

【論 説】

Natural Disaster, Men and Animals among the Penan:
Beyond "Thunder Complex"

OKUNO Katsumi

要 旨

本稿は、「雷複合」との関わりにおいて、サラワク州ブラガ川上流のプナンにとっての自然災害について考える。約 15,000 人のサラワク・プナンのうち、約 500 人の西プナンがブラガ川上流に住んでいる。彼らは 1980 年代の定住・半定住後にも、狩猟採集に抛りながら暮らしている。自然発生するものが、彼らにとっての自然である。

本稿では、第一に、プナンがどのように自然災害に向き合っているのかが記述される。プナンは天候激変を恐れる。それは彼らにとって最大の自然の脅威である。俄かに空がかき曇り強風が吹きやがて雷鳴が轟き激しい雨が降って、場合によっては洪水となる。天候の変化に気づくと、彼らは天に祈りを唱える。天候激変は、雷神の怒りであると考えられる。プナンにできることは、儀礼的に雷神の力を減じることである。

第二に、そうした実践の背後にある思考様式が検討される。儀礼実践の背後には、動物に対する粗野な振る舞いが天候の激変を引き起こすとされる、東南アジア民族誌学において「雷複合」として知られる考えがある。プナンは、雷雨、嵐、激しい雨、洪水および石化などの現象は、動物に対する人間の誤った振る舞いのせいであると考ええる。「雷複合」との関わりで、プナンは「動物と戯れてはならない」「狩猟後には動物は、すみやかに解体して料理して食べなければならない」などの動物に関わるルールを発達させてきた。

第三に、自然災害との関わりにおいて、プナンの習慣をどのように理解すればいいのかが検討される。それは、動物に対する人間の優位を回避するための努力であると解釈することができる。プナンのハンターは、動物狩猟する際つねに動物に対して優位に立つが、彼らは人間が動物より優位に立つことを無意識のうちに恐れている。自然に関するプナンの考えを否認するからである。プナンは、彼らにとっての最大の関心事である天候激変を介して、人間と動物の公平な関係性を維持しようと努める。

I Introduction

The Penan of Sarawak, whose population is estimated to be 15,485 (SUHAKAM, 2007: 249; Jayl Langub, 2009: 2), are generally divided into two groups: Eastern and Western Penan. The Western Penan inhabit in the interior watersheds of the Belaga River, the Seping River,

the Plieran River, the Linau River and the Balui River in the Kapit Division (Brosius, 2006). Some 500 Western Penan are living along the upper reaches of the Belaga River (Jayl Langub, 2000: 7). This paper describes and analyzes natural disasters among the Penan of the Belaga River.

It should be noted, in the first place, that the meaning of natural disaster among the Penan of the Belaga is largely different from that of our modern world. Natural disaster is an idea developed in the Western philosophical tradition, which sees nature as something in opposition to cultural construction, thereby as something that should be culturally/technologically controlled and managed; roots of such Western natural philosophy can be traced in Plato and later to be completed by Hegel.

By contrast, to the Penan, nature is considered *not* as something that is culturally/technologically controlled and managed, but as something *spontaneously growing and self-ruled* (*merip petiken*): such thoughts of the Penan may be linked to those thoughts existed before Plato. Thus, nature is regarded by the Penan as an eternal provider of life resources such as game animals or plants for human everyday needs. At the same time, nature is also seen as something that manifests rage in the forms of natural phenomenon such as thunder, lightning or flooding. To them, nature seems to be intrinsically uncontrollable.

Based on the brief discussion of the difference in the thoughts of nature between Western tradition and Penan society, this paper poses the following questions: How do the Penan challenge such natural uncontrollability in the case of natural disaster? What lies conceptually behind the Penan challenge? What can we see from the Penan cultural institution – the Penan version of the "thunder complex" (see below) – in relation to natural disaster?

