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SATHER, CLIFFORD. *Seeds of Play, Words of Power: An Ethnographic Study of Iban Shamanic Chants*. The Borneo Classics Series, Volume 5. Kuching, Sarawak: The Tun Jugah Foundation, 2001. (In Cooperation with the Borneo Research Council, Inc.). xvii + 753 pages. Illustrations, map, tables, appendices, glossary, bibliography, index. Paper US\$49.00; ISBN 983-40513-5-2. (Order from: Janet Rata Noel, The Tun Jugah Foundation, P. O. Box 734, 93714 Kuching, Sarawak).

This book, containing more than seven hundred pages, is, in its entirety, an almost encyclopedic account about Iban shamanism as observed in the lower Saribas-Krian region in the Malaysian state of Sarawak. About seventy percent of the book is allocated to the transcribed texts of shamanic chants and their annotated English translation, while the first two hundred pages are for the discussion of the religious and ontological notions as well as the general framework of shamanic practice. The English translation of the Iban texts is accomplished in such a dexterous way that even a non-expert in the field of Iban studies can grasp the characteristic features of their ritual chants and, indeed, enjoy them. The original Iban texts are of great value not only for scholars specializing in Iban ethnography, but also for the Iban of younger generations, who would miss opportunities to listen to the shamanic chants at full length. Although the Iban have long been renowned for their huge corpus of oral literature, including what Chadwick regarded as the epic tradition, various categories of ritual chants, and the genre of poems of individuals' creative work, the shamanic chants have remained thus far the least scrutinized. As this valuable cultural heritage is rapidly disappearing from the contemporary Iban social life, this work may well be regarded as a monumental one. Together with the author's efforts, the enterprise of the publishing body, which has been active in promoting the recording of Iban cultural materials, should also be praised.

The main body of the book consists of seventeen chapters, followed by three brief appendices and a glossary. In the first eight chapters, which may constitute the first part, the author gives comprehensive background knowledge for understanding the cultural significance of the shamanic chants. This includes the categories of Iban rites and of experts of ritual chants (Chapter 1); an outline of shamanic practice and career (Chapter 2); the concept of person, the notions of its constituent parts, and the image of life as well as of spiritual beings that directly impact on human conditions (Chapter 3); the cosmological structure of the Iban world and the myths relating or revealing this structure and the nature of divine beings (Chapter 4); the general procedures of shamanic healing rites (Chapter 5); the spatial settings and the paraphernalia of shamanic rites with their symbolism (Chapter 6); the structural features of shamanic chants (Chapter 7); and the performative aspects of the healing rites (Chapter 8). In what may constitute the second part, that is, from Chapter 9 to Chapter 17, each chapter has a brief introduction preceding the body of text and translation with occasional

explanatory paragraphs indicating the transitions in the sequence of the respective rite. The order of the chants is arranged roughly in accordance with the sequence of shamanic ritual procedures and the degree of graveness of the healing works, including the "spreading a working mat" signifying the beginning of the whole procedure (Chapter 9); the recovering the errant soul from the roots of nearby trees (Chapter 10); the protection of the plant image of human life by making a fence (Chapter 11); the journey to the otherworld to fetch back the soul (Chapter 12); the killing of the spirit that abducts the patient's soul (Chapter 13); the severing of the deceased's part of the plant image from its remaining parts (Chapter 14); the taking back of the human and mythic shamans' souls (Chapter 15) and the erecting of a ritual barrier (Chapter 16), both being the care-taking after the main work accomplished; and the whole set of the chants sung at a special, now almost extinct, healing ritual for a gravely-ill child called "Gawai Betawai."

Recent anthropological theories concerning rituals have largely emphasized their behavioral or performative aspects. The further the refinement of those theories goes, the less attention is paid to the verbal aspects or components of the rituals. This is certainly a justifiable reaction to the once prevailing intellectualist interpretations of rituals. However, it has led us to the other extreme of ignoring the verbally expressed exegeses, verbal components of ritual acts and, above all, the semantic contents of verbal utterance, read, spoken or sung. Rituals in this perspective are something to be done, not to be spoken. The fact that the participants in rituals are often ignorant of the meaning of the words uttered there may enforce this theoretical stance. In dealing with Iban shamanic rituals, the author takes objection to the performative approach in its extreme form. As he puts it, "not only are these words [in the chants] meaningful, but they are themselves viewed as a source of curative power, and despite the dramatic impact produced by their 'enactment,' it is the words of the leka pelian [words of shamanic chants], above all, and the narrative they relate, that hold the greatest interest to Iban audiences" (3). Being a student of Iban religious practices and ideas, the present reviewer agrees with the author's view. Every aspect of Iban religion, and not just the shamanic rituals dealt with in this book, is imbued with the power of words, which are well recognized and appreciated by lay people. Without paying full attention to this verbal aspect, one's understanding of Iban religion as a whole would be incomplete.

