

Iban *gawai* in their twilight in Kapit, Malaysia

Goro Hasegawa

ABSTRACT

This article contributes an ethnographic on-the-ground perspective of *gawai* rituals in their crucial twilight phase among the Iban in the Kapit District of Sarawak, Malaysian Borneo. It reveals the processes and actors involved in these ceremonies in Iban communities in Kapit. It explores the reasons for the decline in frequency of these events, and identifies cost, migration and a loss of expertise as the main contributors to this trend. A rich and detailed perspective was gathered through accompanying a *lemambang* (Iban religious leader), when he officiated these rituals. This access was enormously important for revealing the subtleties of the various rituals and allowed for the understanding of the active and inactive components of the *gawai* to be revealed and explored. This contribution is theoretically and practically relevant because it updates the perspective of the 1970s when *gawai* culture was flourishing in their rural life, and further explains the categories of the *gawai* in a fresh and expanded light. By exploring what was regarded as a disappearing culture, this article captures the continuing practice of these rituals and their significance in the social life of the Iban.

KEYWORDS

gawai ritual, *lemambang*, Iban, Sarawak, Malaysian Borneo

Introduction

Following the proverb ‘if dreams are right, auguries be good, rituals observed, there is nothing that cannot be achieved’, the Iban believe that supernatural assistance for success can be provided through dreams, auguries and the *gawai* rituals (Masing 1997: 101).¹

This article examines *gawai*, or religious ritual festivals, among the Iban in

¹ The Iban believed that divine spirits, or gods, could provide them with phenomenal fighting capabilities. The gods’ instructions were customarily sought through dreams and auguries, e.g. by deciphering sounds and flight patterns of the seven birds which were believed to be the gods’ messengers (see Freeman 1960; Jensen 1974; Masing 1997: 102, 121; Sandin 1980; Sather 1980).

the Kapit district of Sarawak in Malaysian Borneo. My fieldwork closely follows the data collection undertaken in Masing's doctoral study on the *gawai* ritual. Masing conducted his fieldwork in Kapit between 1978 and 1979, in an era when *gawai* culture was fully part of the life of the Iban residing in the Baleh river region in Kapit. This article builds on Masing's study of *gawai*. I returned to the same site from 2007 to 2009, 30 years after Masing's fieldwork. Currently, the practice of *gawai* is broadly considered to be disappearing. Contrary to this perception, however, I found that some of these rituals continue to be practised. My analysis is meant to show that the contemporary state of *gawai* culture exists beyond those popular discourses that discuss the disappearance and development of these traditional cultures.

James Jemut Masing was from Majau in the Baleh river basin in Kapit, and is an anthropologist by training. He was supervised by the late Derek Freeman, a leading scholar of Iban studies. Professionally, he has represented the Baleh constituency in the Sarawak State Assembly since 1983, and has since May 2016 been the Deputy Chief Minister and Minister of Infrastructure Development and Transportation of Sarawak.² Masing in his thesis argues that the *gawai* can be characterised as a persistent cultural artefact and is immovable in the face of advancing modernisation. While the privilege of holding *gawai* was traditionally reserved for local community and military leaders, who hoped to invoke divine assistance in seeking success, as cultural modernisation advances such intervention is now also pursued by political and business elites (Masing 1997).

Not only Masing but other scholars too have noted how these rituals have evolved over time, and that they continue to play an important role in Iban communities (Sutlive 1972; Jensen 1974; Davison and Sutlive 1991). This view is crucial to the vanishing traditional culture discourse that has dominated Iban studies since the 1960s (e.g. Jones 1966; Wright et. al. 1972).³ My study confirms that Iban traditional customs are not simply vanishing, as commonly thought. However, I

² Despite his background, brought up in an ordinary farming family, he has been extraordinarily successful in his career. I will describe later that he is practically revered by the locals as their god-like being.

³ Wright and others explained the supposed 'vanishing' of traditional Iban societies through demographic study data and predictions based on these. In the early 1970s, the Iban accounted for one-third of the state's population; however, it was predicted that by 1985 it would be reduced to one-quarter, and that simultaneously the Sarawak Chinese population would increase to 40% of the population, through increased urbanisation, industrial advancement and social competition (Jones, 1966: 170–71; Wright et. al. 1972: 152). However, these statistical predictions have proved completely inaccurate. As of 2017, the Iban continue to be the largest group in the state's population and the Chinese population has declined to third place, having been overtaken by the Malays (*Borneo Post*, 8 February 2014).

believe that a critical perspective should be adopted in acknowledging this.

I discuss here how the *gawai* goes beyond the dualism of either vanishing or continuing to develop. The process is more complicated, as the practice of some rituals may vanish, while others continue to be used, and others still may be adapted to new forms of religious belief, and thus all these possibilities could be happening in parallel to each other. Therefore, it is not simply that these rituals either vanish or develop, and it is important to account for the ways in which people actively engage with these matters. This study focuses particularly on the role of the *lemambang*, who are bardic priests and Iban religious leaders, in the continuing practice of these rituals. Through my study, I show that the *lemambang* is the backbone of the *gawai*, and is critically important for the current development and diversification of *gawai* culture. It would be impossible for the *gawai* to continue to exist without the *lemambang*.

Vanishing *gawai* discourses

When discussing the extent to which *gawai* have disappeared, I encountered numerous negative remarks towards the rituals during my fieldwork. People often reminisced that many *gawai* took place throughout the Kapit area, especially in the Baleh, during the 1970s, and they lamented its loss. In 2007, I sought information about where *gawai* were still being held throughout the Kapit area, but was unable to gather anything of importance. This could possibly be due to the low regard that community members have for the rituals. Following this, I decided to investigate who the well-known *gawai* sponsors (*pegawai*) were in Kapit at the time. Many people anecdotally told me that Minister Masing had performed many *gawai*.

I was able to speak to the Minister about his performance of *gawai*. He denied that he had held *gawai*, and stated that he was not adequately qualified to hold these ceremonies. Furthermore, he said that there was currently little interest in *gawai* on the part of the Iban, as the practice was expensive and dated. While this vastly differed from what he described in his doctoral thesis, it was possible that this was the current reality of the rituals. At this juncture, I had no way of knowing his true opinions on the matter, as it could have been the Iban virtue of not talking boastfully about one's *gawai* career that prevented him from speaking openly.

Furthermore, I was told about an Iban *pemancha*, or appointed district chief, who had recently performed a large *gawai*.⁴ When I interviewed him, he explained that the ritual had taken place because a Malaysian national TV programme had asked him to hold it in 2006. He agreed, on condition that all the expenses, which

⁴ There are about 350 Iban longhouses under the jurisdiction of the Iban *pemancha* of Kapit district.

totalled M\$20,000, would be borne by the programme. The ritual lasted for three nights and four days and was a gathering of more than 500 people. However, as a Methodist Christian he himself would never do the ritual ordinarily, and he explained that people nowadays had less interest in the ritual as it was too expensive to sponsor it.