In this paper, the so-called "thunder complex" is examined. "Central to the complex is the notion that prohibited acts, more particularly those involving the improper treatment of animals, will result in a storm and hence be punished by flood or lightning strikes and, in some cases, by petrification" (Forth, 1989: 89). The "thunder complex" is an idea prevalent in Borneo, Malay Peninsula and Eastern Indonesia, that means certain offences, notably behaviors considered offensive to animals, will result in meteorological catastrophe (Blust, 1981: 294). Ethnographic interest in the "thunder complex" stems from Rodney Needham's article (Needham, 1967), which drew attention to the occurrence of almost the same forms of the complex among the Semang of Malaya and the Penan of Borneo¹. This paper, therefore, explores the relationship between men and animals beyond the complex.

¹ Other ethnographic articles focusing on the complex are as follows: (Freeman 1968), (King 1975), (Endicott 1979), (Forth 1989).

I presuppose that behind their ideological challenge regarding natural spontaneity/uncontrollability, there is a serious attempt to sustain an impartial relation between men and animals in the Penan society. In this paper, a viewpoint regarding the ideology behind the Penan attitude toward natural disaster will be presented in this paper.

II Penan the Hunter

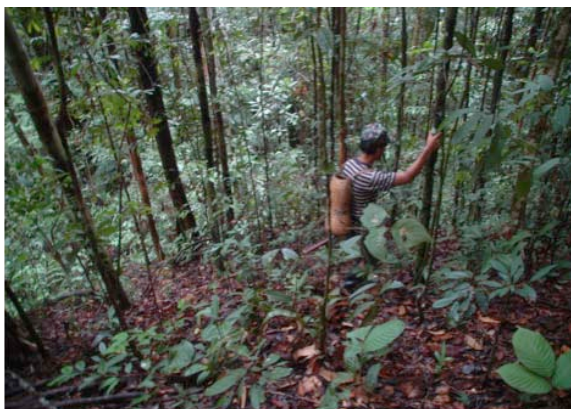
First of all, I briefly outline the hunting practices of the Penan to show their relation with animals in general. The Penan of the Belaga started hill rice planting in the late 1960s, but their knowledge of farming still remains relatively low: they have had years when the harvest has been plentiful and also years when the harvest has been bad (Jayl Langub, 2000: 9). There was no harvest between 2006 and 2007 and only a very small harvest in 2008. Therefore today, they still rely heavily on hunting for their living.

The Penan of the Belaga go hunting either from their settlement or temporary hunting huts in the forest. They eat almost all creatures both from the forest and the river such as wild boar, deer, monkeys, birds, fish and so forth.

Their relationship with animals is surprisingly simple. The Penan usually avoid animals as much as they can, except during hunting or catching animals in their daily lives. They have strong taboos concerning treatment of animals. Mistreatment of animals is related to uncontrollable phenomena such as thunder, lightning, and flooding, which are believed to be caused by supernatural beings (*baley*). I shall return to this topic in the following chapters.

The Penan of the Belaga today engage in two types of hunting: (1) hunting in the surroundings of the rainforest between morning and sunset, (2) hunting in the oil palm plantations at night. In addition, they sometimes trap small animals (*maneu viu*) by using materials in the forest.

The Penan are traditionally hunters in the deep jungles of Borneo's rainforest. The Penan of the Belaga gradually started to settle or semi-settle in response to the instructions of the Sarawak State Government sometime in the 1960s. The surrounding rainforest had gradually been cleared due to the encroachment of commercial logging into their region in the mid 1980s. After



A Penan hunter in the forest

the bulk of the trees in the forest were cut down, the oil palm scheme was introduced in 1997. “Under the oil palm scheme, all forms of vegetation were cleared with the area terraced for planting oil palm” (Jayl Langub, 2000: 33). “The area was once used by the Penan for hunting wild game and collecting sago and rattan. This further reduced the sources of food supply and cash income for the Penan” (Jayl Langub, 2000: 34).