This does not mean, however, that the textual meaning of Iban ritual chants of any genre is easy to grasp from the very bottom of their layers of meaning. On the contrary, the "deep words" of the chants, which are full of allusions and metaphors, are too ambiguous and often ambivalent to make a simple reading or hearing. Lay persons may know the general sequential framework of those chants, but it requires a long learning process even for an expert, in this case, a shaman apprentice, to acquire a full knowledge of them. Moreover, handling of those words or singing the chants is not simply a matter of knowledge. As an expert of healing rites, he, or more rarely she, has to undergo a peculiar experience of shamanic calling, often through mysterious dreams. This is because shamanic practice is, in its essence, work that bridges the world of material beings and the world of spiritual beings.

This brings us to the most delicate aspect of Iban shamanism, in particular, and of Iban religion, in general. The universe as perceived and, in fact, experienced by the Iban is a dualistic reality. The duality, not the simple opposition, of the material and the spiritual, of the seen and the unseen, of here and there, is fundamental to Iban thinking. But this duality is supported at its basis by the ultimate unity or mutual permeability between the two worlds. Thus, human afflictions in the material world are often caused by the beings in the spiritual worlds. The shamans are said to be able to see in their healing practice otherwise unseen beings, such as souls, human or nonhuman, the plant image of human life, and various sorts of spirits, and to take care of or cope with them. This is a rather well-known fact for any student of Iban

studies. One of the notable contributions of this book is that the author gives diverse opinions the individual Iban shamans and laymen offer concerning those unseen beings, and that he does not make an over-systemization of this diversity. As such, this book plays a real encyclopedic role in the scholarship of this field.

The source material of this book is almost exclusively from the lower Saribas-Krian region. It may be of some interest, therefore, to offer here a somewhat different opinion the Skrang Iban would give to one conceptual set, among others, given in this book. The Skrang Iban, especially elder ones, would classify the deities or gods, called *petara*, as a sub-category of the spiritual beings (*antu*) in general, rather than make a clear contrast between the two (86). The contrastive opposition between the benevolent and the harmful to humans is a matter of degree or emerges only as a situational one. As the most dreadful *antu* (*gerasi*) may assist shamanic calling, as is given in this book, the usually benevolent gods may turn out to be troublesome or even harmful for humans if the mutual relationships are not maintained well in ritual services or in response to mysterious encounters in dreams. This may serve as another example of diversity of the views that the Iban would have towards the beings of ambiguous nature in their unseen world.

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SELLATO, BERNARD. *Innermost Borneo: Studies in Dayak Cultures*. Paris: SevenOrient/Singapore: Singapore University Press. 221 pages. Maps, tables, b/w photographs, references. Paper €24.00/S\$42.00; ISBN 2-914936-02-8.

Bernard Sellato, the author of this book, is Director of the Institute for Research on Southeast Asia (IRSEA), University of Provence; a member of CNRS, the French National Science Research Center, and editor of the Southeast Asian studies journal *Moussons*. As he tells us in his introduction to *Innermost Borneo*, he first came to the island in 1973. At the time, working as a uranium geologist, he came to know well the Aoheng and neighboring tribal peoples of the remote Müller Range, where he was then engaged in geological mapping. Eventually, after living for two years with the Aoheng, a community of forest farmers inhabiting the headwaters of the Mahakam and Kapuas Rivers, he abandoned geology for anthropology, receiving his doctorate from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in 1987. Today, he is the undisputed authority on the smaller Dayak groups of the central Borneo interior, including not only farming communities like the Aoheng, but also a variety of rainforest hunter-gatherers.

Innermost Borneo comprises thirteen chapters, most of them previously published as articles or book chapters, but also including five previously unpublished essays. Additionally, many of the published papers originally appeared in French and are translated here for the first time into English by the author himself, including two major essays, "Social Organization in Borneo: A General Overview" and "How Tribes Come into Being." The latter, which was originally published in 1992 as *Rituel, politique, organisation sociale et ethnogenèses: les Aoheng de Bornéo*, deftly combines a micro-sociological analysis of ritual, politics, and society with insights from history and comparative linguistics in one of the finest examples of anthropological writing in the Borneo literature. The publishers are to be commended for bringing together this significant, but scattered, body of scholarly work in one readily accessible volume.

Despite being written over a period of twenty years and treating a variety of topics, the collection hangs together remarkably well. First, the focus is clearly interior Borneo and, in