Most Iban in Sarawak – 76.3% in the 2010 census – are now Christians, which is an increase from 70% seen in the 2000 census (Varney 2014: 2). The influence of Christianity on Iban ritual activities poses complex questions for ethnographers. Interestingly, however, Joel Robbins (2007: 5–6) calls for a more developed anthropology of Christianity; he argues that anthropologists have chosen to avoid, ignore, play down and shy away from studying the cultural aspects of Christianity and have only recognised that it can be merely a thin veneer overlying deeply meaningful traditional beliefs.⁶ Christianity is indeed problematic and confusing. Freeman obviously experienced this. His important local informant Mr Igoh anak Impin, a *lemambang* from the Baleh, refused to help Freeman in his research when they met again after eight years in the 1960s, because he had converted to Methodist Christianity and had abandoned the old Iban beliefs (Freeman 1997: ix). However, a 30 year old man told me that in 2008 Igoh was actively working as a *lemambang* despite his advanced years, and that he was still widely known in the Baleh as one of the best *lemambang* in living memory. This case rightly exemplifies that Christianity can indeed be a thin veneer and that cultural continuity is easily overlooked. Liana Chua (2012a, 2012b) discusses cultural continuity and discontinuity, or rupture with the past, among the Bidayuh Christian community in Sarawak in the context of conversion to Christianity. She has sought native exegesis of their Christianisation and has argued that discontinuity is merely a trope (Chua 2012a). She also emphasises that there was no collective epiphany or total change in lifestyle; discourses and enactment of continuity that may exist in our field sites should not be occluded by the discontinuity bias, as noted in Robbins' 2007 groundbreaking model (Chua 2012b: 513–14). Thus this muddy melange of Christianity and local religion begs for further ethnographic attention in order to understand the people and their true stories that are hidden behind the discourses of 'vanishing *gawai*'.

Taking a more subtle approach to understanding the dynamics of religious change could cast those negative remarks from local leaders differently, although of

⁶ Robbins' argument is much more complex than my summing up here but it is beyond the scope of this article to deal comprehensively with his approach to establish and deepen the theoretical framework for an anthropology of Christianity.

course ethnography conducted on the Iban *gawai* might still be able to conclude that this constitutes a vanishing narrative. By continuing to ask people in the town of Kapit if there were those who still practised *gawai*, I found that there were some local businesspersons who had performed many *gawai*. Although this discovery further fuelled my interest in discovering who the *gawai* sponsors were, my attempts to interview them were unsuccessful as they had no interest in participating in a graduate student research project. It is also possible that this reluctance was due to discretion and was similar to the response given by Masing when I attempted to interview him.⁷

Meeting the bard

Eventually a breakthrough on *gawai* was achieved when I met a *lemambang*, or bardic priest. Mr Enggong anak Baning was 60 years old in 2008, and was originally from the Majau river in the Baleh region, the same river where Masing was born. Masing wrote about him in a case study and rightly reported that he was not prompted by a customary spiritual dream experience to be a *lemambang*, but rather possessed talent from a young age that had been passed on through the previous generation of Iban *gawai* (Masing 1997: 92). I showed Masing's book to Enggong, and asked him to confirm that he was indeed the subject of the study. He was utterly astonished at seeing his name as *lemambang* in the book. I explained to him in detail what had been written about him. He was delighted and understood what I, as a foreign researcher, wanted to know from him. By building a strong rapport with him, he was able to open up to me.

Enggong explained that many *gawai* occasions were currently occurring in Kapit, and he was officiating at many of them. He had served at 20 large major *gawai* thus far in his career from the 1970s onwards, and at five to six additional minor *gawai* each year. He was able to remember especially clearly the large *gawai*, and could recall all the dates, places, sponsors and specific types of the ritual at which he had officiated.

In the early stages of my fieldwork in Kapit town in 2008, upon the advice given by Enggong, I moved to a longhouse village located on the Mujong river section of the Baleh, some 50 kilometres away from the town of Kapit where I had discovered that a number of *gawai* were frequently held, particularly small ones. I found that *gawai* was completely embedded in everyday village (longhouse) life.

⁷ Chua (2015: 254) explains the theoretical concept of 'ritual religious ignorance'. Ignorance, including change, secrecy, ambiguity, loss, indifference and so on, is not a passive factor but is the agentive space that needs to be carefully inspected; it is literally 'knowing not to know'.

While this was a positive discovery, it should not simply be taken to imply an optimistic perspective, as local people still feel that the practice of *gawai* has greatly diminished, particularly when compared to the height of the tradition in the 1970s. In the 1970s, *gawai* used to be celebrated with great *éclat*, with several big rituals being held at the same time by various families in longhouses all over the district of Kapit (see also Linklater 2001: 287). From this historical and local perspective, *gawai* culture has certainly diminished in popularity and presence since the 1970s.⁹ While I argue that a proper understanding of *gawai* goes beyond discourses of its either vanishing or developing, it is still a certain fact that from the local perspective *gawai* is today in its twilight. Thus ‘twilight’ is used in this article’s title. However, I would argue that there are some active, living components which still survive, even within this negative general situation – namely, the practices and roles of the *lemambang*.

Lemambang Enggong was kindly willing to be interviewed and he allowed me to accompany him to a few of his commissioned *gawai*. With his help, I was able to conduct a quantitative case study research on the Iban *gawai* at the local level, and in particular a data-driven analysis of expenditure involved in major *gawai*, which shows the actual rate of change over time.

***Gawai*, its conceptualisation and classification**

Chua has studied *adat gawai*, or the old rituals of the Bidayuh, the second largest indigenous group of Sarawak after the Iban. The Bidayuh began converting to Christianity in the 1950s, and large-scale conversion occurred in the early 1970s, which caused *adat gawai* to diminish very rapidly (Chua 2012a: 85ff).

Christianisation does appear to have been inexorable, causing *gawai* to diminish at an accelerated pace. Chua, however, does not address the fate of the old rituals but discusses the paradox of continuing them in the contemporary world (Chua 2012a). Mashman and Nayoi (2000) focus on the relation between the deeply-held values of generations of rice-farming and the nascent Catholic spirituality that has emerged since 1960s among the Pinyawa’a Bidayuh.¹⁰ They discuss how the former carried

⁹ A longhouse leader told me that during the 1970s many men boastfully claimed to hold large *gawai* rituals; they had received dream revelations, which are the proper Iban method for holding *gawai*. He denied that they all simultaneously actually received such dreams, and he explained that this was why their families had not prospered, but had moved to towns and failed. He, as a Methodist Christian, said he did not believe in Iban rituals. With this anecdote, however, he seemed to contradict himself and show that he did indeed greatly believe in the power of the *gawai*. Varney (2011) points out that Methodist Iban do not follow the omens of the traditional bird auguries and dreams any longer; however, they are still fearful if they receive such signs because they understand their meanings.

