

GAWAI ANTU

Iban Feast of the Departed

by

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Notes:

We have taken every care to provide very minimal mistake in publishing this transcript.

Words that are in italic mark the usage of the Iban language. Any translation from actual oral communication will be typed using Times New Roman and italicised.

We hope by sharing this transcript you will have a better knowledge on our customs and practices during the Gawai Antu festival.

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Introduction

Gawai Antu is the greatest of all the Sea Dayak feasts for the dead, celebrated in honour of those that have died since the last Gawai Antu feast was held.

Sarapoh, who was taught by the spirit Puntang Raga, originated this feast.

As the feast is expensive there is no fixed date for the celebration. It would take at least one or two years to prepare for the ceremony financially.

The Gawai Antu ceremony has strong significance to every Sea Dayak heart. Those who fail to celebrate it from negligence are considered disloyal to the religious duty of marking the graveyard with sungkup. Thus all Dayaks for every generation should celebrate at least once in a lifetime.

Ai Garong and Ai Jalong Timang

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to explain in full the qualification demand of the “brave” who are to be selected to drink the sacred libations offered to the spirit of the dead.

The most sacred *ai buloh* or *ai garong* as it is sometimes called used to be lavishly thrown away at the foot of the house ladder at the termination of the Gawai Antu.

Later as time passed by, men were inspired by the spirit in dream to drink the *ai garong*, if they have completed the following deed in battles.

They must have taken the head (*bedengah*¹) of an enemy.

They must have picked out the brain of the enemy from his skull (*udah ngerok*) to entitle them to handle the offerings of the Gawai and the Gawai Burong festivals. The man who has done these things is known as *tau nasak*.

By these rules, they must have drunk the *ai jalong timang* wine on a previous occasion before they are entitled to drink the *ai garong* wine.

A war leader is the highest rank amongst the Sea Dayaks. Due to his exalted status he is not to drink the *ai jalong timang* which is to be drunk by his leading warriors. The *ai jalong timang* that is offered to the soul of a dead hereditary chief or war leader (which no ordinary warrior would dare to drink) is to be drunk only by any war leader present. As far as the sacred *ai garong* is concerned, he who has not completed the above deeds or has not been told to do so in a dream, must not drink it merely for the sake of fame.

Not to confuse the two sacred wines - *ai garong* and *ai jalong timang*, the former is traditional, while the latter was recently invented and has become a feature of the Gawai Antu in the Saribas and Krian areas only.

After the fall of Sadok in 1861, all the principal war leaders of the Saribas and Krian held a historic meeting to honour their brave warriors in one of these feast.

At this gathering, it was agreed that it was vitally necessary for them to honour these warriors by declaring that they alone should drink the wine *ai jalong timang* at future Gawai Antu.

The Balau, Undup, Lemanak and the Ulu Ai Dayaks do not drink *ai jalong timang*, which only originated from the Saribas and Krian Dayaks.

Other Dayaks only drink the traditional sacred *ai garong* originated by Sarapoh following his teaching of the spirit Puntang Raga. Today, only the descendents of past war leaders and leading warriors are selected to drink *ai jalong timang*.

Summary of the Gawai Antu Ceremonies

The following description is based on observation at five different Gawai Antu celebrations. Four took place in the Saribas district and one in the Ulu Krian district.

1. Preliminary meeting.
2. *Beban*: Preparing wood for the making of sungkup.
3. *Ngambi buluh*²: Collecting of bamboo for the nganyam ceremony.
4. *Ngeretok*: The making of *sungkup*³.
5. *Ngalu Antu*: A welcoming ceremony for the Gods and spirits at dark and dawn on several occasions (including cock fighting).

6. *Nganyam*⁴: Preparation of miniature baskets.
7. *Minta manok*: Begging for chicken.
8. *Mandok*: Preparation for making tuak (*rice wine*⁵).
9. *Tubai Gawai*: Fishing with derris root.
10. Second meeting: To discuss date for holding Gawai.
11. *Ngambi Ngabang*: Invitation is send out to guest for the celebration.
12. *Mantar and Ngeraran*: Preparation for the Gawai.
13. *Niki Ka Orang Ngirup Buluh*: The welcoming of the braves.
14. *Makai Lemai*: Supper.
15. *Bedigir*: Seating of guests.
16. *Begeliga*: A lecture by the senior hosts or the Feast Chief (*Tuai Gawai*).
17. *Ngalu Petara*: A procession to welcome the Gods and spirits.
18. *Ngerandang Jalai*: A dance in order to clear a path free from the spirits of the departed.

