CHAPTER II

Kayan religion
The old religion and the Bungan reform

This book describes both the religion practised at the time of fieldwork, *adat Bungan*, and the traditional religion which preceded it, *adat Dipuy*. *Adat Bungan* is named after its foremost spirit, Bungan; *adat Dipuy* is named after the spirit which was responsible for the rituals, taboos, and omens of the old religion. *Adat Dipuy* is also called *adat Apo Lagan* ('the religion of Apo Lagan', a part of the spirit country), and *adat menuna'* or *adat aleng una'* ('the religion of olden times'). (These expressions are used interchangeably; for clarity, I will consistently refer to the old religion as *adat Dipuy*.) The old religion has several designations because it lacked a name until the Bungan reform. The old and new religions share essentially the same beliefs; there are basic similarities in the structure and content of their respective rituals. Each of the following chapters covers both *adat Dipuy* and *adat Bungan*. This chapter focuses on the rise of the Bungan religion. When it first arose, *adat Bungan* was a revolutionary rejection of *adat Dipuy*. As time passed, many elements of the old religion were reinstated and *adat Bungan* can now be characterized as a reform of the old religion (Table 1).

According to a myth of origin (abridged from Baling Avun 1961:1-3), *adat Dipuy* was not the first religion:

> Bo' Dale' Gerang married his sister Bo' Dale' Sirang and she became pregnant. [The spirits] Doh Tenangan and Batang Tuman caused her to miscarry because there were too many people in the world. Because Bo' Dale' Gerang and Bo' Dale' Sirang were disconsolate, Doh Tenangan transformed the dead child's soul into rice. Under the stewardship of Bo' Dale' Gerang and Bo' Dale' Sirang, agricultural rituals were very simple; people did not need to look for auguries and there were only brief periods of ritual inactivity.
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> Later on, [the spirit] Dipuy replaced Bo' Dale' Gerang; she introduced many rituals, taboos, and omens. She told animals to become auguries and to punish humans if they ignored them. She told the soul of rice to be demanding, to require *dayong* rituals and to be easily offended if mishandled. She listed a large number of prohibitions related to every kind of activity.

Table 1. Religious change

Adat Dipuy	Initial stages of *adat Bungan*	Established *adat Bungan*
Dipuy is the most important spirit	Bungan is the only important spirit	Bungan is the most important spirit
Priests receive expensive fees	No priests	Priests receive modest fees
Many taboos	No taboos	Few taboos
Many omens	No omens	No omens
Many periods of ritual inactivity	No ritual inactivity	Brief periods of ritual inactivity
Expensive rituals	Free rituals	Less expensive rituals
Complex annual cycle	Simple prayers (fewer ritual days than in *adat Dipuy*)	Complex annual cycle
Dayong ritual	No *dayong*	*Dayong* ritual (less expensive than in *adat Dipuy*)
Fresh head trophies necessary for prosperity	No head trophies	Old head trophies sufficient for prosperity
Charms and amulets	No charms or amulets	Charms and amulets
Religion linked to social stratification	Egalitarian religion	Religion linked to social stratification

The rise of adat Bungan in the Apo Kayan

This myth constructs a golden age when life was easy. A single rice kernel was a generous meal; one could cut it with a sword and place it directly in boiling water without drying or pounding it beforehand. The bad-tempered Dipuy destroyed this earthly paradise by creating taboos and omens and by burdening humans with complicated and expensive rituals.[1] *Adat Dipuy* became progressively more unpleasant as people forgot the proper rituals. Badly performed rituals aroused the spirits' ire and a religious reform seemed essential (Baling

[1] Europeans are assigned a responsibility in this deterioration of life. Originally, they lived in the Kayan river area; when they left, they took with them the big rice (*pare aya'*), the rice which called for no rituals or taboos, the rice of plenty. This is why Europeans are prosperous while the Kayan are not. The resilience of this *ur*-rice is marked by the fact that one could cut the stalks with a sword; nowadays, the soul of the rice would be profoundly offended by such cavalier treatment. Rice must be cut gently and discreetly with a special small knife (Chapter VI).

Avun 1961:22-3). The following account of the conversion to *adat Bungan* (abridged from Baling Avun 1961:24-32) is almost identical to what I heard in Uma Bawang.

