

## SOCIAL RELATION BETWEEN GENDER (SEXES) IN THE IBAN LONGHOUSE COMMUNITY

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper aims to examine the social relations between gender (sexes) in the Iban longhouse community and look into the sexual relations, proscribed relations, courtship (the tradition of "ngayap") and sexual jealousy among the Iban women. The study synthesized that the Ibans have high valuations on relations with others, particularly the opposite sex. Discovered through field work, structured interviews, questionnaires consisting of free-response questions, observation with check-list and document analysis, there is an ambivalence or the mixed feeling and contradictory ideas that characterizes relations between males and females. However, women, as well as men, may represent their families in community meetings, may acquire and sell property, and may engage shaman (male or female) for a healing ritual. Some women are dominant figures in their longhouse. Findings show that women particularly have borne or carried the principal work related to domestic activities, but men have provided labor for heavier tasks as required, although the Ibans are thoroughly egalitarian, believing in the principle that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities. Significantly, Iban socialization in the moral realm involves learning to live in accordance with the adat, which is the customary system of rules and beliefs (Sandin, 1980a) that governs the physical and supernatural world, the living and the dead. The Ibans prohibit sexual relations among certain members of the family as identified in Adat Iban (the code of Iban behavior) This behavior is inappropriate in the Iban community. It is called jadi mali or incest because it is regarded as a most serious violation of customary law (adat). Sexual relations are extremely sensitive among the Ibans. "Ngayap" is the traditional method of Iban courtship in which adolescent males visit girls of similar age in their beds at night. The visit may or may not involve sexual intercourse and is the primary method of communication between a young couple where public meetings displaying courtship would be criticized as forward (jigit). Undeniably, jealousy exists in the longhouse community, but both men and women had the capacity for jealousy, or at the very least, because they wanted to protect their spouses.*

Keywords: "ngayap", ambivalence, longhouse, customary, socialization, courtship, jealousy, intercourse, "adat "

### Introduction

There are gender distinctions between Iban men and women and these distinctions or difference (contrast) between gender are very clear. Both sexes (male and female) are considered with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones (Janang et.al, 2016: 125).. But the term is also used more broadly to denote a range of identities that do not correspond to established ideas of male and female. Women particularly have borne or carried the principal work related to domestic activities, but men have provided labor for heavier tasks (Kazunori, 1993: 169 – 187) as required. Men have been much freer to travel and, indeed, the so-called initiate's journey (*bejalai*) has been a prescribed activity for adolescences (the period a young person develops from a child into an adult) and adult males. In the context of Iban community, *bejalai* is an activity of traveling away from home to seek work or to "see the world" outside the community, for example going to Brunei to work on the oilfields.

Yet, the Ibans have been described as thoroughly egalitarian (that is, believing in the principle that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities) by numerous ethnographers like Freeman (1955: 10), Sutlive (1977: 119-136) and Uchibori (1978: 8). In other words, they believe that the Ibans advocate the principle that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities (the principle of equality for all people). Therefore, they characterized the Ibans by clear inequities (lack of fairness and justice) between both the sexes in responsibilities for family maintenance and farming, and in opportunities for travel and the acquisition of prestige. For example, when talking about rice farming, Freeman (1955: 89) says that a "woman's day" is more than equal to a "man's day" and he states that Iban social life is dominated by male values through the attainment of prestige in a series of exclusively male activities, the chief of these traditionally being the cult of headhunting, which for the Iban, has long been a major obsession.

There are some tasks that men will do, and others they refuse to perform. For example, in the work of *bumai* (farming or any other form of horticulture or agriculture), men help fell tress and do the heavy work in farming, but weeding and guarding the fields normally fall to women, older men and children. Until recently, the gender-based domains of the longhouse required men to spend most of their waking hours outside the *bilik* (family room in a longhouse separated by walls from adjoining rooms and from the common gallery), women inside or work related to the *bilik* (Harrison, 1959: 17). However, pity the man who spent what was regarded as too much time in the family-room; he suffered the stinging rebuke of being called a "female-male" (*laki indu*).

