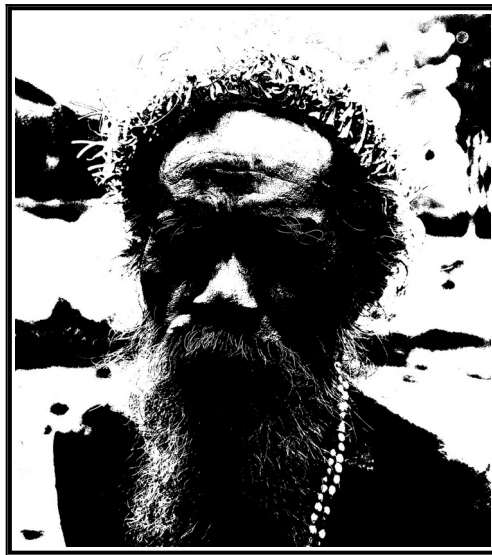


ʔAdad Sɛŋrɔʔx

## The Temiar Ritual Belief System

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## Updates

The Introduction here is taken from the Preface of my book *The Temiars of the Puyan River* (2022). Parts 1 and 2 of this discourse are taken from Chapters 1 and 2, respectively, of the same book. The discourse here, however, is not a static record and will receive updates from time to time, in order to add detail or make corrections to the information presented herein, as I discover more from the Temiars.

The list below is to help anyone who may have seen a previous version, by indicating what changes have been made in newer versions.

Date of updates	Particulars
August 2022	Name of the grey-faced buzzard – <a href="#">Table 3</a>
Sept/Oct 2022	Footnote on blood taboo – § <a href="#">1.2</a> Details on naming animals – § <a href="#">1.2</a> Details on digging tubers – § <a href="#">1.3</a> Details on Temiar festivals – § <a href="#">1.3</a> Details on the fruit harvest – § <a href="#">1.4</a> Details on the <i>kenlɔ̃x</i> eyeball – § <a href="#">1.8</a> Details on turtle species that cause storms – § <a href="#">1.2</a> , <a href="#">2.2</a> , <a href="#">Table 3</a> Detail on the casting net taboo – § <a href="#">2.2</a> Detail on the smell of the afterbirth – § <a href="#">2.3</a>
December 2022	Detail on the <i>R'waay</i> taboo – § <a href="#">2.1</a> Added the <i>Pacɔg</i> taboo – § <a href="#">2.1</a> Added the <i>B'ranii<sup>k</sup></i> taboo – § <a href="#">2.1</a> Detail on the <i>T'racɔɔg</i> taboo – § <a href="#">2.3</a> Added the <i>Ranyē<sup>k</sup></i> taboo – § <a href="#">2.3</a> Added taboo species to list – § <a href="#">2.4.1</a> , <a href="#">2.4.2</a> , <a href="#">2.4.2</a>
May 2023	Footnote detail on mediums – § <a href="#">1.8</a> Detail on the <i>S'lomban</i> dance – § <a href="#">1.9</a> Detail on Genhaa <sup>k</sup> taboo – § <a href="#">2.2</a> Detail on Tenlaa <sup>k</sup> taboo – § <a href="#">2.3</a>
September 2023	Note on the cɛŋcɔ̃x liana sap – § <a href="#">1.8</a>
February 2024	Added taboo species to list – § <a href="#">2.4.2</a>

Cover image: the late <sup>2</sup>Abaan <sup>2</sup>Anjan of the Puyan River.

# Contents

Introduction.....	5
Notes on Temiar Pronunciation.....	8
Part 1.....	10
Temiar world view: the human realm vs the realm of nature.....	10
1.1 The divide.....	10
1.2 Souls of nature: animals.....	10
1.3 Souls of nature: trees and plants, mountains and rivers.....	18
1.4 Guardian spirits of the creation.....	23
1.5 <i>C'naal Nyu<sup>k</sup> 'Aluj</i> — Folktales of the Creator.....	26
1.6 The <i>hukom</i> code of life.....	28
1.7 The Human soul.....	33
1.8 Dream life and <i>halaa<sup>k</sup></i> power.....	34
1.9 Ritual dance and invocation.....	43
1.10 Summary of soul types originating from the wild.....	48
Part 2.....	50
Definitions of Temiar Taboos.....	50
2.1 Taboos concerning actions and speech.....	50
<i>Məsíx</i> .....	50
<i>Pacɔŋ</i> .....	51
<i>R'waay</i> .....	51
<i>B'ranij<sup>k</sup></i> .....	52
<i>Jahruu<sup>k</sup></i> .....	52
<i>P'renhɔɔd</i> .....	52
<i>S'lantab</i> .....	53
2.2 Taboos concerning foods from the wild.....	53
<i>Julux</i> .....	53
<i>Sabat</i> .....	54
<i>Te<sup>k</sup>ruu<sup>k</sup></i> .....	56
<i>Genhaa<sup>k</sup></i> .....	56
2.3 Taboos concerning human and nature odours.....	57
<i>Pel<sup>2</sup>ax</i> .....	57
<i>T'racɔŋ</i> .....	57
<i>Raŋyɛ<sup>k</sup></i> .....	58
<i>Tenlaa<sup>k</sup></i> .....	59
2.4 <i>Sabat</i> animal species and associated dangers.....	60
2.4.1 <i>Sabat</i> danger charts.....	62
2.4.2 List of <i>sabat</i> animal and fruit species.....	64
2.4.3 Non- <i>sabat</i> animals.....	68
Index of Terms and Concepts.....	71
Areas For Further Investigation.....	73
Bibliography.....	73

## Introduction

In 2018, I received a copy of Geoffrey Benjamin's book, *Temiar Religion 1964-2012*, sent to me by the author himself, for my study. It was a thoroughly interesting book, especially for me as I was in a place to directly weigh its ideas with the Temiars around me. And thus my research work on Temiar beliefs began in earnest. Through the next two years I discovered much, and I found it fascinating uncovering the true traditions that are upheld by the Temiars, that lie underneath all the normal activities that are carried out. After several months of intensive investigation, I found that many areas of research in the book didn't accord well with the Temiars here in the Puyan Valley, and the story they gave me seemed much more robust, coming from Temiars who haven't had their traditions watered down by interference of outside society. Hence, if you have read the book, you will find that the record of Temiar traditions I give here is different in many regards. It is my hope that I have been able to correct what was distorted and paint a more vivid picture of Temiar beliefs and customs (if somewhat summarised here), so that the traditions of the Temiars may be better known and preserved.

While I have no doctorate in anthropology to back up my own research, the facts that I have given can be proven by anyone who has the opportunity to speak to Temiars who are knowledgeable of their traditions. They will be the ones to prove or to disprove what is written here. I have certainly not tried to fabricate anything myself but there are bound to be discrepancies that will need ironing out in due time, as I or anyone else among the Temiars continue to dig for clues to their history. I am not a Temiar and do not have half of the inborn knowledge they have, and it is easy for me to misunderstand the concepts that they talk about. But at least I can refer back to them at any time and learn where I have made my errors, as I am not removed from the Temiar environment.

It is interesting that the author of the book aforementioned, in response to my feedback on his published research, said that we will never find two Temiars saying the same thing, and thus our research will always differ from each other's. And I agree that this is partly true, as two Temiars may apparently have two ideas about the same concept which they are both describing, but it is not the whole story. If one lives with the Temiars for an extended period one should realise that they only ever describe a concept partially at best (in their mind they are providing what they feel is important at the time, not a categorical breakdown of the entire subject), and the gaps need to be filled in by further careful investigation. As well as that, some Temiars claim to know every detail when in fact they can be proven by others to be ignorant of the traditions they claim to know. It takes much time, even years, to find persons who are consistent with their knowledge and who can be trusted with what they tell. But even a trusted person may need to be asked about something on multiple occasions in order to gain a full picture of the lore that lies hidden

inside his heart.

One good example is with the Temiar concept of ‘*kenlōōx*,’ a word that by itself means a glass ball or eyeball. I had difficulty in discovering the true significance of this word to the area of soul-mediumship<sup>1</sup> and at first I heard that it was the actual eyeball of the soul-guide that the medium took in a dream and thereafter kept in a pouch. Later on the picture became clearer and I found that a medium obtains a stone from his/her soul-guide, not its eyeball, to make it a ‘pet’. The soul-guide, which has a real animal form in waking life, then becomes the ‘eye’ of the medium and can see for him/her as it roams about in the forest and thus it is the guide itself that is called the ‘*kenlōōx*’ [see [Section 1.8](#) for further description]. The idea in the book proposes that the ‘*kenlōōx*’ is one of the medium’s souls, leading to an assumption that humans have multiple souls in Temiar belief.

Also inferred in the book, Temiar Religion, is the idea that the ritual taboos held on actions, speech and foods, and that are stringently adhered to in every-day life, help to provide moral guidelines for Temiar society. But in fact, I found through my interviews that they do nothing to constrain inter-human behaviour, they only serve to prevent actions of human behaviour that might interfere with the souls of nature around them. Furthermore, the deity that resides over these souls and metes out punishments (Taa<sup>k</sup> Kareiy, the one causing storms and thunder) on breaches of the code of non-interference is not interested in the ups and downs of human morality. The taboos relate to the Temiars’ existence and safety on a daily basis, and breaking them can lead to many kinds of ill fate. They do not guard against moral misdeeds and neither do they draw direct attention toward the Creator (Nyū<sup>k</sup> ʔAluj), who is very apparent in Temiar thought.

The picture of the Temiars is well in need of repainting or re-colouring anyhow, as they are a people who are hardly heard of and the advancing, modernist society all around them still knows very little about them. Their faces are seen at town when they make day-trips to collect their small benefits and to visit the market or the hospital, but where they come from, how they live and what traditions they hold all remains a mystery. They are deemed a bush-people, who lag behind main society, refusing to pick themselves up and learn about the modern ‘scientific’ life that makes the world a ‘better’ place. Visitors to the Temiars will see their ‘poor’ living conditions (evidence of a dependence on natural materials, not of squalor), and may assume they are idle most of the time, noting also the

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<sup>1</sup> I follow Geoffrey Benjamin’s use of the word ‘medium’ and ‘mediumship’ to describe the communication and invocation of spirits as it describes the activity of communication with the spirit world on behalf of others in the community, as opposed to manipulating the powers of that world for personal use, which would be described as shamanism. In Temiar belief, most spirits are wandering souls (and hence I refer to them as souls throughout). They are the soul or inner person of natural entities that have wandered away from their physical home, whether it be it a tree, mountain, animal, or human, and can be seen and interacted with by persons in their dreams, and especially by the spiritually adept, or mediums. A soul-medium can interact with the souls of nature while in a trance state during a ritual dance.

absence of money-making activities going on, such as commercial farming or rubber plantations, especially in the upriver valleys. When they clear off, daily activities can resume and a perpetual list of jobs that are necessary for maintaining a forest existence, such as foraging fern shoots and fruits, cutting and burning new swiddens, planting and tending crops, collecting materials for house-building, gathering medicinal plants to treat ill persons, sometimes venturing far off in the mountains to find what they need. Some go hunting, fishing and setting traps, to bring back food for their families.

Social activities also go on, like the night-time dances, the celebrations of the first fruits and rice planting, or the sending away of a deceased person's soul. Discussions of important issues are held by the elders, such as regarding land-encroachment by loggers, or regarding the settlement of a dispute between villagers. That the Temiars possess a *hukom*, or code of conduct, that the elders uphold and teach in their community, is probably completely unheard of to outsiders. If those visitors would hang around a while they might see that the Temiars do not sit idly watching the sun rise and then set each day, but they busy themselves, as much as their energy allows, providing for their families and maintaining the spiritual life of their society. They might also see that life in the last twenty years has become increasingly difficult to maintain, with widespread deforestation and the loss of many natural resources. In the old days the Temiars could make a living by collecting forest products for trade, such as manau rattan, but in recent years even these resources have been reduced to very little, due to serious damages inflicted upon the landscape.

This is a discourse on Temiar traditional beliefs and their observance of rites that stem from these, on what make the Temiars a true indigenous people group of the Malayan Peninsula. The Temiars are recorded as the second largest group (after the Semai, a sister people group living further south) of original peoples in Malaysia, who are termed 'Orang Asli,' having a population reaching 25,000 in 2008, compared to 42,000 for Semai (Gombak Museum figures). There are some 19 people groups of the Orang Asli, that have been classified by the government (but there would be more if language division is appreciated), and, undoubtedly, some of them will be found to hold similar beliefs and observances as the Temiars. For example, while the Temiars practise ritual celebration of the souls of the forest, including that of the tiger and those of the trees and mountains, the Menriq people to the east of them celebrate the tiger soul, and the Jehai, to their west, celebrate the souls of trees and nature. Therefore, parts of this discourse may provide an introduction to the beliefs of not only the Temiars but also of the neighbouring indigenous people groups.

## Notes on Temiar Pronunciation

As of today there is no formalised way of writing Temiar. The Senoic language has some complex word forms and difficult vowel sounds and attempting to write it with plain Roman letters, as has been attempted before, proves totally inadequate. It also does little to help the non-Temiar with correct pronunciation of Temiar words. The Temiars use plain letters, such as in their short-hand messaging on their phones, because they recognise words without the need to write them so precisely. But to do the language some justice, and to help us non-Temiars, I use some special symbols that allow us to differentiate between vowel sounds (which can all be short, long or nasalised) and to add some special consonants. My grasp of Temiar is not yet perfect, however, and my spelling of Temiar words may still be experimental sometimes!

Vowel symbols are as follows:

a aa	front vowel, as in pat, but ‘aa’ can tend to a central sound as in art
ə əə	mid-central vowel, as in her
ε εε	unrounded ‘e’, as in pet
i ii	high-front vowel, as in feet
í íí	unrounded ‘i’, as in pit
o oo	a rounded ‘o’, as in poke, but ‘oo’ can be higher, almost at ‘uu’
ɔ ɔɔ	a half-rounded ‘o’, as in corn
σ σσ	back, unrounded ‘o’, as in pot
u uu	back, rounded vowel, as in do
u̯ u̯u̯	mid-central ‘u’, as in ‘ew’
ù	a half-rounded ‘u’, as in book

Almost all vowels can be pronounce short or long.

Consonants sounds that are different to English are:

c	is pronounced similar but shorter than an English ‘ch’, and word-finally it is shortened even more
j	is like English ‘j’ except word-finally where it is usually silent (it positions the tongue against the palate)
ŋ	‘ng’ as in ping pong, Ì when capitalised
ɲ	a nasalised ‘y’ (different to ‘ny’), Ñ capitalised
k̠	glottal stop at syllable-end, which marks a truncation of the vowel sound before it. I refrain from introducing glottal stop marks (ʔ or ʔ̠) here because they would not be recognisable to Temiars, who grow up with the use of k, as it is used with the Malay language. It is raised so that it isn’t confused for a pronounced consonant (the velar k) by a non-Malay-speaker.
x	pronounced (velar) ‘k’ at word-final, often as ‘kh’, having slight aspiration by

- many Temiars
- <sup>2</sup> glottal stop pronounced pre-vowel at word-beginning or mid-word where a consonant does not begin the vowel sound. It is marked here to show that words in Temiar do not run into each other.

Diphthongs, especially of vowels at word-end, which are usually closed by w or y:

ay	as in fly (long: aay)
ɛi, ɛy	as in say (long: ɛɛy)
aw	as in how (long: aaw)
ow	as in snow (long: oow)
ɔy	as in toy (long: ɔɔy)
uw	as in flew (long: uuw)

Also, there are ɔw, ɔɔw, əy, əəy, uy, and uuy which are not found in English. Vowels can also be pronounced nasalised and these are denoted with a bar over the letter, e.g.  $\bar{o}$ . The marker [''] is used to show a separation of two consonants, usually at word initial position.

It should be noted also that the language I use here among the Temiars in the Puyan valley is considered different in certain regards from that spoken by Temiars further south or those in Perak state. From Pos Gɔɔb, the farthest Temiar community northward in Kelantan, to Pos Balaar, several river valleys south, the kind of Temiar spoken is considered plain and direct, and because of that fact these Temiars would call themselves, *T'mær*, meaning 'plain and clear'. Temiars further south in Kelantan, from Bøøx B'tus (Kuala Betis) to Pos Haw, speak with intonations that gain them the label of *Genləəl*, 'wavering'. Further south still, and akin to the Temiars of Perak, the Temiar is mixed with Semai, the language of a sister indigenous group, due to the proximity with Semai communities in the Cameron Highlands. Over in Perak, the Temiars speak slowly and slur their speech, thus giving themselves the title of Temiar *p'lēh*, which comes from the word *p'lenhēen*, 'slowly'.

While ethnographers try to explain that the real divide between kinds of Temiar speech is North-South, regardless of the Central mountain range, the Temiars here in the Puyan do place a certain lingual divide along that mountain border. There are countless different words used by Temiars in Perak and their formations of words from verbs follow the Semai rules. One obvious aspect of morphological difference, is the nomilisation of verbs, to create nouns. For example, the Perak Temiars' *cebniib* 'a journey', from the verb *ciib* 'go', as compared to *nebciib*, the same word as spoken in Kelantan. Perak speech largely follows the Semai rule of infixing verbs whereas Kelantan speech nearly always affixes to the front of words.



## PART 1

### Temiar world view: the human realm vs the realm of nature.

#### 1.1 THE DIVIDE

The Temiars face a multitude of spiritual entities that are at odds with human activities going on among them, disturbing their realm. According to their belief, the souls of trees, animals, rivers and mountains can all be offended by careless human actions and they may retaliate by causing illness and attacking or stealing people's souls. The great guardian spirit of all living creatures of the wild also replies with thunder and storms when any of his sub-ordinates feel offense as humans encroach on them. While being wholly dependent on the natural realm for their life and sustenance, people do not share the same wild nature, and as the Temiars say, they carry a different odour on them that nature can often sense. The great wild is where they have been put by Nyu<sup>k</sup> 'Aluj, their Creator, but wisdom is needed to preserve their existence in it and to maintain the balance between cultured human life and the realm of untamed nature. In their own mind they describe themselves as a people of cleared spaces, in the midst of the dense and wild forest, calling their cleared spaces *dii*x, 'home', and the forest around them, *bεε*x, 'the outside'. They must venture out to forage for their needs, and to hunt, so that life at the *dii*x be sustained. They are not fearful of the *bεε*x around them, but they know that it is a wild realm, where they could cause disturbance. Even the fruits, plants and animals that they gather from it can carry risks when they bring them back to the home. The *bεε*x provides them an abundance of resources, and yet they must offer respect to that realm, or their lives could become troubled.

#### 1.2 SOULS OF NATURE: ANIMALS

All people love to have fun and the Temiars are no different, finding ways to enjoy themselves most of the time, when out foraging for fruits, jumping in rivers, catching newts on the rocks, swinging on liana vines, making models from sticks, painting their faces with colour dots and so forth. But there are some actions that seem fun and harmless, and yet they cross the line into causing interference with the souls of nature. Laughing at creatures that are *nε<sup>k</sup>caa<sup>k</sup>*, caught for food, or are found scurrying or flying about, such as insects, is one activity severely cautioned against as indulging in such frivolity is feared to

cause a great *dəndəx* storm with crashing thunder. The pig-tailed macaque has one of the most potent of animal souls (and also the easiest to dress up and play with) and the stories tell of numerous occasions where they gathered to play with one and laugh at it, and were then suddenly destroyed by the earth turning over on them or a giant rock falling down and burying them all alive. Of such places where this is known to have happened there can be found a pool of water today as testament to the folly of those fun-makers.

Making an animal perform as a human, or a dead animal scratch itself as if still alive, or pretend that anything like a fruit, or even oneself, is an animal, all cross the boundary into offense of souls. Mimicking certain bird calls when out in the forest is another dangerous action that is strictly tabooed. Even laughing too loudly, playing chase too vigorously, and screaming while down at the river are actions that would be asking for a storm to blow over and the elders would in every case order the young ones to quiet down. Reflecting the sun's light upwards toward the sky, with a mirror or by leaving a pot of tea uncovered outside, would be deemed dangerous, as if asking the thunder deity to come and drink, and with him bring his thunder!

Mentioning the name of animals, fruits or plants can also prove problematic for daily life, if the attention of the souls of those things are aroused by hearing their names called. It is particularly careless to call the animal's name while preparing or eating its meat and it is feared that to do so would bring on a dangerous bout of diarrhea for whoever eats it, even leading to death. Vegetables, fruits, or inanimate objects, cannot be called *nyam*, or animals, either, as if they were alive. Announcing someone's return from hunting will cause the same kind of trouble for them when they eat the fish or game they have brought home, as well as pointing at or mentioning what animals they caught. Pointing at a hole in standing bamboo, in which bats could be nesting, will cause them to change into a centipede that would jump out and bite the one trying to extract the bats. Naming a rainbow when one is seen is also fearfully avoided, as doing so is said to bring on a storm. Instead, a safer term is used, simply, *na-wōg*, 'it has risen'.

The actions and speech mentioned above are tabooed for the Temiars and are called, *məsíx*, a term that probably comes from the word, *bísíg*, to whisper under one's breath so that unwanted persons can't hear what is being said. They are actions that would be better not done, or words better said secretively, so that the souls of nature would not hear and take offense and the wrath of the thunder maker not be stirred. Taboos on actions and words are implanted in the minds of children daily, by the adults around them, who will call out, "*Məsíx! ʔAgo<sup>k</sup> həəy!*" Meddling! Don't do that! whenever a child infringes on something prohibited. And thus they grow up learning to be cautious with their actions, thereby sparing themselves the undesirable consequences of their mistakes.

There are animals that would create great danger if killed because they dwell in the recesses of the earth, and in deep holes among large boulders. These include three spiny turtle species, the large land tortoise, and the python. One turtle cannot even be approached, for fear of it burning up the forest with fire. A few years back a large python

attacked the headman's dog at Kajaax village and he took his shotgun and shot it. The dog had already been crushed by the python's coils, but then shortly afterwards a storm blew up and they all had to run for cover. In the 1980s, at Pinañ, they caught a large soft-shelled turtle in the main river and a number of people gathered around to have a look, pointing and laughing because it was quite unusual to see. It was in the middle of the dry season and the weather was calm but as they were preparing the turtle to make a meal of it, a huge and sudden gale blew on them and they were frightened for their lives and fled up-river.

A hunter would never announce he was going out to *siyə<sup>k</sup>*, or hunt animals, as doing so would cause him to *siyal*, or find nothing to catch. He would keep his intentions hidden by saying he was just going out for a walk, in order to keep his luck intact. A trapper likewise would not say he was going out to set traps, but just that he was tying knots, or running along the trail. The names of *mərgəəh*, or dangerous beasts, such as the bear, tiger and elephant, were never mentioned when out in the forest, for fear of bringing their attention on oneself. Avoidance terms would be used to outwit them, such as: *sadaam*, 'menace', or *jə<sup>k</sup>tuux*, 'feared', for the tiger; *tataa<sup>k</sup> rayaa<sup>k</sup>*, 'big old man', for the elephant; *cəg ʔapəʔs*, 'rips zingiber leaves', for the sun bear; *ludaad*, 'slithering', for snakes. One would never be foolish enough to say that the such and such a beast hadn't been seen in a while, as this would openly remind it to come and call on the house. To call the names of medicinal plants while collecting or applying them would cause them to lose their efficacy. Many other *nehtuh julaa<sup>k</sup>* or secret terms were used, to avoid calling real names or speaking too plainly about one's intentions, as shown in the table below:

Speaking carelessly, as I have given examples of above, can cause instant dangers to people, even as they strive to maintain an inconspicuous disposition within the wild around them. Making careless promises to someone can also put them in danger and persons should do their best to avoid such flippant assurances. But still, it does often happen and there have been numerous cases of people meeting with beasts of the forest that have set them fleeing. For example, promising to meet someone later on in the forest, to forage or go fishing together, but later on deciding not to go, will cause that person to expect one's company later on, and instead, another somebody will be sure to come and meet them, be it a tiger or a snake, to attack them! Or if one is going on a long walk, or going away and hopes to come back soon, they should say, I cannot promise, I don't know when I'll be back, so that no one will have expectations that will not turn out.