¹⁰ The Bidayuh are one of about 30 officially recognised ethnicities of Sarawak (Chua 2012: 3), and

over to the latter; namely the process of inculturation, with the Catholic Church mediating between old and new. Sather studied Iban rituals in the Saribas where conversion to Christianity had largely been completed by the 1970s. Despite this, he found that longhouse ritual life was little affected, and *sugi sakit*, a certain Saribas rite of healing, was very much alive and was still going strong in the 1990s. Sather points out, interestingly, that this healing rite, supposedly subordinate to the *gawai*, was officiated by the *lemambang*, who are supposed to handle only *gawai*, the most elaborate of the rituals. However, the last *lemambang* in the region stopped his work in the early 1990s, when the whole of his field longhouse became Christian (Sather 2016: 254–55).¹¹

The classification of *gawai*, has been studied by many scholars. Leo Nyuak (1906) documented about two dozen types of Iban *gawai*. Gana Ngadi (1998) investigated more thoroughly Iban rites of passage and related ritual acts. These two authors have investigated classification in detail in particular regions; however, there is certainly a certain amount of divergence seen in practice between regions, something which makes classification complicated. Vinson Sutlive (1972: 299), an anthropologist who worked as a Methodist clergy among the Iban in Sibu, explains that *gawai* can be divided into more than 60 types of rituals. He also states elsewhere that ‘counting all minor acts, farm rituals exceed four dozen’ (Sutlive 1978: 66). In the Lubok Antu District in Sri Aman Division, where the population is predominantly made up of the Iban, the *gawai burong* (bird) or *gawai kenyalang* (hornbill bird) is regarded as the greatest of the *gawai* (Jensen 1974: 58, 195).¹² In the Saribas-Skrang region, *gawai antu* (to honour the dead) is seen as the greatest *gawai* (Jensen 1974: 195; Uchibori 1978). It is clear that these regions’ rituals differ from rituals in Kapit, as I will discuss later.

Sather (1977a: 169) confirms that there are clear, major differences between *gawai* in different regions. In discussing these regional variations, Masing also insistently notes that many rituals are on the verge of disappearing, something which could be caused by various social and environmental changes taking place. In this process, new variations of these cultural rituals could be generated (Masing 1997: 30). According to Masing, *gawai* should correctly be classified into three categories, namely: *bedara*, *gawa* and *gawai* proper. The last category is the most significant of

their language is further divided into several dialect groups of which Pinyawa’a is one.

¹¹ Graham (1983) provides an excellent analysis of the literature on Iban shamanism where he examined *manang*, or shaman in healing rites.

¹² For this, a carved hornbill statue is raised up in the air and people believe that during the ceremony, this bird pounces upon an enemy’s longhouse and will pillage their wealth (King 1993: 259; Nyuak 1906: 421–2;).

the three and is further subdivided for variations (Masing 1997: 31).

Masing's attempt to rank these three types of *gawai* is interesting, because people currently do not generally distinguish between the subtleties of each ritual. They are all sweepingly described as *gawai*. Furthermore, there is confusion with Hari Gawai Dayak, the pan-Dayak Festival launched in 1963 for the first and second of June, by the Iban Chief Minister of Sarawak to match the Malay Hari Raya and Chinese New Year celebrations (Postill 2000: 107). Hari Gawai Dayak is a state holiday in Sarawak, but it is a nominal celebration and does not hold the same ritualistic meaning as *gawai*. In Sarawak, public schools have a two-week holiday, and during this period the Dayak (including the Iban) return to their home villages and celebrate their *gawai*. The Iban customarily held appropriate *gawai* in longhouse community villages whenever they needed spiritual instruction. However, many Iban are currently based in towns and live away from the longhouses. This creates an obstacle, as the ceremonies cannot be held instantaneously. To overcome this, the 'gawai' is held during the Hari Gawai Dayak vacation or at Christmas, as more community members can be expected to return and participate.¹³

Three classifications of *gawai*: *bedara*, *gawa*, and *gawai*

Bedara

Bedara ('to make offerings' or 'to sacrifice') is the simplest form of ritual ceremony for the Iban, and is most frequently observed in the rural areas. It usually lasts only an hour, or a day at most. The purpose of this ritual is to invalidate violations, such as bad dreams, and to seek divine assistance in various matters (Masing 1997: 23–4).

I witnessed countless *bedara* activities taking place in the longhouses,

¹³ In the Baleh, many have moved to towns. It is rare, however, for people to completely abandon their room (*buai dapur*: abandon-hearth) in the longhouses. Cramb mentions *pemali chelap dapur* (prohibition on the hearth cooling down) – that inhabitants are not permitted to be away for a long time, and that it was strictly enforced that the hearth had to be warmed at least twice a month (Richards 1963: 57, cit. in Cramb 2007: 332 n. 13). Heppell says that the *adat chelap dapur* imposes a rule that the the hearth must be warmed at least once every three days (Heppell 1975: 269, 278, 289). My understanding is that all longhouses have different rules (*adat*). In 2009, my field longhouse located in the Baleh had a rule that residents who stayed away for longer than a month were required to pay M\$30 to the longhouse headman when they returned and used the hearth again. If they were not going to use the hearth, this payment was not required. However, they were still expected to use the hearth at least once a year. The villagers who usually returned during the Hari Gawai Dayak or Christmas period came and cooked something. Sometimes strangers visited the longhouse on the owner's behalf for a vacation and used the hearth.

especially during the busy paddy farming season – September and October.¹⁴ One was a ceremony related to the young men from the towns who had returned to help with the farming and who worked cooperatively among the other villagers while sowing the paddy seeds. A *bedara* called *bedara norun kereja* (back to work) was held, before these young men returned to the towns once the sowing of seeds had concluded. It was held on their last night in the village before their return. A few close friends and family members gathered and prayed for the man's safety and success, followed by much drinking and merry-making.

Another noteworthy example of *bedara* that I witnessed was at the school ground on a graduation day in the village. Under a tree stump, several men suddenly brought in a piece of *pua' kumbu'* (the Iban ritual fabric) and began preparing offerings on it while also drinking rice wine, sharing it among themselves.¹⁵ They explained that the ritual was celebrating the divine power of a palm tree, one planted by Dr Masing, in his capacity as the Land Development Minister. These Baleh people yearned for development projects, and idolise Masing. The story they related went as follows: the Minister once came to the village and proposed a palm tree plantation as a development project for the community to undertake. While he planted one tree as a form of a promise, he failed to keep his word and did not return to them. The villagers were very upset about this and so they cut down the tree. However, the tree grew again and new buds sprouted. They were, of course, aware a palm tree could regrow after having been cut but the symbolism was evidently important for them.¹⁶

There were many *bedara* that I encountered which were held in the context of the social life of the village: *bedara terimah kasih guru besar* (a retirement ceremony for a schoolmaster), *bedara motor* (a ceremony for accepting a newly bought outboard motor), *bedara mata elektrik* (for the completion of an electric repair), and so on. I concluded that *bedara* were as much opportunities for ceremony as they were for gathering and drinking together. The Iban certainly enjoy socialising in this manner. It would often be found that the purpose of ceremony be

¹⁴ Hill-rice cultivation has a distinctive religious significance (Sather 1977a: 152). One Christian Iban in the Baleh told me that wet-rice farming is much preferable as it does not require any Iban ritual to be undertaken.

