(2) f①

UK

4 September 1992

Dear Cliff,

Here, at last, are most of my answers to your hand-written letter of 29 January last, with two pelian texts with translation and interlined literal translation. There are a lot of words I do not know, but have no way of checking (e.g. on a tape-recording) whether they are 'new' words or known words mis-heard and wrongly transcribed. I have worked on this on and off but, unfortunately, more off than on. Perhaps I'm getting slower: I'm certainly forgetting things and have to check on words and phrases that I used to know well. But I am ashamed to have taken nine months to produce this unfinished screed -- after all the promises I made.

We are away to Wales for a bit -- to get away from everything -- like the troubles of four children and nine grandchildren living close to Cambridge; the demands of the parish (I'm a churchwarden), and of a large garden. Going away is overdue -- and has the hearty support of our doctor. We both are ailing a little -- rheumatics and such -- but we do pretty well for late seventies. Borneo sunshine has begun to catch up on me and exact payment - a small growth on the back of my right hand was found to be malignant and had to be cut out recently -- local anaesthetic, and now almost entirely healed after two weeks. But there is no reason to believe that there will not be others in time.

Perhaps I should have marked the scripts you sent and returned them. As it is, they are written all over with pencil. If you wish, I will tidy them up and send them back.

I keep forgetting that it is thirty years since I left Sarawak. How very out of date I must be!

Bob and Barbara Pringle called in the other day -- and I don't think I've seen them to talk to since1964 or'65. And Robert Cramb called briefly to quiz me about Iban agriculture before 1963.

Once again, my apologies for slowness (if not sloth!) and

with all good wishes

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Notes on two texts: Journeying to the Other World (Pelian Nyembayan)
To Sever the Flowers (Pelian Beserara' Bunga) 1977.

Not having any manang(pelian or saut) texts to consult, several dirges for the dead (sabak) were consulted for the 'geography of Sebayan':-

SMJ XIII 27 (Borneo Writing: T.H. and B. Sandin) -- this was no help, except that there was mention of bats and spiders in the Gawai Sakit text, confirming that manang do commonly refer to such creatures in their poems.

SMJ XIV 28/29 (1966) pp. 15-80: (B. Sandin) a sabak with translation and some notes, but in 'blocks', not divided into short paragraphs, let alone verses and lines. The translation is shocking; with omissions (of sentences or longer pieces) and mistranslations: e.g., section 69 (top of p. 44 -- tukang nyabak ~~xxx~~ nyedan singer of dirges with sobbing (not hiccupingly!) and tukang does not imply 'well-known'. And tuyu' just before is nonsense as 'mischievous' -- it must mean babbling or mumbling (i.e., the dirge).

B. Sandin - Leka Sabak. Borneo Literature Bureau 1968. A version of the last (SMJ XIV) in lines and verses, but no translation: mush more readable.

F. Rajit (The Revd. Frederick Rajit). Sabak Kenang. Borneo Lit. Bureau 1969. Again in lines and verses, but no translation or notes. This is a very different sabak poem, whose style I much prefer (but exactly why I don't know) Author is from Melaban, Betong, and says he got it from his mother, Simai anak Usik, when she was about seventy years of age. He missed some of it because she could not dictate slowly (which is commonly the case).

SMJ XXVI 47 (1978) B. Sandin. Pelian Bejereki. No help, at least not in answering your specific queries -- not surprising since you had a hand in it. The very first verse (p. 58) translates batu as 'petrified', which I consider wrong -- but more of this when I get to detail in the present textes.

The Revd. William Howell. SMJ, 1, 1 (1911) Sabak, probably Bugau/Undup: no help because very scrappy -- probably the singer was quite unable to go slow.

Minda anak Janting, of Julau (formerly known as Indai Geramong, and (half-?-sister to Pengarah Banyang). Sabak bebuah. Not published. Collected about 1960. Principal parts (batang) only, as she stressed, with very few of the details and embroideries (gerini'). She is a Roman Catholic, and her poem can be adapted to suit either a Catholic or a pagan deceased. This text was for a young girl (a close relation, I think), not Christian. The standard stages of the journey (the 'geography') to Sebayan and into Langit are as in the poems listed above, but the emphasis is different: matters of war and masculine interest are just touched upon, but a good deal is made of ways to help Mother (and Father) with charms, etc., later -- as is right for a little girl, of course. Instead of going on foot, or by ordinary boat (represented by the coffin), the Sebayan who come to collect the girl's soul return with it flying in the 'boat' which is the burial pua'-- borne by the wind, so they look down on the Titi Rawan, Pintu Tanah and the Mandai River and the other places. But they pass on and up to the Langit where the final resting place of the soul is in a longhouse, from which the Christian heaven can be seen on the other side of the river.

The story is similar to the published sabak until they reach Lang Singalang Buring and the wondrous tree (with head trophies as fruit!- Sandin's ranyai, here called nibong ranyai, or ensurai ranjing. On the way to Langit, they visit manang Segadu' ("Bird's Egg" --living as a hornbill high in a hollow tree, or a hole in the rocks) - who provides a flying coat to help the girl visit visit and help her parents later. They pass the moon, the place of rain, lands of goblins and the known dead (all names are in riddles: e.g., the "hill of Pursed Lips" means the singer's father-in-law, for you must never name your father-in-law directly. They are now on foot: they go round the Pintu Langit (cannot open it). They see the Tarsier, the Milky Way, the Seven Sisters (Bintang Banyak) and finally the house where they belong. They view the Hill of Glory across river, and the girl is promised she will be able to fly with 'charms' (batu) to help her parents -- AFTER her tomb (sungkup) has been built. So her weeping ceases.