> Jok Apuy lived in the Kenyah village of Lepo' Jalan at Long Sungei Avong in the Apo Kayan. At first, he practised the old Kenyah religion. The Dutch, who had established their rule at Long Nawang, told the Kenyah to become Christians and Jok Apuy did so, following the majority.
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> All his life, whether he practised the old religion or Christianity, Jok Apuy had been poorer than most people. He often went hungry, he suffered many misfortunes, his children died. 'I might as well kill myself', he thought. 'There is no point in living such a miserable life'. Every day, every night, Jok Apuy called on [the spirits] Bungan Malan and Pesilong Luan to kill him. 'What is all this about Jok Apuy asking us to kill him?' said Bungan Malan. 'I am tired of always hearing the voice of Jok Apuy. We'd better go down to meet him.'
>
> In a dream, Bungan told Jok Apuy that when she created the world, rituals were simple and there were no auguries; problems arose with Dipuy. If humans return to Bungan's religion, the original religion, they will have a better life. Bungan explained her religion: 'Jok Apuy, when you are about to go on a trip, take an egg and a sword in your hand and say "I lift the moon jar, I raise the jar of bliss, I tell you, Bungan Malan, Pesilong Luan, to send away the auguries, to throw away the *adat Apo Lagan*; I do not use Dipuy's agricultural rituals any more, nor do I follow her auguries; I eat without hindrance all the foods which were tabooed by Dipuy because I now follow the *adat* of Bungan Malan and Pesilong Luan". This is what you will say to the egg, Jok Apuy. Now you can eat everything which was tabooed, everything that brought death under Dipuy's *adat*.' For every occasion when spiritual intercession was required, Jok Apuy only needed to pray to Bungan while holding an egg in his hand.[2] Waking up from his dream, Jok Apuy followed Bungan's advice.
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> In the following four years, he had bumper harvests. His neighbours noticed his change of fortune; they also became aware that he had ceased to attend Christian prayer meetings. The prayer leader demanded he explain his behaviour. Jok Apuy renounced Christianity and many village members followed his lead.[3]
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> The village chief summoned those who still followed the old religion. Most commoners expressed their desire to practise Jok Apuy's religion and the chief agreed with them. Only a few people kept to the old religion. *Adat Bungan* spread to neighbouring villages: Lepo' Bakong, Lepo' Tukong, Lepo' Tau, Lepo' Bakah, Lepo' Lisan, Lepo' Timei, and Uma Lekan.

The spread of adat Bungan to the Baluy area

According to Baling Avun (1961), Jok Apuy had his vision in 1940; his fellow villagers in Lepo' Jalan converted in 1944. The Bungan religion had its greatest

[2] This is the usual procedure for a prayer to Bungan. The egg is an offering which serves as a conduit through which the prayer is transmitted.

[3] In a manuscript written in 1959, the Christian prayer leader of Long Nawang says that *adat Bungan* started twelve years after the arrival of Christianity (Bit Enjok 1959). According to Pa Bit Enjok, Jok Apuy converted to Christianity against his parents' wishes, then returned to the old religion; after that, he asked to be readmitted to the Christian fold, but his request was denied.

success in the Baluy region. *Adat Bungan* came to the Baluy in 1948 or 1949.[4] By 1951, most Baluy Kayan villages had embraced Bungan (Smith 1951b:182), except Uma Kahe. Kenyah villages of the Baluy also adopted *adat Bungan*, except Long Bangan, Sambup, and Uma Pawa'. In 1961, most Kajang still kept their old religion (Baling Avun 1961:32), but they converted to Bungan later.

The first Baluy area longhouse to adopt Bungan was Uma Kelap, soon followed by Uma Bawang.[5] Lake' Belulok, the foremost priest of Uma Kelap, converted his Uma Bawang counterpart, Lake' Lirong, and about six Uma Bawang households. Lake' Lirong held a ritual to inform auguries and spirits that the new converts were abandoning them and their rituals. The converts made offerings to the spirits and auguries so that they would not be angry. In the old religion, each household used to keep charms in a basket (*ingen lali*). Lake' Lirong gathered these baskets; he made offerings to them and placed them in a hut built downriver of the house where they were abandoned.[6]

The rest of Uma Bawang, as well as neighbouring villages, waited for a year to see what would happen. As Uma Bawang remained prosperous, they followed suit. In Uma Bawang, another ceremony was performed to reaffirm the conversion. A large sacrificial pig was entrusted with the message that Uma Bawang was adopting a new *adat*, that its members were no longer subject to food taboos or the supernatural consequences of transgressing them. They threw away the old charms (*pengaroh*). They were so eager to join *adat Bungan* that they converted to it in mid-year rather than wait until the end of the annual ritual cycle. This conversion created much excitement and came to the attention of the colonial authorities. An account of this event notes a Christian element to which I will return.