¹⁵ For discussion of this Iban ritual fabric, see Jabu (1989); Mashman (1991); Linggi (2001), Gavin (2003); Hasegawa (2014); Heppell (2014).

¹⁶ One Christian Iban I met did not believe in the Iban gods, but he once had an order from Masing through his dreams to perform a large *gawai*. Dream revelation is a traditional method for receiving instruction to perform *gawai*, and so he reluctantly obeyed. For ethnographic observations regarding Dr Masing's charismatic qualities, see Hasegawa 2017.

confounding – a prayer, or socialising.¹⁷

Gawa

This, the second type of *gawai*, literally means ‘works’, or ‘activities’, and implies ‘ritual works’ (Jensen 1974: 195; Masing 1997: 25). This ritual is more complex and larger in scale than the *bedara*, which is undertaken when no effects have been felt after a *bedara* and so even greater divine assistance is requested in order to battle the devils. Guests from outside the village are invited, and the sponsoring family serves generous amounts of food and drink. The ceremony can last through the night and can take up to two days. The preparation for the ceremony is also costly in terms of time and expense (Masing 1997: 25–26).

A significant difference between the *bedara* and *gawa* rituals is the involvement of the *lemambang*. *Bedara* does not require their participation, but all the ritual processes of the *gawa* and the *gawai* are conducted under the direction of the *lemambang*. The *lemambang* and his two assistants (*penyaku*) march in a line and recite the *timang*, or the invocatory ritual chant.¹⁸ *Timang* is therefore necessary when conducting *gawa* and *gawai*, being one of the few kinds of Iban oral literature that still exist. It narrates the epic journey to the world of gods, and the gods’ subsequent adventures while attending the ritual feast in the human world (Masing 1997: 1–2, 55, 84).

Masing (1997: 121) emphatically states that ‘given the ingenuity of their *lemambang*, ... the *gawai* and its *timang* will be so modified as to gain new significance in the radically changed circumstances of the people’. Masing subdivides *gawa* into two categories, based on types of *timang*: *gawa timang beintu intu* (to take care of man’s welfare and life), and *gawa timang tua* (to increase one’s fortune). Under the former, there are six further variants (see Table 1). In contrast, the *lemambang* Enggong told me roughly ten variations of *timang* that showed a slight distinction from Masing’s data (Table 1). Enggong commented that ‘it differs from *lemambang* to *lemambang*, like every medical doctor says different things’.

One day, a school teacher invited me to attend his relative’s *gawa* in town. This sponsor, who was in his early forties, had been working for almost 20 years in Papua New Guinea and had just returned to Kapit for the Christmas holiday. He had purchased a house in town a few years before for his family who had been left

¹⁷ E.H. Gomes (1911: 209) indeed observes the social character of the Iban ritual ceremony; guests’ feasting seems to be more important than the making of offerings to the gods.

¹⁸ There can be more than two *penyaku*. Masing’s study is based on data collected in 1978 and 1979. He rightly observed that there were generally three *penyaku* (or *orang nyagu*), and in the Saribas-Skrang region of Betong Division there can be up to six (Masing 1997: 75).

behind in the Baleh. For this *gawa*, there were about 50 people; his friends and relatives had gathered to drink, eat and, of course, make offerings overnight. The sponsor did not divulge the purpose of the *gawa*; however, his eldest son had graduated from high school that year, and this event might have spurred him to perform the ceremony at this time. Therefore, on the basis of *gawa tuah* (or *nimang tuah*; see Table 1), some other rites (*bedara* types) were also added in an improvised manner to celebrate his son together with other high school graduates who were children of his relatives .

In the last two decades, there have been considerable population movements from the Baleh to the peri-urban part of Kapit town (Ngidang 2012). This migration is motivated by the fact that young Iban men gain expertise and then work abroad in logging, offshore oil or the gas industry in countries and continents such as Africa, Belgium, Brazil, Brunei, Papua New Guinea, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Scotland. And, as their children begin to enter junior high school (which is only available in town), it is preferable for the remaining family to live together in town, rather than letting the child board at school. As the migrant workers generally earn good salaries, they are able to give up farming and their rural lifestyles.¹⁹

I argue here that there is presently an increase in the demand for *gawa* to be held in town among this newly emerging social class, as illustrated by the example given above, rather than big *gawai* that traditionally take place in the longhouse villages. While it was Masing's contention that elites in politics and business routinely participated in these rituals, it seems that today, migrant workers, especially those who draw high salaries, constitute a third group who also perform the *gawa*.

Gawai

The *gawai*, that forms the third category of the broader *gawai* ritual is the most elaborate, complex and prestigious of all Iban ritual activity. Masing (1997: 31) subdivides this ritual under three headings; *gawai antu* (ritual for the dead), *gawai bumai* (farming ritual), and *gawai amat* (the proper ritual).

Gawai antu is a ritual marking the formal end of the mourning period, which is regarded as being the most important of all the Iban rituals in the Saribas-Skrang region (Jensen 1974: 58–9; Uchibori 1978: 148). Among the Iban in Kapit, *gawai antu* is called *gawai ngelumbong* (interment ritual); however it is in no way

¹⁹ In 2009, they also explained to me that it was cheaper to buy rice rather than grow it as besides the labour they were spared the expenses of agrochemicals and fertilizers. In town, Vietnamese rice was sold at only M\$2.5 per kg, whilst locally grown rice cost M\$ 3.5 per kg in 2008.

comparable to the importance and prestige of their *gawai amat* (Masing 1997: 31–2).

Masing (1997: 32) explains that there are two major farming rituals under the *gawai bumai*: *gawai batu* (whetstone ritual) and *gawai beneh* (seed ritual). Masing separates these rituals in the *gawai* category, but, as shown in Table 1, I found that these rituals could currently be categorised as *gawa* instead. Masing further mentions that *gawai batu* was no longer performed by the Baleh Iban, as the aims and purpose of the ritual had been incorporated into a much simpler ritual. The importance of *gawai beneh* had also declined and this prompted the demotion of the ritual to the category of *gawa* (Masing 1997: 33, 34).