However, in the early 2000s some of the Penan fortunately found that wild boars and other small animals come to eat the fruit of the oil palms. In this way, hunting in oil palm plantations at night has been recently added as one of the traditional hunting in the forest, although they never distinguish one from the other. Hunting wild boars in oil palm plantations is characterized by “waiting” for the wild boars that come to eat the oil palm fruit.

Penan hunters usually leave home (settlement or hunting hut) to hunt in silence. People are expected not to ask where the hunters go or what they are trying to catch. Hunters then return home silently if they successfully obtain game animals. After a while (usually before or after cooking), they describe the hunt. A typical description of hunting in the oil palm plantation is as follows:

Pukun lema taop merem akeu tae jin jebatan ayu kereta tae ton simpan lamin buhei akeu tuun sina akeu tae ke buhei mukat simpan dalem sawit tae avi tong uban tua saau mengisi obat pisit akeu tae rau kediva tae tong sawit ra kaben rau sina akeu menimuk mabui merem ja nalee merip ja pengah ineh mulie tong lamin.

At five o'clock in the evening, I took a logging company car from the bridge to the crossroads under the upper house. I got out of the car there and climbed up the mountain in the oil palm plantation. After a while I reached the spot where we were previously. I put a battery in my torchlight. I started to walk down the mountain and reached the left side of the oil palm plantation, where I shot two wild boars that I saw last night. I got one, but the other escaped alive. Then, I returned to our hunting camp.

On the other hand, if they return home without game, they murmur “*piah pesaba*” (angry words for animals), primarily to let the family members know of their hunting failure².

² The Penan of the Belaga River utter “*piah pesaba*” only when they return from an unsuccessful hunting trip, while according to Jayl Langub, “the texts of the utterance (of “*piah pesaba*”) convey the message to the audience in the village whether or not they caught a pig, its size, fatness or whether they caught other types of game, or that the hunt was completely unsuccessful” (Jayl Langub, 2009: 9). Jayl Langub shows that the root word “*sabah*” from “*pesabah*” is often used as an expression of sincerity of offer, drawing on Peter Brosius’s PhD dissertation (Jayl Langub, 2009: 9, Brosius, 1992). However, I could not find (the meaning of) any word “*saba*” or “*mesaba*” during my fieldwork among the Penan of the Belaga. A

*Iteu ulie amie padie melakau
 puun ateng menigen³
 saok todok kat⁴
 selue pemine mena kaan⁵
 uyau, apah⁶
 panyek abai telisu bogeh⁷
 keledet baya buin belengang dek ngelangi⁸
 saok todok kaan
 panyek abai telisu bogeh
 keledet saok tedok kaan
 baya buin belengang dek ngelangi*

The above “*piah pesaba*” can be loosely translated in the following:

“Here I walked back, my brothers, I could not catch any animals, I could not hunt any animals. My father will die, my mother will die. Pig’s ugly nose, Malay who was once a boar, pig’s nose like a hammer’s head, big-eyed deer. Deer’s eyes which shine at night, crocodile, pig, hornbill, fowl cackles. I could not catch any animals. Pig’s ugly nose, Malay who was once a boar, pig’s nose like a hammer’s head, big-eyed deer. Deer’s eyes which shine at night. I could not catch any animals. Crocodile, pig, hornbill, fowl cackles.”

“*Piah pesaba*” can be uttered only when no game animals have been caught after

Japanese ethnomusicologist, Shimeda who visited the Penan of the Belaga River in the 1980s, translated “*piah pesaba*” into Japanese as murmuring words for animals (Shimeda, 1996).

³ The term “*ateng*” is an emphatic negative (Brosius, 1992: 919). The word “*menigen*” means “to hold”. This line means “we did not get anything” (Jayl Langub, 2009: 9).

⁴ The words “*saok*” and “*todok*” mean “all”, while “*kat*” means “each and every” (Brosius, 1992: 920). This line means not a single animal (Jayl Langub, 2009: 9).