If food or drink is offered, or is made available and has been mentioned by mouth, it is not only polite to take some but it is taboo to refrain from eating or drinking, and doing so would be asking for certain ill fate, such as a centipede running out and biting, or a tree falling on one in the forest, or getting cut with one's own bush knife. So people are careful to take some, even if only a handful, and as they do they say, "*s'lantab*," meaning, I've had a little. In the old days, if anyone teased someone that they should marry a girl or boy, then that person would be ordered to marry her or him as soon as possible, for the suggestion being made was also considered *s'lantab*. If the person who was offered

someone as a partner then left without marrying, or their suggested partner procrastinated, then a serious ill fate could happen to them.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Term</b>	<b>Hidden meaning</b>
Animals and foods	<i>ʔaay</i>	game in the trees
	<i>nyam</i>	game on the ground
	<i>bəər</i>	vegetables and even bats and rodents
	<i>cōōs</i>	‘chirping’, birds
	<i>gantεεη</i>	‘bamboo tubes’, rats
	<i>bōōh</i>	bananas and sweet potatoes
	<i>bēnhed</i>	‘sweetness’, game
Substances	<i>kendeg</i>	‘bitterness’, blow-dart poison
	<i>bəər</i>	bird gum
Activities	<i>dēhdəh</i>	‘passing’, hunting
	<i>kεmkap</i>	trapping
	<i>pεrpaar</i>	‘running’, checking traps
	<i>sεgsūg</i>	‘shining’, frog hunting
	<i>pεηgəp</i>	‘sinking a hook’, fishing
	<i>ʔis ʔōōm</i>	tomorrow
	<i>həηōōd</i>	nights away (sleeping in the forest)
	<i>dεmdəp</i>	‘laying leaves’, camping
Rituals	<i>kuyōw</i>	‘wandering’, visiting far away
	<i>sīndul</i>	‘to gather’, to hold a ritual dance
	<i>s'gīíp</i>	‘to wipe’, administer ritual healing
	<i>mēē<sup>k</sup></i>	fragrant leaves

*Table 1. Julaa<sup>k</sup>, or secret terms, used by Temiars to hide what they intend to do from animals and souls of the wild.*

Perhaps the most dangerous offense that can be made against animal souls is one that is committed by accident, and that involves one’s *lōōt*, or blood. It happens when one gets scalded while cooking or eating certain meats, either with the hot soup or a hot pan, or an ember from the fire, or else gets cut and spills one’s blood. The smell of human flesh or blood becomes mixed with the game causing a conflict of human and animal realms. This mishap falls under a taboo named *pēlʔax*, also named *māsíx-lōōt*, ‘blood mentioning’<sup>2</sup>, and

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2 Thus it is one’s scalded body or dripping blood that calls the attention of the animal,

its consequences can lead to fatality, be it from a tiger attack or from a calamity out in the forest. A person who commits this offense is said to carry *pəl<sup>2</sup>ɛŋ*, the smell of their own blood that has offended, and if they went out to the forest for any reason the avenging tigers, who are an evil kind, would be sure to seek them out in only a short time. They would actually not dare to leave the house if they valued their life and believed that the danger was real, but they would stay at home for at least seven days, until the day of the *c'raŋas* was reached, when the smell of offense on them had ended. It is this *pəl<sup>2</sup>ɛŋ* (also referred to as *ŋoŋ*, smell) that the tigers will seek out on persons to exact their revenge, and it depends on how strong this smell is on someone as to whether they will be sought out quickly or not. Some reptiles are so potent that they can cause a person to *tɛ<sup>k</sup>nɔɔ<sup>k</sup>*, or be guilty of the highest offense, if they were careless while eating the meat, and the tigers can seek out the *ŋoŋ* on them in only one day, so there is reason to fear.

Even pulling off a leech, or squashing a hair louse at the time of preparing food can make one's blood drip and thus cause this blood-offense. It is known to have happened several times in the past, as with one family living at Bɛɛd on the Puyan, in the 1970s, when a woman squashed her daughter's lice the evening they were eating *kaa<sup>k</sup> kɛnrab*, a sandy-coloured catfish. The next day the girl was out in the forest following after her father (who had warned them not to let her go out) and a tiger attacked her. When her father searched for her he saw the tiger with her body. Another tragic incident happened at the Jɛŋhuŋ River, probably around the 1940s, when <sup>2</sup>Asuh, the young daughter of Taa<sup>k</sup> <sup>2</sup>Ampís, a great ancestor of the Puyan Temiars, was taken by a tiger in the early morning as she washed at the river. She also had crushed hair lice the night before. Children are put in great danger if they break the taboo while eating meats such as rats or catfish and they carelessly scald themselves with the food or the hot pan, and thus their parents will often command them to come indoors at dusk, or not to run off anywhere alone, just in case they have any smell of offense, saying, “*Pəl<sup>2</sup>ax hāā<sup>k</sup>!*”—remember your blood offense!

*Tɛ<sup>k</sup> jɛnrab*, or the place of a tiger attack, arouses notable fear in the Temiars, especially as the attacks that happen there are normally linked to the *pəl<sup>2</sup>ax* offense. No one would dare venture near such a place (amazingly, even some 70 years after the attack, I found) due to the belief that the smell of human blood (and the *pəl<sup>2</sup>ɛŋ* that attracted the evil tigers) still remains there. If anyone was to approach the spot, the sky would *s'ɛnyəb*, or darken suddenly, and the dangerous tiger-soul would arise and, without warning, a tiger would emerge and pounce. In the same way, if a person was killed in an accident, it could easily be linked to *pəl<sup>2</sup>ax* or another taboo offense and the place would carry their offending smell for generations to come.

The roaming tiger is the most feared of beasts and when they are the evil kind, many times more so. They are known to be able to mimic the chattering of people, the crying of a baby or even call out to people, “*Madoh!*” over here! Thus they are very dangerous to the unsuspecting person who might hear voices and go to see who is coming or go to see

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while eating its meat, and thus disturbs its soul as well as the animal realm.

whose child was left behind. They also thump the ground or stamp on dry bamboo to make it crack loudly, to announce their presence if they prefer not to have an encounter with humans, or if they wish to intimidate. They might also follow someone along the path, or cut across the hillside above their path, to put fear in them. They can even come under the house, making strange noises, if they want to find someone on whom lingers the smell of *doos*, or sin. Such was their fear of the beast, which abounded in numbers pre-1960, that the Temiars would often build their homes high up in the trees, with a bamboo wall around the base, and a ladder up the trunk to make the way impossible for a big cat to climb up. The tiger was just too powerful a beast to have tugging at the wall or pushing against it in the dark of night, to see if it could be torn down.

An animal carcass (of deer or pig) left by a tiger is also known as a dangerous place to stumble upon, as the tiger will still be nearby, waiting for the carcass to rot, and it will growl and pounce on any intruder. The fruit season and rainy season are particularly dangerous times to walk in the forest as the tiger may think it easy to find someone when they are out fruit picking, or will be waiting to ambush pigs. It is said that the voices of children (especially the sound of their crying) attract the tiger, also of women, whose chatter sounds like that of hens, as the tiger senses they may be weaker prey who can't run far or climb up trees or throw sticks. In the old days, men would always accompany the women when going foraging and the children were kept at home, as they believed there was always much 'smell' on people to attract tigers. In the history of the Puyan River Temiars, there have been a dozen tiger attacks resulting in death, as well as numerous close-encounters and narrow escapes. People with *doos*, or wrong-doings, are believed to be more likely to meet their fate as they will grow weak when the tiger pursues them and be unable to flee, or else they will be pounced on with no warning. Other animals are believed to attack people with *doos* or blood-taboo offense, such as *regrɔɔg*, the yellow-throated marten, and also venomous snakes such as pit vipers and cobras.

The evil kind of tiger is believed to originate from the soul of certain trees and vines, which are classed as *julux*. When the tree is cut down, or the vine is hacked and damaged, the soul of the tree or vine comes down to the ground as a *k'norux* soul, taking the form of a small cat. It then begins to roam the forest, initially seeking the perpetrator of the cutting, and as it roams it grows in size, soon to become a tiger. The Belyans of old dreamed of the *julux* souls and they forbade the people to cut down those trees or vines, warning that anyone who did would soon feel the affects of their actions, and would also increase the danger of attack for everyone else. Until today, people are cautious of disturbing the souls of *julux* trees and most of the fruits of these trees are forbidden for young or susceptible persons. Even palm oil must be avoided in some cases, as the *sawít* palm is a species with a potent *julux* soul. The *manaar* vine, the bud of which blooms into the world's largest flower, the rafflesia, is another *julux* species and camps are never made in areas where it grows, for fear that it may trouble them in their sleep.

Human odour, in general, can cause antagonism in many ways and so the Temiars have certain practices for hiding their odour when they are out walking or to keep it away from

the realm of nature when it is thought to be particularly strong. When the Temiars walk in the forest they are quick to spot fragrant leaves growing on the forest floor and they will pick them and stuff them in their loin cloth or waist belt. This hides their body odour with a more pleasant smell of nature. The odour of human blood is believed to cause the greatest conflict with nature, as noted with *pəl<sup>2</sup>ax*, above, and women also, must frequently *t<sup>1</sup>laa<sup>k</sup>*, stay at home, in order to hide it from souls of the wild. A woman during menstruation and soon after child birth, is not allowed to wash her blood in a river, as doing so would bring on a freak storm, with gale-force wind knocking over trees and causing great rocks to roll down hills. Post-natal mothers and newborns carry the strong smell of *ʔayeg*, the afterbirth, on them, for a period of time called *raŋyē<sup>k</sup>*, that lasts up to a month for the mother and a few months for the child. During that period the mother abstains from bathing at the river again, as it would cause the weather to *j<sup>1</sup>aar*, or become stormy, if she did. If her husband helped at delivery and held the child he would also carry the smell of *ʔayeg* on him, and he should not go out into the forest, for bears are known to attack people with the smell of *ʔayeg*.

A newly married couple are also not permitted to go out anywhere for a week and a man who has set traps must stay at home until he goes to check on them, so that his smell will not scare away his catch. The trapper cannot prepare his own bait either as it will then have his odour on it, and so another person must assist and dig up the manioc and soak it in water, for two or three days to ferment it. Dropping items that are classed as *dīx* (or that belong to the human realm) onto the ground can also cause problems in some cases, for example, when soil collects inside an empty food container that was discarded, it will cause trouble for the one who used the item and in severe cases they can suffer breathlessness. Bamboo cooking tubes are always split open after use by hacking at the node and these days even tin cans are punctured on the bottom to prevent them filling with earth. Likewise, old clothing must be burned in a fire, so as not to become covered with *s<sup>1</sup>mōr*, biting ants, and cause the owner of it to suffer itching all over the body. Hair clippings are not thrown out either, but are stuffed into the ends of the bamboo wall, to prevent a person suffering hair loss. The reverse is also true in some situations, where humans cannot come close to strong smells from nature. Those who are sick and have received treatment of a soul-medium cannot have smells of animal blood, raw meat or certain raw fruits come near them or they will faint, and may even die.

Many foods from the wild, including numerous species of game animals, birds, fish and fruits, are tabooed for certain persons to eat, as they can cause them to contract serious and life-threatening ailments. The young child and menstrual woman, are at most risk of being affected, in both body and soul, as they either haven't grown resilient enough toward the outside *bēex*, or they carry strong odour of the human domain, and they must be prohibited or abstain from eating a great list of wild species. The ill effects they can cause range from physical illnesses such as over-heating, growing thin and having seizures, to behavioural changes believed to be caused by an attack of the animal's soul on the person's soul, such as manifesting the anger of the animal and even acting as an animal, scratching at people and running outside into the bushes. Young people can only start eating wild boar meat,

for example, by the age of 16 or even older, depending on their physical development and also whether they feel *lamiid*, or brave enough.

A mother and father will also be prohibited from certain foods during pregnancy, because it is believed that they both contribute to the baby's growth in the womb. Certain foods can cause dangerous complications for the child in the womb and at birth (putting the mother at great risk also) and others will be ingested by the child in the womb and will cause problems for it later on in life, in its childhood especially, but also during adulthood. Mothers generally have to forego eating most wild animals until their last child is weaned off milk, because they are either pregnant at some stage, or else nursing children, and the animals will be ingested by their child through breast milk. There are some species that are only safe for adults to eat and a few that only those in old age can safely consume. Several turtle species are excluded entirely from the dinner menu as they would cause a devastating storm to blow up if they were eaten. Some adults have to reap the affects of foods that they ate when they were small, such as a water rat, that can cause them to frequently become breathless. (In 2.2, I talk more about this taboo called *sabat* and I give a list of all *sabat* species and the effects they can cause).

The elders of any community should be well aware of the species that cause danger to young people and mothers, and would prohibit them from eating harmful foods, while also excluding them from places of preparation of game meat. But some people are careless and allow their children to eat any animal or bird that has been caught and thus they put them at great risk of becoming ill, weak, or abnormal in mental health. Those people who take the matter seriously will keep the bones of any *sabat*-risk animal that has been consumed at the house, by posting them into the tubes of the bamboo wall, or hanging them near the fire place to dry out. The bones are to be kept as a precautionary measure in case anyone in the house becomes ill later on, with symptoms that may indicate a *sabat* animal was to blame. The person who became ill can then be treated with the bones of the animal which they consumed in the hope of curing the illness caused by the animal in the first place. To do this the bones are first baked until blackened, and then they are scraped and ground in a mortar, making a black dust that is then mixed with water and smeared over the person's body.

Another taboo, even more grave than others, is placed on a select number of species of wild animals, that if caught by a hunter or fisherman, must shared out with others at the house. If they do not share out the quarry, as some persons have done in the past by greedily eating the whole thing alone, then the animal will cause *genhaa<sup>k</sup>*, or misfortune, and either a child in the family, or the hunter himself, will die. There is a case remembered by the Pɪŋcɔŋj Temiars, of when a man caught a yellow catfish and was taking it home with him. As he passed by another man on the path he was warned that he should share it, since it had been seen, but instead he disregarded the warning and kept it for himself. He died the day after eating it and the hill where he was warned is now named in remembrance of him, Tanjɔl Kenirab, Catfish Hill. The more potent creatures, that are called *genhaa<sup>k</sup> rayaa<sup>k</sup>*, great misfortune, would cause everyone present to die if the meat



was not shared out and the same fate would also occur if they were carried over to another main river valley. The same goes for anything that is found by good fortune, such as a pool of the river teeming with fish and someone nets them all, or a big turtle in the forest that a dog sniffs out, it must be shared out or it will cause great misfortune to everyone.

When the Temiars *bε<sup>k</sup>cōō<sup>k</sup>* (name or make a pet of) an animal they effectively bring it into the *dñx* or human realm, and this is especially so in the case of keeping pets in the home. A wild beast that is frequently encountered, such as a giant python, for example, that hasn't harmed them, could be given a name, and thus be spared from death. Other animals, such as the wild boar and sun bear, the largest which can be domesticated, and civets, squirrels and various birds, can all be made pets and thence they would not be killed or eaten. The human-inspired name given to the animal acts to humanize it, bringing it out from the wild. Domestic animals, such as cats, dogs and chickens are all fed from the hand (whether they are given names or not), so they are never killed.

### 1.3 SOULS OF NATURE: TREES AND PLANTS, MOUNTAINS AND RIVERS

The many problems which arise for human life, that I have described so far, are mostly related to human contact with the *r'waay*, or souls, of animals and creatures, and are also caused by these souls, as well as by the thunder god, Kareiy, who guards over his creatures in many respects. But other souls of nature can cause harm to human life, and these are the souls of trees, mountains and other prominent features of the surrounding landscape. The trees in question are the seasonal fruits that each year give their sweetness, offered in plentiful bunches, that are a welcome source of sustenance to all foragers of the forest. Their souls must be paid proper respect by the eater, as they are the life-givers planted by the Creator, and there are prohibitions that must be heeded during the gathering of fruits. For if these souls are disrespected and their provision taken for granted, or they are given the accidental curse (when falling from a tree, for example) they can steal a person's soul away and cause them to drift into an endless sleep. These souls are also celebrated in ritual dance, to retain their favour and protection, and also to ensure that the seasonal fruits will be plentiful (as some years can be leaner than others). It is believed that if the souls of the fruit trees are not placated with a petition to their guardian spirit before the first fruits are eaten, it would be to tempt ill fate, including the malicious activity of tigers.<sup>3</sup>

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3 The souls of trees reside in the *jalōx* canopy, while the *canteēη*, or roots, are attached to the souls of the ground, specifically, the <sup>3</sup>aab tigers. Both of these can do harm to the human soul or life; thus in the fruit season one should not do anything to damage the trees. A petition must be made before climbing the most powerful of trees (the *jiyēes* and *sō'c*); the *j'lax*, the towering mahogany, has a powerful *pāt'riih* soul and thus felling them causes sincere trouble to the land.

Out in the wild, powerful souls are believed to inhabit mountains, boulders, waterfalls and rivers, and these are also capable of stealing away human souls. When visiting such places the Temiars take care not to disturb those souls, and they will never shout or scream at the river, or “woo-hoo” at waterfalls. The flowers on mountain-tops are never shaken about, as they carry the essence of the soul of the mountain, which is called the *pət'riih jəlmol*, princess of the mountain (from the Malay, *puteri*, princess). The person who offends one of these souls may find his or her eyes closing, being unable to stay awake and falling into a *s'nəryor*, a sleep from which they cannot be woken. Their only hope is that a soul-medium will help their soul return to them from wherever it has gone. The medium sleeps and searches in his dream for the souls which have stolen that person's soul away, and he says to them, “*Kasa<sup>k</sup> ŋəb-siyej r'waay-doh? Caco<sup>k</sup> yih<sup>k</sup> na-doh*” why have you taken this soul? This is my grandchild. And as soon as they release the soul the person will open their eyes and be able to eat and drink.

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In the early days, the Temiars lived entirely on wild fruits and tubers. The digging of yams carried certain taboos, especially as they were found in mountain areas, as anything living in the ground there was believed attached to the soul of the mountain. They couldn't *ce<sup>k</sup>re<sup>k</sup>*, or call their name, when finding them, and they couldn't dig downward from the vine, on top of the tubers, they had to dig the ground from the side. Once they began unearthing the tubers, the whole root system had to be excavated, they couldn't leave any roots in the ground. Failing to observe these codes would result in the earth *yelyool*, or turning over on them.

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To the Temiars, all trees and plants producing food have souls and it is the soul within them that, if treated properly, will produce food and fruits for the tender of crops or nearby inhabitants of the trees. We have seen that the seasonal fruit trees have souls, as do mountains and rivers, and when these are respected and even celebrated in traditional dance, they will never cease to provide their sweetness, each year becoming laden with heavy bunches of delectibles. Planted crops are the same, they have souls that need to be protected in order for them to thrive and provide. These specific souls are called *r'waay canaa<sup>k</sup>*, food souls. With manioc, for example, those who respect the plants, and are careful to jab the stems back into the ground after harvesting the roots, will see their plants keep growing and producing food for them. Those, on the other hand, who are greedy for today's food and don't care about the life of the plants, and scatter the stems on the ground, will not see more food from the same patch. It is a simple horticultural principle, that to the Temiars is explained by the need to respect the souls of food-bearing plants.<sup>4</sup>

To ensure that the plants keep growing and are not lost because of having no space left to plant the stems, a new patch must be cut and burned while the first patch is still growing. When the plants are still young, only some of the roots are dug up, leaving the plant to keep growing. Diligent planters are called *sen<sup>2</sup>ooy bajarii<sup>k</sup>*, or fingered people, as they are

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4 The breaking of manioc shoots was tabooed (it usually still is today), and only harvesting the roots was allowed, due to the fact that the food soul would be harmed by the breaking of leaf stems.

constantly working to preserve the life of the crops, that in turn give them life. Such a person will have all kinds of seeds drying around the house, peanuts hanging on cords, and newly woven carry-baskets hung up ready for collecting the swidden's produce. On every visit to the swidden they will come back with seeds, from ripened gourds, squashes and cucumbers, and from aubergines, long beans and spinach plants. Anything edible that grows in the field is enjoyed by them, it is never left unwanted. For if they said, "Those greens are bad, I'm bored of them," then the soul of the plants would disappear and they wouldn't be found again. Their soul, that causes growth of the plants, is the *s'manjat*, or life-source, of the planter.<sup>5</sup>

The Temiar's annual crops, *jawa<sup>k</sup>*, millet and *padiy*, rice, are a little different in regard to the life-giving soul of plants and trees. They each have a *r'waay* that guards the swidden. The Taa<sup>k</sup> Belyans saw them in dreams and learned of their characters, and a *c'naal*, or folktale, was told of them. The *jawa<sup>k</sup>* or millet soul is known as a *menaleh*, or young woman, just as the *r'waay tawùn*, or souls of the seasonal fruits. She does not cause harm to people and therefore there are no rules to be followed to avoid arousing punishment. The soul of the rice swidden, however, is an old man, who is called the *Tataa<sup>k</sup> S'laay*, old man of the swidden. He is evil-natured, rather like the tigers which are extremely dangerous to any offender, and people must be cautious of him and keep to the rules of the swidden that have been taught by the elders. It is feared that if anyone breaks them, the *Tataa<sup>k</sup>* will come and torment them in their dreams—*nam-tuh garaŋ*, he will shout angrily at them. Specific rules they must keep include those in the following list:

***Stage of the rice Rules to be followed  
swidden***

- |                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| After the planting | no one other than the <i>tuwan s'laay</i> , or swidden owner, should walk through the field with a bush knife.   |
| Before harvest     | the <i>tənreel</i> period: people should not pass near the field, they should <i>t'laa<sup>k</sup></i> or stay away; they cannot cook with spices or wear lipstick (of <i>sumbaah</i> flowers, or modern kind).  |
| During harvest     | no metal implements should be left behind overnight in the field; persons of another household cannot enter the field to pick edible shoots or cucumbers (in other words, to steal them), or the <i>Tataa<sup>k</sup></i> would <i>dendəh</i> , repay whoever came down after them to the field, with sickness, and ritual dance and <i>jamūū<sup>k</sup></i> offerings would be needed to help them recover. Young children are not taken down to the rice field for fear that they would scream and pull off rice heads, upsetting the old man of the swidden. |

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<sup>5</sup> Certain plants were always planted: *monleey*, a medicinal plant (pictured, Vol.2, p13), *buus*, sugar cane, *jaay mas*, sweet bananas, *mantax*, a rattan, *sugih*, a tree, and *gase<sup>k</sup>*, a cotton-bearing parlm, to ensure an abundance of crops.

Finishing the harvest      the last work should always be left to the swidden owner, and only he can taste of the first rice before the harvest festival is held.

After the harvest      no one should walk through the field to the other side.

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The Temiars had three notable *ʔaniwoh*, or festivals, that they celebrated annually, by preparing a mass of food for a large crowd. The first was held to mark the New Year, which fell on the first day of the millet or rice harvest. The swidden owner would cut only a symbolic amount, like a sack-full, or enough for everyone to eat that day, with the real harvest beginning the day after. The second was held at the end of the harvest, to mark its *kʼrenmas* or completion, and to celebrate the *sʼmaŋat canaa<sup>k</sup>*, the life of the crops. The third was held on the day the planting begun, in September for rice, or later in the year for millet. A *kʼrenmas* party would also be held when receiving someone home who was away for a long while. Following the feast, they danced in the evening to enjoy themselves and to petition Nyu<sup>k</sup> ʔAluŋ for protection and a good harvest or good crop.

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Another soul that the Temiars fear, which is truly malevolent and can cause terrible grief to any person who comes too close to it, or group which settles nearby, is that of the *berbow* tree, the moluccan ironwood. This tree can lie on the ground for half a century before it rots and it is believed to have a powerful soul, alive even in the stump or the old, hardened logs. It is so feared by the Temiars that they actually call it *mergəəh*, a beast, along with the other fearsome beasts of the jungle. When anyone comes too close to the stump or the logs as the sun is going down, they will likely become sick with aches and they may also contract a severe chest pain which is called *pacog*. A soul-medium can give treatment to a sufferer of this condition and can actually extract a splinter of the ironwood from a their body, which was causing them such serious grief. Because of its antagonism, homes are never built too close to one of these trees and if one is found to be giving people bad dreams then they will break up their homes and move to a safer location (as happened with the group living at Tersaŋ, who relocated to Bərcaap, in 2014). Two years ago I found a large ironwood log in the ground just by the house and when I dug it up and started removing and burning it, my wife had a dream of a *tataa<sup>k</sup>*, or old man, who said to her, “Why are you removing my home?” She had some wit and told him to move on and find somewhere better to live!