Finally the singer (i.e., her own soul) flies with the wind back to the bereaved longhouse where her body has remained. Her return is helped (ensured) by the JAR on which her fingers rest, the IRON (Kerirng Semengat) on which her feet rest, the BAJU kebat in which her body is clothed, and the PLATTER (pinggai) which covers her head.

For further notes on Segadu, see SMJ XLII, 63 (Dec. 1991) -- Traude Gavin, section 5 (page 10) and notes. I don't think Segadu' is commonly mentioned (I had never heard of her till this visit to Minda) and she may belong to a tradition east of the Saribas: Minda's ancestors came form Engkari or Lobang Baya, possibly Lemanak, and were related to ancestors or Koh and other migrants to Katibas and Baleh.

In sabak, the Sebayan (souls of ancestors and deceased relatives of the one now mourned) are warned by the wind, and come from their home in the Mandai ("Sebayan") to fetch the soul now due to join them. They have no difficulty (Pintu Tanah opens at a touch -- but not so on the return journey). (In the 1960s in Saribas the Sebayan dressed in the latest fashion and travelled by outboard). They come to the house and collect the soul now due to join them, to accompany it on its long journey. They traverse the menoa (SMJ XIV 28/29, p. 36, arrive at house) They leave the house with the soul (as the burial party does with the boady) and traverse the menoa a different way, noting birds, etc., on the way. They reach the Titi Rawan, the Bridge Perilous (see my Dictionary: Malays, Arabs, and others know it and name it: in Chrètien de Troyes - in his tale of 'Lancelot', Sir Lancelot crosses it- a bridge of sharp swords, but he is wounded by it because he is not as pure as he should be --- Chrètien probably got it from the "Moors" - Muslims - who ruled most of Spain for centuries and tried to invade France when he was writing).

Then you have the Pintu Tanah, described to me as double doors of stone, so close fitting that a blade of grass could not get between (I wonder where the tradition of double stone doors comes from? ancient Etruscan tombs, and 'modern' vaults in England have them!) The doors have to be opened from inside by the Worm Queen (another Kumang) who must be persuaded to cease her weaving (twining and writhing of worms that shift and topple the broken jars of the tomb) long enough to open it. The Coucal lives near there: bubut, dundun, from the call; but bubut is also said to stand for bau but (the stench of rotting flesh). Bubut eats scorpions, centipedes and other 'nasties' -- ever since Kumang Jelidi cursed her with this food after finding her in bed with Keling Aji, her cobra husband in Panggau Libau.

All the sabak I have referred to place Titi Rawan first (on the side of the land of the living) and then Pintu Tanah. I had an idea at the back of my mind that they were the other way round, with Titi Rawan on the Sebayan side of Pintu Tanah. All I can find is a note I made: I asked T.R. Numpang of Betong in the Menyang (Ulu Ai) -- there are or were several others called Numpang -- and he said quite definitely that Titi Rawan comes after Pintu Tanah, just inside 'Sebayan'. Perhaps this marks a difference in tradition between the 'Saribas' and the Ulu Ai and Baleh. But Minda should belong to the latter? It would be nice to check this, and to discover the trains of thought behind each placing. If the Limban, in its gorge, is the same river as the Limban Jawa, in the headwaters of which the manang and the ayu have their abode, and since the celestial manang or yang arrive to help in a pelian without passing Pintu Tanah, then river must divide, or the Titi Rawan is this side of Pintu Tanah -- but the manang don't cross that either -- perhaps all are correct in different circumstances?

Then there is Ensing Jara (see Dictionary under SANG -- not a Kingfisher) where cockfighting takes places (SMJ XIV pp. 53-55 for these), the places where dwell the souls of those who died of not natural causes -- in childbirth (see Dictionary lia' 2) in war (no heads), by drowning, falling from trees, etc.

Note that in SMJ XIV pp. 50, 51 there is reference to Tuan Lengsong - Sandin ought to have known that this was Mr Deshon (2nd & 3rd Divisions from about 1879 perhaps till 1905 --: one of the three officers in charge of the 1902 'expedition' to the Ulu Ai -- the "Cholera Expedition": see Robert Pringle, Rajahs and Rebels: Ithaca, N.Y. 1970: seven refs. to pages listed in Index).

* not the same: see Die limban, and manang at top right of p. 205.

Also in SMJ XIV p. 51 section 86 -- there is mention of Dara Rambai Geruda (see Dic. Geruda, Geruna, Rambai) who flies with streaming tresses -- this is a misplaced note -- it belongs to the place where your text mentions the lady, but instead of Rambai you have Rembia, which is a Malay word for sago! Rembai would have done -- but it just marks one of many such pitfalls in transcription or copying.

In this part of 'Sebayan' there are also various 'spirits' -- see Dic. under Sereganti. (Sere- is a prefix, = seri- or si-). Sanskrit ghanta means a bell (rung worldwide to avert disaster), one of the "weapons" of Siva' spouse in her aspect as Durga, the bloodthirsty destroyer of demons, who is also called Ghanti (M. & J. Stutley, A Dictionary of Hinduism..., Routledge, London, 1977). She is in Wilkinson's Dictionary as Serikandi - a nymph of romance and/or wife of Arjuna.

At the pendai, pangkalan further down the Mandai river the party makes ready a war-boat (berangai) with a roof of pua' on a frame of blowpipes. This must be the the coffin or 'soul-boat' of the Sabah caves and the Ngadju country in South Borneo. They travel DOWN the river, passing various menoa and tributary rivers (e.g., Telaga Darah, Telaga Gadong -- see Dictionary under telaga), including those of people who have died of natural causes, and various 'spirits' like Sereganti (wrongly put above)

At the landing place of the house they belong to, they bathe and dress as is usual on arrival at the end of a journey. SMJ XIV, page 64 ff. then tells of the magical (nibong) ranyai, swaying with its fruit, which only the brave may cut down. The fruits are head trophies and charms of power. This compares with the tree at Tembawai Tampu Juah (See Dictionary tembawai) which caused quarrels which led to the dispersal of the peoples. (A longhouse is never built across a stream, so that the huge longhouse in "Ketungau" straddling three rivers must be myth). The trees may represent a kind of "Tree of Life", which appears in the myths of so many peoples.