⁵ The word “*selue*” means “all” and “*pemine*” means “the majority of” (Brosius, 1992: 920). The word “*mena*” means “give” and “*kaan*” means “animal”

⁶ These words are so called “death names” given to an individual upon the death of his/her father and his/her mother. This line can be interpreted as “if I am not tell the truth Father will die, Mother will die” (Jayl Langub, 2009: 10).

⁷ The word “*panyek*” means “the blunt nose of the pig, which Penan consider to be ugly”. “*Abai*” is a “term for Malay” who was thought to be transformed by pigs by Penan in story. “*Telisu*” is a “term for hammer, referring to the flat nose of the bearded pig”. The word “*bogeh*” means “Bugis” (Brosius, 1992: 922). Belaga Penan explained to me that “*bogeh*” means “big-eyed deer”.

⁸ The word “*keledet*” refers to “eyes which shine at night when a light is shone at them” (Brosius, 1992: 920). “*baya*”: “crocodile”, “*buin*”: “pig”, “*belengang*”: “rhinoceros hornbill”, “*dek*”: “fowl”, “*ngelangi*”: “cackle”.

hunting. It partly includes insults to animals: to play with their big nose, big eyes or nose shaped like a hammer's head. In contrast, the Penan say that they should not utter words such as “*piah pesaba*” on a daily basis, which are thought to attack or play with animals. I shall return to this topic in Chapter 4. After returning from hunting without game, Penan hunters also explain their hunting failure as in the following example. This case is taken from hunting in the rain forest.

Akeu kebai ayu atok tae tong long meru naat ia mabui tong penvangan menimuk mabui jin ju teneng mabui tenimuk dee avi dipee alet tuai maau jin long meru iyeng matai.

I took a canoe downstream and then reached the mouth of the Meru River, when I saw a wild boar on the bank. I shot it from afar. The wild boar bled and then escaped. I followed it to the opposite bank of the Alet River. It was not shot dead.

In this chapter, I mainly described the hunting practices of the Penan today. Now I proceed to the next chapter to outline how the Penan challenge natural disaster.

III Penan ritually challenge the Thunder God's anger

One night, it didn't stop raining. I, sleeping soundly in a hunting hut built alongside the small river, was suddenly woken up by someone's voice saying, “Look out, flooding (*jaau bea, jaga*).” I heard the huge sound of the stream alongside the hunting camp. I saw the stream coming closer to the camp, and then I saw the stream one meter higher and twice its width. At the same time, I heard two women praying toward the sky. One of them was walking back and forth, raising her hands and invoking the following:

Eh, maneu daau, maneu adee.

Pah avi lengedeu bateu hujan, pah avi lecak tanah, pah avi tevi tanah...

Ami mani amu mulie, ami mani jaji, ami mani tebang ngan kuuk...

Sounding, lightning..., Thunder has come to turn men into stone, flood the land, exterminate the land..., I need you to go home, I need you to promise, I need to talk to you...

I wondered what might happen to me, if the stream were to get bigger. I thought there was nowhere to escape as the camp site was flat. It seemed as though I would be washed away

by the strong stream. I was terrified about the flooding together with the other ten Penan people in the hunting hut. Finally, about an hour later, I was relieved, because it stopped raining and then the stream returned to normal.

In this way, the Penan mostly fear natural disasters such as heavy rain and flooding. They have never attempted to overcome nature with their own hands: they never endeavor to change streams or disrupt water. It can be observed, therefore, that nature is conceptualized as something *spontaneously growing* and intrinsically uncontrollable beyond human access. The only thing the Penan try to do is to ritually reduce the natural power. If thunder and lightning appear in the sky, or when heavy rain continues, they invoke ritual phrases. The ritual is called "*migah langit* (pray for the sky)" as shown above. The following is another example of *migah langit*.