My research in the Baleh river region in 2009, showed that *gawai bumai* is the comprehensive name given to a series of traditional farming rituals: *gawai batu*, *gerai* (good health), *ngelabohpun* (end of seed sowing), *mali umai* (taboo on the farm), amongst others. Sutlive (1978: 66) explains that the farming rituals are emphasised to greater or lesser degrees in all communities, and differences in the names of the rituals are indications of localised modifications. Sather (1977a: 169; 1977b: ix) also points out the variability of the rituals, and explains that major *gawai* are continually modified and reinterpreted by individual sponsors and *lemambang*. The Iban in the Baleh explained that the series of farming rituals used to be held on a large scale all through the year until the 1990s, when a steady decline was seen in the number of these events being held. Local people tended to explain that the most important reason for this decline was the community's conversion to Methodist Christianity, which led to the simplification of the ceremonies.²⁰

Masing is derisive of *gawai batu*, and I appreciate that it is a confusing subject. It has appeared in many writings and almost universally translated as the 'whetstone feast' held to technically and ritually sharpen farming implements before the inauguration of the new farming season (Howell 1909: 124; Gomes 1911: 215; 2007: 48; Sutlive 1978: 66; Sandin 1980: 44; Sather 1992: 115; Varney 2011).²¹ It is not possible to overemphasise the amount of variation found in the *gawai* classification and therefore it is possible that I encountered a modern-day regional variation of it. It did not involve any actual functioning whetstone; however, the important potent charm-stone (*batu* or *pengaroh*) was used in this ritual. These

²⁰ Methodist missionaries did not simply uproot what was regarded as corrupt: it was hoped that there could be interaction between Christian and Iban concepts that might in time produce a form of the Christian faith which would be firmly grounded in the life of Iban Christians (Varney 2011: 151 ff.).

²¹ A newspaper reports that a Christian-based Iban *gawai batu* was practised by an Iban community for the first time (Chang 2013).

charm-stones are normally passed down the generations in family units (*bilek*). While Masing (1997: 32) does clearly remark that the Iban do not actually sharpen their farming tools on the whetstone, the rest of his explanation about the *gawai batu* remains ambiguous. This vagueness could be attributed to the secrecy surrounding these precious *batu* stones, and where they should be kept in the home. Throughout my fieldwork, my caretaker (or ‘father’) had continually told me that the stones had been thrown away because they did not believe in them anymore, which I later found out were simply excuses for hiding possession of the stones. Towards the end of my fieldwork, when the *gawai* was getting underway in May, he invited me as a family member to his *gawai batu* ceremony and revealed their treasured *batu* to me for the first time.

Ironically, despite appearances, the stone is not used to sharpen farming tools. Rather, pieces of the stone are shaved off with a knife in the process, and the residual powder is collected and then immersed in water. This water – *ai batu*: water of the stone – is placed in small bottles to be hung on pillars or beams in their homes as special *ai penchelap rumah*, water to preserve the house from spiritual heat, or to be carried with people as a panacea.²² This *gawai batu* has therefore not been a farming ritual, but rather an annual ritual to cleanse the stones in order to renew their powers and for the water to be replenished in all the bottles (see Figures 1 and 2). There are many types of charm-stones, and some Iban would place a great deal of emphasis on them. One person I spoke to was, in fact, known as a ‘*batu* collector’, as he kept many powerful stones. He admitted to owning a number of the stones and even boasted that he had a powerful one of the tooth taken from a gibbon which was found a rarely beautifully hair dressed.. Despite telling me about the stones, he declined to show them to me. Rather than seeing my request as polite curiosity, he felt I was harassing him. I thereby understood that inspecting private *batu* collections could be seen as an intrusion of privacy, suggesting that the *gawai batu* has been shrouded in even greater secrecy. An appreciation of these cultural rules is required before we can attempt to understand the *gawai* fully.

***Gawai amat*: the ‘proper’ ritual**

Gawai amat, the most important ritual practised among the Iban in Kapit, has distinguishing features such as the attendance of the supreme god of Singalang Burong and *timang* chants that are only recited by higher-level master *lemambang*

²² For discussion of the Iban concept of cool (*chelap*) and hot (*angat*) refer to Freeman (1970: 122), Jensen (1974: 110, 115). Heppell (1975: 279) and Uchibori (1978: 32).

(Masing 1997: 57 n.3).²³ These *lemambang* are known as *lemambang-tinggi* (high or higher ranked) and are compared with the *lemambang-mit* ('small' or lower-ranked) (Masing 1997: 84). *Lemambang* Enggong himself was at the master's level, and told me that currently there were only seven master *lemambang* including himself in the Kapit district, but only two of them knew all stages of the *timang* chants.²⁴ Compared with Masing's findings in 1978 and 1979, this shows a slight decrease in the number of master *lemambang* who still perform the chants for *gawai amat* (Masing 1997: 91).

Figure 3 shows that *gawai amat* can further be categorised into twelve ranks based on the stages of the *timang* stories and episodes in the travels and adventures of the gods. This chart was created from an explanation given by another *lemambang* informant in the Bangan river area of the Baleh. Agreement about the accuracy of the chart was reached with Enggong, and he stated that he had mastered eight out of twelve ranks. In contrast, Masing (1997: 40) only offers eight ranks for the *gawai amat*. This discrepancy is not easily resolved as the classification of *gawai* is a complicated matter. This is possibly because, by its very nature, a *gawai* is assumed to be a single structure that can be interwoven with many other rituals and systems. Still, there is agreement between Masing's work and my own that the *tresang mansau* is the first stage and the *empalai kasai* is the ultimate, and these stages clearly have an order.

The *empalai kasai* is the largest *gawai* and it was last held in Kapit in 1977 over eight days (Masing 1997: 38). The relationship between the lack of any performance of this ceremony since then and the small number of master *lemambang* which now remain cannot be confirmed. However, the advancing age of the *lemambang* could possibly contribute to the disappearance of these big *gawai*. The *lemambang* is the person who recites the *timang* chants for the whole period of the *gawai*, often for days and nights without cessation (e.g. Linklater 2001: 287). Linklater's depiction of this practice is probably a little exaggerated as he takes a traveller's perspective; however, one can imagine how difficult it is for *lemambang* who are often now over the age of 70 to conduct a major *gawai* over days and nights.

²³ During my fieldwork in the Baleh, a few people insisted that the farming god Pulang Gana had been the supreme god worshipped, rather than Singalang Burong. There might have been changes in the conceptualisation of the Iban gods that perhaps also led to the variations of *gawai* seen presently. The advent of Christianity in Kapit after the 1950s may possibly be the key to understanding this.

²⁴ *Lemambang-mit* is also generally called *lemambang-tadika* (kindergarten). Masing (1997 38, 84) explains that a *lemambang-tinggi* has mastered four *timang* categories; *beintu intu*, *tuah*, *beneh*, and *gawai amat*. Masing's categorisation may be confusing, but it still confirms that *gawai amat* is only led by the *tinggi*.

While Masing emphasises the importance of *timbang* chants in *gawai*, it is also necessary to focus on the *lemambang* themselves, without whom *gawai* would probably cease. Little attention has been paid to them so far. The section below details who the *lemambang* are and unpacks their practices and roles in the ritual. Doing this allows an investigation of the active aspects of the *gawai* rituals in their twilight period.

***Lemambang* Enggong anak Baning (1948–)**

Table 2 describes the career of *lemambang* Enggong (see also Figures 4 and 5). In his early twenties he was apprentice to a well known *lemambang* in the Baleh, who gave him water immersed with *batu peningkat*, which is a charm to improve one's memory, believed necessary for memorising lengthy chants in order to become a *lemambang*. The master shared his stone-immersed water with Enggong and he later soaked his own *batu* in this water and made one for himself.