Other souls<sup>6</sup> are feared also, that are not attached to creatures of the wild or formations of nature, but take on physical forms of their own. One of these is the *Jaa<sup>k</sup> Wooy*, which has a human female form and a mass of hair which *barwooy*, is shaped like an umbrella (hence its name, *Wooy*), but it can become invisible if it desires. The creature has a male counterpart, which is less known, the *Taa<sup>k</sup> Wooy*, and they are believed to be *senʔooy bæex*,

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6 Perhaps these ‘souls’ would be better described as spirits, not being attached to any physical form to which they would give life to, but in some cases they may have been souls to begin with. To the Temiars they are termed *rʼwaay*, the same as other souls.

or forest people. They reside in caves, or deep holes in between boulders, and can lure a person into their lair where they will keep them captive indefinitely, closing the rock door behind them to make their escape impossible. It is therefore considered dangerous to be walking alone in the late afternoon in places with many rocks or caves, as one might meet what appears to be a young woman (the creature in a hidden form), stranded but taking shelter in a cave, and when one enters her place she will trap one inside, only afterward revealing her true, ugly form. People are also advised not to stay alone out in the wild for too many days, as the *Jaa<sup>k</sup> Wōōy* will take pity on them and come and lure them away. The creature is also feared to steal people's souls and eat their bodies, and it can then take the form of that person's soul which it swallowed, and return to the village appearing as that person!

They will also steal children if they are left alone at home and carry them away atop of their mass of hair. One story is told of a couple traveling on a forest path, and the mother put her child down for a moment, and when she came back it had gone. They searched for it and they could hear its crying coming from the holes in the boulders but they couldn't reach it. If one comes across ferns in the forest which have already had their shoots picked, then it is because this cave creature has been there earlier and if people leave home for a while they may come back and find that squash shoots have been picked from the swidden. The *cep wōōy*, the black-capped kingfisher, is the pet bird of the *Jaa<sup>k</sup> Wōōy* and it goes out to collect fish for her, and will also report to her about people down at the river (as the folktales tell) and for this reason people are afraid to make too much noise while bathing. If she came to a man alone in the jungle and she lured him, and he fell for her and married her, he would then have to forsake the village and live with her in her cave, for if he then tried to leave her she would turn cruel toward him and eat him.

The Belyans of long ago would make petition before entering any cave, to ask the *Jaa<sup>k</sup> Wōōy* to leave them alone and not to close the door on them, and they kept their own souls safe through the *halaa<sup>k</sup>* power they possessed. Taa<sup>k</sup> <sup>2</sup>Atih, of the Πίνκοση River, saw the *Jaa<sup>k</sup> Wōōy* in his dreams, or when he walked out in the forest because he could see them even when others couldn't. He said that the young ones were very attractive but the old *Wōōys* were quite the opposite, very horrible. Its name is sometimes mentioned to frighten children so that they quiet down or go to sleep and is also given to the tag person in a game of tag, the <sup>2</sup>*awōōy*, whom no one wants to be caught by.

There is another kind of malicious soul, called *sanu<sup>k</sup>*, and these can be encountered at graves. When a person comes too close to a grave they can be followed by the *sanu<sup>k</sup>* residing there, and they will afterward feel very uneasy in their own soul. The Belyans of old would meet these dark, wandering souls in their dreams and cast them out of the place.

To the Temiars, there could be any number of unknown creatures lurking in the river or in the forest, and this gives rise to some strange, mystical creatures that they fear, not to mention the crocodiles that were said to once inhabit deep pools at the river. One of these is known as the *lamboy* (also known as *biday*), and it is believed to have been formed

from a woven mat that blew into the river, long ago. Its body has the appearance of a coloured <sup>2</sup>*apíł* or mat, and it can easily swallow a person. It is attracted by the smell of blood and there are still certain places they do not recommend bathing, such as at Jōŋ bridge, at Tohōy, where it is believed to have eaten a school teacher. It is also known to have caused a calamity once at the Jēnrol River, when it made a large wave that consumed a group of men who were sleeping on the river bank, leaving only one of them to survive and tell the story. There is another creature called *la<sup>2</sup>ōōy*, that is said to be bear-like in appearance, roams the forest in a large pack and would be very dangerous to encounter. It is interesting to note that in the 1950s, the Communists were named after this creature, being called *lan<sup>2</sup>ōōy* by the Temiars, because they roamed about the forest in groups, and seemed dangerous.

## 1.4 GUARDIAN SPIRITS OF THE CREATION

According to the traditional folktales, there were two spirits that had great prominence in the beginning and were responsible for the creation of the world and all living things. To most Temiars, these two entities, named <sup>2</sup>*Aluj* and *Kareiy*, are practically deity, as a monotheistic god (called *Tohaat*, Lord, or *Dōɔ<sup>k</sup>*, Father) was not perceived until more recent dream revelations. They are described as *sen<sup>2</sup>ōōy* or people, but they are not human in the sense of being made of earth and neither are they visible to the human realm. They reside in the atmosphere above the earth and both watch over a multitudes of lesser *r'waay*, or souls, placed under their guardianship. To <sup>2</sup>*Aluj*, who is good in nature, belong all the souls of the fruit trees, flowers, mountains and so on—the *r'waay<sup>2</sup>en-balix*, souls of above—as well as the souls of men who are his *caco<sup>k</sup>* or grandchildren. He is the guardian over the created earth, with its rivers and mountains, and also the subterranean cavities beneath the surface. To *Kareiy*, who is notably mischievous in nature, belong the souls of all living creatures—the *r'waay<sup>2</sup>en-tē<sup>k</sup>*, souls of the earth—who are his *caco<sup>k</sup>*. Both are invoked or petitioned by the Temiars during their ongoing endeavor to survive and the need to maintain balance with these two spirits, either to obtain the protection of <sup>2</sup>*Aluj* or to prevent the destructive anger of *Kareiy*, forms the basis of the ritual dances.

*Kareiy* is known by Temiars today as a great tyrant, a fearful being who sends down shattering thunder and devastating storms on those who offend the souls under his watch and is rightly feared for doing so. His proper name, *Kareiy*, tends to be reserved for folktales, however, and another name of his, <sup>2</sup>*Enkuu<sup>k</sup>*, meaning thunder, would not be mentioned at all, for fear of arousing his attention. He is more commonly referred to by some of the following pet names:

<i>Taa<sup>k</sup> Guwaan</i>	he climbed the <i>guwaan</i> fruit tree in the folktale
<i>Taa<sup>k</sup> Gorís</i>	Terrible old man
<i>Taa<sup>k</sup> L'gaan</i>	Evil old man
<i>Taa<sup>k</sup> L'gōō<sup>k</sup></i>	Old liar

<i>Taa<sup>k</sup> Luŋgəər</i>	Old man who booms
<i>Taa<sup>k</sup> Təŋgoom</i>	Old man who shouts
<i>Taa<sup>k</sup> Roŋgam</i>	Old man with a bulging body
<i>Hiwəəx</i>	Huge one

He is envisioned as an evil ‘King Kong’ kind of creature that sends down (or urinates) lightning on the earth, splitting trees asunder and burning them to a cinder. It is widely believed that the crashes and rumblings of thunder must be caused by a physical creature somewhere in the sky above. A soul-medium could make petition to him, with burning of incense, a *nəscəəs*, in order for the storms to cease. If they knew that the storms were caused by someone’s offense, say of *məsíx* taboo, they would make a ritual dance that night and the medium would sit inside a closed booth of leaning palm-branches called a *panəəh*, invoking Taa<sup>k</sup> Guwaap to come and drink of an offering of *cah* tree sap, in order for his anger to be assuaged.

A more drastic measure would be taken if a woman had provoked his anger by washing her child’s afterbirth in the river. A huge storm would arise because of this, and they would need to *sumux*, or make a blood offering, to appease the storm and to preserve their lives. The guilty woman would slash her shin with a sharp bamboo edge and collect some blood in a bamboo dish. The medium would then take it out in the rain and stab a hole in the ground with a rod and pour the blood, mixed with water, into it while beating the ground and calling on Taa<sup>k</sup> Guwaap to cease his booming thunder. If there was no medium to carry out this ritual then the innocent parties might flee the place, leaving those responsible to their own fate. For if they failed to placate the storm-maker, it was feared that it would *deŋdax*, become even more catastrophic with great rocks from the heavens falling down and killing everyone, and even *yelyool*, with the ground where they gathered turning over, burying them all alive. There are pools found today where this kind of disaster is believed to have happened, such as at the old village of Ləŋraaŋ.

<sup>2</sup>Aləj is much closer to the human nature and much more considerate than Kareiy, and therefore he is given the title Nyu<sup>k</sup>, meaning uncle (in ritual terms). He is also interceded in many circumstances, but not to send help when Taa<sup>k</sup> Guwaap has stirred up his wrath, and not with offerings of tree sap or blood to satisfy him, for he does not demand these earthy rituals as Kareiy does. His power is known to be manifested in multiple entities of the creation, which have been learned of by the *tə<sup>k</sup>taa<sup>k</sup> manah*, the forefathers, in their dreams. Each source of power from <sup>2</sup>Aləj is known as *bəlyan* to the Temiars (from the Malay, *belian*, a polished diamond) and they are able to petition these to obtain the particular kind of power they hold. They are typically invoked by calling on the different names of <sup>2</sup>Aləj, of which, the most notable ones are as follows:

**Nyu<sup>k</sup> <sup>2</sup>Aləj Tampuy:** power of the fruit trees, the giver of seasons; invoked when a kin group are about to make the first harvest of fruits of the season or before commencing a ritual dance; the *tampuy* fruit (*baccaurea macrocarpa*) is a *julux* species, which means that

its soul can cause trouble if disturbed.

**Nyuk<sup>k</sup> ʔAluj Lenʔooy:** power of the *soʔc* tree, giver of long life; invoked when a person is ill or feels close to departing this world; the *soʔc* fruit (*elateriospermum tapos*, perah nut), another *julux* class species, is believed to be the carrier of one's soul in death.

**Nyuk<sup>k</sup> ʔAluj Lulew:** power from the ground, or the layer of the earth from which life comes, the giver of protection; invoked when walking out in the forest, climbing a mountain or making a long journey.

**Nyuk<sup>k</sup> ʔAluj Tilɔɔ<sup>k</sup>:** power to make things appear near.

There are still more names given to the footprints of ʔAluj in creation, such as, ʔAluj *d'na<sup>k</sup>*, ʔAluj *ʔexʔaax*, ʔAluj *məkoʔh*, ʔAluj *payeh*, ʔAluj *segiyeh* and ʔAluj *tarooʔg*, that are invoked for different purposes.

While making a petition to Nyuk<sup>k</sup> ʔAluj a person will clear the throat frequently, before each sentence, to show that they are only human and are lower and inferior to him. As they speak to him they ask him to look down on them, his *cacoo<sup>k</sup>*, and consider their earthly needs such as their hunger and their need to harvest from the fruit trees, whose souls could become offended by the clumsy activity of climbing them and knocking down fruits. As they approach waterfalls and climb mountains, petitions are made to Nyuk<sup>k</sup> ʔAluj for safety, because the powerful souls of these places were also put there by him. The souls of waterfalls were put there to guard the waters, so that they always flowed, and the souls of mountains were put there to guard the whole life-system that has its source there. It is interesting to note that ritual dances of the present day now involve more petitions and songs to ʔAluj than they used to in times past, which is likely due to a new *noŋ* or path that was adopted by the Temiars in the 1990s (see story on p32).

According to the tradition of their ancestors, the first harvest of the fruit season began with a petition to ʔAluj Tampuy, in order to let the fruit trees know that they were present, and that they wanted to take of the fruits—so that no harm would come on them, as these fruit trees are believed to have powerful souls. This would be made when the first *jiyees* tree ripened, and another petition would be made at the house, with the whole group gathered together, to *kahyax* or celebrate the first fruits. After this, the group was free to gather fruits from the trees, as they pleased. Only the men would go to the *soʔc* tree, because the fruit was potent and could harm children's or women's souls if they went. They would first make petition to ʔAluj Lenʔooy, before climbing the tree, to ensure their own safety.

To ʔAluj belongs the duty of watching over human life and the Temiars believe that they will return to him in *pantar b'huj*, the plateau of heaven (else called *p'yeeʔw*), if they have followed the *noŋ*, or path, and the *hukom*, judgment, that has been given them through the dreams of the forefathers. That judgment is different to the prohibitions placed on foods, and the taboos on actions and words that would stir retributions from *Karɛiy*, as it regards interaction between humans, not their interaction among the souls of the wild. And whereas the taboos are based on the fear of ill fate falling on one's family and oneself, in



terms of calamity and death, the *hukom* of <sup>2</sup>Aluj is based on a fear that *doos*, or sins made by offending others, will lead to a set of uneasy consequences, in this life and in the life to come. The human heart may choose to follow his code and to refrain from anger and cursing, or it may choose to deviate, and reap the consequences of that folly.

And this Karsiy is not a part of, the relations between humans. He does not reply with his thunder when people offend each other, only when they trespass against the creatures under his sway. In the folktales, Karsiy did some wicked things to <sup>2</sup>Aluj and his distaste for mankind, whom <sup>2</sup>Aluj gave life to, caused him to invent death so that no one would live forever. His animal nature, perhaps, is the basis for this antagonism with mankind, and the set of rules that he watches over involve the animal world, not the human world. Thus the observance of ritual taboos does not constitute a path to better inter-human relations, or good morals, as has been so enthusiastically promoted (Benjamin's thesis, for example), but it serves only to avoid retributions from entities of the spiritual world.

Three birds, *cɛp biraay*, the oriental magpie-robin, *cɛp tawùn*, a green dove, and *cɛp hɔɔŋ*, a bird only heard and never seen (probably a cicada, that goes 'hɔɔŋ... hɔɔŋ...'), are known as '*cɛp <sup>2</sup>Aluj*' or birds of the Creator, as they have importance in the creation stories. They cannot be eaten and if they were a terrible storm would arise. The magpie-robin, properly called, *Nyuh <sup>2</sup>Aluj biraay*, comes by people's homes to tell news of someone coming home or anyone having passed away.

## 1.5 C'NAAL NYUH<sup>k</sup> <sup>2</sup>ALUJ— FOLKTALES OF THE CREATOR

The Temiars keep many *c'naal*, oral folktales, which were learned in dreams by the forefathers and have been passed down from one generation to another. They speak about the origin of animals, birds and plants, that are all believed to have had human forms in the beginning, before they transmogrified into the forms of each species. And also about the trials and vindications of the early humans, who are most often portrayed by a young woman and young man (siblings or married) who are always named, <sup>2</sup>Asuh and <sup>2</sup>Aluj. They tell of giants, called *k'lumbay*, as well as fabled man-eating sub-humans, called the *bata<sup>k</sup>*. In accordance with the tradition, the *c'naal* were only be recited at night and because they could take hours to tell in their every detail, the recital could continue into the wee hours, if people could stay awake. They would only be told to an audience of people old enough to <sup>2</sup>angoh, or keep affirming that they were following, by saying '*həə<sup>k</sup>*', or yes, in response to the tale teller. It was feared (and still is today) that if no one was able to <sup>2</sup>angoh, or if everyone had fallen asleep without the teller knowing, then something else would answer instead from the darkness outside, a *mergəəh*, a beast, the tiger or a dark soul, causing such a fright to those in the house that they would run for their lives. So, in the case that no one could stay awake, the tale-telling would be ended for the night—and thus persons old enough to say they couldn't stay up any longer had to be present.

The *c'naal* recitals made good evening entertainment, the teller giving detailed description

and vivid expressions throughout so that the tale came to life. They also ensured that younger persons learned the tales from their elders, so that they would be able to recite them to their own grandchildren in time to come. Not all children, though, were diligent to stay up long hours in the night, and not all of the older generation were eager to recite either, which means that finding people today who memorised the *c'naal* is not easy.

The primary purpose of the *c'naal*, however, was to teach the *hukom* of Nyu<sup>k</sup> ʔAluj, through episodes of traditional Temiar life and the decisions that the characters made. It is believed that if the *c'naal* were forgotten, or relegated from their place in Temiar society, of teaching the *noŋ* of ʔAluj, then the *hukom* would also be lost from their mindset and then life itself would begin to lose meaning. Without the *hukom* of Nyu<sup>k</sup> ʔAluj in their minds, good fortune would not be found, for example, when foraging foods or hunting animals, and consequently their daily existence would become difficult. The *c'naal* also went hand in hand with ritual dance, as the ambiance created by the dances, which were made to celebrate the same entities of nature that were celebrated in the tales, served to invigorate the tale teller and the tales became truly meaningful. As they danced on some nights, and told the tales on others, the life of the forest dwellers was uplifted and hunters would find game easily and their traps would catch animals continually. The bad luck that they always feared would be pushed aside by good fortune.

In the Temiar creation tale, Nyu<sup>k</sup> ʔAluj went to *cəl*, or prod, the ground to see if the mud had dried up enough, after the primordial flood (the Temiars say there were two *límbaŋ* floods), and when it had dried sufficiently then he made the first man and woman, by putting together bamboo sticks and molding earth around them, first their toes, then their calves, their thighs, their ribs, until their heads were formed. Their blood was given them from the ʔapoos *haaŋ*, a red-stemmed zingiber plant with reddish sap and then he blew on them and they came to life. Everything was made in this way, by blowing it into existence, which in Temiar is to *perhíc*, to create something without planting it or giving birth to it. The first humans, ʔAsuh and ʔAluj, could also blow things into existence. For example, they could simply blow, with a ʔfook<sup>k</sup>, and a swidden of crops would be planted, without the need to till the earth. Some say that ʔAluj, the first man, would jab a stem of a *sugii<sup>k</sup>* plant into the ground and *p'taa<sup>k</sup>*, or petition ʔAluj above, and food would grow for him. There was no need to work and sweat in the beginning. But Taa<sup>k</sup> Kareiy interfered with human life from the start—and I am still in the process of discovering the tales which tell of what he did, which is no short adventure—and he dissuaded ʔAluj from petitioning for help from above and encouraged him to use natural means to aid his survival.

There is a tale of a catastrophic flood—which would be the second *límbaŋ*—that covered the whole earth with raging water. The first humans lived at Guwɔɔ<sup>k</sup> Cɔɔs (so named due to the *cɔɔs*, or petition made with burning incense, that was made for the flooding to cease, but otherwise known by its Malay name of Gua Cha), on the Nenggiri River. Two youths, also named ʔAsuh and ʔAluj, fled from there up the Periyas River valley and reached the Perak border, although there were no great mountains at that time. The two reached Ceŋkey mountain on the seventh day of walking, while the flood arose and waters poured

from out of the earth with great waves, and they remained there to await their death. They survived on that outcrop of land for three years, eating only fern shoots. They were sad to be alone there and decided they should marry. They bore a child and then <sup>2</sup>Aluj dreamed of a spirit that told him he must sacrifice the child and cast its blood on the water to make the flood abate. While doubting whether this was right, the baby itself spoke and told him he must do it. On sacrificing his child the flood abated and the next day they saw all kinds of crops growing that they could eat, from millet to manioc. Afterwards they had twelve children, six sons and six daughters. These were married off, pair by pair, and in turn they produced the Temiar, Jehai, Bateq, Menriq, Semai and Temuan people groups. The Temiar group moved to the B'ro'x river source and from them came the Temiar, Lanoh, Jahut and Semelai groups and each were taught their own language and the taboos and rituals to be held.<sup>7</sup>

## 1.6 THE *HUKOM* CODE OF LIFE

The *hukom* of the Temiars teaches the way of being *menhaar* (generous) over being *kariyeed* (stingy), and having *kaloon* (pity) on others instead of having *tenruu<sup>k</sup>* (anger) and *ken'is* (hate). It is a code of sound values and respect, passed down orally from the forefathers to their descendants, being taught whenever situations arose that required judgment and guidance. Through adherence to it a social fabric of patience and self-constraint has been nurtured and rooted in minds. Those who pay attention to its path find that they have peace with other people, even when strife arises.

The Temiars have been labeled a “peaceable people” in the past, largely due to the fact that the Temiars almost always desist from causing others physical harm. The reason why they desist was explained by some researchers using a theory of dream control.<sup>8</sup> They claimed that the Temiars could dissipate violence in the dream experiences they had, by fighting off evil souls, so that in conscious life they were always found non-aggressive. The *hukom* that lies at the heart of the Temiars (especially those of old) seems to have been missed by many, a code and a belief, which guides their actions and is more likely the real cause of their passive lifestyle. In their heart they know that striking out against another will cause them to have *doos*, and that *doos* will be required of them at some later date by Nyu<sup>k</sup> <sup>2</sup>Aluj.

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<sup>7</sup> This story may have some variations, especially the names of the people groups mentioned.

<sup>8</sup> It has been claimed that the “Senoi people” (referring to both the Semais and Temiars, whose languages both use the word *sen'ooy* for ‘person’) are able to cultivate psychological health and social happiness through control of their dreams (Kilton Stewart, in his 1951 article, *Dream Theory in Malaya*, and Patricia Garfield, in her book, *Creative Dreaming*, 1974). This theory made the basis for the “dreamwork movement” that began in the 1960s, but it carries little truth in regard to the customs of the Orang Asli. For one, the Temiars do not actively control their dreams, or see what they want to see in them, but they use them to interact with other wandering souls. Secondly, contrary to the claims that they spend much time telling their dreams to one another, it is really only the adepts, or mediums, who describe their dream experiences to their people, to share knowledge of the spiritual realm and to *peryard*, or give guidance.

The Temiars believe that only those who have followed this code will be allowed into the abode of the souls of the fruit trees when they *p'loow*, or make the journey of the soul. On passing away, a person who has done good is taken by <sup>2</sup>Aluj Len<sup>2</sup>soy, the soul of the *so'*c tree, to a beautiful place among the souls of the seasonal fruits, called *pantar r'duuk*, the shaded plateau. This is the place of *temel'soy*, where nothing ill or harmful is found, only good. Those who are full of *doos*, however, will be taken down into the *reḡhsoḡ ʔso's-jux*, or the glowing fire beneath our feet!

The most prominent *hukom*, or moral code, that the Temiars hold concerns having respect for others, as each person is considered a *caco*<sup>k</sup>, or grandchild, of <sup>2</sup>Aluj, their great guardian. Persons must always be addressed with their proper relational term and personal names are never used to address someone once they grow past childhood (perhaps so that their soul is not put in danger by those souls that may hear their name mentioned). Relations are addressed by their status, such as, grandmother, uncle older than parent, uncle younger than parent, older sister, older brother's wife, older brother's child, and so on. Non-related persons are addressed according to age, relative to the speaker, such as, little girl, young man, older man, grandfather, great-great-grandparent, friend between sisters, friend between men, newly married, newly married who was married before, widowed man, childless woman, mother whose first child is a boy, father whose first child is a girl, son-in-law's parent, and so on (the list is extensive). In-laws are addressed only when of the same sex as oneself, as it is practically a taboo (but really it's due to shyness) for opposite sex in-laws to speak to one another. The siblings of a father-in-law or mother-in-law are addressed and respected equally as in-laws.

There are many codes that are followed when interacting with people, especially to those older than oneself, such as not walking behind some one's back without telling them, or walking between people who are conversing, unless one crouches low and parts the way with one's hand. When one passes by someone's home they should make it known that they are going by, either with a cough or by making a remark about something like the work at the swidden, and not creep past silently. Persons who show no respect or do *ragam* or disorderly things are said to be *to*<sup>k</sup> *barhukom*, or to have no morals.