*Pooi, kau, mematai menyiai mekih
Akeu menuneuk memerah, memigah
Baley Gau, Baley Liwen
Bisa kau makang kau Jutan Tedung bawai iteu*

Stop you God, I kill, smoke and cut, I barn and hit with praying⁹. Thunder God and Storm God. You two far in the sky are strong and brave enough just like Jutan and Tedung¹⁰

Thunder, lightning, heavy rain, flooding or human petrification are believed to be caused by the Thunder God (*baley Gau*) and strong storms, the work of the Storm God (*baley Liwen*). Generally speaking, most of the natural disasters are attributed to the Thunder God. Specifically, meteorological catastrophe is thought to be caused by the rage of Thunder God. Such belief drives the Penan to alleviate the rage of Thunder God.

Another important ritual to reduce the Thunder God's power/anger in relation to natural disaster is the *piah tivai* (*tivai* words) ritual. The Penan believe that red sunset is the symbol of Thunder God's rage. The sky will be covered by red sunset, and rain falls heavily for a long period of time. For the Penan, red sunset is also regarded as a sign of an extended period of rain and they invoke ritual phrases to prevent such phenomenon to occur.

The Penan believe that the ashes from burnt game animals hold mystical and magical

⁹ This "*migah langit*" was performed while the prayer was cooking the hunted animal.

¹⁰ Jutan and Tedung are dead men who were renowned for their bravery when alive.

power¹¹. Ashes are thrown to the sky as they utter words like the following.

*ia peseu telauu medok kevok
menye menuneuk, medok kevok
tae menavah menyelah
maneu e mebeng ngajeleng utih
ngejami putih
ngejami abun bale ineh
tae ju maneu, liwen uven
tae maneu, tee unye
ngelibet menyelah ia*



A Penan in a boat with dark cloud in front

The heart of mouse deer, pig-tailed macaque, monitor lizard, I order to burn, pig-tailed macaque, monitor lizard. Go and reduce the red colour, turn white, whiten the sky. Whiten those red clouds. Go and make, storm and long rain is coming. Go and make, it will be raining long. Disappear the red sunset.

This way, the Penan generally perform rituals when they face or anticipate natural disasters such as thunder and lightning, rain and storms, and flooding. It can be said that their challenge is part of the Penan version of the “thunder complex.” Significantly, they perform rituals only in the case of such natural disasters. In the next chapter, I would like to briefly examine what lies conceptually behind such Penan ritual performances.

IV Penan attribute natural disaster to their mistreatment of animals

As described above, the Penan are always greatly afraid of meteorological catastrophe. They believe the uncontrollable power of nature to be the manifestation of Thunder God's rage. Do they ignore it? No, they do not. They always challenge the meteorological change. The only thing they can do, however, is to try ritually reducing the terrible power. In this regard, it is interesting to note that natural disasters are thought to be ultimately caused by their own erroneous action, in particular by their mistreatment of animals: the erroneous actions not

¹¹ In this regard, Needham recorded that the Penan practiced the blood-offering to appease the Thunder God's anger (Needham, 1967: 140). He also reported, “If thunder continues and everybody then offers blood or burns hair it will surely stop” (Needham, 1967: 140). I personally observed that some of the Penan of the Belaga burned hair to quell the Thunder God's anger, but never saw them offering blood, with which Needham was mostly concerned.

necessarily considered to be conducted by themselves but by someone somewhere who has mistreated animals. This is outlined in the following.

Penan children tend to play with the body of hunted animals after the game is brought back home. For instance, the children gather and point at the nose of the wild boar and laugh, because it looks just like hammer's head. They may also fondle small animals with their hands. When the children indulge themselves in such actions, the adults order them to stop playing with the animals as the adults believe such treatment of animals can be regarded by the Thunder God as the mistreatment of the animals, which may bring its rage. It is believed that the animal's soul (*berewen*) travels to the Thunder God and then reports about the mistreatment.