19. *Ngelalau*: A dance performed by the brave to enclose the path.
20. *Berayah pupu buah rumah*: A dance performed by one old man from each village to lead the spirits along the cleared and enclosed path.
21. *Nimang Jalong*: The *lemambang* sing songs to bless the sacred wine, which shall be drink by the brave.
22. *Muai Rugan*: Destruction of the tabernacle.
23. *Bebungkar Ruang*: The eating of meat with wine after the destruction of the tabernacle.
24. *Ngambi Tebalu*: Ending of the mourning period undergone by widows and widowers.
25. *Nganjong Buloh*: The drinking of the sacred wine ai garong.
26. *Berangap*: The presentation of food and money to the homeward bound guest.
27. *Nganjong Sungkup*: The erection of monument in the graveyard.

Preliminary Meeting

The headman of the longhouse will hold this meeting to inform the longhouse occupants of his intention to celebrate the Gawai Antu.

At this meeting, he will formally tell the members of the longhouse that he has a mind to celebrate this festival. If everyone agrees, the headman will invite everyone to farm collectively on the hilly ground. The reason for this is to enable every family to plant crops other than rice such as pumpkin, cucumber, various kinds of gourds, black and brown glutinous rice. All these things are needed for the offering of the Gawai Antu with the exception of nyeli, which is used in the making of rice wine.

At this meeting the chief descendant of the eldest deceased person will be appointed the Feast Chief provided that he is not of the lowest class of family in the longhouse. If such a barrier obstructs this appointment, then it will be given to the descendant of the next oldest deceased person.

Upon this appointment, it is the duty of the Feast Chief to direct the households to undertake the various stages of work for the festival till the end of the feast.

Immediately after the harvesting season, the Feast Chief will hold another meeting to assess the amount of grain harvested. If everyone agreed on the quantity, the festival will be celebrated according to plan. Having confirmed this the Feast Chief will immediately discuss the date of *Beban*, which is the preparation of wood for the making of the *sungkup*.

Beban

In the early morning of the *Beban* day, the Feast Chief will first offer a sacrifice to the spirits. He will then be the first to leave the longhouse to the area where the collection of wood will take place. The sacrifice was offered so that the *Beban* may be done as quickly and successfully. It is important that every family begin the *Beban* on the same day under the directives of the Feast Chief.

When all the workers have arrived at the appointed spot, the head of each family must first make an offering similar to the one offered by the Feast Chief and leave it at the longhouse. Without such an offering, the work would be slowed down by the invisible interference of evil spirits.

While the *Beban* is in progress, the host often invites the voluntary workers to pause in order to refresh and stimulate themselves with all kind of drinks. The *Beban* ceremony is usually accompanied by the sound of shopping and merry shouts of the young, which is deafening sometimes and could last the whole day.

As soon as everyone has finished preparing the wood, the host will direct his men to take it home. However, they must not take it straight into the longhouse before the Feast Chief is ready.

Before the Feast Chief bring home his wood, he must first sprinkle it with the blood of two chicken (which is equivalent to one pig due to the total number of chicken legs). Simultaneously, the Feast Chief will smear the blood from the chicken to the foundation post of the longhouse to protect the longhouse from being cursed by the spirits of the dead. Having done this, the Feast Chief will bring his wood into the longhouse followed by all the others using the same route.

Collecting of Bamboo for the Nganyam Ceremony

A day after the arrival of the wood, the most senior woman of the Feast Chief family will call for women's meeting to fix the day for the collection of bamboo. This bamboo will be used to weave decorated baskets and various other kinds of bamboo baskets for the dead.

When the day of the collection of bamboo, the most senior woman will lead the women to collect the bamboo. After the job is completed and being brought back to the longhouse, it is not necessary to smear the bamboo with blood (*enselan*) since it was included (during the "*enselan*" for the wood) as part of the material already collected for the feast.

After the wood and bamboo have all been collected and kept in the longhouse, the Feast Chief will call for another meeting (known as *baum ngeretok*) to fix the day for the making of *sungkup* and weaving of the bamboo baskets.