Sandin (SMJ XIV p. 72) also mentions the Mission and Church -- probably based on the mission at Betong and/or some other place in 2nd Division. Minda's description probably derives from Kanowit (or Julau -- the bell-rope is knotted to give handhold) but also, quite obviously, from the description of the New Jerusalem in the Revelatic of Saint John. Sandin goes on to describe the process of acceptance into the community of ancestors, and acceptance of it by the 'new' soul, to the ceasing of weeping and sorrow. A final section (153, p. 75) relates the protection and return of the singer upon the wings of the wind.

I haven't compared all these sabak versions closely. Each seems to emphasise different things, probably dictated by the circumstances of the occasion/version last used and therefore easiest to recollect -- or just as much as the 'informant' could be bothered to recite to one uninitiated. But the main sequence is constant, as described above. It all fits into the Iban cosmos, which derives (partly at any rate from Indian and later "Malay" ideas: e.g., the central mountain (Maha Meru) from whic run seven rivers that divide the "World" into its parts and end in the encircling Ocean. In Iban, the several rivers -- Mandai, Panggau Libau/Gelong, Langit, etc. -- including your own river, be it the Layar, Rajang, Kapuas, 'Ai Ropa'(Europe) or even perhaps the Missouri(!!)--- run down into the Ulak Jawa (which has nothing to do with the Island of Java, but is the Ocean) where is the great whirlpool with the tree in it- the pusat tasik of the Malays, where the great coconot grows in which the garuda roosts. (Reminds one of Sindbad and the roc bird: and of Charybdis as described in Homer's Odyssey).

There is no dimension of time -- everything everything was, is now, and ever shall be --- and other dimensions are variable, even mercurial. It is no good asking When (of time) or Where (of geographical space or place): the answer to "When?" is "Long ago"; and to "Where?" is "Far away", "Beyond the Kapuas", "Across the sea", or the like. In 1935, when Mussolini invaded Abyssinia, and someone asked in an Irish village pub where it was -- "Sure, and it's not far: just a small piece beyond London." Your informant could say (but he is too polite!) "It doesn't matter to us or to the story to have a time and a place for it -- so don't ask silly questions!".

I have never come across any Iban drawing or "map" of the worlds such as they make in other places sometimes: e.g., among the Ngadju. You could imagine the world: (in a simplified diagram) as parts of a three-dimensional figure of eight, or two interlocked spheres: the earth we inhabit is across the middle between the spheres ("Middle Earth"), with the brilliant sky and the heavens in the sphere above, and th

dark and shadowy world of the dead below in the sphere below. But they all extend in curves and merge one into the other, though there are boundaries or marks, and differences of nature: if you climb th mountains you may come upon Pintu Langit (for ever opening and shutting like the Clashing Rocks of Greek legend); go another was and into a cave, or under water, and you may come upon Mandai Mati, or the abode of the Landak and the realm of Pulang Gana's earth. You can pass inside the spheres from Mandai to Langit: "upwards" -- birds, light, stars and the abode of the (Indian) gods: "downwards" -- waters, serpents,gloom. The serpent people of Panggau live on or in the earth and the waters, but since they are deities, they have a high place and a heaven too, though generally they fight with the dwellers in the Heavens (as in Hindu myth the serpents are for ever at war with the birds).

"Journeying to the Otherworld"

In Mandai, the Sebayan regard dark as light, whole as useless, broken as valuable. So grave goods are broken, but not to prevent grave-robbers. The Sebayan cannot carry water except in a sieve, or a jar broken at the bottom: cf. the later legend of the Danaids, 50 daughters of Danaus -- Robert Graves, The Greek Myths, section 60, esp. comment section 6. --- but the answer to your question about small birds on the way to the Pintu Tanah is that they are the busy little people of the small trees and bushes, and they are the most likely to spot a speeding (flitting) soul. (Don't ask why birds can know of or see a soul passing when you and I cannot,-- that would spoil the story). The birds have no particular significance of their own. See descriptions in Smythies' Birds... The only one I know anything about is engkerasak - he is an incorrigible gossip, (see my Dic.) Also he is an omen bird but only, as far as I have heard, among the Maloh people.

The little birds are of a size with the soul - which is only the size of a thumb: how else could it leave and enter the body by way of the fontanelle? -- and it travels "like lightning", as the Forest Kingfisher, the tiny ensing batu, does (see the description in Smythies, No. 265 (p. 307 in 1st ed.). Remember that the soul of the pursuing manang is the same size --- and so is yours or mine when it goes off on its own during our dreaming. See Wilkinson's Dic. semangat for old ideas of the 'spirit of life' which was, and is, regarded as being a timorous 'bird'.

(b) The numerous 'names' for the dead are simply periphrasis, avoiding the direct words parai or mati (except in the case of people who have died by violence or other unnatural cause). The small deep valley is the grave. Slipped away, faded, wilted -- these phrases are only the equivalent of English forms, like:--- paased away, gone beyond, fallen asleep.

Phrases ending in -an, like tikam pendawan (stab with spear), may have some significance (perhaps using words associated with death?) but on the face of it they are simply rhyming riddles on Sebayan.

(c) tambai (line 117), if not a misspelled repeat of tampai, may have the second meaning of 'companion' --- for the usual meaning of a sign prohibiting entry seems to make no sense. So the line may mean: Matai catches sight of (glimpses) the companion (i.e., the patient's soul) he is looking for. pansik can mean 'seek out', 'look for'.