In this way, the Penan always pay great attention to the treatment of (game) animals. They call mistreatment "*penyalah*." The children described above are regarded as committing "*penyalah*."

Mistreatment applies not only to men, but also to animals: the Penan think that animals also mistreat men. For instance, it is regarded as mistreatment if a snake bites or a wild boar attacks men. It is not considered as a mistreatment for men to kill such animals because attacking men is considered as a mistreatment. In contrast, men also mistreat animals. Human mistreatment includes playing with or treating animals badly. In this sense, one can understand that the relation between men and animals is regarded as impartial, which I shall return to in Chapter 5.

One day I whispered, "O, it's a fowl (*o,dek*)," after looking at an animal in a rattan bag (*bukui*) brought back from hunting. A Penan man in front of me, hearing my words, looked very embarrassed. He immediately said, "No, it's not a fowl, but a wild fowl that we caught in a trap (*amai iteu datah jin viu*).

From this experience, I came to realize that there is a taboo against referring to wild fowl as fowl. According to the Penan, I was not paying respect to the animal. On the contrary, it is not regarded as inappropriate to refer to fowl as wild fowl, because fowl, recently introduced into Penan society from the outside world, are not classified as animals (*kaan*). Domesticated animals there cannot be given any classification. It is believed that human mistreatment of animals is reported to the Thunder God by the animals' spirit, who creates heavy rain, flooding and so forth.

The other day, a wild fowl was brought back alive to our hunting hut from a trap and forced people in the camp to remain silent for some while until the leader of the camp killed it. The leader explained to me that mistreatment is more dangerous when committed with living

animals than dead ones¹².

Additionally, the Penan usually say that people should butcher, cook and eat the meat as soon as possible after hunting the animal. This means that they are very much afraid of mistreating the game animals in the cooking process.

Based on these brief outlines of the Penan version of the "thunder complex," it is fair to say that the uncontrollable power of nature such as thunder, lightning, heavy rain and flooding is *not partly but mostly* attributed to the failure of human action. Mistreatment of animals by men at least ideologically plays a major role in constructing natural disaster/meteorological catastrophe.

One day in the dry season we went fishing in the river, and caught more fish than we actually needed. All of sudden, we heard thunder and lightning. A Penan man said that we had caught too many fish. He thought that over-consumption of fish was the cause of the thunder. We stopped fishing and then returned home soon. What needs to be examined in the next chapter is what we can learn from such Penan version of the "thunder complex."

V Penan prevent human dominance over animals

The most impressive feature of the Penan's relationship with animals is that they do not express their gratitude towards, or appease (the soul of) the animals which are used as livestock of men¹³. In other words, they do not have any rites for (the soul of) the animals. The Penan appear to do nothing with animals, as shown in the previous chapter.

They say, "don't play with animals," "don't treat animals badly," and "people should butcher, cook and eat the meat as soon as possible after hunting animals." Breaking these rules or mistreatment of animals angers the Thunder God, causing the most feared natural disaster for the Penan.

Why did they develop such a complicated cultural institution? That is the next question. The answer is that, I suppose, the Penan have sustained or have tried to sustain an impartial relationship between men and animals¹⁴. Hunting practice basically consists of a

¹² Needham reported that he was told not to cast a swollen leech into the fire by a Penan man, while another man suggested that it did not really matter so much (Needham, 1969: 41). The Penan of the Belaga today suggest in general that killing swollen leeches does not matter at all, because the leech is born from jungle leaves, which means that the leech is not included in the category of their creatures.

¹³ For example, through the "iyomante" ritual of the Ainu in Northern Japan, they celebrated returning a bear's spirit to the spiritual world, with gifts and invitations to return again soon. In the ritual, they killed the bear, which they captured as a cub, after raising it as an honored guest from the spiritual world. The ritual is an expression of thanks to animals that were provided from the spiritual world (Watanabe, 1964).