Temiars believe it is important to share with others when they have need, whether it be tubers from the swidden, rice from the sack or money from a sale of produce, or even a benefits payout. It is feared that neglecting to show hospitality to a traveler or visitor will cause the hosts *genhaa*<sup>k</sup>, or some kind of misfortune such as a crop failure or even a death. Causing any harm to anyone would be a *doos*, or sin. Another kind of wrong-doing is called *tulah* and this can typically be described as committing an act of profaning someone who deserves proper respect, whether by belittling them, cursing or slandering them behind their back or stealing their possessions. Those who deserve this respect include one's immediate family as well as one's spouse's family, with respect for one's father-in-law and mother-in-law playing an important part in upholding the social framework. One's parents-in-law are deserving of much respect because they have been good enough in the

first place to provide one with a spouse and also a share in the inherited land with its fruits and whatever resources it holds. A son-in-law or daughter-in-law is equally respected by his or her parents-in-law, if he or she acts with proper respect toward them, and thus they are accepted as valuable new members of the family.

In-laws must be addressed appropriately with their respective titles and never be spoken to rashly or vulgarly, as if they were on an equal or lower level. They should be given help with chores such as food and firewood gathering, swidden-cutting and planting. Parents-in-law of the opposite sex cannot be addressed directly, or even looked in the face, or laughed with or smiled at, and one may not pass nearby them, sit close to them or block their path to the doorway or anywhere else either, such as a river crossing. A parent-in-law will not address their child's spouse of the opposite sex either, but they will provide for them through the channel of their child. Causing in-laws any harm, such as slandering them, stealing from them or forsaking them when they are in need would be serious *tulah*, as would speaking badly of other close relatives, such as a brother- or sister-in-law. This custom would extend further than one's direct parents-in-law, as their siblings, cousins, second cousins and third cousins (considered also their siblings), are also to be treated as parents-in-law through one's marriage, and should be addressed, or not addressed directly, as appropriate.

Committing incest is another serious act of *tulah*, and communities where marriage with close relatives frequently occurs are believed to bring many misfortunes on themselves. Disrespecting people's rights to their inherited land and evicting them, or stealing from the resources in their land, is also considered *tulah*. For example, non-heirs build homes on the land without any right (such as they would have through marriage), or non-natives arrive and say to the present-day heirs whose ancestors have been in the land a thousand years, "Because we are so kind, we will allow you a small piece of land to dwell in." In doing this they completely negate the inheritance rights of the existing community, achieving only to cause strife and uncertainty about the future, as well as making their own lack of morals clearly apparent.

Having such a mindset, believing that wrong-doers will meet their own fate in due time, allows the Temiars to react passively in many adverse situations, for example, when people become impatient with them, accusing them of neglect, or cheat them for profits and steal from their orchards. They believe that the perpetrators will soon receive their just recompense. And indeed, it has been reported many times over, that bad-natured traders and logging bosses alike have ended up in an accident, either in the forest or down on the main road, or their workers, similarly, have paid the price for their boss's flare of temper against the natives.

In Temiar society, all important activities or problems are discussed openly in the long-house, where the elders gather to *ciwaa*<sup>k</sup>, or exchange dialogue, in order to come to an agreement on any matter at hand. Sometimes elders from neighbouring valleys are called over, to hear and give guidance. These discussions can go on for hours, even through the

night, and are only closed when a decision has been agreed on by all parties, whether it be the issue of marriage, where to cut a new swidden or any other difficulty. Marriages are usually easier to arrange and an elder will *kiraa<sup>k</sup>*, or speak to the couple, stipulating all that is expected of them, and ask each in turn if they agree to the conditions. As soon as there are no barriers then the couple are considered married and they can move into the same long-house compartment or the girl's house. No dowry was required in the old Temiar tradition, and this is still so in the Puyan Valley and most other valleys in Kelantan. Sometimes, if there were enough youths ready for marriage, five or six couples would be wedded at the same time, after holding a dance.

Dream revelation is not limited entirely to the wise men of old, as in recent times also, certain Temiars have learned of the being and nature of Nyu<sup>k</sup> ʔAluj through their dream experiences. From what I have learned, however, most people who have had such experiences tend to keep the dreams and their implications much to themselves. This is because, even with the level of enlightenment that the dreamer may have received, possibly elevating his or her knowledge of the unseen, and even of the Creator, Nyu<sup>k</sup> ʔAluj, they would not want to appear as a preacher of new knowledge and seem to challenge those who maintain a position in society with their own dream revelations, having their own ideas of the unseen. One man's dream journeys, in the 1990s, had such an impact on the Temiars that a vibrant resurgence of soul invocation through dance came about that continues until today in many villages. He was Taa<sup>k</sup> ʔUsop, of Lalo<sup>k</sup> village, on the Panæes River, on the Yaay.

Around the years 1991-1992, he began to have dreams which changed his way of life and gave him some extraordinary powers, which he considered were given due to a closeness he had with Nyu<sup>k</sup> ʔAluj. ʔUsop's wife was flown out by 'med-evac' to deliver her child at hospital. Tragically, she didn't survive, even though the child was saved, and her body was returned to Lalo<sup>k</sup>. ʔUsop was shocked at this, because his wife had been healthy. After the burial he told his children not to enter or disturb him, until they saw smoke from the house, because he wanted to seek the soul of their mother. For seven days he lay in his house, while his soul traveled. He searched among the souls of the *bōōd*, the fragrant plants, looking for her face, but he didn't see her. The souls told him to look underground and so he went below to search there, and there he met ʔAluj Lulew. But he told him to search above, so he then went above, to ʔAluj Tampuy, and implored him to show him his wife. Eventually he saw her there, among the souls of the fruit trees, and she implored him to follow the *hukom* of ʔAluj and do only good. She also showed him that the *maṅsii<sup>k</sup>* cane was for his healing, as ʔUsop was born with clubbed feet and couldn't walk.

Due to the visions he had he became something of a prophet to the Temiars at Lalo<sup>k</sup>, and to many others who traveled to hear him, including a crowd of people from the Puyan region. He began to *peryad*, or show the way that he had learned from ʔAluj. He had seen that it was dark and frightening with ʔAluj Lulew below (who is identified as being the *ndaṅgaa<sup>k</sup>*, or subterranean serpent, by some), but with ʔAluj Tampuy above it was *bayōōg*, light, and he was the *dōō<sup>k</sup>*, or father, the Creator. He thus called Nyu<sup>k</sup> ʔAluj by the term of

<sup>2</sup>Ahaat, which is the term of address for a *tohaat*, ‘healer’. His wife had given him a black vine in the dream, and this he would put in water and cover with leaves, and the water would rise, enough to baptise the people and make them clean of their sins. When he washed with the *maŋsii*<sup>k</sup> cane he was able to stand up, to everyone’s amazement, and his face was changed and he became handsome. Some, however, did not receive his message about <sup>2</sup>Aluj being the Father (and they conspired to end his life because of it) while at the same time many others began holding ritual dances to celebrate Nyu<sup>k</sup> <sup>2</sup>Aluj, which the Temiars had never done previously (only souls of nature had been invoked in their rituals).<sup>9</sup>

To confirm the validity of his revelations, Taa<sup>k</sup> <sup>2</sup>Uso<sup>p</sup> performed certain miracles, and he could *terbíd* or provide food for the people. For example, in that time they couldn’t catch any fish at the river, so he told them to make a big *bubuu*<sup>k</sup> fish-trap and put it in the river with the mouth facing upstream, and one more facing downstream. Then he petitioned and the river level dropped and all the fish fled into the two traps. Then once again, he petitioned for wild boars, because many people were there and they needed food. In the morning, *ta<sup>2</sup>oŋ badoo<sup>t</sup>*, bearded pig, came into the village and they speared them. Another time he prayed for langurs and they were found too, in the nearby forest. In his dreams, he saw where a certain manioc plant was growing, that was good for food, and finding it the next day he told people to take stems of the plant and plant it at their own homes because it was *mɛj*, good.

This strain of manioc is still planted in many villages today and they call it, ‘*kayuh <sup>2</sup>asal*’, original manioc. It is also the preferred variety, because its roots are soft and starchy when cooked, therefore filling, and it has no hardness or bitterness like other varieties. He also received new strains of millet, sweetcorn and yams and everything that he received in this way was believed to be from <sup>2</sup>Aluj and was called *<sup>2</sup>asal*, original, because it grew of itself and wasn’t planted by anyone. Also, <sup>2</sup>Aluj showed him in his dreams what was of the *rɛhŋah*, or darkness, and that he should refuse those things. He had power to close the path to the house so that people could not find a way through, or he could cause them to walk around in circles so that they would wear themselves out trying to find the way.

He entertained many people at his village and taught them to do good, to stop their wrong-doings, commanding them not to hit their children or shout at them. They sang to celebrate <sup>2</sup>Aluj at night and also in the day time. They had lamps burning during the dance and didn’t put them out (this was changed later on, because they found that darkness was necessary for invoking their other soul guides, in order to obtain *halaq*<sup>k</sup> from them). Through his teaching a vibrant new branch of Temiar ritual practice emerged, that is found in many villages until today, where the community assembles to dance three times a

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9 Geoffrey Benjamin describes this new wave of ritual dance and invocation as a resurgence of ritual practice (*Temiar Religion, 1964-2012* (2014), p370), even calling it a re-enchantment of Temiar spiritual life (as if the Temiars had ever become dis-encharnted with their spiritual beliefs!) It was in fact a new path that the Temiars received through the dream encounters of one man, and which they have adapted in recent times with more dream revelations, whether as sincere as <sup>2</sup>Uso<sup>p</sup>’s, or not.

month. But as is often the fate of popular people among the Temiars, who say they have dreamed and heard a message from Nyu<sup>k</sup> ʔAluj, others sought him harm and the mediums of B'roŋx, Tuwel, Haw and B'latim gathered, to use their magic against him. But their efforts were futile initially, as no matter how many five-inch nails they made fly at him, he stopped them all by his power from ʔAluj. Eventually, as the attacks continued, he dreamed of his wife, who called him to leave this world and join her where she was. He told them that the next day he would return to ʔAluj in *b'huj* above. When they attacked him again, with flying glass this time, he succumbed to their magic and died that day, and they saw blood coming from his mouth.

## 1.7 THE HUMAN SOUL

The Temiars believe that the life of every living thing, including trees and flowers, and even mountains, is its *r'waay*, or soul. In humans, the *r'waay* resides in the *hup*, or heart, the life-beating organ of the body (which some may describe as the liver, and is also called *h'nom*, from *hom*, to breathe). Just as with English, the Temiars say that a person is *mej-hup*, good-hearted, or *laʔas-hup*, evil-hearted, due to the fact that a person's *r'waay* is perceived to be tied to their *hup* or heart. But for the Temiars, the *r'waay* can wander away from the *hup* and the body at certain times, and this can be both useful and dangerous. During deep sleep and dreaming, a person's *r'waay* is said to leave their body, exiting by the top of the head, and then, wandering free of physical constraint, is able to meet other wandering souls, whether they be of people, animals trees and plants, mountains, or even other kinds from above or below. On the other hand, if a person's soul is made vulnerable to a powerful soul of nature, it can be stolen away, leaving them in a state of perpetual sleep, unable to be wakened, until they would die from dehydration. It is considered dangerous to disturb someone who is in a deep sleep because of the fact that their *r'waay* has wandered away (they are said to *reywaay*, be 'soul-drifting') and if they were to wake up too suddenly, their soul would not return to them in time and they would be left in a dazed state, unable to recollect anything, until washed with water.<sup>10</sup>

Studies claim that the Temiars hold to a belief that multiple souls belong to living being<sup>11</sup>, be it human, animal, plant or even a geophysical object, such as a mountain. I interviewed Temiars from several different valleys, trying to find proof of this theory, but in every case they described to me the concept of singular *r'waay*, and I was actually told that humans cannot have multiple souls. Anthropologists have inferred from Temiar descriptions of *r'waay*, especially of its ability to wander away from the physical body during dreams, or in trance-state, that a duality of soul must be involved, with humans having one soul that remains resident in their heart (a so-called 'heart-soul'), and another soul that has the

<sup>10</sup> During burial, a person would be laid with their head facing the sunset, to enable their soul to leave in the right direction; and also, being hit on the head with fruit peels poses danger for a person's soul, which could be made to wander away by the soul of the fruit tree.

<sup>11</sup> Especially Benjamin's thesis on 'Temiar religion', published in his aforementioned book (pp34, 114-117 etc.).



ability to wander (a ‘head-soul’). But this idea contradicts Temiar belief that the *r’waay* of any being is its life<sup>12</sup>, for how could a human or other creature have more than one life within?

Other aspects of *r’waay* that were supposed by researchers to be additional souls are not actually souls either, such as the *wəəg*, or soul shadow. When a person passes away, their *wəəg*, also called the *yəəl*, *ləə<sup>k</sup>* or *j’rəəx*, is said to remain near the house or at their grave for seven days, while the grave is watched over by a little bird, the *cəp c’riyəj*, or dark-necked tailor bird. After seven days, when the ceremony is held to *tərsə<sup>k</sup>*, or release, the deceased person’s soul, the bird flies off and the *wəəg* also departs. The *wəəg* can only be seen by a spiritual adept or medium but its voice can be heard by others, for example, a deceased person’s *wəəg* can be heard calling for its child. A deceased soul can make known its departure to people in other villages, such as to relatives, making a sound like the hum of a cicada, in order for them to make petition and pray *s’lamad*, or peace on that soul.

The *wəəg* is the shadow of the soul and is only seen or heard when a person’s soul departs, but in life it can also be feared as it can be cast by the soul even as a physical body casts a shadow. When someone is lying sick, and has most likely been blown on ritually for healing, it is prohibited to walk by them and cast one’s shadow over them as one’s *wəəg* will also be cast over them and interfere with the essence of the dream-guide (about which I describe below) that was invoked to bring healing. A sick person’s soul is also left in a vulnerable state and there are many normal activities that others should abstain from, such as cutting down bananas or playing games outside the house, that if undertaken might affect them, or even cause their death.

## 1.8 DREAM LIFE AND HALAA<sup>k</sup> POWER

Dreaming is an integral part of Temiar life, giving them knowledge of the wild, of the dangers that lie in wait, and spiritual vitality, through dream guides that taught them to invoke souls of nature and obtain help from them. But such knowledge would normally be learned by adepts, or those who had soul-guides that they followed in their dreams. The more common kind of dream, which the less adept could also have, might tell of events that were about to happen. For example, dreaming of a person would mean that the person was on their way to the house; of a new house, or weaving roofing palms, it would indicate that a death had occurred; of a pool of water, it would mean rain was coming, or of many birds flying about, it would be windy; of something on fire, such as the swidden, it meant that there would be dry weather; of a wild animal, such as a snake, or of getting attacked and cut, with blood, or a tree falling on oneself, it meant there was danger for oneself in the forest, or of a wild boar or bear pouncing, it would mean that one was likely

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<sup>12</sup> The life they refer to must mean consciousness, as the physical body can still breathe and remain alive when the soul wanders. However, the wandering of the soul for an extended period is considered dangerous.

to fall on a stump and shouldn't go out; a dream of the *ndangaa<sup>k</sup>* serpent rising would mean there is danger at the river, one should not go down there.

As well as dreams, certain circumstances were also believed to give signs of current events: if one choked on a drink, swallowing the wrong way, it meant that somebody somewhere had mentioned one's name, and thus one would think of them too (after choking). If one tripped up, or felt lethargic, or dropped the food on the floor, it meant that someone was on their way back or coming to visit. Catching nothing when out fishing, gathering only bad fruits, feeling faint, being restless at night, unable to sleep, or if the cooking turned bad, meant that there had been a death in another village, and it had caused *genhaa<sup>k</sup>*, or misfortune.

Those who were brave enough to approach souls in their dreams could converse with them and discover if they were good or evil, whether they would share knowledge and protect them or would try to kill them. Many kinds of souls could be met in dreams, including the souls of mountains and fruit trees that appeared in the form of *lɛwtow-m'nehleh*, young men and women, and sometimes *tataa<sup>k</sup>-jajaa<sup>k</sup>*, old men or women, with wonderful bodies and faces (the *r'waay ʔen-balix*, souls of above). The souls of animals and birds (the *r'waay ʔen-te<sup>k</sup>*, souls of the ground), appeared in dreams with their natural forms. All souls, if good, could share spiritual essence with the dreamer which would enable them to counteract negative forces in the natural world such as sickness. This essence, called *kahyex*, would *c'robob*, or flow to the dreamer like a stream of water, and remain with them in their *hup*, for where they would call on its efficacy in daily life. Its presence gave them a degree of *halaa<sup>k</sup>*, or spiritual power (a person with such power was also called a *halaa<sup>k</sup>*).

The great ancestors of the Temiars met the souls of the mountains and rivers in their dreams and sometimes these would *sorotŋ*, bestow their power on them, such as with Taa<sup>k</sup> ʔAmpís, who met the soul of the Puyan River. But in order to guarantee a steady flow or possession of this power-infusing *kahyex*, a *halaa<sup>k</sup>* would seek to take a *kahyex*-issuing soul as his or her *guníg*, or dream-guide. When a good soul came in a dream it would say to the *kahyex*-seeker, “*Yi-cɛn ma-hāā<sup>k</sup>, yím-guruu<sup>k</sup> ma-hāā<sup>k</sup>,*” I desire you, I want to call you master. Then the dreamer would obtain a token from that soul, normally a stone called a *batu<sup>k</sup> t'gas*, or in some cases a tooth or claw, if from a beast, and then the soul would become the person's *cōō<sup>k</sup>*, or pet, and the person would become its *kūul*, or keeper. The *t'gas* stone was kept in their ʔapo<sup>k</sup> pouch and no one would dare to steal it for fear that its issuing *guníg* would soon come after them. The keeper would endeavor to maintain a union with the *guníg*, following it in dreams and gaining knowledge from it of the souls found in nature around.

The *guníg* could protect its keeper from evil *guníg*, and give him or her the songs that would bring the *kahyex* up in his or her *hup*, at times when it was needed. Only the souls of animals and birds would be made *gunígs* as they could roam the forest and come to their keeper whenever he or she called them. Those animals typically included the *kasín*

sambar deer, *jeed* barking deer, *kawíib* sun bear, *bawaaj* pig-tailed macaque, *regrɔɔg* yellow-throated marten, the *ɕep biraay* magpie-robin, and even the *ʔalaaʔ* elephant and *r'laay* python. The *guníg*'s keeper would call them in time of need, such as when sick, and the *guníg* would appear at the house and enable their master to get up and recover. A keeper would send their *guníg* away if it was in danger of being hunted by others, or caught in a trap, or in order to keep his crops from being grazed. He might even send it to trample on someone else's manioc field if they had mocked him. If someone met a person's *guníg* it would disappear quickly to avoid any harm to itself (as it is too valuable to its keeper). The *halaa<sup>k</sup>* may say to the people, "Don't go out there at this time," because he knew that his *guníg* was resting or feeding there.

A person could keep up to three or four *gunígs*, but never a multitude of them because it would be impossible to tame so many, let alone sing to them all. Most often a person only kept one *guníg* unless they were more spiritually adept. The *towaa<sup>k</sup>*, or headman, of Jadeer village, is perhaps more unusual in that he keeps Taa<sup>k</sup> Guwaap as his *guníg*, as well as a tiger, and when a storm brews up because the children have misbehaved or broken taboos, he can petition his thunder *guníg* to cease his storm-making. It is said that a storm can blow up suddenly if he has passed by a place on his way somewhere. Jaa<sup>k</sup> ʔAbɔɔŋ of Tohɔy village is said to keep a *lamboɔy* as her *guníg*, the mysterious river creature mentioned above (see 1.3). She can petition it so that it leaves her grandchildren alone when they are down at the river.

Keepers of *guníg* soul-guides shared this *kahyex* with them, infusing it into each-other's *hup* in dreams by the action of *p'renlùb*, blowing through the hand onto the head or heart. Thus they became a *s'lantees*, or joined in the power of their *guníg*, and had this power available to them in daily life. They were also a guide to the people in their valley and could *perɔad*, or show the way forward for their *k'moɔm*, or kin group. In times of uncertainty, such as happened when a solar eclipse darkened the midday sun and everyone ran outside into the open, the *halaa<sup>k</sup>* was implored to go and sleep and dream. When he awoke he could give his assurance of safety because his *guníg* had told him that no ill fate would fall on them. At other times he could direct what activities should be done, such as going hunting upriver, or where to cut a new swidden, because he had seen the rivers and the land in his dream, and the places which were ideal for finding food.<sup>13</sup> A *guníg* animal that roamed the forest was also called a *kenlɔox sen'ɔɔy*, someone's eyeball (or else, *mad sen'ɔɔy*, someone's eye), as it belonged to a master and it saw for him or her as it wandered about.

When the master passed away, the stone or tooth that he kept would return to the *guníg* and the animal would be set free. This was exemplified at the passing of Busu Lon, who lived at the Tabɔh River, on the Puyan, when his *guníg* yellow-throated marten, a black, dog-sized mammal with a long tail, came bounding about in clear view, to show that it had

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13 The *halaa<sup>k</sup>* keeps the rain off, while the swidden cuttings dry out, by dreaming and entering the skies, then he tells them when to burn, and dreams of the rain to allow it to fall the next day, to prepare the land for planting.

been freed. I was also told that a person's *kenlōōx* can remain wandering about after the person's death, and cause problems for the living, bringing them sickness and so forth. Hence the reason for sending off the souls of the deceased properly, so that they do not have these soul attachments that remain in this world, looking for them or for others. In which case, the *kenlōōx* is not so simply defined, as being the actual dream guide animal, but it is more like a spirit force that attaches to the dream guide keeper and his/her dream guide animal. They also refer to it as a *b'ndəəh tē<sup>k</sup>ruu<sup>k</sup>*, 'thing of anger', meaning something that rose up in that person's *hup* during their life.

The most powerful of *guníg* was the tiger, and not any normal tiger but a roaming soul of the *julux* trees, that had become a wandering *k'norux* soul, taking the form of a tiger. This soul was actually evil, in that its nature was to hunt down people with the smell of blood offense on them, being sent out by the tiger lords, Məŋkah and G'nacəb, who reside one to the East and the other to the West. But a brave adept could meet a *k'norux* soul in his dream and make it his *guníg*, if the tiger requested that he become his *guruu<sup>k</sup>*, or master. By taking its tooth or claw he would make the tiger *l'mōon*, or tame, so that it would not attack him but would respond to his call when bid, and would become relaxed by his *g'nabag*, or singing. The keeper of a tiger *guníg* was called a *halaa<sup>k</sup> rayaa<sup>k</sup>*, or great medium, and the power available to him was also of a much greater degree than that available from other *guníg*. Because of such power that they held in the realm of souls, there was normally only one great medium per river valley, to whom people went in times of trouble or to participate in the ritual dances that he led. Women never became great mediums because they were not *lamiid*, or brave enough to walk with a tiger, in dreams perhaps but not in life.

The great medium was also called a *Taa<sup>k</sup> Belyan*, because of the token he held from his *guníg*, the symbol of having *guníg*-union and the power at his disposal through it. They would say that the old man held a *belyan*, and he was rightly respected because of it. For example, he could visit places in his dreams and see what people had in their homes, to check if they were hiding anything stolen or if they had any poison that they might use on someone! He could *bacax*, or recite magic, and send people speedily along the path, or make them wander around in endless circles trying to find the house, if he did not want them arriving to see him. A powerful *halaa<sup>k</sup>* could *p'laaw*, or fly off without his physical form being seen, and reappear elsewhere, which was a useful tactic when circumstances were threatening. It is told that a Temiar in Perak, when apprehended by the police and locked up, being accused of aiding the Communists, disappeared from his cell in the night and was later found back at his home doing his work.

His *guníg* taught him what would offend the jungle souls, the things that are taboo, of foods or actions that are forbidden, and it would protect him from other tigers and show him in dreams where they were roaming. In their dreams the *Taa<sup>k</sup> Belyans* of old would walk or fly with their *guníg* up on the mountains, and from there they would view the rivers and valleys below, and thus they became well acquainted with the land. Many of the mountains were also named from their dream experiences. A *Taa<sup>k</sup> Belyan* might see in a

dream that the tigers were looking for someone in particular and he would warn them not to go out at that time.<sup>14</sup> He might dream of a bear chasing someone and order them not to go out anywhere—and if they did they would be likely to meet with ill fate such as falling with their rear-end on a sharp stump.