Once the date is fixed, the chief will direct every family to go out for the traditional begging of chicken (*mintamano*) from the neighbouring longhouses that they intend to invite to do the work of *ngeretok*.

Ngeretok - Making of the Sungkup

When the day of the *ngeretok* comes, the first thing the Feast Chief must do is to erect a special platform and a frame which will be put over a fire for roasting glutinous rice on the river bank. From the outset of the making of the platform and frame, a band of young men at the longhouse beat gongs to a rhythm known as the “*gendang rayah*”. The *gendang rayah* is a special music played to summon as well as to amuse the Gods and Spirits. The musical performance must not stop until the work on the platform and frame is completed.

Eventually at about 5 p.m. of the same day, the women will come together to the riverbank to soak the glutinous rice. Simultaneously, the old men at the longhouse will start to erect the sacred tabernacle known as “*rugan*” on which the offerings will be placed daily until the termination of the whole Gawai Antu feast.

The offering will consist of black, brown and white glutinous rice; each mixed with pieces of pumpkin gourd and the flower of the *telasih*⁶ plant. Besides all these mixture, the most important item is the smoked black fish such as the “*belau*⁷” fish and *keli* (catfish). These fish is customarily considered as the favourite food of those who have died.

Ngalu Petara

This is event mark the welcoming ceremony to the Gods and Spirits. It is performed at dusk and dawn on several occasions (including cockfighting).

At about 6 p.m. of the same day (day of the *Ngeretok* ceremony), *Ngalu Antu* starts with the sound of gongs beaten by every family. At this moment the ghost of the dead comes and is being welcomed by the living.

Sometimes that night, the Feast Chief will be the first person to offer a sacrifice to the spirits, which shall be followed in turn by the others. These offerings must be placed individually by each family close to the place of constructing the *Sungkup*, which will made on the following day.

At dawn the following day, five-session *gendang rayah* will be played again. It is during this time the men and women gather on the bank of the river to roast glutinous rice.

The women will fill the bamboo containers (usually a few hundreds) with glutinous rice while the men roast them. Before the anyone start to roast, the Feast Chief will go down to the erected platform and spread a mat on it and put a betel nut box on top as a gesture of welcoming the Gods and spirits. The roasting period varies ranging from 3 to 7 hours.

Immediately after the first batch of rice has been roasted, an early breakfast is serve in order to leave sufficient time for another *Ngalu Antu* ceremony which usually takes place at 6 p.m. Having completed this task, a traditional cockfighting begins on the communal verandah of the Feast Chief.

Cockfighting is said to be the favourite game of the dead, the spirits and the Gods. After the third fight, the game will be ceased although the young men may continue it on the open space outside the longhouse.

When the cockfighting is over the Feast Chief will walk along the longhouse with a roaster in his hand to direct all the families to spread new mat on their verandah and await the arrival of guests who will attend the *ngeretok* ceremony.

Immediately after the arrival of the guests, the Feast Chief once again waves the cock (*miau*) along the verandah. This gesture is to inform the host to arrange the seating of the guests in line according to their rank and achievements in life. After the guests have sat down in order, a cock is again wave by the Feast Chief to direct the host to serve the guests with wine. This act of serving wine is called *nyibur*.

After *nyibur* is served, the Feast Chief will again wave the cock to announce that the work *ngeretok* is to begin. At this time the hosts and guests will work together to shape, design and fit the materials for the *sungkup*.

This work is to be done throughout the day according to the size and decorations of each *sungkup* individually. If the work is not completed in one day it can be continued on the following day or even longer.

Nganyam - Preparation of Basket

While the men are busy carving the *sungkup*, the women shall start to weave (*nganyam*) all types of curious sacred baskets. The shapes vary in accordance to the age of the departed. For the children, ball, fruit and varieties of toy are woven.

A decorated basket known as *gelayan*, which has eight tooth-shaped projections on which it stands is the only thing to be woven for any ordinary dead men and women.

If the deceased is a man of rank, who had always been lucky in life and who had been wealthy enough to purchase valuable old jars (*tajau*) or had kill an enemy in battle (*bedengah*), he is entitle to be given the fantastic *garong tunggal* basket, which has nine projections for its stand.

If a deceased was a leading warrior he is entitled to be given a *ranggong dua* basket, which also have nine projections for its stand. The lower side of this basket is decorated with hairs of the enemy to show that he is an honoured brave man.