¹⁴ The Penan have a rich store of folk tales (*suket*), which are about animals, human beings or about human beings and animals sharing the same environment (Jayl Langub, 2001:1). One can see the

discriminating relationship between men and animals, as hunters one-sidedly hold the power to kill and consume the game animals. Penan hunters, however, have been particularly careful to avoid human dominance over animals. They must be aware of the oddness of the human dominance over animals. For them, animals cannot be controlled or managed, because they are part of uncontrollable nature. An impartial relationship between men and animals has been woven as the basic principle into the Penan society.

From time immemorial, in general, humans have survived by utilizing the surrounding natural resources. Some men were eventually able to stably secure foodstuff after they domesticated and slaughtered animals. Animal domestication was then brought into the commodity economy. Animals started to be slaughtered, processed and brought home. In this way, men gradually came to identify themselves as the “lords of nature” instead of being mere members of nature, and then began treating animals as objects of sport, clothing, experimentation, entertainment and so forth. In the latter half of the 20th century, those who felt deep sympathy for the animals that were cruelly treated by men started to argue for animal rights by which animals can live based on their own nature (Steiner, 2005).

On the other hand, the Penan may not treat animals badly or play with them. This impartial relationship between men and animals in the Penan society can prevent “anthropocentrism” in the modern world¹⁵.

In sum, in our modern world, men came to hold the power of life and death over animals. This means that we, in our modern world, no longer have an impartial relationship with animals. Such “anthropocentrism” is spread all over the world today, and is generating various practical problems: not only cruelty to animals, animal experimentation, indiscriminate hunting or fishing, but also food production systems based on the mass slaughter of animals.

My supposition here is that the cultural institution described in this



Penan children playing with a hunted wild boar

mystical past in which the lives of men and animals are merged.

¹⁵ Anthropocentrism is a view that places the moral status of humans in a position superior to that of animals: Humans have used animals as instruments to serve their needs. These views have their roots in Aristotle, and particularly in the thoughts of the Stoics, Saint Augustine, Saint Thomas Aquinas, Descartes and Kant, and have long exercised their influence on thinking in the history of Western philosophy (Steiner, 2005: 2).

paper – the Penan version of the "thunder complex" -- can unconsciously lead to the prevention of falling into the trap of "anthropocentrism." In other words, regarding natural disaster as a byproduct of human misconduct, the Penan have developed certain rules concerning the treatment of animals, which consequently have prevented human dominance over animals.

The idea of human dominance over animals completely contradicts the primordial conceptualization of nature in Penan society: nature is *something spontaneously growing and self-ruled (merip petiken)*. Thus, the Penan are seriously attempting to maintain an impartial relationship between men and animals on a daily basis, as if from the very beginning. It seems to me, they had already recognized that "anthropocentrism" is one of the most serious human problems.

V Conclusion

This paper describes how the meaning of natural disaster among the Penan of the Belaga differs from that of the modern world. Nature is seen as something uncontrollable by the Penan. Nature is *spontaneously growing and self-ruled (merip petiken)*.

First, how do the Penan challenge such natural spontaneity/uncontrollability in relation to natural disaster?

The Penan are always very much afraid of meteorological catastrophes, which are the only and the most feared natural disasters for them. Ordinarily in the afternoon, the sky turns dark, and then sometimes strong storms, lightning strikes, squalls and flooding emerge. After they face such meteorological change, some of them begin invoking *migah langit* phrases with the hope of reducing the natural power. The uncontrollable power of nature is in most cases represented as the Thunder God's rage. The only thing they can do is to ritually reduce naturally uncontrollable power of the Thunder God.

Second, what lies behind the Penan ritual practices?