Nowadays, differences between Iban men and women are being exacerbated or made worst by technological and economic changes. The introduction of large chainsaws and outboard motors has created opportunities for men that are beyond the physical strength of most women (King, 1975: 124-125). In fact, in numerous instance, slightly skewed (biased) indigenous

politics (organized societies) which have favored men have tilted or moved even further, so that in state and national politics, Iban men have enjoyed much greater authority and prominence.

Among urban migrants, Iban women have fewer employment opportunities. Independent studies that have been carried out by Winny Koster (1991) and Sutlive (1992) indicate ambivalence (that is mixed feelings or contradictory ideas) and antagonism (active hostility or opposition) between some men and women. One of the reasons some Iban women gave for practicing prostitution was retaliation of their husbands who, going on *bejalai*, virtually abandoned them. The many rapid changes Ibans are experiencing require continuing studies of gender and the relations of men and women.

## THE IBANS

The Ibans are an ethnic branch of the Dayak peoples of Borneo (Vinson and Joanne Sutlive, 2001: 734-735) living in Sarawak, East Malaysia. There are eight groups of this indigenous peoples namely the Ibans of Saribas, Skrang, Lemanak, Balau, Undup, Sebuyau, Remun and Dau. These identities are related to their settlements (Mckeown, 1983: 26) who identified themselves by the streams or other significant geographic feature near their residence (Sather, 1994: 26). Rivers formed a major focus of Iban social identities and riverine societies which are defined by watershed boundaries that divide one river system from another. That is why, the Iban people normally identify with the river on which they live, and those who live along the same river system, distinguished from other Iban by minor differences of dialect and *adat* (Sather, 1994: 26), describing themselves for example as kami Saribas or kami Skrang or kami Sebuyau (*we of the Saribas river, we of the Skrang river or we of the Sebuyau river*).

For the Ibans, *adat* is a totally encompassing way of life, created and sustained to promote community and to discourage conflict. So it is a way of life, basic values, culture, accepted code of conduct, manners and conventions established and experienced by the Iban society. *Adat* safeguards the state of affairs in which all parts of the universe are healthy and tranquil (*chelap/lantang*) and in balance. Breaches of *adat* disturb this state and are visited by 'fines' or contributions to the ritual necessary to restore the balance and to allay the wrath, whether of individuals, the community or the deities (Janang et.al, 2016: 9). In its most general sense, the term *adat* refers to the normative rules and understandings that regulate human affairs and govern relations between humankind and the unseen supernatural and everyday visible worlds (Sather, 1994: 31). Therefore, *adat* also may be defined as an Iban code of conduct; and it is all-encompassing, as it specifies not only the relationship between man and his fellow beings, but also between them and the *petara* (gods). That is why *ngelanggar adat* (wrongful acts) or running over customary behaviour are fined according to the gravity of the offences. Since 1973, efforts have been undertaken by the majlis Adat Istiadat under the Chief Minister's office to list and standardize *adat* and fine. The draft of the Iban Adat Law (previously known as *Tusun Tunggu*) was printed with the title *Adat Iban 1993*. *Adat* indeed protects the ways of the ancestors and relations with other parts of the universe, so that Ibans may live in peace with no disturbances or problems (Janang et.al, 2016: 10).

During the colonial period they were formerly known by the British as *Sea Dayaks* because they were frequently seen patrolling the sea to help the Malays fight against the pirates. Being a very strong and successful warring tribe, the Ibans were a very feared tribe and renowned for practising headhunting (*ngayau*) their enemies and making tribal or territorial expansion in Borneo (Sandin, 1978: 18). Headhunting among the Ibans is believed to have started when the lands occupied by the Ibans are intruded by other tribes from Kalimantan (King, 1975: 37), and also due to the arrival of western civilization which occupied their lands belonging to them. Therefore, confrontation was the only way of survival even if it resulted to death. Today, the days of headhunting and piracy are long gone and the Ibans live peacefully with the other ethnic tribes and other races such as the Malays, Chinese, Orang Ulu, Bidayuh and the like in the Land of the Hornbills (Numpang, 1989: 7) enjoying modern era of globalization and technology but they were originally farmers, hunters, and gatherers before the arrival of the Western expeditions and White Rajahs to Sarawak.