(d) line 147 Apai Jengkuai. Not seen before. Perhaps the sick person (whose soul is sought in the pelian) is father of Jengkuai. This is if it is a personal name: words similar to jengkuai do not help. The next passage (lines 148-159) has me foxed, unless the assembled manang souls and their yang who are searching (at a check for the moment?) see where the soul has gone (hidden in a hollow log like a lizard?) and make a rush for it, moving like the various animals named. Does this take in your footnote to line 154? In line 160 the soul is caught and taken back: the 'fish-hooks' catch it--- hence the fish-hooks put into the manang's fingers at his initiation.

(e) lines 175-176. perepat may be wrongly transcribed. It may be pelepa' -- they see the 'obstruction' they have made, or they have stopped the soul's flight -- or rapas - snatch. But, evidently, both lines refer to the (now captured) soul. I can not explain segamurong (sa-gemurong?) or cerarepong. Not seen before. Have you other examples in other contexts? Mistranscription? murong is a swamp crab who scuttles into holes in mud as the menarat does in logs). Unlikely it is a strange formation from burong - as a reference to the beginning where the soul flitted like a small bird.

The other word might be based on ripong - the short and pallid Python curtus that inhabits caves. apong means to catch something that is adrift. The problem defeats me; but there is no doubt that both these lines refer to the re-captured soul.

Line 210 is the real ending, with the blessings of Selampandai an Bilu Bunsu Petara (Biku is another Malay, ex-Indian word, like Patara). But the manangs must recover their own souls also. Lines 211-216 do not seem to tell of this, except by analogy or implication? -- unless it is only the celestial manang (who died long ago) who are mentioned here as returning to their hill - Rabong; or getting the recaptured soul to the top of the 'hill' (over the pagar api?) or of the body so that it can re-enter by the fontanelle to the recovery of the patient.

Some further notes on this piece are:--
1. 102 -- Bubut hears a crowd passing; l. 110 catches at but fails to hold one of them.
line 112 - Dara Lemai, and your note to lines 113 and 115. (Lemai is probably just a name, but it could mean 'evening' or 'twilight'?) She is one of many called Kumang, but is not the paragon of beauty -- that is Kumang Jelidi of Panggau (cobra). Keling Midang (wandering, = dead) or Bujang Lengah (one G?) Lengan is probably the ~~brother~~ dead brother of Keling Aji (of Panggau) often called Kemping Padi. The chief leader of the ancestors (who come to fetch a soul) named in Saribas is Niram: in the Baleh, Julau, Ulu Ai, it is Jubang.

line 126. First 2 words may be one - ~~bekxregau~~ beke-regau with same meaning, but the wandering may apply to the 'wavy' or zig-zag stripes on him. Bukir is, of course, be-ukir: and the Eng. word usually has T and double TT -- tattoo, otherwise it looks like 'taytoo' (which might be a kind of spud and edible).

line makes its home in a dead tree -- o.k., but might it be a distinct species?
line 131. I translate puntul iko' as Stub-tail, i.e. short-tailed, but it means a crocodile, baya, or jagu. Jagu has no glottal check: it is a term used in Ulu Ai and Baleh.See Dic., under baya.
--- line 122. kindang$_2$- hover (your wandering to and fro is o.k.) - but Malay kindang is a cloth (sarong usually) worn across the body from a shoulder -- so you can carry a child in the loose part at the opposite hip. Sarawak Malay calls it by the Sumatran name of selendang. It can mean (imply) be-sandik.

lin e 145. sengkilat: the s- is a prefix (signifying something like the definite article) and the bare word is engkilat which means not only the trap-door of a bubu but a 'pipe-trap', which is the meaning here. See Dic. under bubu. Reference here is perhaps to the open end of the 'pipe'.

line 154. Can't find segada (seguda?) -- associated with gada'? of the coils of a big snake lying like a cast-off length of rope? before they start to move.
line 158. landai could be a form of landak but the verse doesn't require it here: I suggest it has its usual meaning of 'gently sloping'. Landak is something like a hedgehog but the size of a badger: he doesn't make burrows he has to climb in and out of, but has them on a slight gradient into the side of a bank or hill.

--- line 149 and others following -- helpers of we -- helper (not plural) -- and not 'of us' (and certainly not 'of we'). it simply means 'our helper'. The officiant is calling to his aid the famous manang of long ago, name by name.-- down to 165.
--- line 156 omit the brackets. No need for 'spirit' each time. "Catch it, our helper Guit, the roving crocodile ... (162) Catch it, our helper, Gelanyang, the clouded leopard".... (omit shamans) -- and so on. In the singular. I see that Gelanyang is a python ln line 153, and Leopard in 162. Two manang with the same praise-name. In line 163, I think sigi' belongs with cheli-cheli to emphasise it -- simply or really (brightly) gleaming. And ngeli' will be plural - teeth. There is no reason for the leopard-manang to be lacking teeth! "whose teeth truly flash in hi jaws". Line 165 -- tegong is the roar of a leopard-cat (remaung)--- so you could translate as the Roaring Leopard-cat'. Line 166 -- see Dic. sana' (with glottal) -- not in Dic. -- may mean striped or mottled, like the mat it's named after: they are all animal so 'animal' in the translation won't do: jelu is a 'wild beast' - four-foo or a monkey- how about transferring 'wild' and saying -- " wild child of the striped cat"?

Line 168 -- the errant soul is caught by the (brass) fish-hooks in the manang's fingers, seized by Usam in both hands (169) and carried back (wrapped) in a fine cloth (170). See Dic. pua': ensuga is a 'comb', so the design has something like combs in it, or it has figures wearing tall combs on it -- 'female' transvestite manang?