When he was 27, Enggong carried out *nimang*-chanting for a *gawai amat* for the first time as a master *lemambang*. From the age of 35, he was employed as an offshore oil worker in Brunei for seven years. While in Brunei, he only once had the opportunity to perform a one-night *gawa* as a *lemambang* at an Iban house. When he returned to the Baleh river region at the age of 42, he resumed working as a farmer and occasionally undertook the work of a *lemambang*. At 57, he moved to town with his family and took up with his wife employment with the Town Council as street sweepers. Apart from this, the couple also farm rice on a small piece of land which they have purchased near town.

He explained that thus far he had served at 20 *gawai amat*, and in recent years he had regularly about four to five *gawa* each year. Unfortunately, it is not possible for him to make a living as a *lemambang*, even as an expert. He is also unperturbed about his son's indifference to following in his footsteps as a *lemambang*. It is interesting to note, however, that he has allowed his son and daughter to make a different, profitable use of the charm as a memory-enhancer, applying it to their studies at school.

A case of *gawai amat*: procedures and expenditure

Our attention now turns to the actual work of the *lemambang* in a *gawai amat*, looking at the process of the *gawai* and the expenditure involved, which includes the fee paid to the *lemambang*. I followed Enggong through the process of a *gawai amat* during the period between the end of 2008 and New Year 2009, held at a longhouse

in the Ngemah region in Kanowit.²⁵

A brief outline of this *gawai* which took place over five days including preparation and clearing up between 30 December 2008 and 3 January 2009 is shown in Table 3. It was conducted on a *kalingkang* basis (see Figure 3), and was arranged and carried out by Enggong upon the request of the sponsor, combined with *gawai tangga raja* and *nimang (gawa) tuah*. The interlacing structure of these rituals must have complicated the classification.

The sponsor was originally from the Baleh and was a close relative of Enggong. He was said to have had a good harvest that year as a farmer. Initially, the ritual was meant to last two nights and three days; however, through divination of pigs' livers (see Figure 6), the climax of the *gawai amat* was inauspicious, and this forced the *timang* chant to return to a particular stage to be redone and prolonged the ritual for another day. Including preparing as well as clearing up the venue after the ceremony was completed, the *lemambang* spent five days dedicated to this activity.

I calculated the actual time that the *lemambang* spent on chanting, which was 23 hours and 12 minutes. Each chant session could be between 15 minutes and 2 hours. Between sessions, they took short rests or naps for periods ranging from a few minutes to a couple of hours. During these breaks, other participants enjoyed playing musical instruments and games, which created a very festive atmosphere. Though the description of the chanting as 'ceaseless' is an exaggeration, the *lemambang's* physical and spiritual strength and his memorisation skill should not be underestimated. The Iban traditionally hold *lemambang* in high esteem, regarding them as protected by the gods.

As mentioned earlier, the Iban nowadays consider the *gawai amat* too expensive to sponsor. The total expense is generally estimated at M\$10,000 or more though Enggong considers M\$5,000 to M\$6,000 is sufficient. In fact, the expenditure incurred in the *gawai amat* which I witnessed exceeded Enggong's estimate. Table 4 explains the costs incurred by the *gawai* sponsors for this particular ceremony. I compared the duration of this *gawai* and that described in Masing's study, and both took place over three nights and four days. Although residents from neighbouring villages were officially invited to the *gawai* I witnessed, not more than a hundred people attended it.²⁶ Many of the longhouse residents were in Sibuh for Christmas and had yet to return. The expenses for the ceremony I witnessed totalled M\$7,125 or more, and therefore cost 2.5 times more than the ceremony in Masing's study. At the time of his study, Masing (1997: 38) explained that M\$2,809 was a

²⁵ *Gawai* in this region is very rare. The practice of Catholicism must be one reason for this.

²⁶ The *gawai* Masing (1997) refers does not provide the information on the number of guests.

very considerable sum to pay. It seems clear that the costs of the ceremony have increased over the years, and this could be why many Iban people turned away from staging *gawai amat*.

One obvious reason for the increasing cost of holding a *gawai* is due to the price difference 30 years on from when Masing did his study. These are shown in the Table 4. Whilst the price of rice and eggs remained the same that of pigs soared. In Masing's data, the cost of fowls is not listed. It is possible that fowls were not commodities for sale at the time. Beer and whisky need to be purchased from shops in town today, making the cost of alcoholic drink at *gawai* more expensive. In the past, *tuak* (rice beer) was the usual drink at *gawai*, and this was made locally and was much cheaper.

It is also clear from the table that the fees (*upa*) in cash paid to the *lemambang* increased 7.5 times, from M\$75 to M\$560, between the 1970s and the 2000s. The amount may vary slightly depending on the *lemambang*. Enggong charges between M\$350 and M\$480 for a single night's *gawa*, M\$560 for two to three nights, and M\$650 for four nights or more. Included in the fee would be the services of his other two assistants (*penyaku*). Interestingly, whilst the fee gained is, customarily for the Iban, shared equally between a *lemambang* and his assistants, other items following the ritual, specifically jars, fowls, cloth, amongst others, are not. All of the ceremonial jars used during *gawai* are usually given to the *lemambang*, but Enggong explained that to avoid having too many of them at home, he would himself arrange beforehand to rent and supply them to the *gawai* sponsor.

Another way to calculate the increase in costs over this time is to look at the percentage of all the cost for the rewards (jars, fowls, and cash) within the total amount of given for costs. It was only 6.3% in Masing's study – M\$177 of M\$2,809 – but it has now increased to 16% – M\$1,145 of M\$7,125. Regardless of rising prices, it can be concluded that the *lemambang*'s reward cost has evidently and remarkably been boosted.

Conclusion and future prospects for *gawai*

This article discussed the current situation relating to Iban *gawai*. There is a general perception that the practice of *gawai* is declining. However, although the *gawai* tradition is certainly in its twilight phase, I have examined the empirical data to observe the actual rate of change and there appears to be a balance between the loss of some types of activity and the persistence of other types. In other words, while *gawai* is becoming increasingly rare, local people still value the importance of the rituals. *Lemambang*, who are bardic priests and religious leaders continue to respond

to the demand for them to recite ritual chants to conduct the ceremonies.

Lemambang Enggong has a great deal of skill, knowledge, artistry and a strong conviction in *gawai* culture overall. He is precise and particular about the details of the ceremonies he directs, and organises his venues and his activities competently. An example to illustrate this is his construction of an attractive *ranyai*, or the shrine where the gods rest during the ceremony. The *lemambang* continues to practise in this established role. During my study I observed his masterful skills in coordinating *gawai*; moreover, he acts as a general problem solver for any deficiencies which may arise with the ceremony. ‘Deficiencies’ here means anything that is absent, and in the process complicating the holding of a *gawai*, for example, knowledge on the part of other people about the procedures of the ritual, how to set up the venue and what preparations need to be made, and also the lack of paraphernalia needed for the procedure such as ritual fabrics, which are very scarce these days. In the context of these cultural deficiencies, the role of the *lemambang* has certainly expanded. However, Enggong is able to cope with these challenges, and he brings knowledge and all the necessary items with him.