Uniquely, they live in longhouses called *rumah panjai* in the middle-level hills (Vinson, 1978: 32) and on delta plains until today. The longhouse becomes a centre of social, economic and political territory (*menua*) consisting of family units (*bilik*) built side by side. Longhouses vary from as few as eight units, averaging 12 feet in width (96 feet in length) to 80 units (almost 1000 feet in length). Longhouses may not straddle (extend across or be situated on both sides of) a stream nor directly face each other across river. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Iban settlements are well established and most of the Iban longhouses nowadays are equipped with modern facilities such as electricity and water supply and other facilities such as tar-sealed roads, telephone lines and the internet. The younger Ibans are mostly making a living in urban areas but they frequent visit their hometowns especially during the holidays or festive seasons. Although the Ibans today are becoming increasingly urbanised, surprisingly they are still retaining most of their traditional heritage and culture (Vinson, 1989: 49) in their respective villages. The dynamic relations between the Ibans and the other racial societies have produced profound changes in the Iban society and culture.

### Objectives:

This paper discusses four important issues in the context of socialization among the Iban in Sarawak as below:

1. The social relation between gender (sexes) in the Iban longhouse community
2. Proscribed (forbidden, especially by law; denounce or condemn) Relations: The Case of Incest
3. Sexual Relations and The Iban Courtship - *Ngayap*
4. The Emotions And Sexual Jealousy Among the Iban Women

### Social Relation Between Gender (Sexes) In The Iban Longhouse Community

Many people have commented about the Iban social life in the longhouse community after they have observed that these indigenous ethnic people have high valuations on relation on others (Kazunori, 1992: 16-87). This is true, because from birth to death, and even in death, need to be alone. For example, the newborn is caressed and cuddled, so that the bonding is immediate and intense. Infants sleep in the security of the *sarong* suspended from a spring, with siblings or adults nearby to respond immediately to a cry for food or for comfort. In the Iban longhouse community, relations between or among the opposite sex are encoded in the numerous terms that they have created to identify the instrumental and expressive ties by which they are bound to each other such as a younger sibling (*adi*), an elder brother or sister (*aka*), grandfather (*aki*), grandmother (*ini*), boyfriend (*ambai*), fiancé (*tunang lelaki*), fiancée (*tunang indu*), daughter (*anak indu*), adopted child (*anak iru*), adopted parents (*apai-indai ambu*), uncle (*aya*), aunt (*ibu*), great-grandchild (*ichit*), brother-in-law (*ipar*), kindred (*kaban belayan*), distant relatives (*kaban jauh*), daughter-in-law (*menantu indu*), son-in-law (*menantu lelaki*), parent-in-law (*entua*), sibling (*menyadi*), cousin (*petunggal*), great-great-grandchild (*wit*) and et cetera.

Obviously these consanguineal relatives are among the most important persons to the Ibans. The above terms of address are therefore commonly used for such relatives, with close friends, confirm the weighting given to such relations. The Ibans generally distinguish terminologically between kinsmen and affines (relatives by marriage), the former being regarded as closer than in-laws. This explains that affective relations between kinsmen are more positive, and support more readily forthcoming (Padoch, 1984: 1 – 14). In fact, Iban terms of reference for relatives are similar to the American terms.

The ambivalence or the mixed feeling and contradictory ideas that characterizes relations between males and females in other human societies exists as well as among the Ibans in Sarawak. For example, men have been freer to travel in the “off-season”, that is, the period between planting and harvesting rice crops (Richards, 1959: 9-25). While applicable to polity and access to some positions, the concept of “egalitarianism” must be applied selectively to other areas of Iban life. Women, as well as men, may represent their families in community meetings, may acquire and sell property, and may engage shaman (male or female) for a healing ritual. Some women are dominant figures in their longhouses, but they are effectively excluded from warfare and the highly ritualized prestige system.