A great medium could call his *guníg* to come at any time, to his aid or perhaps to *pegycɔx*, scare people, who might have mocked his status. For example, if they say, “You have no *halaa<sup>k</sup>*!” or they revile him, he will send his *guníg* to meet them when they walk in the forest, to make them fear for their lives and flee without managing to collect what they went looking for. Thus he would *be<sup>k</sup>co<sup>k</sup>* or tease people and they would soon learn not to disrespect him. When somebody did something that was distasteful to him, or against the tradition he taught, he would lay a *mayan* on them, a fine, and they would surely pay up<sup>15</sup> for fear that his *kenlɔɔx* would constantly tease them when out foraging. That said, the *halaa<sup>k</sup>* would keep his *guníg* away from the village so that people were not put in danger and so that it wouldn’t run into a spear trap set for deer or wild boars.

When the *caŋwɔɔʔj*, the brown wood-owl, was heard cooing at night, it was the sign that the *guníg* tiger was prowling in the forest nearby, causing people to fear leaving the house too early in the morning. The owl is said to ride on the tiger’s back and it is called the *wɔɔg sɛn<sup>2</sup>ɔɔy*, the face of the tiger’s master. Its call is also believed to usher in the *tawùn*, or fruit season. Another bird, *cɛp tʻranɛ<sup>k</sup>*, the chequer-throated woodpecker, that lives in the hollows of trees, signals the presence of the tiger in the daytime with its call, ‘*wɛɛh-wɛɛh*,’ or of other animals such as boars if it calls, ‘*reh-reh*’. One other bird, *cɛp yooɔ*, which is never seen, calls when the tiger has made an attack on a wild boar, or on a person.

A great medium’s soul did not *pʻlɔɔw* as others, when he died, but it became a tiger itself and wandered away down-river, to a great rock called, Batu<sup>k</sup> Bʻralɔ<sup>k</sup>, where it abode with other tiger souls. His tiger *guníg* would then be freed and would look for another master to keep it. The *halaa<sup>k</sup>* would normally introduce the *guníg* to his son at the ritual dances, so that he would be familiar with it and less afraid to take its token in a dream and tame it himself. This practice has not continued to the present generation however, and tiger mediumship has practically disappeared. The great medium of the Píncɔɔŋ River, Taa<sup>k</sup> <sup>2</sup>*Atih* Kabel, showed his *guníg* to his daughter, <sup>2</sup>*Asuh*, probably over 60 years ago, and after his death she dreamed of the tiger and took its claw, which she still keeps. But this was just to keep a remembrance of her father’s spiritual power, she did not acquire that

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14 A medium would burn *kasay* root at the year’s beginning to determine how the year would turn out: if he saw *mʻnanj*, or cords, rising in the smoke, straight up, things will be good, but if falling to the side, there would be problems. If there were cords of birds and animals, the year would have plenty of game and food; if of a *deŋdax* storm, the year would have a lack of food; if of the tiger, there would be danger, as a tiger may seek to take one of them and they should go out always in safe numbers (tigers from elsewhere, and not their own, were more feared).

15 In the old days, people would keep rings in their pouch, in case they needed to pay a fine, because the punishment for not paying was too fearful.

same *halaa<sup>k</sup>* power—she would have needed to entertain it with vine water in a darkened booth, in order to have possessed its real power. She was never afraid when she walked in the forest because she knew that the tiger looked to her, although she never invoked its help. The tiger was known to roam near the village and it never harmed anyone, even though it showed itself to several people. But a formerly kept tiger *guníg*, roaming without a keeper, is thought to be a very dangerous animal to meet with, as no one is taming it with songs to calm its soul.

The *ʔaam*, or tiger, would request of its *guruu<sup>k</sup>* in a dream that the people sing to it the following night, saying, “*Jawah ma-yii<sup>k</sup>*,” play for me, and prepare *jamūū<sup>k</sup>*, or special offerings for it. The offerings would include *bōōd l'bag*, a smooth-leaved plant that grows on the forest floor abundantly, and *c'bōōh cēŋcōōx*, the sap from a certain liana, as well as other fragrant plants that it might prescribe. The leaves would be cut up and laid on the floor inside a *panōōh* booth, and the water would be contained in a bamboo flask. The *halaa<sup>k</sup>* would sit inside the booth of palms and sing a slow and sad song, of a wavering voice style called *pēnʔāy*, to music made by the stumping of bamboo tubes. Incense of *kasay* root burning on hot embers was carried around the outside. At a certain stage in the song the medium would begin to *lāās*, jump about, and *k'roox*, to shake, and then he would *wəl*, forget himself and enter a trance (and some say he would also levitate into the top of the booth). Then he would begin to *hilad*, tell of the past and the future. As the medium called on the tiger to come in from the dark outside, he would say: “*samon b'lantēy*,” petition him with the drink offering; “*ʔintey gelg'lēel*,” coming from the mountains, he jumps on the booth; “*gabag terman*,” sing to please him; “*samon s'naŋ caloon*,” petition well with the leaf bunch. At a certain moment he would call out, “*Tataa<sup>k</sup> nam-huwal*,” the old man will come out of hiding, implying that the *ʔacōōg*, or tiger in song language, was entering the booth.

The medium's song would *terh'wal* the tiger, or bring it out of the darkness and into the booth, and then the top of the booth would begin to *l'pud*, or rustle as the tiger landed on the palm leaves. It then came down, with a ‘*s'luuh*’ sound, to the leaves on the floor and at that moment the medium requested the liana sap to be passed to him, saying “*p'saar b'lantēy*,” send forward the offering, and this he gave to the tiger to drink. The blood-red sap was believed to cool down the tiger's thirst for real blood! The tiger was said to be physically present in the booth but no one would see it, unless the *halaa<sup>k</sup>* permuted them to enter or to put their hand in and feel its fur. The late great medium of Pípcōōŋ took certain persons into the booth so that they could touch the tiger, which was placid as a cat they say, and his daughter (mentioned above) was also shown the tiger in this way.

The villagers had to comply with each of the tiger's requests and prepare each dance correctly, laying out a specific kind of leaf or flower, for example. Thus doing, they would keep it *l'mōōn*, or tame, and prevent it becoming evil, and liable to attack any of them at any time. It would even be dangerous for the *halaa<sup>k</sup>* if it was not entertained properly. So the *halaa<sup>k</sup>* courted trouble when he became a tiger-keeper, and surely he was aware of that, as in reality the tiger kept him. But there were good advantages to be shared by the whole

group through such a soul union and their survival in the realm of wild souls became much more feasible.

A *halaa<sup>k</sup>* could use his *guníg*'s power to *sɔɔ<sup>k</sup>* (Malay, *jampi*), or administer healing to sick persons or those suffering from ailments or soul-loss caused by souls of the wild. This he would do during a dance, but also at other times, in whatever house he was called to. Women could also *sɔɔ<sup>k</sup>* others, but only for other womenfolk or for their own husbands. When performing such a ritual, he would *k'tup*, tap the chest to find the *kahyex*, and then *s'rɔɔp*, kneel down next to the person with the illness, and *garr* or shake a bunch of fragrant leaves over their body. He may also *rapɔr*, hit the air with the leaf bunch, or *pegpɔg*, hit two bunches together. Then he would *t'hoool*, or blow through his clenched hand on the person's heart, to *perlùb*, or infuse his *guníg*'s essence, and after some reciting and more blowing on their body he would be able to extract the sickness and throw it aside<sup>16</sup>. But one session may not be adequate and he would need to return later to infuse more *kahyex* on the patient. In the meantime, he would prescribe taboos on certain foods that could interfere with the ritual's power, and even cause the person's death. The patient would not be allowed to go out in the sun or to eat chili, which would make them hot and give them the shakes.

He may also blow on items for the patient to use such as drinking water and tobacco, and herbal medicines such as *mɔŋleey*, for them to bathe with, or dyes such *r'mæed* (turmeric) and *ʔulox* (a yellow root) to paint on their face, and also amulets for them to wear around the neck. This was in case the *halaa<sup>k</sup>* couldn't attend to them for a few days, so that when they felt they would *selwah*, or faint, they could touch the item infused with the *guníg*'s *kahyex* and feel well again. The *halaa<sup>k</sup>* would also *perlùb* or infuse *kahyex* on those willing to follow his lead and become an adept or on the one chosen to succeed him as the next great medium.

The *ne<sup>k</sup>sɔɔ<sup>k</sup>*, or healing ritual, is known by the Temiars as the only cure for many kinds of illness that are believed to be incurable by other methods. Those would include problems caused by eating tabooed foods and also some other illnesses that are believed to be jungle-born. One such illness, called *bahyaa<sup>k</sup>*, gives a person acute pain in the stomach or back and is caused by bathing in cold river or stream water. Infant children are most susceptible and for that reason they would always be bathed with warm water.<sup>17</sup> Another is called *taníg*, a gout of the knees that is caused by kicking *taníg* rocks (exact identity still not known to me) down a slope. The *halaa<sup>k</sup>* could also *termaa<sup>k</sup>*, or return, someone's soul if it had wandered away and couldn't come back or if the souls of nature had stolen it. He

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16 The medium sucks out the illness through a clenched hand. In some cases, depending on his or her qualification as a medium, a solid object can be removed, that was the cause of the ailment.

17 This is not to be confused with *baad*, a long black worm which is sometimes found in the gut of grasshoppers and fish. Children are not permitted to touch raw fish due to the possibility of coming in contact with one, and also, they are not bathed with fresh, cold river water, which they call *ʔoɔx baad*, or water with *baad* worms.

would be able to find their soul in a dream and bring it back, and the person would awake from their dangerous slumber.

Another illness is called *mameŋ*, a migraine that comes on with the midday heat and is believed to be caused by the cold air, the mist, or the dew dripping from leaves, having contact with one's head in the early morning. Children are susceptible because they may run straight out in the morning without first washing their face. The remedy for this is more simple, however, as it can be relieved by pulling a clump of hair on the head to 'crack' the scalp. A more serious condition that a medium would be sought for was *gees*, the inflammation of the genitals or abdomen, believed to be caused by committing incest (or from close marriages). But only a qualified medium would know how to extract the disease (they would find and remove a small rag) and be able bring relief to the sufferer.

Some people followed dark souls in their dreams and obtained token stones from them, called *batu<sup>k</sup> t'lag*, in order to retain power from them. This was deemed useful to them in the same way as *kahyex*, but it was a dark power and could be unleashed to cause serious harm to other people. A *t'lag* stone could be buried in the ground in order to inflict a deathly illness on anyone passing that way and if it was buried near a home it could cause chaos. Some practiced *pensuu<sup>k</sup>*, the sending of sharp objects through the air. First the object would be blown on to give it power and then it would be sent off, liquidizing in mid air and solidifying again once it lodged in the flesh of the target person, to cause them serious pain or death. It might not be flying objects that were sent to their victim but debilitating diseases such as arthritis or swelling of the abdomen, that would make their life extremely difficult or even end it. One woman I heard of, who lived at Kajaax, was targeted by someone's magic and she became sick, with a burning feeling inside her. After two months of suffering she died and a witness said that ants came out of her mouth and ears.

Another dangerous type was called *senpug*, whereby someone would *s'pug*, or pull away another person's soul, causing their inevitable death. A less harmful type, but very manipulative one, was *cenwōōy*, the love charm. A person was given something that had the water of a charm dripped on it, in order to *cerwōōy* them, or put them under a spell, so that they would become desperate to marry the charm's holder, crying for them, even if that person was old-aged and ugly. Only to find out after a year or so that they had been charmed, but then be too afraid to say anything as the charm holder may well cause them a premature death!

Temiar sorcery is said to be less strong than that of Jehai, Semai or Indonesian origin, but to the Temiars it is still powerful except that they choose to keep it hidden. They don't readily use it to inflict harm on others (as just described) but it is used to procure long life for them in other ways. It is said that keepers of these magic charms die miserably, being tormented, unable to depart this world, sometimes going crazy and climbing up in the roof rafters. It would depend on how far somebody had strayed from the light of <sup>2</sup>Aluj into the realm of the *sen<sup>2</sup>ōōy rehŋah*, or dark souls. Persons who possess forms of *halaak<sup>k</sup>* power



often appear quiet and thoughtful, as opposed to those with loud and humorous character, and when they see another person of quiet demeanor they may search that person's heart, to see if they have any *halaa<sup>k</sup>*, and they may also try to *tarση*, or contest them, to prove which *halaa<sup>k</sup>* is the stronger. It is believed that many persons with *halaa<sup>k</sup>* who die sudden deaths were challenged by other *halaa<sup>k</sup>*s. The late Rtd. Sgt. <sup>2</sup>Uda Siyam, of Kacəŋ village, was believed to have been challenged by an Indonesian builder working there, without his knowledge. His level of *halaa<sup>k</sup>* proved far inferior to the foreigner's and the result was he became incurably ill, and died soon after.

Other stones were obtained in dreams also, to aid one's hunting and gathering in the forest, or for protection from beasts. These included the *batu<sup>k</sup> t'gas*, from the tiger, to keep one safe from them, or a larger one from an elephant to make it a *guníg* and to keep them away from the swidden. The *batu<sup>k</sup> manōw* from manau rattan, was kept to enable finding rattan easily. Those found in animals, such as langurs, siamang, certain fish (<sup>2</sup>*ayom*, *t'ŋāās*, *bawuh*), large rats, bull frogs and the porcupine, were all used for finding and hunting these creatures easily. The adept first blew on the stone to give it *halaa<sup>k</sup>* power and then kept it with him. But stones of the python, millipede and centipede were not taken as these creatures wriggled and no one would want to meet any of them!

In recent years, there have been many cases of persons affected by dark spirits, causing them different forms of psychological disturbance, leading to insanity and even demonised behaviour. The Temiars of the past always had the occasional <sup>2</sup>*ayēŋ*, or crazy person, to bear with, like an old man who talking nonsense, but not the kind of cases that I describe here. The affected person first loses his or her human feelings, and then their sense of cleanliness, not bathing for weeks, eating things in the dirt and sleeping under the house. They may start interacting with a 'person' that keeps appearing to them, but is invisible to others (except for an adept person). Their 'companion' spirit will either terrify them, or make them laugh, and even lead them out into the bushes at night. It is often called their *tōw*, husband, or *leh*, wife, even if they have a real spouse, because they are always observed responding or talking to it.

Because of their detachment with real life, which puts fear in other people, this person will be labeled a *sombiy*, or zombie. Ultimately, such a person will *sēdsiid*, or become possessed by the spirit, often in the evenings, and will gain super-human strength, so that no one can restrain them. They will disappear or fly away so that no one can catch them and they will lust for blood and catch chickens to bite their heads off. *Nē<sup>k</sup>soō<sup>k</sup>* ritual blowing may have no effect at dislodging the spirit from them and after attempts have failed they will be left to themselves, while people shut their doors for fear of being bitten by them. It is also feared that their presence in the village causes everyone to be frequently sick. Sometimes they can be washed with *man̄sii<sup>k</sup>*, the water of spiral ginger cane, to restore their sanity. To my knowledge, in the last few years there have been around a dozen such cases at Pos Gōōb, out of some 300 adults from a dozen villages, with half of them coming from one village.

It is believed this kind of spirit-possession occurs due to a person's *doos*, their miss-deeds, or to a person's exposure to something that shocks their psyche. For example, a person is startled by seeing a jet aeroplane (this caused insanity for one Semai man I know of) or they have seen movies that are way outside their norm and the scenes were believed to be real life. Perhaps, also, they were introduced to narcotics and had hallucinations. One man, of B'røg village, a retired Sergeant, had seen someone in a bloody state while serving in the Army (based at Bidor, Perak), and this caused him to go insane. He was retired early because of his condition and since his return he has become a danger to the other villagers. In January 2021, he was flown out for medical care, but they soon returned him, unable to find a cure for him.

A more sinister cause of insanity among the Temiars is linked to malicious spells. Indonesian loggers or labourers who have been in the area, who possess *halaa<sup>k</sup> síhiír*, or dark magic, have been known to *pukow*, or cast spells on objects and then bury them near a village, in order to infect people who pass by. One is believed to have been buried at the loggers' yard opposite B'røg village, causing at least two persons to be affected, and become insane. There are two other places where charms were buried in this way, and both places were named Habog, which means 'ash', because when a charm is buried it is wrapped up in a packet filled with ash. One was buried near Cenantə, by a Semai working at the Fort at Gəɔb, many years ago, and until today no one dares to live there. The other was buried more recently, near Bæd, and this caused trouble when a group tried to settle there in 2014. After a few weeks, they awoke one morning to find all their chickens headless and blood scattered around. They had to abandon the site because they feared a dark spirit possessed the place which was hungry for blood.

Temiar children residing at the boarding school of J'ræg (also more recently, in 2023, children at the Pos Tohøy school) have been affected by the *sedsiid* type of demon-possession several times, which was believed to be caused by malicious spells, as these problems have never occurred before among children.

## 1.9 RITUAL DANCE AND INVOCATION

Already mentioned above are two types of ritual dance that are made in order to appease and pacify two powerful entities, those being Taa<sup>k</sup> Guwaap, the thunder-maker, and the great medium's tiger *guníg*, which is a dangerous *k'norux* tiger soul. During both these rituals the *halaa<sup>k</sup>* would sit inside a booth made of palm branches, chanting in total darkness so that his invocation was not interrupted. The rituals were solemn gatherings without room for excitement or pleasurable singing and the people were probably somewhat stricken with fear anyhow. The medium entreated these powerful entities so that he could lure them into a state of calmness and thus procure safety for everyone in the kin group. Once he succeeded in his petitions, then the dance could change pace and more vibrant songs be sung, with enthusiastic beating of bamboo tubes as they began to celebrate the souls that gave life. This faster style, *nehpəɔh tawùn*, the dance to the

seasonal fruit souls, was by far the most practiced of dances. This dance is also called the dance of *ʔadoot p'renhíc*, the great-grandfather who created life, and it is held to protect the *r'waay canaa<sup>k</sup>*, or food souls of the forest.

Its main purpose was to invoke the souls of the *bæx*, and to seduce them into approaching the hall where they could meet with the soul-medium. When they arrived he would speak with them, to secure their favour on all the people, and also be their mouthpiece and tell about things from their perspective. Failing to celebrate them would also cause them to withhold their fruits, which are a vital life-support of the Temiars, and for that reason the dance was typically held before the fruit season begins and as the first harvests are made so that the trees would yield their sweet bounties in plenty. It is believed that the *cendot̃y tawùn*, the souls of the fruit trees and givers of a healing water in the dance, are more active during the fruit season. Also, if traveling far from the home valley, a dance would be held before departing to seek harmony with these souls, and especially so that they would not meet with the two *ʔaam rayaa<sup>k</sup>*, the great tiger souls, *Meŋkah* and *G'nacəb*, on their travels.

The dances were performed in the *d̃iix tagod̃*, the communal long-house, and this was first decorated all around with *cənlaay*, fragrant leaves hung from cords by their stalks. The aroma of these plants, together with bunches of more fragrant leaves mixed with flowers in the hands of dancers, and the beautiful flowers adorned by the women, infused the place with an aroma normally never experienced in such constant intensity, even when walking near flowering trees in bloom or when picking these leaves to stuff in the waist. This infusion of scent in the house was necessary to make the visiting souls of the forest feel a homely, perhaps intoxicating, atmosphere on their arrival. The men *t'pɔɔ<sup>k</sup>*, crown their heads with woven bands made of palm leaf and flowers, and the women *cadùg*, adorn the hair with beautiful flowers and *cɔɔd̃*, or dab dots on their faces with sticks dipped in colours. All these decorations helped to create unity of soul between the dancers and the visiting souls which descended from their forest abodes.

The women-folk would enter and sit alongside a smooth log, on which they to beat their two lengths of bamboo tube, one long, the male, and one short, the female, closed ends down, to create a resonant and deep, bi-tonal music. The men stood in the middle of the hall under the hanging leaves and moved about slightly to the rhythm of the bamboo high-low '*huuŋ-hooŋ*'. A song leader among them performed his best recitals, line by line, as the female percussionists sung in reply, overlapping the end of the lead and maintaining a constant flow of vocals. The men waved their *caloon*, or tied bunches of fragrant leaves, to infuse the air with a powerful fragrance, sometimes holding them in their own faces while breathing in deeply. Then they would start shifting from one foot to another in small hops, and, as the tempo increased and the songs become excited, they would start to *pɔɔh*, or jump to the rhythm of the bamboo music, while still maintaining the shifting of feet. And as they jumped, they made a percussion on the bamboo floor (and hence the dance was designated the term *nehpɔɔh*, jumping about).

This song style is called *taŋʔəy*, and it involves the sheer enjoyment of good voice and skilled, but often improvised, lyrics. The songs include stanzas about the rivers and hills around, life in the forest and the plea for <sup>ʔ</sup>Aluj to protect it, as well as spiritual ideas about *pantar r'duu<sup>k</sup>*, the abode of the deceased. The *halaa<sup>k</sup>* would invoke the souls of mountains in his song, calling on the names of the high peaks all around the valley, such as P'naŋəw, Síriŋ, Lírís, Səid or Bəŋley, and then the souls of the seasonal fruits, calling them *mən-ʔalat b'rəx*, the hands of the fruits, from *s'galaa<sup>k</sup> mənwaa<sup>k</sup>*, all over the land. When the *cəndəŋ tawùn* (also called *cəndəŋ b'riix*), the visiting souls, arrived near the hall, they wouldn't enter but their presence caused the *halaa<sup>k</sup>* to *lāās*, jump about, and to *hilad*, speak things that he heard of them. Then he would request them, “*Yaah, ham-ʔəŋ c'boəh*,” give me the cool water, “*yím-termuh ʔom-na<sup>k</sup>*” I will bathe them with it. This water would travel down *p'remjeem* or silken cords dangling from the roof (else called, *m'naŋ tawùn*, threads of the seasonal fruits), which were only visible to the *halaa<sup>k</sup>*, down onto the *tamuu<sup>k</sup>*, a ring of hanging leaves at the centre of the hall. The medium then collected this water with his leaf bunch, or in a dish on the floor, and with it he would *ramus*, or sprinkle all the people present.

In today's form of the dance, the participants squeeze water on their heads at the end of the dance, from a bunch of beaten *maŋsii<sup>k</sup>* canes hanging at the *tamuu<sup>k</sup>*—the same cane that Taa<sup>k</sup> <sup>ʔ</sup>Usop, the Temiar prophet from the Panəes River, saw was good for healing. Once the ritual was completed, the song was ended with a sudden and loud, “Hoo!” from the medium, and with that the *cəndəŋ* were sent back to their abodes of nature. In the dance he would speak with them to obtain an assurance of safety for his people, and for the next few days a peace lingered, and all who had been present would feel *məj*, or well, in soul and body. When walking out among the trees they felt safe from molesting souls and animal dangers. The dance was so beneficial to health that it would be held whenever the sense of peace with nature had dimmed, as well as those times when persons had overtly offended and brought troubling retributions on themselves. Through the dance, the outside realm was brought into the human realm and the two met, in a celebration of souls, and a unity was established, thanks to the spiritual adeptness of the medium.

Certain flowers were planted around the house, such as purple *tahən* (*Gomphrena globosa*), red *carax* (*Celosia argentea spicata*) and yellow or orange *tambus* (marigolds, *Tagetes erecta*) which were not only used for women's hair decoration, or stuffing in men's head bands, but they were ritually important and couldn't be picked for fun or have their petals torn off. Their souls were believed to aid dreamers in learning the songs of spirit invocation. When a spiritual adept met them in dreams they gave the songs that would enchant the souls of the seasonal fruit trees and cause them to come down to the dance hall and give their blessing. A *guníg*, a proper dream-guide, on the other hand, taught the songs that invoked the souls of the mountains, for the *guníg* was familiar with them, always wandering far and ascending the high peaks, where it felt fresh, and it would also take his keeper there in his dreams. The songs of the Taa<sup>k</sup> Belyans often reflected on the occurrences they had seen in their dreams and many of these have been passed down as well-known songs until today. The dances were held on a monthly basis or on special

occasions such as during a good millet harvest or for the sending away of a deceased person's soul.