Lines 176, 183, 184, 186 and elsewhere: the shaman names are personal names ad not descriptive titles; so they do not need to have the definite article 'the' before them.

Line 196-- I have not got tiga' with glottal in Dic. (without glottal = three which makes no sense). Line 205 -- it can't be 'we' - either it is confined simply by Empong, or "by me, Empong" perhaps if it is Empong who is reciting the poem.

line 205 - nukong could simply be to 'sit still'. 206 in the middle of a 'dragon' jar: hard to understand. A menaga jar is pretty big and tall, and the tiny thing could only stay in the middle if still wrapped in a pua' -- unless the menaga really means the body of the sick man. 'Sit still' may therefore be better than dejected.

Lines 189-190. A fossilised or "petrified" wax-gourd would be far too big and heavy to carry about as a talisman. A wax-gourd CHARM might be dried -- a seed or two or an oddly shaped bit of outer skin. In the early days after the war (by about 1950) Tom Harrisson was intrigued by 'petrifaction' stories: but I can't identify any published from the SMJ index, and it would take too long to search out all the likely ones. These stories usually tell of divine retribution for a blasphemous act, where (very often) someone laughs (mocks) at the antics of a cat or some other small animal; there is a great storm and flood, and the whole community and its longhouse is turned to stone. In this way oddly shaped hills or rocks are 'explained'. Somewhere along the line he must have connected that idea with the very small batu used as charms: many are indeed stones, but I have never heard of a fossil being a charm, and many are obviously not stone (and need not be) -- like oil, horn, hair, dry seeds or bark or shell. T.H. persuaded Sandin that 'petrified' was in order and convenient, so Sandin perpetuated its use. I believe 'petrified' is wrong when applied to charms: batu simply has two meanings - stone, and charm (or talisman) -- as the word 'charm' has! But enough of that! Line 189 seems to follow on from 188-- --"wax-gourd charm that strikes and holds. 190 is hard: you can't slice a stone, and I suspect that sirap is wrong (silap or something else?). Gamalai (?gemalai) I can'T find, except as a Malay word (in Wilkinson) meaning lissom, graceful: it may be associated with gemala (jewel), or melai (long grass of swamp, or enterokok m., one of the Coucal birds). If kerapa should be M. kelapa it doesn't help.

line 213 -- "of we " again. 212 - brought by Rechap, kin of Empong (delete "the"). line 215 -- here tampak means famous, synonymous with benama. nampok -- I cannot see from my Dic. entries for nampok and tampok that it can mean 'alight upon'. I am not sure whether the semengat belongs to the patient or to the manang or manangs. I suggest that bai (in line 212) means led by, and the souls are those of the various helper manang who have given their help, rescued the patient's soul, and are now returning 'home' led by Rechap (who is always named as a senior manang of the 'heavens'). And following this up , perhaps nampok (line 215) means that they return to their own place (Bukit Merabong Kajang) to keep vigil or watch there for the next time they may be needed.

To sever the flowers.

In the journey to the Other World, the manang and their celestial helpers do not really go into Sebayan at all, because they catch the speeding soul of their patient at or near the Pintu Tanah -- as we say "snatched from the jaws of death". When ordinary folk die, their souls go through to the Mandai River and then by boat DOWN that river to their final home. (Wilkinson says that mandai is one of several Sumatran Malay words for 'mother'). When a manang dies, his/her soul goes upriver, either their own river or the Mandai under a different name, until they reach the high hill near to or in the heavens -- named after the (pe-)rabong from which the drums are sounded at the manang's death (tebong, ke-tebong, menebong). At burial, therefore, a manang is buried head upriver (like a Christian priest, the opposite way to the laity). See my Dic. entries: rabong (esp. 4 c), tebong, manang (esp. page 205: also tawai 2, limban 4.

Here are some details:----

(To sever the flowers)

Intro para. 1 'expirating'? expiry, or simply end. ketas (ngetas) strictly means 'cut', and so 'cut open' by cutting the rotan bindings of the ulit bundle and so letting it fall open or be unwrapped.
Para. 2. langgai ~~tinggang~~ tinggang is strictly the tuft of hair on a sword-hilt and so really adds description -- a sword (decorated) with human hair.
Para. 4. beserara' bunga seems to mean 'dead-head' or remove faded flowers from the plants, but I think the real meaning is to separate the dead plant from its clump or rootstock to make more room for the living members of the clump. As with sago -- when the main palm-stem matures and flowers, it dies: it falls or is removed and so the younger 'suckers' round it can grow properly.
page 2, lines 2 and 9. 'surviving family members' is not needed the second time. and last but one line -- 'offering (pedara) to the dead', so that it doesn't look as if pedara is a translation of 'dead'!
page 2 (para. 6) basket item 3: lemba' is of Curculigo sp. and is not a palm. It is perhaps related to the Amaryllis family. Low-growing, no stem worth mention, with broad pointed leaves with fibres in them (but no midrib). The leaves are scraped in running water (on a log or big flat stone at river's edge) to remove the green pulp: this leaves the fibres, which resemble raffia when air-dried.
The same: item 4. batu perunsut. I know it as batu garu' (must have the glottal). See garu'. dekoh (with this meaning), chong, tangga semengat - are not in my Dic.