If a deceased is a war leader, who successfully led a few wars in his lifetime, he is entitled to be given a *ranggong tiga* basket, which also has nine projections for its stand. The lower side will also be covered with the enemy's hair, but more thickly than the *ranggong dua* basket.

If the deceased was a really great and celebrated war leader, he is honoured with a basket called *entugin*. The *entugin* is made of five baskets place one upon another. It will have thirteen projections for its stand and be heavily decorated with enemy's hair.

On certain occasion the Dayak like to honour once again an ancestor who has already been honoured at the last Gawai Antu. This is permitted but is rare and only done to honour the most famous or war leader or hereditary chief of the tribe. On this second feast the deceased is entitled to be honoured with seven baskets neatly woven together known as *ranggong tujuh* (sometimes called *Mudor Ruroh*). The *ranggong tujuh* will have fourteen projections for its stand and be thickly decorated with the hair of the enemy.

If the deceased has twice been honoured at the Gawai Antu, his grand children are still permitted to honour him again for a third time. However, this sort of honour can only be permitted to be given to a war leader or hereditary chief of the tribe. For his third and last memorial, he is entitled to be honoured with nine baskets called *ranggong sembilan* (sometimes called *sandau liau*). This basket will have fifteen projections for its stand and is also heavily decorated with the enemy's hair.

It is a rule in weaving these baskets that no women of loose character are allowed to weave. The baskets, which are to be decorated with the enemy's hair, are only to be woven by the most expert and elderly women of the tribe.

In the evening after the *ngeretok* and the *nganyam* ceremony are over, the guests shall return to their respective villages. Beginning that night, after the departure of the guest, every family must light a fire on the *rugan* (tabernacle). This fire must continue until the completion of the Gawai Antu.

Minta Manok - The Begging of Chicken

After the *ngeretok* comes the time for the families to beg chicken again from the neighbouring villages whom they intend to invite for the Gawai Antu. The act of begging chicken is a traditional custom during Gawai Antu. It has been in existence since the ancient time of Kedawa, who lost his way and found himself in the other world while following this custom.

The host family must carry out this tradition even though they have enough chicken for the occasion. If the host family fail to follow this tradition, they will be criticised by their relatives as an insulting act.

Empie - Preparation of Rice Wine

When the begging for chicken is over, another important work known as *empie* will start. During noon on the day of this ceremony, the Feast Chief will walk along the verandah of the longhouse with a cock in his hand to announce the making of a platform and frame for roasting glutinous rice. The roasted glutinous rice will be use for the preparation of the rice wine (*tuak*). This work can be done at the same place where the *ngeretok* has been carried out. Minor repair may be done to the platform.

At about 4 p.m. on that day, the Feast Chief will again wave his cock to direct the women to soak their rice in the river. As the women soak the rice, the young men at the longhouse will start to beat the gongs to summon the spirit of the dead. The music will continue until the soaking of the rice is over.

After the soaking of rice, the Feast Chief will wave the cock to direct all the families to spread the mat on their individual verandah. Having done this at 6 p.m. the music of *ngalu petara*, which begin. The evening meal will be serve after the *ngalu petara* ceremony ends.

The rest of the things that need to be done during the *empie* are similar to that of the *ngeretok* ceremony.

After the glutinous rice have been roasted in the following morning, an expert will be asked to sprinkle it with yeast to initiate the fermentation of the *tuak*.

Tubai Gawai

After the empie ceremony is over, the Feast Chief would direct the households to go fishing using the derris root (*tubai*) at selected [stream](#)⁸. The catch of this tubai fishing is smoked, pickled or salted to preserve it for the feast.

Please bare in mind, it is illegal to use derris root to fish today. For the purpose of this ceremony, the fish shall be bought from the fish market. Pigs and cows are also served together with the fish.

Simultaneously, the women are busy preparing traditional cakes and buns of various kinds and colours. They often invite women from neighbouring villages to help them.

Second Meeting

This meeting is held to discuss the appropriate date for the Gawai Antu. Today, it is usually held in the month of December to coincide with the Malaysian school holidays.

When all the necessary things have been made or bought, the Feast Chief will call the second meeting to discuss the right date for the Gawai Antu. It is essential to give at least a week notice to the guests. This is to give the guest ample time to fix their headgear feather and hair on the scabbards of their swords. In the modern time, the guest will be inform at least a year before the actual

date to give ample time to take their day off from the office.