The current celebration of Nyu<sup>k</sup> Luj Juwel (the more reverent term for Nyu<sup>k</sup> <sup>2</sup>Aluj, used by today's adherents) sprang from a resurgence of dedication toward <sup>2</sup>Aluj, that began in the 1990s with a Temiar prophet from the Panæes River (see 1.6 above). Perhaps half of the Temiar villages in Kelantan follow this new *hukom*, where they observe '*hari<sup>k</sup> jadi<sup>k</sup> <sup>2</sup>Aluj*' or the birthday of <sup>2</sup>Aluj, three times each month, by holding dances with much fragrant foliage hanging all over, and some stringent rules of participation for the villagers. The men call each other "*nyu<sup>k</sup>*", instead of the age-old Temiar term "*yaah*", to profess their brotherhood under Nyu<sup>k</sup> <sup>2</sup>Aluj. They no longer celebrate the tiger *gunígs* and there are no great mediums who keep them, but their *guruu<sup>k</sup>*, or teacher, seeks *belyan* power from the sources of <sup>2</sup>Aluj and they also still celebrate the seasonal fruits.

In times past, Temiars did not celebrate <sup>2</sup>Aluj with their *g'nabag* songs, it was only the souls of the creation under him who were invoked in this way. But the adherents now believe that <sup>2</sup>Aluj requires complete darkness, as did their *gunígs*, in order for *belyan* power to be given. They also hold that once they have begun this cycle of monthly dances, they cannot cease from it, as they would then become poorly and sick. Most of all, they aim to obtain *belyan* so that they may have the ability to perform healing rituals on their family members. Some *halaas* still keep tiger *gunígs* (at Jadeer and R'køøb for example), even when most of the last great mediums have already passed away, but they don't practice the ritual with a booth of palm branches in the darkness, they sing to their *guníg* out in the forest by themselves. It is said that nowadays people are less supportive of the great mediums and their tiger *gunígs* due to the advent of modern conveniences, such as smart phones and motorbikes, that seem to have given people new freedoms.

Another ritual dance practiced by the Temiars is *s'lombaŋ*, a form of mediumship performed to placate the great Ndangaa<sup>k</sup> spirit, which abides in the subterranean realm, (also called the *s'lombaŋ*) and is held today at Kampuŋ Wæud, a village down on the <sup>2</sup>Uyas River. It is characterised by a song style reminiscent to the *taŋ<sup>2</sup>æy* monotone, but with a faster rhythm of music, and with trance-like swaying of the head and beating of the body with split palm leaves (of *bayas*, *mantax*, and *<sup>2</sup>apøø's haanŋ*). Sweet *k'míŋnam* tree resin is burned, and their headbands and leaf whisks are made of *k'waar* palm—and the medium's power is held in the whisk, which he hits in the air. The language of the ritual was received from *gøb gayíp*, or foreign spirit beings<sup>18</sup>, which only the medium, who is called the *To<sup>k</sup> Pawaŋ*,<sup>19</sup> can understand. The dance is said to have been held ever since the great *límbaŋ*, the catastrophic flood that covered the whole earth with raging waters, and there have been 25 generations of mediums, who have entreated the serpent.

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18 This source of influence has been confused with the Malays (also called *gøb*). Note also that the *tataa<sup>k</sup> s'laay*, soul of the rice swidden, and the *berbøw*, or ironwood tree soul, are also called *gøb*, or foreign.

19 The *To<sup>k</sup> Pawaŋ* is a Malay term; the medium is properly called a *Taa<sup>k</sup> Belyan*.

To *jamū<sup>k</sup>*, or make their entreaty, they enter a cave in the limestone stacks, called *Guwō<sup>k</sup>* *Jaŋgō<sup>s</sup>ōd*, and pass through a narrow opening, by light of *ʔō<sup>s</sup> diyex*, or candles, into chambers filled with turtles and centipedes (it is only for the brave). Some say that they come out on Mount P'naŋōw, or Camaah, the home of the serpent, but I was told that this doesn't happen in the ritual and thus such transportation probably takes place only in the medium's dreams. It is also said that, as they perform the ritual, a boom can be heard in places afar off. The ritual would be necessary whenever they felt that the world had become unstable, such as when the earth quaked, as they believed that the serpent had been disturbed. It was Taa<sup>k</sup> ʔAmpís, the great medium of the Puyan River, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century<sup>20</sup>, who entreated the Ndaŋgaa<sup>k</sup> during the 'red flood' of 1926. He saw it in a ritual dance and it told him to throw seven coins in the deep pool at the Palēes River mouth, which flows from P'naŋōw mountain, and when he did this the flood abated.

It is said by today's practitioners of *s'lombaŋ* that if they did not continue their entreaties of the serpent it would arise from its depths to destroy the earth<sup>21</sup>. The earth has a number of layers—those being: *tē<sup>k</sup>* (the upper soil layer) – *s'lombaŋ* – *ʔudōōx* – *r'mēy* (a place of spirits below)—and with each of man's exploitation of resources, such as logging and mining, a deeper layer is disturbed, causing the Ndaŋgaa<sup>k</sup> to awaken from its abode. The *b'naŋ sawuh*, the cords keeping the earth in place, could even be damaged and then earth itself would disintegrate! When it was seen traveling from downriver toward the mountains, there was no danger, but if from the river source toward the sea, then real danger was posed. The Ndaŋgaa<sup>k</sup> is believed to swim up the Puyan River when it floods and some people claim to have seen a huge, long creature in the billowing and raging waters. Those without *belyan* powers would not dare to mention its name, however, and would call it *ludaad*, the avoidance term used for snakes.

Two persons were believed to have been bitten by the serpent in the past, one at *Sērpsōr*, on the Bərtax River and one at P'lad, on the Puyan, and they both died from their wounds. In the second incident, a woman went to bathe while the river was in flood, and she had been warned not to because the odour of childbirth was still strong on her. She stepped in the water and felt a sharp pain go through her foot, as if she had been bitten. It caused a chill to run up her body, to her head, and she died shortly afterwards. Her father, ʔAtih Kabel, a great medium, dreamed and saw the soul of the serpent.

Even with the disappearance of the *halaa<sup>k</sup> rayaa<sup>k</sup>*, or great mediums, who practiced ritual dances to their tiger *gunígs*, the beliefs in souls and caution of over-stepping the lines of

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20 Taa<sup>k</sup> ʔAmpís was also known as Taa<sup>k</sup> Jaan, because he had a butterfly dream-guide that flapped its wings, with a '*jaan, jaan*' sound, he is known today as Taa<sup>k</sup> Ranal, because of the fact that he was laid to rest on Ranal Hill, near the Bərtax River. It is said that he also held ʔAmē<sup>k</sup> *Cenheer*, the sun, as a dream guide, and thus people could not look into his eyes, which shone. He was certainly one of the greatest and most revered Belyans of the Temiars.

21 They state that, if the observance of these rituals was forsaken, the earth itself would fall off its pillar and all would be lost! They also say that when the serpent travels from down river toward the mountains, that they are safe, but when it travels from the mountains to the sea there is real danger.

offense are just as strong today. The keeping of taboos is just as rigid now as it ever has been, even among those Temiars who call themselves by the name of new religions. Prohibitions on foods and activities, actions and words are still taught to the young and stringently held to. Small mediums still abound and they regularly practice *ne<sup>k</sup>soɔ<sup>k</sup>*, the blowing on the sick to procure healing and most Temiars prefer that treatment to making a long and arduous journey down to a clinic, where they receive non-natural medicines.

It is questionable whether the Temiars could have survived for millennia in their isolated environment, if they had not learned the codes and rites of the souls that inhabit the land and the deities which reside over them, being more powerful than anything human. Anyone who says they have been here that long must know something about the spiritual environment as well as how to be resourceful in the natural realm, not to mention a great deal about the hills and rivers of the land. Without such knowledge it is almost certain they never would have prolonged life to succeeding generations. There are no supermarkets here, nor are there other religious rituals to practice, one must comprehend the customs required by the guardians of the wild *bæx* to be a dweller within it. The Temiars call the dense forest *s'roɔx*, and themselves, they call the *sen<sup>2</sup>soɔy senroɔx*, or the people of the deep forest. This label is testament to the fact that their life is completely contained by the forest, by its resources and by its spiritual code and that they were put there by <sup>2</sup>Nyæ<sup>k</sup> <sup>2</sup>Aləj.

## 1.10 SUMMARY OF SOUL TYPES ORIGINATING FROM THE WILD

The table below simplifies the types of soul found in nature, that are encountered in dreams or in real life, which the Temiars fear in certain ways and follow measures to avoid having confrontation. If there is contact made with them and they cause trouble, in physical or mental health, then there are often ways in which the trouble can be remedied. Remedies would often involve *ne<sup>k</sup>soɔ<sup>k</sup>*, a ritual whereby an adept would kneel next to the patient and, calling on his/her *guníg*, locate the cause of the illness in their body (something solid is supposedly extracted, such as a rag) and then suck it out through the hand and discard it.

<i>Soul type feared</i>	<i>Taboo or cause of trouble</i>	<i>Consequences of offense</i>	<i>Remedies</i>
<b>R'WAAY <sup>2</sup>EN-BALÍX – SOULS OF ABOVE</b>			
<i>Taa<sup>k</sup> Guwaq<sup>n</sup></i> , the thunder deity	<i>məsíx</i> – interference with nature	storms, floods and destruction	<i>cɔɔs</i> petitions, <i>Jamuu<sup>k</sup></i> offering at ritual dance
<i>Tawùn</i> – souls of the seasonal fruits	<i>r'waay</i> – cause offense by cursing or throwing fruits	soul stealing	<i>nɛ<sup>k</sup>sɔɔ<sup>k</sup></i> sucking
<i>Pət'rii</i> – souls of mountains, waterfalls and rivers	<i>r'waay</i> – cause disturbance	soul stealing	<i>nɛ<sup>k</sup>sɔɔ<sup>k</sup></i> sucking
<i>Tataa<sup>k</sup> bərbow</i> – soul of the Moluccan ironwood tree	live too close to a tree or come too close to its logs	bad dreams and severe chest pains called <i>pacɔg</i>	<i>nɛ<sup>k</sup>sɔɔ<sup>k</sup></i> sucking
<i>Tataa<sup>k</sup> s'laay</i> – the rice field soul	breaking the rules of the rice field	tormenting dreams	<i>nɛ<sup>k</sup>sɔɔ<sup>k</sup></i> sucking
<b>R'WAAY <sup>2</sup>EN-Tɛ<sup>k</sup> – SOULS OF THE GROUND</b>			
Of wild animals that are eaten	<i>sabat</i> , <i>tɛ<sup>k</sup>ruu<sup>k</sup></i> , <i>genhaa<sup>k</sup></i>	on-going illness, spirit-possession, death	<i>nɛ<sup>k</sup>sɔɔ<sup>k</sup></i> , treatment with crushed animal bones
<i>K'norux</i> – souls of evil tigers	<i>pəl<sup>2</sup>ax</i> , <i>doos</i> or sins against others	tiger attack	stay home at least seven days for <i>pəl<sup>2</sup>ax</i>
<i>Ndangaa<sup>k</sup></i> – subterranean serpent	disturbing the earth	great floods and earth destruction	<i>jamūū<sup>k</sup></i> ritual entreaty
<b>R'WAAY REHDAH – DARK SOULS</b>			
<i>Jaa<sup>k</sup> Wɔɔy</i> – cave soul	come too close to its lair, stay alone in the forest	holding captive in its cave	petitions by the <i>Taa<sup>k</sup></i> belyans on entering a cave
<i>Sanu<sup>k</sup></i> – grave souls	come too close to a grave	unease, sickness	<i>nɛ<sup>k</sup>sɔɔ<sup>k</sup></i> sucking

Table 2. *Types of soul to be feared in the framework of the Temiar belief system.*



## PART 2

### Definitions of Temiar Taboos

Integral to the daily life of the Temiars is their stringent adherence to a complex web of prohibitions, which were taught first by their ancestors, the Tataa<sup>k</sup> Belyans. Precaution is vital, and avoidance of taboo actions, words and foods is essential, in order to guard against ill fate that could be caused by disturbing the many *r'waqy* or souls of the forest. The constant fear of an accident, a tiger attack, a devastating storm blowing up, or ill health, is enough to ensure that the people are taught what is disallowed from very young. By keeping themselves from acting without care, the spiritual balance between man and nature is maintained, and thus life can be better preserved.

In my research over the last eight years I have been able to categorise fifteen main classes of taboos. I can further divide these into three main areas of human activity that is associated with them, those being: taboos that concern actions and speech, taboos that concern foods from the wild, and taboos that concern human and nature odours.

#### 2.1 TABOOS CONCERNING ACTIONS AND SPEECH

##### ***Məsíx***

This is a class of prohibitions that pertain to behaviour and speech, and largely concerns the disturbing of souls in the animal world, which will be seen and punished by the thunder deity, Karsiy, who watches over them. It is taboo to call the name of any animal or food during its preparation or while eating it, or to play with food and pretend it was another object (a vegetable becomes an animal, or a human object, e.g. a phone or car) or it was still alive when dead. Such utterances or actions will cause the eater to *r'waac t'naa<sup>k</sup>*, to have bloody diarrhea, and waste away until death. A similar fate will come upon a hunter or fisherman, if someone thinks to *ce<sup>k</sup>rɛɛ<sup>k</sup>*, or point at him on his return from the jungle or river and then he eats the game or fish he brought home. Playing with and laughing together at animals that are caught for food, which is especially easy to do with a pig-tailed macaque or gibbon monkey, is the most dangerous offense and it will bring on a storm with the earth *yɛlyool*, collapsing and turning over with rocks falling down, killing every one involved. Likewise, laughing together at small creatures that go about collecting their food, such as the dragonfly, butterflies, caterpillars, spiders, ants, cicadas, the carpenter bee, millipedes, scorpions, preying mantis, cicadas, skinks, and possibly others,

is prohibited as it would surely bring on a storm.

Certain birds are called *cep māsíx*, taboo birds, and mimicking their calls when they are heard is feared a dangerous preoccupation. These include *cep tɛŋtɔ̃x* (greater racket-tailed drongo), *cep wɛdwāād* (white-throated fantail), *cep hɔ̃ldɔ̃x* (black-naped oriole), *cep sɛŋ'jɛ̃d* (Asian paradise-flycatcher), *cep cíntaap* (white-rumped shama), *cep cɛdcad* (little spiderhunter) and *cep s'merlon* (white-winged black jay), as well as *cep hɔ̃sɔ̃ŋ*, a so-called bird that is never seen, only heard.

Reflecting the sun's light upwards is another taboo, which will invite a storm from the thunder deity, Taa<sup>k</sup> Guwaap (he will see a drink shining up at him and come to drink it!). Laughing loudly while playing chase or chasing a dog around are also likely to usher a storm, and children are often told to play more quietly. A sudden thunder storm is often blamed on people copulating outside in the day-time, in full view of Taa<sup>k</sup> Guwaap (who in the folktales copulated with many young women who were really stinging ants and they did him serious damage!). Calling a rainbow by its name when seen is also refrained from and a name-avoidance term is always used, *na-wɔ̃g*, it's risen.<sup>22</sup>

### ***Pacɔ̃g***

This is the taboo on any actions that would endanger someone's health caused by the malevolent *berbow*, or moluccan ironwood tree. People should not build homes too close to the stump or logs of a dead tree, or they will be affected in their sleep—an old man will come and terrify them. If anyone wanders by the stump in the evening their health could be seriously affected, so that they develop a sore chest pain, that only a medium could help cure, by ritual blowing on their body. A an actual wood splinter would be removed from the chest by an apt medium. Children are also told to be less playful and to sit down when the sun is setting, or when the sky *s'rimaay*, or turns yellow, with warnings like, "*Ham-gəl, pacɔ̃g hāā<sup>k</sup>!*" sit down, your chest pain!

### ***R'waay***

This is the taboo on actions that would cause a person's soul to *r'waay*, or drift away and not return. Disrespecting the seasonal fruit trees, which have souls that are seen in dreams and are celebrated in the traditional dance, is one such prohibited action. It is believed they have power to cause a person's soul to wander away, so that the person enters an endless sleep, which leads eventually to their death. These fruits include *jiyees*, a green fruit with orange pips, *kabaax*, jungle rambutan, *l'cax*, today's rambutan (imported from downriver), and similar small fruits that grow in bunches, such as *tampuy*, *rarõh*, and *rambey*. One may not utter profanities at them, or throw their fruits around, because hitting a person on the head with them would cause the person to *r'waay*. Neither should anyone go climbing the trees to pick fruits toward the end of the day, when light begins to fail. Powerful souls also inhabit the prominent places in nature such as mountains, waterfalls, caves and rivers,

<sup>22</sup> We can add here the action of kicking certain *taníg* rocks down a slope as another taboo, and those actions that would disturb the 'old man of the padi field' (listed on p19).

and shouting or yelling in those places, or shaking the flowers on a mountain-top, would also endanger someone's soul. Petitions are made while walking in the forest and especially when ascending a mountain, for the souls inhabiting there to forego causing harm to anyone. Persons who have not been on the mountain before are considered to carry new 'smell' on them and may cause bad weather or a storm to blow up. They will cut a piece of hair and burn it in order to hide their smell from the souls that live there, making petitions for the sky to open up.

When a person enters a deep sleep, it is believed that their soul wanders away, and it takes time for it to return to its place when they wake up. Thus, a person should not be startled in their sleep by any sudden noise, as their soul would not have time to return to them, leaving them in a dazed state. It is particularly serious for young infants as their soul might not return to them at all. Other activities also could dislodge a newborn child's soul, which is still insecure and vulnerable: the child cannot be bathed at evening, as the sun goes down (so either earlier on or after dark); people must not crowd around the newborn in the house, as they will *hawul* or cast their shadows over it while it is still oblivious to those around it. The parents or grand-parents *t'hool* or blow through the hand on the head of the child to help secure its soul. They also will not cut an infant's hair until it is old enough to sit up, as it is believed that its soul will drift away easily without hair on its head to stop it. There is no "soul-sharing" between the child and its parents, as was suggested before (Benjamin, 2014), but it enters the world in complete vulnerability to the souls around it.

### ***B'ranii<sup>k</sup>***

This is a taboo on mentioning the ill fate of anyone, for example, by saying, "*Ham-k'bəs!*" you'll die!, or anything inferring that someone might snuff it soon, or fall into a calamity, as the fate may well come on that person later. It is likewise taboo to do any action that would make a newborn child seem unwanted, as it then might not survive long.

### ***Jahruu<sup>k</sup>***

Certain actions are tabooed that will disturb the medium during a ritual dance, his singing to invoke the souls of the jungle or his trance when they arrive to converse with him in the dance hall. Shining a light in the hall or taking photos, passing nearby him, or leaving the hall before the closure of the ritual are all deemed to disturb the ritual and thereby may cause consequences in the days ahead if the souls have not given their peace at the dance.

### ***P'renhɔɔd***

To *perhɔɔd* someone is to cause them to want or expect something, whether it be one's company going somewhere, in the forest or down to town, or perhaps a gift that one promises to give. It is different from making an arrangement to go and carry out some work, such as cutting a swidden or going trapping, which is to *pakad* together, because the

thing suggested will not be done immediately, and later on one may not be able to fulfill it. The person who is expecting to have one's company somewhere out in the jungle will be put in danger, when one forgets to meet up with them or one takes a different path and doesn't find them. They are likely to hear voices and chattering on the path behind them, and thinking it is the one who promised to catch up with them, they will have a sorry encounter with the 'striped old man', the tiger, the one that was mimicking people's voices!

Also, when a person goes on a long walk, hunting or fishing for example, and promises to be back later, but he walks too far to return or the sky turns dark with rain and he must sleep in a shelter somewhere and return only the next day—he puts people at home in grave danger because he spoke, making them anticipate his return, but then he couldn't return. While they are still expecting his return in the evening, instead, the tiger will come by for them, prowling under the house. The more careful procedure is to say, "*To<sup>k</sup> yi-perhoo<sup>d</sup>*," I can't promise you, I may stay the night up there. And the same danger will occur if one makes others expect someone's return, who has gone hunting or down-river, by saying, "So-and-so will be back soon!" and he or she doesn't come back that day.

### ***S'lantab***

This is the case where something has been offered to someone, food or drink in most cases, and usually while paying a visit to another house, and this provision must be accepted, if only to taste a little and even if feeling full already. Even if the hosts of the house mention that they have something available, like tea on the boil, one must wait for them to serve it and take some. While tasting some one would say, "*S'lantab*," I've satisfied my thirst and there won't be anything else coming to take it instead of me. If one refuses and leaves without eating or drinking, a centipede will surely run out of somewhere and bite, or a tree will fall on one in the forest, or an accident will happen in the swidden. It can also cause the same danger if one asks for something to eat and it's not available, or even craves for something that is not possible to obtain. It can even apply to something being shared out among everyone, like some delicious fruit or a bowl of meat, and one comes late or from another village—one would need to find a little piece of it to taste, and say, "*Na<sup>k</sup>, s'lantab!*" In the old days, they wouldn't even say that someone should marry a girl, as that would be offering them something that they would need to take, and if they didn't then marry, an ill fate could come on them.

## **2.2 TABOOS CONCERNING FOODS FROM THE WILD**

### ***Julux***

This is a class of certain tree and vine species, including many fruit trees, that in Temiar tradition are taboo to bring carelessly into the house, because they contain powerful souls that cannot be brought into the human domain without asking permission of their guardian-creator. Most of these fruits are also classed under a food taboo (see *te<sup>k</sup>ruu<sup>k</sup>*

below) and cannot be eaten by post-natal or nursing mothers, young children or menstrual women or they would cause dangerous side-effects to their health. These include several species of seasonal fruits as well as other fruits that are eaten by birds and rodents, including *sawít*, oil palm nuts, and thus to eat animals that have consumed these fruits may also cause problems. Meat that would normally be safe for women must be avoided at certain times of the year, for fear that the animals were eating wild fruits such as *p'latuw*. The *julux* species that is eaten by a child is said to *r'gɛ<sup>k</sup>*, or cling onto them tightly, constricting growth and causing them to be thin and weak.

When the first fruits of the year are to be harvested, such as *jiyees* (a variety of breadfruit similar to the keledang that is known to Malays, *Artocarpus lanceifolius*, which is called *pergəəs* in Temiar), *tampuy* (tampoi fruit), *sempaa<sup>k</sup>* (varieties of jungle durian), or *sə'c* (perah nuts), they are gathered only after the annual *penta<sup>k</sup>*, or petition, is made to Nyə<sup>k</sup> ʔAləj Tampuy, the guardian over the souls of the fruit trees, with burning of incense. This is normally conducted at the first *jiyees* tree to be harvested in the fruit season and at the first *sə'c* tree where the nuts are gathered a month later. Back at the house, the group gather round with a great heap of all kinds of delicious fruits at the centre, to *kahyax*, or celebrate, the provision of the *b'riix*, or seasonal fruits. After this, traditionally, the men must go down to the river and *ruuy s'laa<sup>k</sup>*, cast leaves in the water to float away as an offering to the souls of the seasonal fruits.

*Julux* trees and vines, which include *k'bəə<sup>k</sup> ʔajɛl*, a fruiting vine, *manaar*, the vine of the rafflesia, *hariyuw*, a palm with broad fan-shaped leaves, and ʔawen *gantaan*, giant bamboo, must not be cut down or damaged, as they have potent souls that can descend to the ground and take on new form if their plant life is killed. They will become an evil *k'norux* soul, and take the form of a tiger, small initially, but growing larger as they roam. These tigers are more feared than any, especially by persons with taboo offense (see *pəl<sup>2</sup>ax* above). It is said that the soul of the *sawít* palm often comes down as a small cat and it is also known to cause anger in women and children if they consume any palm oil during menstruation or the *ranjyē<sup>k</sup>* period. The *manaar* vine is quite feared and Temiars never camp in areas where it grows, and its bud, a medicinal herb used for treating post-natal mothers, cannot be collected by the father during the pregnancy.

## Sabat

This is a category of animals and fruits from the wild that can cause severe problems and illnesses to persons who are susceptible to soul-attack, especially children (even in the womb) and young people, if ingested by them or anyone who can directly affect them. These foods are taboo for mothers and fathers during pregnancy, for children, and for women during menstruation, as well as the *ranjyē<sup>k</sup>* period (the month after child-birth). A breach of the taboo by a mother or father will result in complications during pregnancy, if they are *tɛ<sup>k</sup>nɔɔ<sup>k</sup>*, or the 'right kind', meaning susceptible, such as the unborn child tangling up or becoming lifeless in the womb. And also at birth, the child may not deliver, the umbilical cord may tangle around the neck, thus also greatly endangering the mother's life, or it could be born with deformity. It could also cause the child to be born weak and

sickly (i.e. not surviving long), and other illnesses for it in later years (depending on the species of animal or plant that was eaten).