*Ikat* weaving has been very important among Iban women, with the elaborate technology and rituals of *ngar*. Nevertheless, Traude Gavin (1996) is quite correct in her assessment that activities related to weaving have not achieved for women what headhunting and related rites of bravery have for men. Obviously, there is clearly a double standard for the two sexes, a sociological fact that is confirmed in attitudes of anger and jealousy expressed by Iban women. As Koster (1991) and Sutlive (1991) have reported, many Iban prostitutes in Sibiu indicated a surprising intensity of anger that they felt towards their husbands. The much-reported Iban male institution of *bejalai*, in which men may leave their wives and families for months or even years, is a basis for antagonism that marks relations between many husbands and wives. According to Sutlive and Appell (1991: 57-120), women and children often suffer real deprivations because of the extended absences of men who choose to leave them for work or simply for adventure. Several women interviewed by Koster indicated that they were practicing prostitution to avenge themselves on their husbands. The intensity of anger and resentment may arise, in part, from the obvious contradiction between the maxims prescribing equal treatment and justice for all, that is, *Adat Para Segantang* (Use the same measure for everyone). Another maxim (a short, pithy statement expressing a general truth or rule of conduct) is *Anang benibung bepinang* (Don't have some climb the thorny cluster palm, and others the smooth areca palm). There is a sense of justice in these maxims. In fact the sense of injustice and unfairness is stronger yet in those women who are fully as intelligent and competent in the management of their affairs as any man. It is a small wonder then that men, employing the defence mechanisms of denial, displacement and projection, feel that ‘women are the enemy’ (Sutlive, 1992: 44) and have shown widespread fear of the the *Antu Koklir*, the spirit of the woman who dies in childbirth and returns to avenge herself on men.

Socialization among the Ibans (Child, 1954) is a process by which they develop that is customary and acceptable for them according to the standards of their group. Of all the sociocultural environments into which they are socializing, the parents and the child-rearing practices (Kagitcibasi, 1984) have emphasized as the major spheres of influence. Other socialization agents include schools, community, peers and siblings. Through socialization, they learn their position in the school matric and the ways of the larger community in which they will take adult roles. These ways include socially required skills and code of behavior. According to Kagitcibasi (1984: 145 - 157), all aspects of human development – physical, emotional and cognitive are therefore affected by socialization.

Generally, Iban socialization in the moral realm (field/domain) involves learning to live in accordance with the *adat*, which is the customary system of rules and beliefs (Sandin, 1980: 27) that governs the physical and supernatural world, the living and the dead. Therefore, the *adat* is designed to safeguard the state of grace and harmony in which all parts of the Iban world remain healthy, tranquil or cool, and the Iban are spiritually and physically content. There is a proper way of behavior in one's relationship with the *adat*. To learn to live with the *adat* means learning to maintain a harmonious relationship (Sandin, 1980) with the community members, nature and the gods. A breach against the *adat* is a disturbance of the balance of the state of grace within the community. Any breach of *adat* may threaten this balance and affect the family and the community adversely. Therefore remedial action is to be taken immediately by offering proper ritual propitiation (the action of atoning, propitiating or appeasing the god and spirit).

The Iban socialization practice greatly emphasizes interdependence and harmonious relationship among group and family members, as well as obedience, respect and compliance with authority and superiors. For example, at a very young age, children are taught to be “afraid” (in this context, to *respect*) of the superiors, because it is a common belief that if the children do not learn to be ‘afraid’ at an early age, they will not learn to take advice and respect their superiors (Arnold, 1959: 23). Not only are

young persons expected to behave with the greatest respect towards the elder generation, but even among peers, they are speak with reverential tones to their elders. One is expected to refrain (stop oneself) from comments or criticism of the behavior of others. Although the Iban boys and girls are equally socialized in complying with the *adat*, the adult expectation of their efforts, accomplishments and behavior tend to vary. Girls are expected to pass easily into the female role and act responsibly at an early age. In other words, they are made familiar with the female world and female obligations. Boys are given much more leeway (freedom to move or act) and are left more on their own. Normally, the Iban socialization practice is largely related to their traditional home setting, that is, the longhouse. Such living environment, being close and practically no 'private life', generally involves conforming and passive submission of oneself to the group's interest for the sake of preserving group integrity (the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles) and harmonious (free from disagreement or dissent) relationship.