Distribution of Invitation Cards

Early the next day a few trusted men will go out to all the selected villages (*rumah panjai ka semakai enggau orang ka ngintu gawai*) to inform them that they must come to the feast as early as they can on the fix date. The women and children are similarly and heartily welcomed to witness the fulfilment of the Gawai Antu.

Mantar and Ngeraran

On the day before the arrival of guest, the host longhouse will erect the platform and frame to roast glutinous rice. The location for the roasting is usually situated at the riverbank.

The *gendang rayah* is to be played continuously during the construction of the platform and frame until the job is completed.

Beside the construction of the *raran*, it is a custom for the nearest relatives of the host to help in the slaughtering of pigs and cows for the Gawai Antu.

Ngerendam Beras

Later in the evening, the women will begin to soak their glutinous rice in the river as they did during the previous ceremonies.

The relatives of the host who have come early will have the night to themselves. The young men will be enjoying themselves with the wine and traditional dance until dawn. It is a practice in modern Gawai Antu that no modern dance is allowed during the feast.

Ngelulun Asi - Roasting of Glutinous Rice

This event takes place in the early morning where both men and women will go down to the river bank to roast the glutinous rice as has been done during the past two ceremonies. Immediately after the glutinous rice has been roasted, an early meal is served at the verandah of the longhouse. After the meal, the Feast Chief will wave his cock to announce the commencement of the traditional cockfighting on his verandah.

The cockfighting is normally ceased after the third game although the young men outside the longhouse can continue it.

Beranchau and Decorating the Longhouse

After the traditional cockfighting is over, the Feast Chief will again wave his cock along the communal verandah to direct the entire household to spread new mats on the floor of their individual verandah. Besides these mats, the outer walls of the verandah will also be decorated with all kind of *pua kumbu* designs.

The wealthier families will hang their gold embroiled blankets above the seat of honoured guests. While along the upper part of the outer verandah, rolled-up mattress is placed for the guest to lean against.

Niki Ka Orang Ngirup Buluh Enggau Ngirup Jalong

All the men who has been appointed to drink the sacred wine (*ai garong or buluh*) will be asked to dress themselves and to assemble at a clear space outside the longhouse. The Feast Chief will honoured these men with a procession along the verandah.

As the procession starts, the young men beat gongs and drums of various sizes. The procession will move slowly along the verandah headed by the Feast Chief carrying a flag occasionally shouting, “*Receive, receive this guests with respect*”.

Eventually each guest will receive a glass of rice wine from the hands of the women who are standing on their individual verandah.

Biau Pengabang

Upon completion of the procession, the Feast Chief will be politely invited the guest war leaders to sit at the seats of honour at the Feast Chief’s verandah. Trays containing traditional cakes, buns, and other kinds of offering are place in front of the warriors. As they sit down, the Feast Chief will hold a cock and wave it above the heads of the warriors and guests with the following enchantment;

“Sir, I stand here to honour your arrival at my feast. Following the tradition of our ancestors, I respectfully wave this cock above your heads. If anyone of you have heard any unsatisfactory omen, has

been disturbed by an unfavourable dream or bad luck will be changed to good through this cock. Indeed, although you have come here visibly alone, the host of the spirit of your ancestors invisibly attends you. They also, I honour with this cock. Finally I pray to those spirits whom I now welcome, that you and we may both be well and live long with blessing and prosperity.”

Ai Aus

Having spoken these words, the host will offer the guests the wine known as *ai aus* (to quench the thirst).

Ai Untung

After that another wine, known as the *ai untung* (individual share) is served to each guest in amount according to age and rank. The senior one of these who will presently drink the *ai garong* gets fifteen glasses followed by the next man and so on down to the youngest who will drink five glasses of this wine.

Ai Basu and Masu Pengabang

After the *ai untung* is served, another wine known as *ai basu*⁹ (washing wine) will be served to the guest of honour from the hands of the young women. Before that, the young women accompa-

nied by the young men will walk in procession along the verandah to the beating of the gongs and drums.

After the procession, the young men will pour the wine from the bottle to the glass, which will be handed by the maidens to the guests.

Kendawang and other Omens

Eventually at about 10 a.m. the remaining guests begin to arrive from various villages. On the arrival of each group of guest, the family who have been chosen to entertain them will greet and welcome them on the cleared space outside the longhouse.