Likewise, if children or young persons eat any *sabat* food they will put themselves in danger of whatever illness it can cause. Such illnesses include: wasting away and becoming thin (leading, ultimately, to premature death), having high temperatures, *gegyeg* having fits or becoming deranged or stupid, having breathlessness, dizziness, vomiting or cutting pain in the stomach. And some of these effects, such as breathlessness, are believed to hit them later on in life, in their adulthood. It is also not surprising that seizures are a possible effect caused by *sabat* foods, as the word *sabat* is closely related to the Malay word for epilepsy, *sawan*.

*Sabat* animals include the pig-tailed macaque, siamang and gibbon monkeys, slow-loris, sambar deer, barking-deer, mouse-deer, bear cat, civets, mongoose, squirrels, bats and flying fox, tortoises and turtles, monitor lizards, porcupines, bamboo rat and other rats, pheasants, most hornbills, doves, swallows and some fish. I have listed 122 species in total, including 40 fruit and plant varieties. Those animals which men may eat and mothers who are still nursing children may not, are cut up and fur-singed on a fire outside the village or in the jungle, and the meat is usually cooked outside the house and eaten from dishes separate from those used by women and children, as even touching or smelling *p'iih*, the raw odour of the meat is considered dangerous for them. Youths must be physically grown enough before they can start eating *sabat* meat safely, which is usually only by the age of 16 years or older.

Three turtle species are not eaten at all by anyone as they would cause an immediate storm to blow up if they were killed. Of these the *ʔawaa<sup>k</sup>*, a flat, spiny turtle, cannot even be approached where it dwells in the mountains, as doing so would bring on a catastrophic storm, or even a forest fire—as it is said to be repulsed by human odour (therefore the fear of it follows more the *məsíx* taboo).

Certain fruits must be abstained from by both parents during pregnancy, such as pineapple, which is believed to cause elongation of the child's head in the womb, and twinned banana, which is believed to cause deformity of the child. *Ndaŋkaa<sup>k</sup>*, or jack fruit, is also avoided as it would cause problems during delivery of the child. Certain ferns are also risk-prone if eaten during the pregnancy, such as *bayas* and *bəər paku<sup>k</sup>* (Malay, *pucuk paku*), and the pith of palms, as they have latex and can cause the womb to stiffen. Three fruits which have a strong smell, *b'taar* (petai), *sə'c* (perah) and *ʔaŋrəy* (niring), cannot be eaten during pregnancy or by women during menstruation, as they would cause a person to go *ʔayəŋ*, or lose their mind and run off alone into the forest, possibly even getting lost for days until others found them and brought them home. Even the flowers of the perah tree that drop in the rivers can cause people dizziness.

Fish caught with a bought casting net, i.e. made by machine (it has a different kind of overlapping at the outside edge) or one newly-made or a one with a new chain, will cause dangers for an expectant mother and so she must avoid eating any. She also must not eat any fish caught with the long fish trap with two funnels inside (*bubuu<sup>k</sup> gəət*), but only from the egg-shaped trap (*pacəð<sup>k</sup>*), and if fish caught by a hook, the hook must not be lost

but kept safe. When a mother begins labour, any casting nets in the house (or any in the village from which she has eaten fish caught in it) must have their pull ropes untied immediately, and all the bottles must have the caps removed.

### ***Tɛ<sup>k</sup>ruu<sup>k</sup>***

(A sub-division of the *Sabat* taboo)

This is a more serious form of soul-attack, of a class of certain animals and fruits that are forbidden for children to eat and also women during menstruation. If they did eat them, they would *hāāw*, or waste away and become skin and bones, and also manifest animal-like behaviour. These animals include *ta<sup>2</sup>oŋ*, the wild boar, *kaa<sup>k</sup> ʔayom*, the Malay mahseer (*Tor tambroides*, Malay, ikan kelah; a pinkish carp with large scales), *tabεεg*, the bullfrog and all the *sen<sup>2</sup>ooy rayaa<sup>k</sup>* or ‘big people’ animals, including tapir and gaur, rhinoceros and elephant. All these animals are ferocious in nature and eating their meat would cause the child’s *hup*, or heart, to become possessed by the soul of that animal and the child would then also *t’ruu<sup>k</sup>*, or begin to manifest the animal’s anger (*tɛ<sup>k</sup>ruu<sup>k</sup>*, have anger). It is believed that the animal’s soul rises up inside the person, causing them to *hermaar*, become ferocious and start behaving as the animal itself, growing long nails and scratching at the fire-mound or at people, climbing up in the roof or running outside into the bushes. Eventually, the animal will start to emerge from their *hup*, which can result in their death.

The bullfrog is quite a potent creature and it can cause women and children to *hermaar* seriously. A few days after they eat it they will feel a chill and start growling and scratching, and even have dreams of the frog, which will say, “I hate the menstrual woman touching me, but the others I don’t mind.” The *sabat* animal will *j’huud*, or suck on, the blood of the woman who eats it when she is vulnerable, causing her to waste away and be weak the rest of her life.

Many fruits are also classed *tɛ<sup>k</sup>ruu<sup>k</sup>* and they include all forest fruits from the *julux* class of trees, such as, *kabaax* (wild rambutan, with longer hairs), *hakooŋ*, *k’maraa<sup>k</sup>*, *kejkoŋ’j*, *k’leidəŋ*, *k’maluŋ*, *kurii<sup>k</sup>*, *lεεg*, *p’latuuw*, *remmaŋ*, *s’taar*, *tampuy*, *terhii<sup>k</sup>*, *mancaəŋ* (sour mango), *s’pooy* (jungle mango), *sempaa<sup>k</sup>*, *pergəəs* (similar to *jiyees*), *sawít* (oil palm) and even some well-known fruits such as watermelon, winter melon, dragon fruit and terap. Although *jiyees* and *deriyan* (durian) are listed as *julux* species as well, they can be safely eaten by women and children after the petition to ʔAluj is made at the beginning of the fruit season.

### ***Gənhaa<sup>k</sup>***

This is the misfortune caused by offending another soul, be it of animal or person. Some kinds of wild meat are classed as *gənhaa<sup>k</sup>* because they must be shared out when caught, they cannot be eaten by oneself alone. The consequence of doing so would result in death, either for a child in the family or for the one who withheld it, if the animal was a potent one. For example, the pangolin, monitor lizards, tortoises, bear cat, gibbon, certain frogs

and catfish (if two-hands wide) are all classed as *genhaa<sup>k</sup>*. Certain animals are *genhaa<sup>k</sup> rayaa<sup>k</sup>*, extremely potent, and cannot be carried over to another river valley, including the *wejwooj* (the pangolin again), and the Malay mahseer. There are still more prohibitions they must follow with these animals, such as not breaking the intestinal tract, or the hip joints, and the bones must be put tidily in one place after they have eaten the meat.

When something is found by good fortune, such as a net full of fish, or a giant tortoise by chance, it is called *jurūūh*. The catch must be shared out or else it will cause *genhaa<sup>k</sup>* to the one who found it. Other things can cause misfortune also, such as dropping coins through the floor (ash or water must be poured down the hole before going to retrieve them) or pointing at someone with the middle finger! Forgetting to show hospitality to visitors will also cause *genhaa<sup>k</sup>* to the household. *Genhaa<sup>k</sup> dñix*, or misfortune of a house, is caused when the home's soul is dislodged. A new house is believed to have a *k'norux* soul, and the Temiars *juul*, or wave smoke, in the rafters in order for it to stay and keep the house at peace.

## 2.3 TABOOS CONCERNING HUMAN AND NATURE ODOURS

### ***Pel'ax***

This taboo is also called *masíx-lōōt*, blood taboo. It is the case of mixing one's own flesh or blood with the meat of certain animals, such as by scalding oneself with the hot soup of game, or by cutting oneself while eating the meat. Even a leech spilling one's blood, or squashing a hair louse full of one's blood while eating meat can cause trouble. A particularly dangerous fate will come on the offender if they go out soon afterward into the forest, as they will carry *pel'ēŋ* on them, the *ŋōōy*, or smell, of their blood mixed with meat, which evil roaming tigers will seek out! These tigers are *k'norux* souls in tiger form, sent out by Məŋkah, the tiger lord, to catch those who have offended. Many have already met with this fate, as the stories testify. A person who commits the offense would need to *t'laa<sup>k</sup>*, stay at home for a number of days, until the *c'raŋas*, or day of release, came. They might find a great *To<sup>k</sup> halaa<sup>k</sup>* to help them by petitioning his soul-guide tiger to hold back the evil tigers.

Most game meat can cause *pel'ēŋ*, and are classed *pel'ax*, but a large number of fish are exempt because there have been no cases of tiger attacks after eating them and being cut or scalded at the same time. The greatest *pel'ēŋ* is caused by the *k'nog*, the large land tortoise, and one would need to stay home for a year if one was careless while preparing or eating its meat! The *geriyex*, or rough-necked monitor, could cause one to stay put for a month in the house, for fear of being pounced on soon after leaving its safety. Also, as a new, modern category of the taboo, when canned food has been consumed in the morning those who ate any should not sharpen their bush knives afterwards, but should go to work with it blunt. The reason for this, I am told, is the sharpening stone will be cut into by the knife and make *ŋōōy*, but it is not obvious how this is connected to the tinned food.



### ***T'racɔɔg***

This is the condition caused when certain items from the *dii*x or home are discarded on the ground after their use, where they would become soiled with earth, such as bamboo cooking tubes or modern tin cans. It is feared that the person who used the containers will become breathless, and so bamboo tubes must always be split in half after their use and tins punctured on the bottom. Hair clippings are another item of the human domain that should not reach the earth, as this would cause a person hair-loss, a danger for the soul which might drift away through the head if there is no hair to prevent it. Used garments also cannot be thrown outside as they will become soiled or covered with swarming ants, and this would cause a person to suffer itching all over. Hair clippings are stuffed inside the wall or a pouch or bag to prevent them falling under the house and old clothing is always burned to prevent it rotting on the ground.

A more severe case can be caused by a child spilling drinking water, or urinating, down a house post into the ground, resulting in the child becoming *sedlɔɔd*, breathless, or even dying. Nothing that a young infant uses, such as food, or diapers, should be thrown out, but burned if necessary. A newborn's bathwater should not be thrown out carelessly, either, for example into rubbish, but poured out somewhere safe.

When a new fire-log is placed on the fire mound, whether in the house or outside, it must be put with its top end toward the fire, to be burned first, and not with its base end—the end nearest the ground—toward the fire. Failure to follow this rule will cause illness to anyone in the family, or worse, if a mother is expecting it will cause her baby to be born feet-first. A tree with a closed fork between two branches, or a tree that has grown up touching another tree is said to *t'regcɔɔg*, or be causing odour, and cannot be used for anything at the home, such as a house pillar, and its fruits cannot be collected. Likewise, the mushrooms that grow on a log of a tree, if the tree has fallen and any part of its trunk has *c'rad*, or stumped the ground with the upper end, are called *bəər cənrad* and cannot be collected, or they would cause those who consume them to become breathless.

### ***Ranyē<sup>k</sup>***

Pre-natal and post-natal mothers with their newborns carry great risk of harm due to the strong odour of *ʔayeg*, the afterbirth, and cervical fluids that are associated with childbirth. The period after childbirth is called *ranyē<sup>k</sup>*, and it lasts two weeks to a month for the mother, and two to three months for the child (and I am told that an expectant mother carries the smell on her even before childbirth). Washing the afterbirth into the river would be calling for disaster to strike, as it would cause a *dɛɲdax*, a terrible storm, and if the mother bathed or washed her clothes in the river during the *ranyē<sup>k</sup>* period it would also cause *j'ʔaar*, or stormy weather. Such storms could go on for weeks until they reached the stage of *rɛɲrɛex*, the earth flooding and collapsing, and in that case a ritual dance would be held to invoke Taa<sup>k</sup> Guwaap, to petition him to cease making his storms. Infants are not taken to the river during this period, as it is feared their soul would be taken away with the water's flow. The mother must also *t'laa<sup>k</sup>* or abstain from food with salt or oil, in order to

protect the child, who can be affected by it through her milk and suffer *k'laab*, or gall pain. When the period ends for the mother she will eat salt again and then she will go to the river and *ruuy s'laa<sup>k</sup>*, cast fern leaves in the water to float away as an offering to the *r'waay*.

I was told that the blood of females and the afterbirth, if it reaches flowing water, will cause the Ndangaa<sup>k</sup>'s anger to arise, the serpent which resides in the subterranean cavities of the earth and also rides in the flooding waters of the rivers. The Ndangaa<sup>k</sup> then appeals to Taa<sup>k</sup> Guwaap for him to make his storms, in retribution on this offense, which it finds detestable.

If anyone else held the child at birth, such as the midwife, or during the said short period of odour, then they also would need to *t'laa<sup>k</sup>* in much the same way as the mother. The lingering smell of the afterbirth (especially in the days before they had soap or shampoo) will *tæg*, or hit, anyone who touches the newborn child. A father would rarely touch the baby until the odour had safely passed, as, if he had this smell on him and he went out to the forest, a bear would likely attack him, because the smell causes it great anger. Also, if a father ate *sabat* game during this period, he would have to abstain from holding the child, as the child would be sure to get harmed by illness caused by the *sabat* animal.

As this smell is so strong and carries so much risk, anything contaminated with it (clothes) would later be burned. The placenta was traditionally washed and hung up somewhere to dry out, but because these days there are so many people about who could chance upon it and be affected by its odour, it is now buried, and the ground on top is burned with fire to prevent ants reaching it.

### ***Tenlaa<sup>k</sup>***

This is the abstinence of normal activities that certain persons must observe for a period of time, generally to avoid ill fate, bad luck or the loss of efficacy of herbal medicines. Persons who must *t'laa<sup>k</sup>*, or stay at home, include women during menstruation, or in late pregnancy and after childbirth, a newly wedded couple, a man who has set traps in the morning or someone who has broken the *pe<sup>l</sup>ax* taboo. They must not go out anywhere, especially into the forest where fate could meet them, because of the odour they carry on them. Mothers and new-born children must *t'laa<sup>k</sup>* and not go to the river, due to the smell of the afterbirth, that they still have on them (see *ra<sup>ny</sup>ē<sup>k</sup>* taboo above).

Women during menstruation are described as *tii<sup>k</sup> ma-moy*, or being out of normal activities. They must abstain from foods which would be harmful to them, including taboo meats and fruits such as pineapple and jack, and foods with palm oil or salt, and even glutenous rice. They also cannot eat together with other people, as it would endanger everyone else if they did. When their period has ended they will *jamah*, or break their fast, with a little of the food that they had abstained from, such as fish or chicken cooked with oil. Palm oil is particularly risk-prone because it comes from the *sawit* palm which has a malicious *julux* soul. They must also abstain from planting manioc during menstruation, as if they did the manioc would grow rotten.

In the case of persons who have had *ne<sup>k</sup>so<sup>k</sup>*, ritual healing administered to them by a soul-medium, they must refrain from foods with a hot taste (notably, *so<sup>c</sup>*, the perah nut, chili or curry) and certain smells, such as of earth, manioc shoots, raw meat or blood, as these would cause them to faint or even die. The medium may prescribe for them further abstentions they should keep, that he was told to give them by his dream-guide.

Animal calls in the forest can also signal the need to *t<sup>l</sup>laa<sup>k</sup>* at home. The *ce<sup>p</sup> cicarr*, black-eared shrike-babbler, is a small bird which has a shrilling call and is known as the *ce<sup>p</sup> t<sup>l</sup>laa<sup>k</sup>*, because when many of them call together people must stay home and not go out to plant their crops. When a *g<sup>c</sup>ce<sup>k</sup> genwaan*, or full moon with ring around it, is seen, one also cannot cut a swidden. When cutting a new swidden, they make the *tenkeed*, or test cutting, on the first day, and on the next day they rest, in order to see if there are any malicious souls (whether *berbow* or *pat<sup>r</sup>riih*) on the land that they should avoid disturbing.

## 2.4 SABAT ANIMAL SPECIES AND ASSOCIATED DANGERS

Of the above defined taboos, *sabat* is probably the most complex of them all, involving a large list of wild animal and fruit species and with various different complications tied to each one. The danger of *sabat* species is also one of the most serious that the Temiars must guard against, along with those associated with *masix*, *pel<sup>l</sup>ax* and *genhaa<sup>k</sup>*. It is imperative that the elders of the community teach which species are tabooed, and prohibit those persons who could be easily affected from eating them.

Looking at the effects of *sabat* naturally, it might appear that allergies to the animal's meat are to be blamed for these troubles. If so, the allergic affect must become less and less harmful with age, as the danger is much greater for infants and children than it is for adults (see the chart below). But there are indications that this is not the case all the time. For one, an unborn or infant child would be put in danger by its mother or father consuming tabooed meat as it is believed that they both contribute to its growth—the mother through the womb and breast-feeding, the father through semen during pregnancy. It may also appear to be an attack by the soul of the wild animal because in some cases there is mental derangement caused and, at other times, behaviour described as spirit-possession.

Women are prohibited from eating *sabat* foods throughout their child-bearing years as they could so easily endanger their children, as well as themselves. Only when they have stopped bearing children and have reached menopause are they entirely safe to eat game. Otherwise they are affected by all *sabat* species, including those that endanger pregnancy (category A on the chart below) and their child in infancy (category B), as well as those that endanger themselves at other times (category C), including during menstruation and the *ranjy<sup>ek</sup>* period (the month after child-birth) as they will be highly susceptible to attack. Fathers are only prohibited from eating them (categories A and B) during the pregnancy and they can resume eating them after the child is born. They could easily put their child's

life at risk by being careless about what kind of game they eat during the gestation period.

If a woman eats *sabat* meat during her menstruation, she will endanger her own health, and if she actually began to menstruate while eating *sabat* food, she would *j'roh*, or cause *sabat* danger for anyone eating the same food with her, who was also susceptible to attack. She would cause them to *t'ruuk*<sup>k</sup>, or manifest anger in them due to the animal's or fruit's soul interfering with their own. When this happens, the food they were eating would be discarded to avoid risking any health attack from the animal. A woman could only safely eat if she knew her period was over recently and wasn't about to suddenly come on her. If they were eating *so'c* nuts at the time, which are delicious when roasted or baked into a cake in bamboo, a susceptible person, such as a child, could be affected by its pungent smell. They might seem to lose their mind at times, needing the family to watch out for them so that they don't run away, with spirits calling them to follow. In another case, if she eats food with any salt, MSG, palm oil, sugar or milk added and begins to menstruate, she will get an itching cough (or gooey, depending on the food additive), along with anyone else who was eating the same food with her.

*Sabat* meats are prohibited for children because they are growing up, and either their soul is infantile and vulnerable to attack, or because they are not yet physically developed enough to consume it properly. A child may not *cāmpāā*<sup>k</sup>, or touch, the meat or even come near the *p'<sup>2</sup>iuh* or raw smell of its blood. Young people can only start eating *sabat* meat at the age of 16 or 17 by the earliest, when they have grown up enough, but some animals, such as the siamang, gibbon and slow loris, are so potent that they are not even safe for adults to eat, and only old-aged people would venture to eat them.

It would seem that every little health issue of children is to be blamed on a *sabat* taboo breach, by some or other animal that was consumed by the parents. Vomiting is blamed on *sabat* *'aŋkuuy*, them having eaten frogs with poisonous skin. The swelling of a foot is blamed on *sabat* *'udaŋ/sũmboŋ*, eating shrimps. Dizziness is blamed on *sabat* *cep*, eating bats, or *sabat* *kayuh*, eating manioc shoots, or other strong-smelling shoots, such as *bæar l'haaw*, a plant eaten by older folks. Redness of an infant's eyes is blamed on *sabat* *lada*<sup>k</sup>, eating chili during the pregnancy. A child always burying its head in its mother's armpit is blamed on *sabat* *'ayam*, eating jungle fowl, and a child crying constantly is blamed on *sabat* *tagùt*, eating the yellow-crowned barbet. Cures can be made for some of these, such as with burnt shrimp shells, or heated chili leaves or with the beak of the barbet.

### 2.4.1 SABAT DANGER CHARTS

The chart below illustrates the degree of danger that *sabat* animals pose to humans, depending on their age.

Red shades indicate the most vulnerable stages of human life, and green shades the less vulnerable stages.

A-D are categories of *sabat* species that pose danger to each stage of life, when eaten (even touched and smelled in the case of children) by the persons on each label.

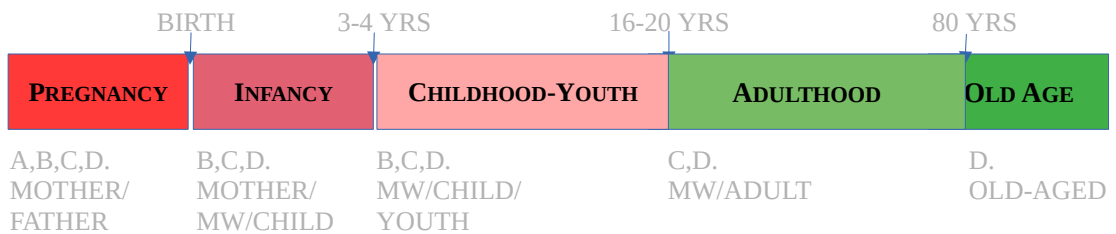


Fig. 2. *Sabat* danger through the stages of life.

#### Category A: Gestation danger

Prohibited for a mother and father to eat, will endanger the pregnancy and also the life of the mother. Non-child-bearing persons may freely eat them but a married woman should not as she may become pregnant. Some of these are also tabooed for infants and adult women.

#### Category B: Infancy, childhood and menstruation danger

Prohibited for both parents during pregnancy, nursing mothers, children and menstrual women to eat; they will affect the child in later years if eaten by the parents during pregnancy. Even though a woman may have reached adulthood, she is brought into high-risk due to menstruation.

The 3-4 years mark is the end of a child's infancy or breast-feeding (which might come sooner than this), at which time a mother may start eating class B animals again, but she would still be at risk.

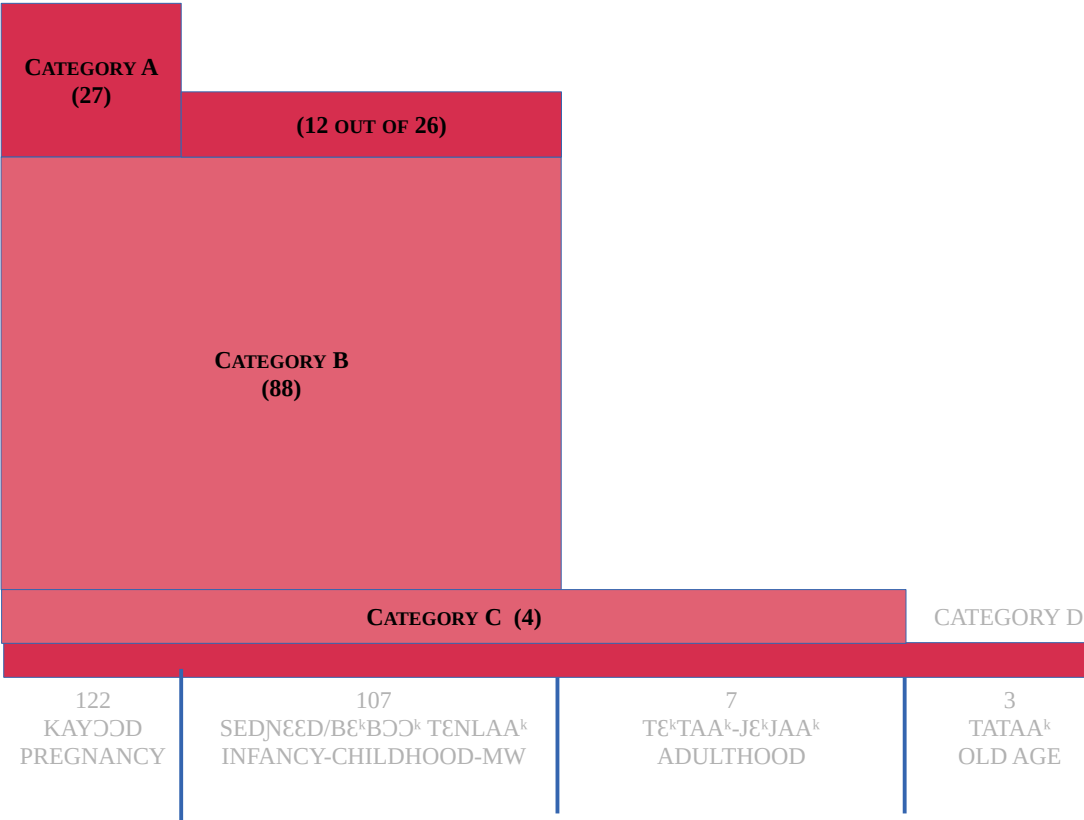
#### Category C: Adulthood danger

The more potent animals that are dangerous from pregnancy through childhood to adulthood, which only the old-aged may safely eat.