It can be acknowledged that the Penan have developed a particular mode of thought behind those ritual performances based on the Penan version of the "thunder complex." Natural disaster is *not partly but mostly* attributed to the failure of human action. Storms, heavy rain, flood, lightning strikes and petrification are regarded as being caused by human mistreatment of animals. In this regard, they have developed certain rules: "don't play with animals," "one should butcher, cook and eat the meat quickly after hunting animals."

Third, what can we see from the Penan cultural institution – the Penan version of the "thunder complex" -- in relation to natural disaster?

The Penan version of the "thunder complex" can be hypothetically understood as their

daily efforts in preventing human dominance over animals. They seem to try to prevent human dominance over animals, and to sustain an impartial relationship between men and animals. Penan hunters empirically realize human dominance over animals every time they hunt or kill game animals. This, I believe, is a primordial experience of Penan hunters, who are paradoxically cautious of human dominance over animals. They are unconsciously afraid of human dominance over animals, because it completely denies the conceptualization of nature in Penan society.

In contrast, natural philosophy in the Western tradition started to establish itself from this very point and then evolved to generate a strong mode of thought with which men have the power to overcome or preserve nature by making full use of scientific knowledge and technology. However, the Penan never undertook such process, but rather understood inappropriate human action to be the ultimate cause of natural disaster, so as to sustain an impartial relationship between men and animals

References

- Blust, Robert (1981) "Linguistic Evidence for Some Early Austronesian Taboos," *American Anthropologist* 83: 285-319.
- Brosius, Peter (1992) *The Axiological Presence of Death: Penan Geng Death-Names* (Volumes 1 and 2). PhD dissertation, Department of Anthropology, the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
- (2007) "Prior Transcripts, Divergent Paths Resistance and Acquiescence to Logging in Sarawak, East Malaysia" in Serombe, Peter and Bernard Sellato (eds.) *Beyond the Green Myth: Borneo Hunter-Gatherers in the Twenty-First Century*. pp. 289-333, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies.
- Endicott, Kirk M. (1979), "The Batek Negrito Thunder God: The Personification of a Natural Force" in A.L. Becker and Yengoyan, A.A. (eds.) *Imagination of Reality: Essays in Southeast Asian Coherence Systems*, pp.29-42, Norwood: New Jersey: Abu Publishing Corporation.
- Forth, Gregory (1989) "Animals, Witches and Wind: Eastern Indonesian as the Thunder Complex," *Anthropos* 84: 89-106
- Freeman, Derek (1968), "Thunder, Blood and the Nicknames of God's Creatures," *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 37: 353-399.
- Jayl, Langub (2000) "Profile of Five Penan Long Houses," *Workshop on Community Profiles of Ethnic Minorities in Sarawak*. Centre for Modern Management, Caching.

- (2001) *Suket: Penan Folk Tales*. Universiti Malaysia Sarawak.
- (2009) “Failed Hunting Trip, Lightning, Thunder, and Epidemic,” Paper Presented at the Seminar on “the Perceptions of Natural Disasters among the Peoples of Sarawak,” IEAS, UNIMAS.
- King, Victor T. (1975) “Stones and the Maloh of Indonesian West Borneo,” *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 48: 104-119.
- Needham, Rodney (1964) “Blood, Thunder, and Mockery of Animals,” *Sociologus* 14(2): 136-148.
- Shimeda, Takatsugu (1996) *Power of Sound: Aesthetics of Song and Output among the Penan of Borneo*. Tokyo: Kobundo Publishing. (in Japanese)
- Steiner, Gary (2005) *Anthropocentrism and its Discontents: The Moral Status of Animals in the History of Western Philosophy*, University of Pittsburgh Press.
- SUHAKAM (2007) *SUHAKAM's Report on Penan in Ulu Belaga: Right to Land and Socio-Economic Development*.
- Watanabe, Hitoshi (1964) *The Ainu: a study of ecology and the system of social solidarity between man and nature in relation to group structure*, Tokyo: University of Tokyo.

(奥野克巳：おくの・かつみ 桜美林大学：J.F.Oberlin University)