The representative of the host family will ask the leader of the guests whether they have heard any unfavourable omens during their journey to the feast before the group is being honoured with a procession,

After the reply from the guest leader, he will then honour them with a procession similar to the one given to the war leaders. However, if any guest has met the snake *Kendawang* (cylinderphis) on his way to the feast he and the rest from his village will be asked to sit upon a wooden rice mortar at the host's communal verandah. While sitting on the mortar, the host will honour them by the waving of a cock above their heads to welcome the God Keling, Bunga Nuing, Laja and their followers from [Gelong](#)¹⁰ Batu Benang and Panggau Jila Isang.

The type of respect rendered to the guests are similar with the exception of the amount of wine served which will be in accordance with the individual rank and work of life. The welcoming of the guests will only be interrupted by the midday meal, which must be served to the guest.

The last group of guests should not arrive later than 6 p.m. Otherwise, they will be in conflict with the next ceremony of *Ngalu Antu*, scheduled to take place right after dark.

Makai Lemai

After the guest (including a considerable amount of strangers present) have all arrived and being honoured dinner will be served at about 7 p.m.

Bedigir – Seating of the Guests

Immediately after dinner, the Feast Chief will wave his cock to arrange the seating of the guests in order of precedence or *bedigir*. When the seating arrangement has been completed, the host will serve another drink known as *nyibur*.

Begeliga – A Lecture by the Senior Host

At about 10 p.m., the Feast Chief and other senior members of the host longhouse will walk along the verandah informing everyone present at the feast about the regulations of the longhouse.

The regulations may contain the followings:

1. If any one punch another because of drunkenness, he shall be deal with according to the Gawai Antu festival rules. The nature of punishment may vary from one longhouse to another.
2. If in the event that any person destroy anything such as the sacred basket or any other items made for the dead, the offender will be asked to pay for the damage.

3. If anyone found stealing, the offender will be asked to return the item(s) to the longhouse headman. Should the offender fail to do this, he will be brought to the court of the tribal chief. In most modern feast, such an offence will be refer to the Police.

Ngalu Petara - A Procession to Welcome the Gods And Spirits

After the termination of *begeliga*, the grand procession of welcoming of the Gods and spirits is held. This procession is called *Ngalu Petara*. At this procession men are expected to wear their best customary dress with sword on their hips. Women wear *kain tating*¹¹, *sugu tinggi*, bangles and other ornaments. The Feast Chief will lead the procession followed by the village headman and senior members of the household. Then come the men and women, boys and girls. At the end of the procession, walk a band of young men beating gongs and drums. This procession will encircle the verandah for three times.

Finally on the third round of the procession, the Feast Chief or his deputy will halt at each family verandah to honour the sitting guests with the waving of cock in their presence. He will politely tell the guests that the purposes of this processing is to welcome the Gods and spirits. Below is what he will say.

“Welcome with this procession the spirits of our ancestors, the spirit of Orang Kaya Pemancha, the spirit of Sang and Bedilang, the spirit of Minggat and Rentap, the spirit of Awan and Buban, etc. They

bring with them blessings and prosperity.”

After this a guest of rank on each verandah with answer the host with the following words.

“Sir, indeed as you said the spirits of our fore father and the God of the universe have all come with us to attend your feast. They bring with them blessing so that although you lavishly spent so much money to celebrate this feast and yet in the near future they will recompense you two or three fold. The spirits of the dead that you now honour with this feast like wise will bless your future with prosperity.

As for us, we pray that you will become prosperous in your undertakings. We wish by the blessing of the spirits of our fore father that you and all of us may be able to earn our daily needs with ease.”

Soon after the *Ngalu Petara* ceremony it will be followed by the ceremony of *Ngerandang Jalai*.

Ngerandang Jalai

Ngerandang Jalai is a dance performed to clear a path free from spirits of the departed. During this ceremony all those who have been appointed to drink the *ai garong* wine will perform a dance known as *berayah*¹² which is done to the *gendang rayah* music.

Ngelalau

After *Ngerandang Jalai* is over, it is followed by *Ngelalau* in which all those who are appointed to drink the *ai jalong timang* dance and they will create a spiritual path for the *lemambang* who will walk along the verandah. *Ngelalau* is a dance performed to enclose the path cleared during the *Ngerandang Jalai* ceremony.