Page 3. bunga tanam.-- does this mean a canna, or other specific flower? bunga (em-)perawan is a tree flower, presumably lasting only a short time: what do they use when that tree is not in flower?
TEXT -(numbers refer to lines)

2. riap, ripple and riang means almost the same. I have not got riong.
5 merebong bunga is a swamp tree. Translation (large type) has Merabong Bunga which is more likely right. The place of the ayu anyway! Ridge of Flowers
6. bujang can seldom be translated as bachelor -- probably only when a question of marital status is raised -- mostly it means simply '(grown) man', or 'young man' without reference to his being married or not. bujang Sekerang (Skrang) (see Dic. means a rover, a man who is (apparently) unattached and footloose but older than usual for such, and you'd expect him to have 'settled down' at his age. In our society it would mean a man of military age and fit. 'Warrior' also is not a word to use in ordinary language. Forget the Skrang bit and translate as 'young men' or simply as 'the men'. The spears are set upright, points down, for the ritual.
10. selangking is a timber tree, the naggka' or bukoh (as a fruit tree); and s. kijang prob. a variety of it. But s. also alludes to one of the gawai burong series. The strength is prob. that of the tree, for a barking deer may be swift, but is not specially noted for strength. But let it stand! -- for I see you have it already in your footnote!
12. Gensarai (bunch of flowers) redak (small) tencang (smashed, crushed) -- as you'd expect when they are dead and brittle -- but a footnote for this would be best, to leave line 12 as you have it. The three words only make another name for the place where the ayu are to be found -- or the rubbish heap where the spent plants are put.
10-19 and 20-25 are a pair of 'verses' that repeat the same idea. A common feature.
21 tawai (bat, flower, and) pole erected at a gawai saut.
33 I can't translate this either. Perhaps mis-transcribed. I would rather say in a note that I can't translate than that the words have no meaning: you might find that they were in fact common words but strung together in a kind of shorthand omitting particles, pronouns etc. I do not believe there is a special ritual language; only a poetic usage that shortens sentences to basic "ideographs" and often uses double-meanings (riddles) -- but with 'ordinary' words. Martin Baier's Wörterbuch der Priestersprache der Ngaju-Dayak (Verhandelingen v.h. KITLV No. 128 (Foris pub'ns, 1987) lists what he and others call the priests' language - not to be generally understood by the uninitiated: but very many of the words are only altered Malay words and easily recognizable.
55. Not nginta but ngintu? I don't know ngidan.
58. Lebur Api -- the name of the precious pua' at centre of ritual - again.
59. ?insert hari--- Ke menjadi hari, malam padam, which is lit by day and put out at night.

line 64. I don't see the force of tunang sendiri here. Simply their companion, or one of them: or could it be a distant allusion to the Siong/Meluda/Menggin story of Iban marriage into the pig longhouse?

67, 69 seregu' should have a glottal.

71. bangkang is lead (metal) not lend. tunang again -- ? 2nd meaning of 'possession'.

72. rembia. Mentioned before. M. for sagu. But these lines all mention the fruit or flowers: there is no mention of the stem or root (paung). So it is probably an error for rembai, which has the same meaning as rambai -- meaning 'trailing' like long tail feathers, or a hanging spray of flowers. Technically of padi - the panicle. So I suppose it is-- bunch, skein, string,truss, as appropriate, or omitted.

74. Ulai Rangki'. ulai = ulak, eddy or backwater, easiest translation is 'pool' (i.e., in a river). rangki' is seashell; armlet is usually tumpa' rangki'. And see Dic. simpai 4 -- maybe a connexion between Lepong Simpai and Ulai Rangki' that I didn't see when the yarn wastold me. Call this one Armlet Pool. in 75 sengkidang langkang has me beaten -- unless isi' here has basic meaning of contents, and the pool loses depth if bathed in?

78 and later rembia. See 72 above.

81. Do they perhaps go by boat -- made of a section of bamboo?- they are small enough. Bandong is another Malay word, likely to be known throughout Saribas, for the common trading boat, sea-worthy but also capable of going far upriver.

84. 'twinkle like the Seven Sisters' - I would say.

94. and later, whenever traders are named: I don't think it is the place in middle Kapuas -- doesn't make sense with place-names like Lundu'. The place is called Sintang (with an i) anyway. Could be senentang ('face to face') or sintang as 'slip into', or s-entang, amongst. I'd forget it, and simply say (reached or attended by -- or where come--) Malay traders from Lundu' (or Brunei or wherever). Further on, in line 112 - Kayong for which see Dic. -- river-mouths are called nanga on maps of it, while lower down in the Pawan down to Matan, muara is used.

92. pulai. Never heard of as form of pulau: if pulau meant, surely that word would have been used to keep up the alliteration (end-rhymes). Pulai is the Malay form of pelai' (see Dic.) a minor 'bee-tree' left standing. 'The creeper (or tendrils) reach to the bee-tree at the end of the ridge' Or omit 'bee' to avoid a footnote!

102. To be precise (and keep the Three Stars idea) why not say 'sparkle like (the 3 stars in) Orion's belt.'?

108 Ilak-Ilong (could be Ilak-Ilang ref. ilang sword, or M. lost - changed to ilong for the assonance?). It must have a meaning, but I can't fathom it.

112-113. Omit Sentang. -- 'attract traders from the Kayong, who buy them with gongs big enough to cover the mouth of a padi-bin six feet across!

115. supit. See Dic. sumpit 3 - a matting bag, "shopping bag".

117. selabit and seladan are the same. jarang -- of (the usual) open weave. These place-names are most likely riddles on the names of individuals, which we cannot find the answers to without having lived many years in the area the poem comes from.

125. Not that 'we keep in boxes' but money of the bank or trading station -- good coin of the realm, probably silver (as from the East India Co.), say 'good silver dolla

cf. line 160

129. I don't see how you can equate ke-rungan and rugan. rungan is a papaya and I would suggest that that the raga' basket is hung from the pillar LIKE a papaya fruit on the trunk of its tree. But it makes no difference to the basic sense. Your bamboo split at the top into a cone I know as teresang (see Dic.) and other names, but not rugan.