Since ritual paraphernalia, such as *pesaka* (heirlooms) cannot usually be removed from the household, Enggong often brings ones which he has borrowed from his relatives in his home village. Construction of the shrine requires good quality *pua’ kumbu’* ritual textiles, which he borrows. He explained that these *pua’* cloths belong to his brother-in-law, and he pays M\$150 to borrow five to seven pieces.²⁷ Thus, *lemambang* such as Enggong perform an enormously important role in the ceremony, as a director, coordinator, and choreographer. I would describe them as the ‘maintenance person’ of *gawai* culture. The multitude of roles which the *lemambang* necessarily take on could explain the current increases seen in the fees paid to them. Given that these fees are being paid, this seems to suggest that *lemambang* are currently in high demand in Kapit.

As previously discussed, only seven *lemambang* currently in Kapit have reached the level of ‘master’. Although the number of people in this group has apparently been stable since 1970s, they are now quite elderly. While there are probably dozens presently of the lower-ranked *lemambang-mit* who are active in Kapit, they can only conduct a *gawa* but not *gawai amat*. As they are also advancing in age, the pool for more potential *lemambang* masters is shrinking.

There are more *gawa* taking place in individual houses in town and this

²⁷ This is extremely interesting from the viewpoint of ‘indigenous curation’. Kreps (2005: 4) explains that *pusaka* (in Indonesian) is a central concept for protecting and preserving valuable cultural property and transmitting cultural knowledge and traditions down the generations.

corresponds with the desires and demands of the newly emerging social class. One-night *gawa* are held quite frequently all over town. This shows that the *gawai* has been downsized and now occurs more casually. Some of the significance of the ceremony has been simplified in these *gawa*, and consequently there are many opportunities at the moment for the *lemambang-mit* to officiate at *gawa* in Kapit.

Simplification of the *gawai* has been seen as inevitable from the perspective of costs. It seems clear that compared to 30 years ago, *gawai* today require more cash; money seems to dominate the *gawai*, as people continuously talk about the ceremony as being too expensive.²⁸ The tendency towards simplification can be seen from the perspectives of hosts too. Women in longhouses often complain about the *gawai amat* being a lot of bother. During *gawai amat*, by contrast to *bedara* or *gawa*, all community members are responsible for contributing to the ceremony and feeding the guests from outside the village. The fact that there is less motivation to hold *gawai* is related to changes in farming practices and to the rural exodus that has taken place. The decline in frequency of the ceremonies and the constant amendments made to the farming rituals must have some bearing to the decline. The village-based *gawai amat* remains valued despite being performed rarely, and this is acknowledged in the community. Members of the newly emerging social class of young migrant workers, who draw high salaries, are increasingly appreciating these old customs, and this will be the key to building and developing the *gawai*. After performing a series of *gawa* they are likely to stage a *gawai amat* in due course. The importance of the role of *lemambang* is therefore likely to further increase. The question still remains of who will be qualified to be *lemambang-tinggi* to fulfil these expectations. I strongly believe that the *lemambang* should be brought into the public limelight as well as scholarly attention. Their role continues to be central to Iban culture and, as we have seen, is likely to continue to grow. Their numbers, however, are likely to decrease due to age and lack of recruitment.

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²⁸ I attended another *gawai kalingkan tua* in the Baleh river region in 2008, staged and paid for by a well known businessman in town. The *lemambang* told me some time later that the man had spent a huge amount of money on this, paying for dozens of pigs to be sacrificed, chartering private ships to transport hundreds of guests, and that he had paid an excessive fee to him, the *lemambang*. He was uneasy about a *gawai* involving such a hefty cost, as an ordinary Iban person would no longer be able to hold such a ceremony. This is a comment worth paying attention to.

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Note on contributor

Goro Hasegawa is currently an Associate Fellow of the International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (Osaka, Japan).

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Table 1 Classification of *gawa* rituals based on *timbang* chants.*

	Masing's data (1978–1979)	Author's data (2008–2009)
	<i>Gawa timang beintu intu</i> (<i>Beintu</i> : to take care, to look after. For taking care of man's welfare and life.)	
1	<i>Timang sukat</i> (<i>sukat</i> : measure; human life-span)	<i>Nimang sukat</i> (see left)
2	<i>Timang bulu</i> (<i>bulu</i> : hair; mantle or armour of the human body)	<i>Nimang bulu</i> (see left)
3	<i>Timang buloh ayu</i> (<i>buloh</i> : bamboo / <i>ayu</i> : soul-substitute)	<i>Nimang buloh ayu</i> (see left)
4	<i>Timang panggang</i> (<i>panggung</i> : a board on which heirlooms are placed)	<i>Nimang panggau</i> (see left)
5	<i>Timang panggau</i> (<i>panggung</i> : a wooden frame to thresh padi, or a bed for sleep)	<i>Nimang sulap</i> (<i>sulap</i> : transplanting)
6	<i>Timang engkune</i> (<i>engkune</i> : a species of tree used for house posts)	<i>Nimang beneh</i> (<i>beneh</i> : padi seeds)
7	<i>Gawa timang tuah</i> (<i>tuah</i> : wealth, good fortune. A ritual to increase one's fortune)	<i>Nimang tuchong taun</i> (<i>tuchong taun</i> : the height of year)
8		<i>Nimang batu</i> (<i>batu</i> : stones or talismans)
9		<i>Nimang giga</i> (<i>giga</i> : expedition)
10		<i>Nimang tuah</i> (see left)

* Masing (1997: 25 ff.) subdivides *gawa* into *gawa timang beintu intu*, and *gawa timang tuah*. Under the former, there are six further variations. There are slight differences in how he sorts these in terms of the *timbang* names. In comparison, my data has been organised by naming the *nimang*, which is the verb form of *timbang* denoted as actions.

Table 2 Career of *Lemambang* Enggong anak Baning (age 60 in 2008).

Elementary school	First performed chanting (<i>nimang</i>) at school event.
After completing elementary school	Gained experiences as <i>penyaku</i> (assistant for <i>lemambang</i>)
In his early 20s	Apprentice to a master <i>lemambang</i> and succeeded with a <i>batu peningkat</i> , a charm for improving one's memory to become a <i>lemambang</i> . The master shared his stone-immersed water with Enggong who later soaked his own <i>batu</i> in this water and made one for himself.
Age 27 (1974)	Officiated a <i>gawai amat</i> for the first time.
Age 35 (1982)	Went to work in Brunei (offshore oil).
Age 42 (1990)	Returned from Brunei to Majau in the Baleh, and resumed role of a <i>lemambang</i> .
Age 57 (2005)	Moved to a rented house in Kapit town with wife, and both work as street sweepers as well as farming rice on land they purchased near town.
Has conducted 20 <i>gawai amat</i> to date (2008), and 5 to 6 <i>gawa</i> each year recently.	