Berayah Pupu Buah Rumah

After *Ngelalau* is over, an old man from each village has to dance along the path, which has been cleared and railed by the braves. They are to lead the spirit to dance in order that the *lemambang* may venture as they sing.

Nimang Jalong

At about midnight another meal is served on the communal verandah. After the meal, a few group of *lemambang* will start to sing the sacred song of *Nimang Jalong* as they walk along the verandah.

In the invocations the *lemambang* will mention the journey both over land and boat from the other world under the leadership of Niram Raja Sebayan, Ngerai, Sedalong, Langgah Lengan, Kedawa Abu, Kedai, Indai Bilai, Ini Inan and Dara Rambai Garuda to attend the feast of the living. The following paragraphs briefly describe the contents of the invocation.

Along the way over land, these immortals pass the various settlements of the spirit birds, the ancient site of longhouses and farmlands which they had farmed and where they were still living.

Passing these, the female will weep, remembering the work they did there during their lifetime.

As they journey on, they eventually reach the famous landing place on the river of the under world. From there, they will go on boat to pass the various settlements of the spirits representing the frogs, tortoise, fishes and so on until they came to the landing stage of the living who are holding the festival.

On arrival the leaders take their followers to bathe. After bathing everyone dress in his or her best to prepare for the procession to the longhouse. On their way pass fruit trees of various kinds until they reach a most beautiful site where the ranyai palm are growing. This palm usually bears

fruits considered by the dead as head trophies. Here (according to the *Nimang Jalong* song), the goddess and women of dead urged the brave warriors to slash the *ranyai* fruits with their decorated swords to test their bravery. As these palms were habitat of the wasps (to guard their safety) before the actual cutting of their fruit took place, the successful young warriors were first asked to throw away the wasp nest, which hung from the trunk and fronds of the palms.

Having done this the bravest warrior will start to cut down the *ranyai* fruit while the cleverest woman blankets weavers ready to receive the falling fruits with the best of their home made blankets or *pua kumbu*.

After *nyelai ranyai*, Niram recommended the continuation of the procession headed by Abu to the longhouse. On arrival they were invited to come up. However, the dead won't allow them until they have the finest cock, which has won a fight in the cockpit waved over them.

After the welcoming of the dead has ended, those brave appointed to drink the *ai jalong timang* wine are asked to sit at the honoured seats of the upper verandah. Each drinker is accompanied by a man renown that drinks a special wine known as *ai serarai*¹³.

When the *lemambang* is about to announce the arrival of the dead from the other world, the women of fine character (usually those who have weave during the Nganyam ceremony) and rank come out of the rooms on behalf of the goddess Ini Inan, Indai Bilai and Dara Rambai Garuda to hand the *jalong timang* wine to the drinkers. The women who offer this wine must be carefully selected or else the drinker might refuse to drink from the hand of one deemed to be unworthy.

Muai Rugan

Muai Rugan is the act of destruction of the tabernacle used for the sacred offerings. After the braves have drunk the *ai jalong timang* wine, specially selected old men or the *manang* (medicine man) destroys the tabernacle.

No young men dare to destroy the *rugan*, an act that could cause insanity at a later age.

Bebungkar Ruang

Bebungkar Ruang is a special meal eaten with wine after the destruction of the tabernacle.

After the destruction of the tabernacle the host will serve the guests with meat especially reserved and which are only to be taken with wine.

Another name for this ceremony is *makai dagin*.

Ngambi Tebalu

*Ngambi Tebalu*¹⁴ marks the end of the mourning period undergone by widows and widowers.

Eventually at day break, the morning meal is served and after this meal a band of old men will be asked to perform the *Ngambi Tebalu Mansau* ceremony. This ceremony is held in order that old men may release the widows and widowers who have taken a vow not to marry before their sacred promise has been legally and religiously removed from them in accordance with the custom of *ngambi tebalu mansau* during the Gawai Antu.

While the old men are busy with this ceremony, those who have been appointed to drink the sacred wine *ai buloh* are asked to cut, shape and fit the bamboo containers with the baskets in which they will be placed.

Nganjong Buloh

Having done that, these bamboo containers are to be filled with the sacred wine. While this is being done, the Feast Chief will wave a cock along the verandah to announce the procession of each family for the *nganjong garong* ceremony.