**Category D:** Danger to all!  
Animals that can’t be eaten at all or they will cause a storm.

MW stands for menstrual women: a woman endangers herself if she eats during menstruation and she can endanger children, youths and adults if she begins to menstruate while eating tabooed food together with them.

The chart below shows the number of *sabat* species belonging to each category of danger (A-D), totaling more than a hundred (that I have discovered to date—see the list of *sabat* species, in Table 3, below), including several generic and 28 fruit and plant varieties. There is notably less danger of animals causing illness during adulthood (excluding women in menstruation) and old-age stages of life.



*Fig. 3. Total number of sabat animal and fruit species (not to scale).*

## 2.4.2 LIST OF SABAT ANIMAL AND FRUIT SPECIES

The list below has been created after careful research was made with the Temiars of Píncōŋ village, mainly in 2019, but updated also in 2022. There may be additional species to add and also the allocations of certain species to particular categories of danger may differ with Temiars of other regions, but it is close to accurate for Temiars of the Puyan, Jenrōl and Periyas Rivers.

### Class A

<i>Description of Danger</i>	<i>Culpable Species</i>	<i>Nature of Cause</i>
<b>lipad</b> , tangled up in the womb	<b>bageet</b> – rough-necked monitor lizard *	monitors wriggle as they go
	<b>geriyex</b> – water monitor lizard *	
	<b>wejwoo'j</b> – pangolin *	curls up in a ball
<b>ceggeg</b> , strangulation of child in the womb	<b>sab b'sii<sup>k</sup></b> – animals caught with a wire noose	because the wire cuts the flesh
	<b>jaloo<sup>k</sup> k'dey</b> – fish caught in a machine-made casting-net	the net is woven differently to hand-made nets
	<b>bubuu<sup>k</sup> gəət</b> – fish caught in a long fish trap	the trap has two funnels inside
<b>segsōg</b> , not delivering	<b>k'nōg</b> – large land tortoise *	lives in caves and holes
	<b>labii<sup>k</sup></b> – river turtle *	turtles burrow in the mud
	<b>peled</b> – soft-shelled turtle *	
	<b>kaa<sup>k</sup> palō<sup>k</sup></b> – 'log' fish	doesn't move
	<b>kaa<sup>k</sup> kenrab rayaa<sup>k</sup></b> – sandy catfish (if large, two-hands wide)	swims in the rapids, not moving (also other catfish)
	<b>k'redlaad</b> – giant squirrel (white striped)	makes a nest
	<b>k'dúg hayōm</b> – bamboo rat *	lives in the ground
	<b>k'dúg dendut</b> – a ground rat *	lives in a burrow
	<b>cep tapəər</b> – all bat species	roost in caves or in bamboo cavities
	<b>cep kawēēd, cep lasar</b> – giant bats *	hang from high trees

	<b>k'bəək ndaŋkaa<sup>k</sup></b> – jack fruit	the fruit has sticky latex
<b>c'gōd sōp</b> , hardened embryonic sack	<b>bəər bayas</b> , <b>bəər taʔsō<sup>k</sup></b> , <b>bəər paku<sup>k</sup></b> – wild ferns *	have bitter properties
	<b>c'kəər</b> – edible palm pith	bitter
<b>cacat</b> , deformity	<b>jaay k'maar</b> – twinned banana	doubled, will cause deformed parts
	<b>k'bəək k'nas</b> – pineapple	long-shaped, will elongate the head
<b>hayuur</b> , chills	<b>kaa<sup>k</sup> p'rēd</b> – a sleek fish	full of bones
<b>bənbōt hi<sup>k</sup></b> , always feeding at the breast	<b>k'lubōŋ</b> , <b>caʔēē<sup>k</sup></b> – mice	live in bamboo

Species marked \* above, also come under Class B, Infancy-Childhood-MW, causing danger of breathlessness, among others.

(20 animal + 7 fruit/plant species)

#### Class B

<b>b'lehñēh</b> , weak, sickly (not surviving long)	<b>dēddud</b> – greater coucal	makes a nest
<b>bud t'naa<sup>k</sup></b> , body heating; <b>na-giyeg</b> , fits; <b>bəs'ram</b> , become demonised	<b>jēed</b> – muntjac	many of these animals have dark meat that causes heating of body
	<b>b'cō<sup>k</sup></b> – mousedeer	
	<b>kasīŋ</b> – sambar deer	
	<b>j'lēw</b> – long-tailed macaque	
	<b>kawíib</b> – sun bear	
	<b>tenyu<sup>k</sup></b> – bear cat	
	<b>taŋlín</b> – banded linsang	
	<b>regrōg</b> – yellow-throated marten	
	<b>cōŋ hadaa<sup>k</sup></b> – crab-eating mongoose	
	<b>k'dúg s'kōol</b> – variable squirrel (white)	
	<b>k'dúg ca<sup>k</sup>le<sup>k</sup></b> – variable squirrel (brown)	
	<b>k'dúg ʔaŋaap</b> – plantain squirrel	
	<b>kayix</b> – flying fox	
	<b>ʔampax</b> , <b>l'jùx</b> , <b>genhoon</b> – flying squirrels	



	<b>ʔancōōh</b> – flying lemur	
	<b>k’diíg s’laiman</b> – moonrat	
	<b>h’nwaan</b> – great hornbill	hornbills make loud calls
	<b>d’kug</b> – a white hornbill	
	<b>kahkuuh, kahkōōh</b> – white-crested hornbills	
	<b>k’wōx</b> – great argus (red var.)	
	<b>c’kum</b> – crested fireback	
	<b>d’na<sup>k</sup></b> – jungle fowl	
	<b>cɛp pugaa<sup>k</sup></b> – a pheasant	
	<b>j’kōŋ</b> – brown boobook	
	<b>cɛp berkoo</b> – mountain imperial-pigeon	
	<b>cɛp b’rawōl</b> – green-pigeon	
	<b>rɛgwoog</b> – little cuckoo-dove	
	<b>j’rɛgpaag</b> – a dove	
	<b>c’mōg</b> – red-billed malkoha	
	<b>sɛgduwag</b> – chestnut-breasted malkoha	
<b>na-hāāw</b> , wasting away; <b>tɛ<sup>k</sup>ruu<sup>k</sup></b> , anger; <b>hermaar</b> , animal-like behaviour	<b>ta’ōŋ</b> – wild boar	fierce animals
	<b>s’lada<sup>k</sup></b> – gaur	the <b>sen’ōōy rayaa<sup>k</sup></b> ‘large people’ animals
	<b>barɛw</b> – tapir	
	<b>hagaab</b> – rhinoceros	
	<b>ʔalaa’j</b> – elephant	
	<b>kaa<sup>k</sup> ʔayōm</b> – mahseer	reddish meat
	<b>tabɛɛg</b> – bull frog	has claws
	<b>ʔapōōs haan</b> – a zingiber variety	has red juice like blood
<b>na-hāāw</b> , wasting away; <b>tɛ<sup>k</sup>ruu<sup>k</sup></b> , anger;	<b>hakōōr, kabaax, kɛjkōō’j, k’ləidan, k’maluŋ, k’maraa<sup>k</sup>, kuriix, lɛɛg, p’latuūw, tampuy, mancaan, rɛmman, r’lōg, s’pōōy, sempaa<sup>k</sup>, pɛrgəəs, s’taar,</b>	all <b>julux</b> fruits; also imported fruits, i.e. dragon fruit, water melon, winter

	<b>terhiik</b> ; + <b>ndaŋkaa<sup>k</sup></b> , <b>tembikay</b> , <b>kundur</b> , <b>sawít</b> , <b>tarap</b>	melon, oil palm, terap ++
	<b>c'kəər gantaan</b> – giant bamboo shoots	
<b>na-lut kēed</b> , extruding of the anus	<b>lēdlēd</b> – masked palm civet (red)	the meat causes diarrhea
	<b>h'laan</b> – rhinoceros hornbill	
<b>sedlōd</b> , breathlessness	<b>j'kəəs</b> – East Asian porcupine	porcupines live in rock holes
	<b>tood</b> – brush-tailed porcupine	
	<b>karāāc</b> – Malayan box turtle	turtles sleep in water
	<b>kajēē<sup>k</sup></b> – a mud-dwelling turtle	
	<b>k'dúg ʔenʔoŋx</b> – bandicoot rat	swims under water
	<b>cəp rəx</b> – a flying fox	lives in a high <b>r'guul</b> tree
	<b>segnūg penpōn</b> – a small river-side frog	
<b>gayaar</b> , a child bites people, acts stupidly	<b>bawaaj</b> – pig-tailed macaque	travels far and eats many jungle fruits
<b>na-gəd ʔeij</b> , cutting pain in the gut	<b>kaa<sup>k</sup> bəgbaag</b> – an eel	long, like a knife
<b>ke<sup>k</sup>ko<sup>k</sup></b> , vomiting	<b>k'dúg tukan</b> – a giant squirrel	poisonous meat
<b>loyec</b> , dizziness	<b>cəp layan</b> – swallows	fly about like aeroplanes
	<b>bəər kayuh</b> , <b>bəər manís</b> , <b>bəər l'haaw</b> – shoots of manioc, and two trees	strong smell
<b>na-kag</b> , stopping of breath	<b>ʔapōs k'rag</b> – a zingiber variety	has hard skin
<b>ʔayēen</b> , crazy	<b>b'taar</b> , <b>sə'c</b> , <b>ʔaŋrəəy</b> – petai, perah, niring	have a hot smell
<b>na-hūs jùx</b> , inflamm-ation of a limb	<b>sùmbon</b> – shrimps	live in mud
<i>mad cəŋlax</i> , red eyes of infants	<b>lada<sup>k</sup></b> , <b>kari</b> – chili and curry	spicy

(55 animal + 32 fruit/plant species)

## Class C

<b>gɛgyɛg</b> , fits	<b>ʔamaŋ</b> – siamang	these primates hang from branches
	<b>tawɔɔh</b> – gibbons	
	<b>ʔegʔaag</b> – crow	eat snakes
	<b>sɛmpəl</b> – grey-faced buzzard	
<b>buta<sup>k</sup> mad</b> , causes blindness	<b>tampəl</b> – slow loris	has poison glands behind its eyes

(5 animal species)

## Class D

<b>na-dəx</b> , causes a storm	<b>kɔʔh</b> , <b>ʔawaa<sup>k</sup></b> – spiny turtles	live in the mountains, cannot be disturbed
	<b>səl</b> – large land tortoise	

(3 animal species)

*Table 3. Sabat animal and fruit species.*

The ‘red palm civet’ may cause outward growing of the anus of children if the parents eat it during pregnancy and they are ‘*tɛ<sup>k</sup>nɔɔ<sup>k</sup>*’, or ‘allergic’ to it. The condition can be treated by burning some civet bones and applying the ash to the child’s body, in a similar way that treatment is made using other animal bones when those animals have caused illness. Other conditions listed above can be treated by *nɛ<sup>k</sup>sɔɔ<sup>k</sup>*, the ritual blowing on a person by a soul-medium.

Animals that are termed *pɛ<sup>k</sup>raa<sup>k</sup>*, meaning that they are not eaten by the Temiars, include: cats, dogs, dhole, otter, eagles, owls and many non-fruit-eating birds, snakes, grubs and insects. *K’maay k’laad*, the small grubs found inside giant bamboo, may have been eaten in the old days, as well as the python. The Semais don’t hesitate to eat snakes but to the Temiars they are detested as slithering, wriggling creatures. I have heard from one source that the *tɛ<sup>k</sup>taa<sup>k</sup> manah*, or ancestors, may have prohibited most of the animals and birds in the list of *sabat* species above, from consumption by any persons, no matter their age. It is possible that only in recent generations have the Temiars become either brave, more reckless or disregarding of the *hukom* of the forefathers, in choosing to hunt and eat all these kinds. In comparison, the Bateqs, a nomadic tribe, will not eat any animals that roam about on the ground, but only those that dwell in the trees.

### 2.4.3 NON-SABAT ANIMALS

With such a full list of animal species designated dangerous for parents and infants, young people and adult females to consume (see Part 2.4.2), it would seem there would hardly be any animals left in the wild that were considered safe to eat by the Temiars. And this is almost the case, as, with mammals and primates, there are only three species, including two langurs and the serow, which are classed non-*sabat* or *mul*, normal. The serow, or mountain goat is considered a healthy animal, whereas goats (as well as cows) would be classed *sabat*, because they eat grass with their own dung! While langurs are considered *mul*, if they are hunted up in the mountains they would not be safe for infants and vulnerable persons due to the fact that they would be feeding on wild *julux* fruits. The giant squirrel, *k'redlaad*, which is classed as *sabat* in the table above, is considered safe if it is all black, not the variety with a white front, but Temiars further south may call this variety *sabat* also. The plantain squirrel, *s'ko'or*, may also eat *julux* fruits at certain times of the year and thus it would become unsafe for children to eat.

Of birds and fish, there are a fair number of species considered *mul* (note that the list in the table below is not exhaustive in regards to these two groups). These are given ardently to young children to eat, as soon as they are old enough to consume meat (by one year of age) and they may be eaten by women and parents without any complications. But care must still be taken not to cook the *mul* animals with *sabat* ones, for example when they are brought back in the same basket or leaf packet together. Those in charge of cooking must sort out the *sabat* from *mul*, such as the water rat, the bandicoot, from the white-bellied rats, or the *sabat* fish, such as the mahseer, from the others, to make sure that they are cooked separately and the children are given only what is safe for them to eat.

Some animals that are classed as dangerous for parents to eat (Class A, above), such as bats, giant squirrel and sandy catfish, would be considered safe for children and women to eat. But other species (of Class A), such as monitor lizards, turtles, bamboo rat and some wild ferns, still carry danger for children and women and must be avoided.

Class of safe species	Species
<sup>2</sup> Aay mʉl, safe game	<sup>2</sup> amɔɔ <sup>k</sup> – serow raŋku <sup>k</sup> – banded langur tabəəx – dusky langur
K'dííg mʉl, safe rodents	<sup>2</sup> abíír, <sup>2</sup> ajóor, b'rawaan – tree shrews cade <sup>k</sup> – red-cheeked squirrel ceŋkəb d'kəh – a yellow rat j'nalē <sup>k</sup> – a brown rat k'dííg man – white-bellied rats k'rədlaad – giant squirrel (black) s'kəor – plantain squirrel (white) s'laa <sup>k</sup> liyaax – red spiny rat siroŋ – himalayan striped squirrel
Cep mʉl, safe birds	deŋdəorŋ – a red partridge <sup>2</sup> es'ees – ocraceous bulbul jagrēeg – golden-naped barbet (lowland) k'wɔɔx rɛŋah – great argus (black) pɛdlaa'j – asian fairy-bluebird seŋuweeŋ – sunbirds t'raad – fire-tufted barbet tagùt – yellow-crowned barbet tambooŋ – whitehead's broadbill təgrəh – golden-naped barbet (montane) ta <sup>2</sup> əj – pouched hornbill
Kaa <sup>k</sup> mʉl, safe fish	b'lembad, batan, bawu <sup>k</sup> , bēel, darə <sup>k</sup> bidín, darə <sup>k</sup> c'mp'raas, gahə <sup>k</sup> , jawa <sup>k</sup> , kenrab rɛŋah, lampəə <sup>k</sup> , lē <sup>k</sup> , nip-t'luuy, p'ridoŋ, s'baraw, s'laa <sup>k</sup> , sikan, siyɔɔ <sup>k</sup> , sɛlwooj, t'ŋəəs.
Segnug mʉl, safe frogs	<sup>2</sup> anquuy – a pimpled river frog b'j'rù <sup>k</sup> – a slender green river frog dəmdup – river newts barhej – a burrowing river frog seēŋ – a small river frog with dappled skin

Table 4. Animal species classed as non-tabooed to the Temiars.

## Index of Terms and Concepts

<sup>2</sup> Aam, tiger.....	13, 38	Hup, heart.....	32, 35, 55
Caŋwōŋʹj, wood owl.....	37	Illness.....	
Be <sup>k</sup> cōŋʹk, naming.....	17	Bahyaa <sup>k</sup> , gut pain.....	39
Beex, outside.....	9, 15, 43, 44, 47	Gees, inflammation.....	40
Seŋrōx people.....	47	Mameŋj, migraine.....	40
Bʹranii <sup>k</sup> taboo.....	51	Taníg, gout.....	39
Ciwaa <sup>k</sup> , discussion.....	29	Jahruu <sup>k</sup> taboo.....	51
Cʹnaal, oral folktales.....	25	Jamuu <sup>k</sup> , offering.....	19, 38, 46
Deix, human realm.....	9, 15, 57	Ruuy sʹlaa <sup>k</sup> , cast leaves.....	53, 58
Doos, sins.....	24, 28, 42	Sumùx, blood offering.....	23
Tulah, sin.....	29	Jaa <sup>k</sup> Wōŋy, jungle woman.....	20
Dream theory.....	27	Julaa <sup>k</sup> , secret terms.....	12
Dreams.....	18, 19, 30, 33	Julux taboo.....	14, 52
Genhaa <sup>k</sup> taboo.....	16, 55	Jiyees tree.....	53
Genhaa <sup>k</sup> rayaa <sup>k</sup> , great misfortune.....	16	Manaar, rafflesia vine.....	53
Genhaa <sup>k</sup> diix, house misfortune.....	56	Kareiy.....	17, 22, 49
Jurūūh, good-fortune.....	56	Deŋdæx, storm...10, 15, 16, 22, 35, 50,	57
Guníg, dream-guide.....	34, 35, 39, 44	Taa <sup>k</sup> Guwaap.....	22, 23, 50, 58
Batu <sup>k</sup> tʹgas stone.....	34	Yelyool, earthquake.....	23, 49
Kahyex, essence.....	34, 39	Lalo <sup>k</sup> village.....	30
Kenlōŋx, eyeball.....	5, 35	Lamboŋ creature.....	21
Guwōŋ <sup>k</sup> Cōŋs, Gua Cha.....	26	Laʹŋŋy creature.....	22
Guwōŋ <sup>k</sup> Janŋŋōŋd.....	46	Límbaŋ, flood.....	26, 45
Halaa <sup>k</sup> , power.....	21, 34, 41	Lōŋt, blood.....	12, 13, 15, 21, 56
Batu <sup>k</sup> tʹlag, magic stone.....	40	<sup>2</sup> Ųyeg, afterbirth.....	15, 23, 57
Belyan, token of power.....	36	Tii <sup>k</sup> ma-mōy, menstruation...15, 53, 54,	55, 58
Cenwōŋy, love spell.....	40	Maŋsiii <sup>k</sup> cane.....	41, 44
Ne <sup>k</sup> sōŋ <sup>k</sup> , ritual healing.....	39, 58	Məsíx taboo.....	10, 49
Pensuu <sup>k</sup> , death spell.....	40	Ce <sup>k</sup> reē <sup>k</sup> , pointing.....	49
Perlùb, infusing.....	39	Məsíx birds.....	50
Pukōw magic.....	42	Pig-tailed macaque.....	10, 49
Senʹŋŋy rehŋah, dark souls.....	41	Rʹwaac tʹnaa <sup>k</sup> , bloody diarrhea...10, 49	
Senpug, death spell.....	40	Meŋkah, tiger lord.....	36, 43
Halaa <sup>k</sup> rayaa <sup>k</sup> , great medium.....	36, 37, 47	Mergəəh, beasts.....	11, 25
Batu <sup>k</sup> Bʹralo <sup>k</sup> limestone stack.....	37	Morality.....	5, 27
Mediumship.....	5, 38		
Hukom, judgment.....	24, 27, 28		

Ndaŋgaa <sup>k</sup> , serpent.....	30, 34, 45, 46, 58	Pət'rii mountain soul.....	18
Nəhpɔɔh, dance.....	43	Plants.....	18
B'lantɛɛy, drink offering.....	38	Sanu <sup>k</sup> spirits.....	21
C'bɔɔh, cool water.....	44	Tataa <sup>k</sup> S'laay, padiy field.....	19
Cɛŋcɔɔx, liana water.....	38	Tawùn, seasonal fruits.....	17
Hilad, trance.....	44	Wəəg, grave shadow.....	33
Panɔɔh, booth.....	38	Raŋyē <sup>k</sup> taboo.....	57
Pən'əəy song genre.....	38	Sabat taboo.....	15, 53, 59, 61
P'rɛmjɛem, cords.....	44	Gɛgyɛg, having fits.....	54, 64
S'lombaj dance.....	45	Kayɔɔd, pregnancy.....	16, 54, 59, 63
Taŋ'əəy song genre.....	44	Məl, non-sabat.....	67
Nɛscɔɔs, petition.....	23, 26	P'ʔiih, raw smell.....	54, 60
Nyɯ <sup>k</sup> ʔAlɯj.....	22, 23, 24, 26, 30	Sabat animals.....	63
Nyɯ <sup>k</sup> Lɯj Juwɛl.....	45	Tɛ <sup>k</sup> ɔɔk, susceptible.....	53
ʔasal, original.....	31	S'lantab taboo.....	11, 52
Ŋɔɔy, human odour.....	12, 14, 15, 51, 58	Taa <sup>k</sup> Bɛlyan, great medium...	19, 21, 36, 37
Pacɔg taboo.....	20, 50	Mayaŋ, penalty.....	37
Pel'ax taboo.....	12, 13, 56	Taa <sup>k</sup> ʔAmpís.....	46
K'norux tigers.....	14, 36, 56	Taa <sup>k</sup> ʔAtih Kabel.....	37, 46
Kɛnrab, catfish.....	13	Taa <sup>k</sup> ʔUsop.....	30
Pel'ɛŋ offense.....	13, 36, 56	Tɛ <sup>k</sup> ruu <sup>k</sup> taboo.....	55
Tɛ <sup>k</sup> jɛnrap, tiger attack.....	13	Hāāw, waste away.....	55, 64
Pɛntaa <sup>k</sup> , petition	17, 21, 24, 26, 31, 35, 42, 51, 53, 55	Hɛrmaar, deranged.....	55, 65
Píŋcɔɔŋ River.....	37	Soul attack.....	15, 55
P'rɛnhɔɔd taboo.....	11, 51	Tɛ <sup>k</sup> ruu <sup>k</sup> , anger.....	55, 65
R'waay taboo.....	50	Tɛmɛl'ɔɔy, peace.....	28
R'waay, souls.....	17, 32	Tɛnlaa <sup>k</sup> taboo.....	15, 58
Bərbɔw tree.....	20	P'ʔiih, raw smell.....	15, 59
Cɛndɔɔy, forest souls.....	43, 44	Raŋyē <sup>k</sup> period.....	15, 57
ʔɛn-balix, of above.....	22, 34	T'mɛɛr people.....	8
ʔɛn-tɛ <sup>k</sup> , of earth.....	22, 34	Tɔ <sup>k</sup> Pawaŋ.....	45
		T'racɔɔg taboo.....	15, 56

## Areas For Further Investigation

- Great mediums: their experiences during ritual invocation, the words they recited, their encounters with visiting souls and their dream experiences
- Real life stories of Temiar ancestors
- Hukom of the Temiar: their code of conduct
- Lyrics of ritual songs
- Audio recordings of Temiar nehpoo dance
- Temiar folklore and mysticism: what else do they hide?

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