139. Segalang are a Melanau people of the Rajang delta: perhaps formerly more numerous and widespread. Probably related to the "Melanau" people still mixed in with the folk at the mouth of the Saribas, Kabong, etc. They still have their own language, at least when sailing or fishing at sea.

141, 142. mas muda means, I think, pale gold, like electrum. Mixed with silver. It is probably the metal let in to the back edge of the nyabur (duku amat?) I possess (let in to act as shock absorber). Electrum is, I believe, sometimes found in alluvial deposits (and so obtainable without mining). One of the mines near Bau produces a beautiful pale metal which is a mix of gold and silver.

nyiur undang (see Dic. niur 2) usually is a figurative use meaning 'head trophy'.

148. ~~notes with stops~~ are/were for how many dollars; Sarawak, Dutch, Malayan ? More research for you! Since the E.I.Co. dollar (ringgit tungkat) and the rial are sometimes referred to in poetry, you may have to go back a good many years, ~~and to several countries~~ before identifying it.

157. Buara is perhaps Muara (with nanga only for rhythm? Rumpang is rubbish?

nonsense - I've now seen the footnote

156 (and other lines like this) If the plant in the ritual is divided between dead and living, this line must mean "Mine I take, who am (of the) dead" (i.e., not WHEN I die): 158 refers to the share of the living, who will profit by working it. In your translation you say "you garden, you tap, And your rubber sheets when pressed....": not in the Iban. Is there a line or so of the Iban omitted?

===== Line 149. cabik = tear in pieces. Mustard is ensabi. cabi' (also called kacang in Iban) is chillies, hot red peppers. See Dic. cabi'. But perhaps usage is different in Saribas? 150 -- yes: obscure but it means the Sebayan and their share.

161. Fell the pingan and lop terap (see Dic. BUKOH - two names for the same tree) -- this is a line (irrelevant) put in to mark the beginning of another section of the poem. Like the first half of a Malay pantun. They use this in Saribas, judging by Sandin's texts, and it is useful. I'm not aware of its use elsewhere. The crops or planting material have been divided and this next section deals with the charms (gifts) given by the dead -- and lasts till the next 'section mark' lines 220-221.

I would delete 'petrified' in each of the many places it occurs in this section: and 'stone' I would change to 'charm'. A wind-charm sounds better than a wind-stone charm.

171. Footnote is fair enough but no need. See Dic. bungkan. A general term for containers of bamboo sections. It would be better to explain that engkalat is small, and long between nodes so that it lends itself for smallthings, and long thin ones -- like documents (gun-licence, land title -- rolled up).

173. Form Four -- long ago this was pretty good. Form III qualified for many jobs and Form VII was about as high as was generally possible. Standards are much higher nowadays. Line 175 Your note is not true. "Until 1941" or "about 1950" would be better. There was a great expansion of education provision during the 1950s, with improvements and/or funds for existing Mission and Malay schools, and the building and staffing of very many village and area schools. (Not to mention attention given to Chinese schools). I was mostly in the Rajang and 2nd Division 1950-1960 and saw many improvements. Big schools outside Saratok, for instance, and smaller schools serving two or more longhouses I saw opened. Batu Lintang (Kuching) School and Teacher Training Centre was started; John Wilson set up the educational and agriculture centres at Budu (Saratok) and Meluan, and Erik Jensen the little one in Lemanak. The American Methodists went ahead splendidly (for the Iban) at Kapit -- in fact, my eldest (the daughter) went to her first school (taught in Iban in lowest classes) at the Methodist school in Kapit - and the year was 1952. All this provided a basis for sending more people overseas to further their education pretty soon after Malaysian Independence in 1963. I think enough time has elapsed now for the present Govt. to accept these developments without claiming them all for their own.

175. Kitap is Malay kitab, book, (especially religious: see Wilkinson's Dic.)

176, 177. Finger-nails literally (phrase is for the rhythm) - but not in English. Fingers would do, and perhaps varied with 'in outstretched hand'. meresian is a general term for Whip-snakes, but not any single snake, so precise identification is not needed.

183. melang, or melai (M.) is a swamp grass with three saw-edges to the stem.

184. tali -- when the drops look like strings or rods -- heavy thundery rain - like pencils, as we say.

191. uting = small; dupan = very large: just words for rhythm? I'd be inclined to say "the curling tusk of a great boar, and (a piece of) antler of a grazing deer".

194. I've written a note about pusat tasik etc. somewhere already? I didn't know about the whale connexion: it's probably a Malay story. (whale in M. is paus: bam is something else) I looked up Kipling's Just So Stories: they were fun again but no help. The Whale story is how the whale got his throat (swallowing "Sindbad" the sailor, (or Jonah!): and the Creation story (Adam allotting tasks, 'play', to the various animals) quite obviously has Malay origins (mention of the Perak River, etc.) but tells how the King Crab sat in Pusat Tasik (high tide) and when he came out the water ran in (low tide) -- finally he was made small, and the Moon took over the management of tides. (See Wilkinson, pauh and janggi: the whale story must be findable.

199 -- an exact description of the crop on my plum and apple trees this year!

200 -- The dead can grow all the padi they need in a space the size of the end of a letan?

208. tunjok antu is the forefinger: little finger is t. anak.

212-216 several words I don't know: if I spend hours more trying to find them I'll never finish at all!

218. sa-ngindang -- arms stretched out like a soaring bird -- reference also to the ritual dance (of the Kite) be-rayah.
230. Nyara' bali' Gendai -- may perhaps mean transvestite here, but it also means that he/she changed names. Ordinarily in a context like this, bali' would mean bali' nama - also called, (changing over to his other name).