Table 3 Outline of the procedure of a *gawai kalingkang tua tangga raja* over three nights and four days.

December 2008 – January 2009	
30 Dec	<p>PREPARATION</p> <p>10:00 People gather and start setting up the site. Start some <i>bedara</i>, making offerings.</p> <p>17:30 First <i>ngalu antu, bedara</i> for calling gods conducted by <i>lemambang</i>. And some other ceremonies, <i>menpu ubong</i>, etc. taking place and music played.</p> <p>24:00 Retire to repose.</p>
31 Dec	<p>FIRST DAY</p> <p>04:12 The <i>gawai</i> sponsor ceremonially visits other (<i>bilek</i>) doors asking for firewood (<i>menpu kayu</i>). Continue setting up the site. Other ceremonies take place; <i>ngalu pegaban, ngepas ranyai, niti daun, mukat</i></p> <p>15:25 The second <i>ngalu antu</i>, calling gods is performed.</p> <p>16:05 A god Raja Remaong is entered in the shrine. The other, Singalang Burong, awaits its turn.</p> <p>18:22 Nimang starts.</p>
1 Jan	<p>SECOND DAY</p> <p>07:06 Singalang Burong is entered in the shrine.</p> <p>07:35 Three pigs slain and the livers divined (<i>nyambut ati babi</i>). One of the three livers read badly and the <i>timang</i> chants are taken back to a certain stage to chant again.</p>
2 Jan	<p>THIRD DAY</p> <p>06:52 A <i>gawa of tua nikia</i> takes place.</p> <p>07:02 Deconstructing the shrine.</p> <p>08:15 A pig again slain for divination, the result is fine.</p> <p>08:48 Start <i>gawa of nimang tanga raja</i>.</p> <p>09:31 Singalang Burong is found still there, and the shrine rebuilt.</p> <p>16:30 Starting the conclusion of nimang</p> <p>20:09 Settle wages and rewards. Continue making small offerings.</p> <p>21:40 Retire to repose.</p>
3 Jan	<p>CLOSING</p> <p>05:30 Making offering for <i>pulai semengat</i> (soul to return home). 15 minutes <i>nimang</i> – final conclusion.</p> <p>07:20 Break up after meal.</p>

Table 4 Total expenses for *gawai amat* (three nights and four days)

Item	DATA FROM MASING (1976)		DATA FROM AUTHOR (2008–9)	
	Quantity	Amount (M\$)	Quantity	Amount (M\$)
RICE	150 kg (336 <i>gantang</i>)	744	100 kg	450
EGGS for offering	200 eggs	50	900 eggs	260
PIGS for sacrifice	4 pigs	250	5 pigs	1600
RICE WINE (<i>tuak</i>)	9 jars	308	50 litres	190
SPIRITS (<i>arrak</i>)	48 gallons	480		
BEER, WHISKY, SOFT DRINKS			8 cases (of 24 cans each)	450
FOWLS for sacrifice and cooking			40 fowls	630
FUEL (electricity)				500 or more
CIGARETTES				100 or more
MISCELLANEOUS		800		1800
REWARDS (<i>UPA</i>) FOR <i>LEMAMBANG</i> AND TWO <i>PENYAKU</i>	4 jars	72	7 jars	405
As above	6 fowls	30	12 fowls	180
As above	cash	75	cash	560
TOTAL		2809		7125 or more

Data from Masing (1997: 42) on *gawai kenyalang* (three nights and four days) from 12 to 15 December 1976 , and my data on a *gawai kalingkan tua tangga raja* (three nights and four days) and including preparation time, from 30 December 2008 to 3 January 2009. Exchange rate in 2018 M\$1 – US\$ 0.25



Figure 1 An Iban magical *pengaruh* stone. For two generations this stone has been shaved for *ai batu* (water-stone) by the family that owns it and it is now shaped thus. Photo by Goro Hasegawa, 2009.



Figure 2 A bottle of *ai batu* (stone-water) hung on a beam. These can be seen in Iban homes. It is a bottle of water that also contains stone powder, *ai batu*. Photo by Goro Hasegawa, 2009.

Conceptualization of *Gawai* (Data: the author)

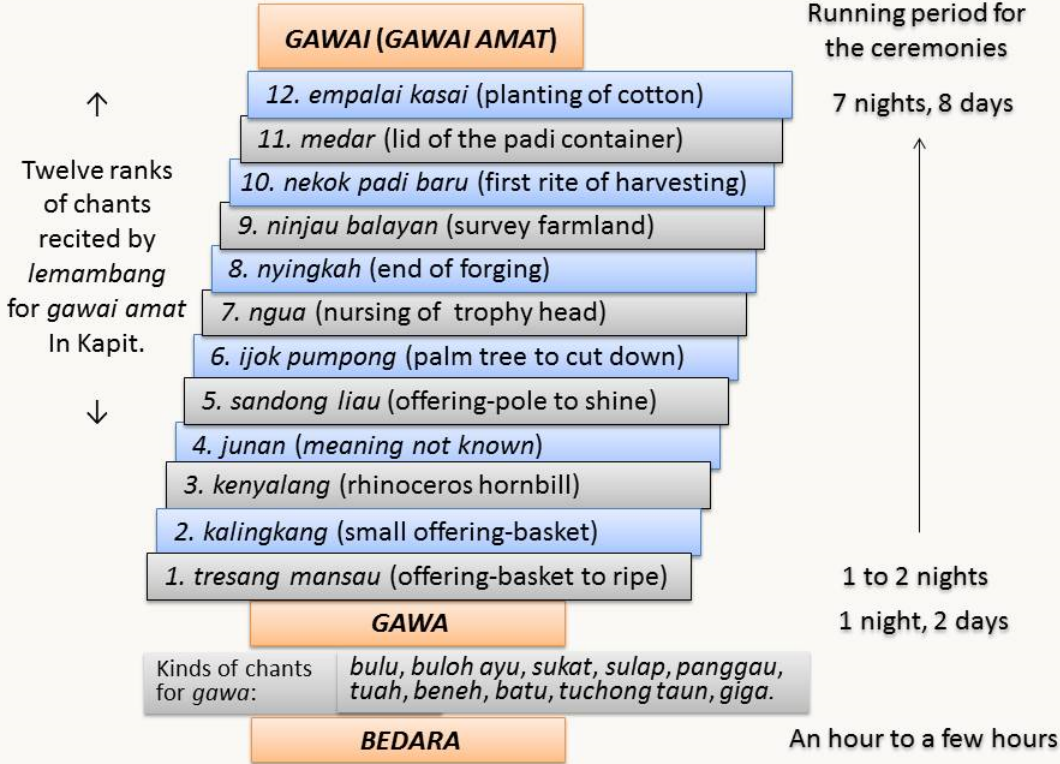


Figure 3 Structure of *gawai*.