A cross-cultural study has been done by interviewing mothers with questionnaires in Melugu and Sri Aman (*The Encyclopaedia of Iban Studies*, 2011: 1749), and it has been discovered that the mothers and their children had many conflicting situations such as mother-child conflict situations, child-peer conflict situations with the child being an aggressor) and child-peer conflict situations with the child as a victim and the peer as an anti-social (aggressive) child. Of course almost all mothers wanted their child to be obedient, well-behaved and respectful. Mother's reaction to their child's behavior varies, depending on the conflict situations. Mothers usually reacted with irritation (*pedis ati*) or even anger (*ringat*) in situations where the child should have obeyed the mother (for example, the child refused to tidy up the toys. In such situations, most mothers openly indicated that they felt irritated because their children have disobeyed their wishes (*enda ngasika jaku*). In situations where the child was the 'victim' in the child-peer interaction, mothers felt being "as usual" (*baka selama*) because they felt that their children are still immature (not fully developed psychologically) and don't know what they are doing. In situations in which the child was the aggressor in a child-peer interaction, the majority of the mothers are reported to feel irritated (*pedis ati*). Most mothers feared that their child had hurt his/her friends or their child was acting in an ill-mannered way (*jai ulah*). Some mothers are afraid (Beguet, 1996: 6) that other people might think that the child had not been properly trained (*takut dikumbai orang anak aku kurang ajar*) but in almost all situations, the child's reaction to the mother's reaction was that of "being calmed" or "kept quiet" (*nadai bemunyi tauka nadai nya-nya*). However, despite modern education, industrialization and modernization, socialization patterns among the Ibans have been stable. In other words, traditional values such as obedience and respect are still the core components of child-rearing goals among the Ibans.

#### Proscribed Relations: The Case of Incest

All human societies in the world prohibit, denounce and condemn sexual relations among certain members of the family. The Ibans prohibit (forbids by customary law) this 'bad' behavior as identified in Adat Iban (1993: 42 – 43) such as marriages of

1. father and daughter
2. mother and son
3. siblings,
4. aunt and nephew
5. uncle and niece
6. grandparents and grandchildren
7. stepparents and stepchildren
8. affines (spouses and father/mother-in-laws).

This behavior is inappropriate in the Iban community. It is called *jadi mali* or incest, that is, sexual relations between people classed as being too closely related to marry each other. The Ibans considered it a crime to have sexual intercourse with a parent, child, sibling, or grandchild. Incest is bad because it is regarded as a most serious violation of customary law (*adat*), threatening not only the families of a couple engaging in such a relationship but the entire region. For example, there are consequences of incest, as those of mocking animals, including heavy rainfall, landslides, failure of rice crops and fruit-bearing trees, deaths of humans and domestic animals. "Kudi" is perhaps best defined as a "convulsion of nature" (Richards, 1981: 168), a response to incest, or some other violations of the natural order, in which every imaginable calamity may befall a region and its inhabitants, like violent storms with damaging winds, hail and lightning strikes, floods, landslides, aborted life processes including crop failures and miscarriages.

Initially, persons caught in an incestuous union were killed, and there are several places, such as a bamboo grove at Nanga Poi on the Rejang, that are routinely recalled as sites where the couple were impaled by bamboo spears. Later, however, in Iban mythology, provisions were made for sparing the lives of a couple of incest, but requiring the life of any child produced by their actions (Sandin, 1994: 111-114). Provisions were also made for persons of adjacent generations who wanted to marry but stood in proscribed relations.

#### Sexual Relations and *The Ngayap*

Sexual relations are extremely sensitive among the Ibans. The insistence upon modesty that begins among seven and eight year old children, continues through adult years. This modesty extends as well to sexual relations. Teasing about sexual matters may begin in late childhood or early adolescence (Melling, 1981: 38 – 40). The use of euphemisms and metaphors to express sexual

intentions is common. So they may use images of plants and their fruits to express these intentions because it considered to be preferable and polite (*alus*) in contrast to direct and coarse (*kasar*) speech.