Shortly after the Feast Chief has wave the cock, those who have drunk *the ai jalong timang* wine will assemble again.

The Feast Chief's family will lead the *nganjong garong* procession followed by the rest of the families. The families for this procession will be represented by men and women who wear their full dress and walk in line behind the brave men who will hand a decorated basket of the wine to the man who will drink it. The procession is to be done in three rounds along the verandah. Grand are the appearance of the handler and the receiver of the sacred *ai buloh* wine the sound of war cries, gongs and drums of the individual procession.

Berangap

Berangap is the presentation of food and money to the homeward bound guests.

Immediately after the *nganjong buloh* ceremony is over, a midday meal is served to the guests. After the meal, *berangap* starts whereby the hosts present all kinds of cakes, buns, etc to the guests as a provision for them on their way home.

Immediately after *berangap*, the guests will start to disperse and only the nearest relatives will stray behind to help with the undoing of the *sungkup* huts and other monuments on the bare platform outside the longhouse. These huts will be removed and placed somewhere on the open ground near the house.

Nganjong Sungkup

Early the next day, the household and the remaining relatives and guests will erect the *sungkup* and other wooden materials upon each individual's graveyard. The sacred baskets will be hung in the *sungkup*.

During the *nganjong sungkup*, all kinds of food and drink, which have been specially kept for this occasion, are continuously served to all that are present at the graveyard. In the evening of the same day, the erection of the memorial hut ends. This also marks the ending of Gawai Antu.

Footnotes

¹ Bedengah indicates a man who have been to war and have killed an enemy as well as detaching the enemy's head from its body.

² Buloh meaning bamboo is the receptacle in which the most sacred ai buloh or ai garong is served. Jalong Timang nowadays offered in a porcelain cup, which replaces the earthenware bowl used in the past.

³ The Sungkup is essential to the Gawai Antu. It is made of belian ironwood. The carpenter who is also a close relative of the family carves it. If a family have more than one deceased to honour then the Sungkup will be erected on the graveyard of the older one. The size runs about 6 feet long and 4 feet wide. Its height is roughly 3 feet with four finely carved "wing" (or the pamanjat) arched to the ends of the roof. The top of the wings are 6 to 7 feet off the ground. The special baskets are tied to the wings.

⁴ Nganyam is the weaving special baskets, which shall be used to cover the bamboo use in the drinking of the ai garong.

⁵ These wines are form of tuak and the difference is entirely in treatment at the drinker's taste.

⁶ Telasih is a kind of flower, which produces edible seeds. It will expand on contact with water.

⁷ Belau and keli are top quality fish of the headwater which also occur abundantly in the river of the dead or the Mandai where they are called the semah sebayan. The fish commonly called ikan semah is not the same as these "semah" in the under world.

⁸ In the ancient time if a great war leader or a hereditary chief of the tribe died his people will declared certain stream and a piece of land to be taboo. A year before Gawai Antu took place, this land was farmed and the stream fished. The products from the stream and land will be use for the feast. The abolition Tubai Gawai as a right is due to rules made by the Brooke to protect the supplies of fish with arising human population. Today the use of tubai is considered illegal.

⁹ Masu pengabang literally means “to wash the guests” but it do not mean to pour water over the guest. It is represented by pouring the tuak from a bottle to a glass and handed by the maiden to the guest.

¹⁰ Gelong is the place name for the homeland of Keling, God of War and his associates.

¹¹ Kain tating are short tabular skirts decorated with hanging silver coins. On these occasions on cloth is worn above the waist but silver and other ornament.

¹² The dance berayah is only done by the elite who may number up to about half a dozen in line along the verandah, each with sword or pedang ilang but rather gentle movements especially of the arms with shouts to show there are brave men. The purpose of these dance is to lead the spirits to the feast.

¹³ Ai Serarai is another special wine differing from the others. It is drunk at the stage and is to be drunk by men qualified for the earlier ai jalong timang plus one or more others not so qualified and who are chosen by the leaders present to be honoured.

¹⁴ This is the strict mourning for the widows and widowers only and who should not remarry until this relief at Gawai Antu though with the consent of the relatives of the deceased earlier relief can be obtained in association with normal *ulit* for relatives other than widows and widowers supported by *tebalu mataq*. The proper and socially best way was always to retain widowhood until the full rite as described in these transcript.