245. The manang announces he will (is starting to) pluck off the wilted ayu (i.e., sever that 'flower' from the rest). And at 249 there follows on what seems to be a description of it in human terms. At 262 it speaks as if it is one of souls (the one involved) come from Sebayan to the mountain to witness the acts of the shaman -- for he speaks of getting ready for a journey -- down river again into the Mandai, from where he will be able to help the living. Final acceptance of death by the soul and, presumably, by the surviving family members. There seems to be no clear distinction between the semengat and the ayu: perhaps there isn't!
line 280. in text -- slave is ulun, not ulu'. 285 lists the things protecting the shamans, which they keep as part of their fees, I suppose.
288 -- It seems the semengat are bidden to take the ayu away with them to their place. Don't bother too much about this kaleidoscopic trick - whereby one things merges into another and distinctions are blurred: it is a sort of dreaming, not a precise pin-sharp account.
306. Note. ordinary upriver boat is luncong: berangai is a war-boat. Chelong was, if I remember aright, the leader of the rebellion (so-called) that was scotched at Wong Adai in the Kanowit river in 1904.
336 - note. Surely it is the coffin which is boat-shaped.
326. penapat tulang - means to the limit of one's strength.
343 onwards is a description of the land of the dead starting from inside Pintu Tanah (some way upriver on the Mandai from the point where the Semengat embark in a sabak poem, but still enumerating non-natural deaths.
350 rindang may mean idle, or perhaps sitting still.

Now I have run out of time. I shall be away and can do no more for at least two weeks. I had hoped to complete by now, but will have to come back to it late.
I do not know of ritual racing of boats. On the face of it, the race seems to be an account ofwhat usually happens when travelling with several boats in company:- they all speed up for the final stretch of the journey - so it becomes an informal race. No winners, but it puts on a good show at arrival, pretending the journey itself was not exhausting. But it may be that there are ritual races, perhaps among Kenyah or others. Why did Charles Hose hit upon a boat race to celebrate a peace-making at Baram; and why is the "January" -- the annual race at Kuching now so old? And why do the people at Belaga keep long racing boats (for up to 100 men) when there can be little prospect of meeting the expense of taking part in the Sibu regatta?
451. Crocodile (Ribai) makes umai fertile and/or protects. Mud figures of baya are made on the ground in umai (but I don't remember seeing one), and sometimes you see an old door in a longhouse carved with a baya in relief.
466 onwards - prob. more riddles on the names of known individuals.

Here I go again. There are a lot of pencil notes on the texts still left -- which I hope to send later on.

14.9.92

490–115 Keling here is not the usual – he belongs in Acheh? Img. in No. 1 K?
three footmarks – BUBUT

(c) what do you make of De Tambi sign in De Otherworld?
tambai ai
line 116–17.

(d) line 147 – Apai Jengkuai. Pis was interpreted by no – only the sound
some as De voice of De soul. Have you come across Pis is it? real name
before? For example in De Sabak

(e) lin. 175–76 " Perapat kami Redap/ bendar amat bulih
must mean [sour
segamurong cheraveporng I can't make any
try and Inspired gemuring? sense at all of these lines – which in various forms appear
at a seme les juncture (after De souls are recovered) in very
other pelian as well. empuring coconut shell
lempung light active
quick

(f) To sever De flowers

(a) line 5 Merabong Bunga hill?
line 12 – Gensarai Redak Tenduang? tenchang. smash
strike
line 58–60 Lebor Api hill what is De
meaning of this allusion – to be lit, extinguished
& burning again? = kicked pud.
riddles re names?

(b) Sentang traders (os line 94) Sintang

(c) lines 245 – onward. This whole section,
? description in human/flower/plant terms of the branch broken off leading up to the action after 295
I find impossible to decipher. It seems
out of place? description of swirl (small sizeth)?

(d) This racing of boats (line 306 – onward)
I find fascinating. Has it any
other ritual parallel? Not that I know of – but it
is common-pattern – this
if several boats race the last aboard of the journey – just
In any case, if you were an Ethnologist
to look of De material I would be most to arrive with Atmajaya
grateful, as ever, for any comments. Also 1992
here we do donot transcription errors, Rodney
Die tried to catch Dem,

with all best wishes.

diff Sutton

January 29th 1992

Tom Thumb Grimm 171 197

Dear Antony,

Many thanks for your letter of the 16th

I was very sorry indeed to learn of Hedda's death. Yours was, infact, the first news of it. She was ill at the time I left Canberra. Infact, I telephoned before I left, and earlier when Jane Hosking was visiting Australia, in hope of seeing Hedda & Alastair once more, but she was not feeling well enough to receive visitors. They were a delightful couple; both of them.

Type the queries

I thought I might send you 2 of the pelian texts - The pelian nyembayan & berarara' bunga as both, of course, involve sebayan. There are a number of things I find fascinating about the sebayan landscape & the journey there (& possibly backagain).

GEMTAN name of "soul" in many? in other?

(1) Journeying to the otherworld

(a) This connection with a series of birds - the series leading closer to the border of sebayan. I don't know what to make of this. Why this association of the transition from life to death with birds? I can understand their perception as messengers but transfers the zone between this world & the sky. Some I suppose are birds of twilight

BIRDS

Kuncit 18
(engkejirah 1.15
impilu 1.22
engkirasak 1.29
sp. hornbill
semateng 1.35
sp. hornbill woodpecker
Serulau 1.42
magpie robin

(b) phrases for referring to the dead, e.g. lines 24, 31 etc. 24 "alone by himself in a flat country" 31 slipped away into a small deep valley" - I suspect possibly, several layers of meaning - and in some case possibly place-names in sebayan. i.e. lines 44-45

No riddle-type rhyme

(11)

Ref. Tiham perdawan rhyme riddle on Sebayan? us. funeral chant? Doane.