In the Iban community, courtship has begun in early adolescence, as young men have sought access to young women who, traditionally, have slept in the family loft (*sadau*). If a young man intended to sleep the night through in their own family-room (*bilik*), he would stay there. If he intended to visit a young woman, he would stay in the gallery (*ruai*) until most people have gone to sleep, and then slip quietly into the woman's room. Such a visit involve sexual relations, but probably not on the first visit. Visits for the purpose of courtship (to develop a romantic relationship with a lady and persuade her to marry) were expected between a couple whose parents had arranged their marriage (Albeny Ak Joslyn Panting, 1993: 24-27). Sexual relations between husband and wife takes place in the family-room, in which other family members are sleeping. Efforts are made to avoid waking children and others sleeping nearby, but it is doubtful any are unaware of the love-making or copulate (have sexual intercourse).

Therefore, *ngayap* is the traditional method of Iban courtship in which adolescent males visit girls of similar age in their beds at night. The visit may or may not involve sexual intercourse and is the primary method of communication between a young couple where public meetings displaying courtship would be criticized as forward (*jegit*). In many rural areas there might only be one bed in the family-room (*bilik*). This would be a four post structure, supporting a mosquito net and decorated with coloured cloth and ribbons, and would be occupied by an adolescent girl (Sarawak Gazette, 1961: 139-143). Her parents, grandparents and smaller children would sleep in the the same room on mats and mattresses on the floor, located in one of the corners of the room against the wall which divides the family-room from the communal part of the longhouse. It is therefore usually the nearest sleeping place to the door of the family-room. Adolescent males could sleep in one of the several places. If they intended to sleep all night they would probably sleep in the family-room. If they intended to go for *ngayap* in their own longhouse or to a longhouse nearby, they would possibly lay out their sleeping mats in the loft (*sadau*) or covered verandah (*pantar*) and remain there until most other people are sleeping when they would go to the family-room of the girls they wished to visit.

If a young man wish to visit a girl in a distant longhouse, he would probably walk there in the evening and sit and talk to the people of the girl's longhouse, and again wait in the covered verandah (*pantar*) until about eleven or midnight. The family-room door would usually be closed with a wooden latch which could fairly easily be lifted from the outside with a knife. The young man would make his way as quietly as possible to the bed of the young woman, trying not to wake her parents or the dogs. Some advances would probably have been made prior to the first night visit, but possibly be confined to "looks" and smiles which would have indicated to the young man that his visit would be welcome. If another young was man visiting the woman and had been "accepted" (Adat Iban, 1993: 56), the later arrival would leave. If there was no other visitor, the girl would be awakened, and if she did not wish to be visited, the man would leave – if he did not leave, she might threaten to light the lamp and call her parents. If the woman likes the man, she may be persuaded to allow him to sit inside the mosquito net and eventually enter her bed. Such visits would involve no more than talking to each other only. Sexual activity, culminating in sexual intercourse would take place in due course. It seems likely that *ngayap* is closely related to possibilities of marriage from the start. marriage frequently forms a topic of conversation between the couple, and announcements of 'engagement' often follow after a few visits (Seginer and Essau, 1993: 243-260). Pregnancy may precede formal marriage, and is in fact often seen as an advantage, having proven the fertility of the couple. In the past it was generally believed that pregnancy could not follow from a single act of sexual intercourse and thus something more continuing than a passing casual relationship would be thought to be evident should pregnancy result.

The tradition of *ngayap* among the Ibans in the longhouse community is often misinterpreted in the eyes of the outside public as implying the possibility of casual sexual relationships. Traditional Iban opinion would reject this view and in fact the Iban leader Tun Jugah commented that it permitted parental control of potential marriage partners, while also giving a degree of choice to the young couple involved. Parents sleeping in the same room would soon become are of a regular visitor and could encourage or discourage as appropriate. The concern of the parents would be in addition to approving of the personel characteristics of the spouse, for enduring continuity of membership of the family (Sutlive, 1965: 44). Parents would thus need to know that if there was only one child remaining in the family, the young man attracted by their girl would be welcomed to take up residence in the family and ensure the continuity of the family. A form of courtship which did not retain such a measure of control by the parents would be thought of as far less satisfactory. A further virtue of the practice to traditional Ibans is that it supports the importance of retaining the family as the primary location for the girls and women, who would be expected to leave it when they have specific business outside. *Ngayap* being the premarital relations, are primarily directed towards the acquisition of marriage partners. This reason or justification makes *ngayap* a strong measure of support as the traditional form of Iban courtship behavior.

### Emotions And Sexual Jealousy Among the Ibans

The lexicon for emotions and their expressions is exceeding well developed and rich. The heart is considered or identified as the seat and source of emotions, and occurs with numerous modifiers to present the shades and subtle differences of feelings (Vinson and Joanne, 2001: 762). Both men and women have emotions as explicated in the phrases like *hate, resent, detest, hate, dispirited, abhor, dislike, amused, desire, fierce, unkind, generous, gracious, patient, agitated, exasperated, love, pity, sorry* and et cetera. There are more terms for emotions in the Iban community including phrases like *affectionate, alacrity, alarmed, ambivalence, ambivalent, anger, angry, anxious, ashamed, bliss, brooding, contrition, covetous, greedy, selfish, cupidity, eager, embrace, grief, intense, rage, jealous* and the like.

Undeniably, jealousy (*ninding/chemuru*) is one of the most frequently cited reasons for marital. But jealousy exists in all other human communities in the world. When one is jealous, he or she is possessing a feeling that suspects his or her spouse is interested in another man or woman. For example, anyone can be jealous and be stern if she sees her husband jokes around too much with another woman. It is a popular thought among the Ibans that women are much more inclined to be jealous than are men. The latitude (or freedom) enjoyed by Iban men in earlier generations, in which they might leave a wife for months or even years, and take up with another woman or other women, while the wife was expected to remain chaste and faithful, contributed to suspicions and gave rise to jealousy.

On the other hand, the logic that is implicit in regulations related to the behavior of married woman and other men in *Adat Iban 1993* indicates that men also had the capacity for jealousy, or at the very least, wanted to protect their wives and their interests against the wives of other men. In this way, in the code of Iban behavior, a married woman should not be alone with another man, for such a liaison (a sexual relationship, especially one that is secret and illicit) or secret relationship could be for only one purpose, that is, adultery. It is construed as an adulterous act when a husband has relations with a woman other than his wife, or a wife, with a man other than her husband.

### Conclusion

The Iban social organization has been extensively described and analyzed by Freeman (1960, 1970) and Sutlive (1972, 1988). Undeniably, the most distinctive feature of Iban residence has been and remains the longhouse. Each longhouse is a social unit, an economic unit, a political unit as well as a ritual unit, with each resident and each family responsible for its own activities and responsible to co-residents for the collective well-being. Each family is identified by its life within a structural unit, centered in the *bilik*, where much of the domestic life occurs – meals prepared and consumed, economic activities planned, family members relax and sleep. Equally important is the gallery or *ruai* where domestic activities are extended to combine with those other families.

This paper has examined the social relations between gender (sexes) in the Iban longhouse community and look into the sexual relations, proscribed relations, courtship (the tradition of “ngayap”) and sexual jealousy among the Iban women. The Ibans have high valuations on relations with others, particularly the opposite sex. There is an ambivalence or the mixed feeling and contradictory ideas that characterizes relations between males and females. However, women, as well as men, may represent their families in community meetings, may acquire and sell property, and may engage shaman (male or female) for a healing ritual. Some women are dominant figures in their longhouse. Women particularly have borne or carried the principal work related to domestic activities, but men have provided labor for heavier tasks as required, although the Ibans are thoroughly egalitarian, believing in the principle that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities. The Ibans prohibit sexual relations among certain members of the family as identified in *Adat Iban* (the code of Iban behavior) This behavior is inappropriate in the Iban community. It is called *jadi mali* or incest because it is regarded as a most serious violation of customary law (*adat*). Sexual relations are extremely sensitive among the Ibans. “Ngayap” is the traditional method of Iban courtship in which adolescent males visit girls of similar age in their beds at night. The visit may or may not involve sexual intercourse and is the primary method of communication between a young couple where public meetings displaying courtship would be criticized as forward (*jegit*).

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