> Three houses in Penghulu Hang Nyipa's area, including the penghulu's own [Uma Bawang], and one house in Penghulu Puso's area threw off all their old adats and pantangs [ritual prohibitions] in late July. Of these houses one is Kayan and two Kenyah. This sudden switch came about because a Kayan visiting a Christian Kenyah house in Dutch Borneo had a dream in which "Tuhan Jesus" appeared to him and said: 'The Chinese, Malays, Christian Kenyahs and other races can plant rice without first consulting the birds, and indeed usually obtain better crops than you Kayans, and they can eat rusa [sambhur deer, a tabooed food] without ill effect. Why do you not follow their example?' He repeated this dream everywhere he went on his return to Belaga. A further Kayan house has not thrown all of its pantangs, but has agreed to eat rusa. Penghulu Hang Nyipa says that he has no adat at all now except to kill three chickens on the rice field to propitiate "Tuhan Jesus". (Abang Indih 1950:19.)

The conversion created practical problems, because the old religion persisted.

> The great step taken by Penghulu Hang Nyipa and some others in throwing of 'pantans' [i.e. *pantang*, ritual prohibitions] and 'beburong' [auguries], is causing a schism among the Kayans. Penghulu Puso and T.R. Baleng [Balung Avun] are reasonably in favour of throwing off 'pantans' and 'beburong' but they cannot approve the eating of rusa. One thus has one party eating rusa and saying they feel stronger for it and have had no bad dreams, while the other party calls them renegades from the true Kayan tradition and foresees eventual calamities befalling all concerned for this sacrilege. (Urquhart 1950b:95-6.)

By 1951, an administrator could report that 'The majority of Kayans in the Batang Baloi have now thrown off all pantangs and eat rusa', but this was not yet the case for the Sekapan and Kejaman (Smith 1951c). Up to the early 1960s, some households of the Kayan village of Long Liko still retained *adat Dipuy*. *Adat Bungan* was first brought to the Baluy by travellers. Then, in 1952, Jok Apuy himself visited the Baluy area (White 1956:472).[7] He held a conversion ritual for each household, for which he received payment.[8]

Adat Bungan and Christianity

The relationship between *adat Bungan* and Christianity is complex. In the Apo Kayan region where *adat Bungan* first arose, Christian missionary activity had weakened traditional religion by offering an alternative. American fundamentalist missionaries of the Christian and Missionary Alliance first went to the Kayan river area in 1929 and they had some success among the Kenyah (Conley

4 Kayan informants were typically very vague about dates, but they suggested that the first Uma Bawang conversions took place in 1948, one year earlier than reported by Urquhart (1950a:35), who places the conversions in 'late 1949'. Informants said that the rest of the village followed suit three years later and this corresponds to Sarawak Gazette reports. Kayan reckoning counts the first year in a sequence, so that 1948 would be part of the three years referred to. Harrisson (1956:147) incorrectly says that *adat Bungan* began in 1949 in the Apo Kayan. White (1956:472) places Jok Apuy's vision in 1948. Aichner (1956:477) reports that Jok Apuy died in 1955. Mythical reinterpretations can arise rapidly: in the Baram, Prattis (1963:65) was told that 'the first appearance of the cult can be traced to the early 1920's'. *Adat Bungan* had reached the Baram Kenyah village of Long Muh by 1952 (Needham 1976:77).

5 Baling Avun (1961:31) says that Uma Bawang was the first village to adopt *adat Bungan*, but the people of Uma Bawang recognize the primacy of Uma Kelap. Baling's mistake may be due to several factors: he spent much of his childhood in Uma Bawang; at the time, the chief of Uma Bawang was also the regional chief (*penghulu*) and Uma Kelap was under his ambit. Uma Bawang converted a few weeks after Uma Kelap. Uma Nyaving, or part of it, followed suit soon after.

6 This is similar to the procedure for abandoning unnecessary – and dangerous – head trophies (see Chapter VI). For more on the *ingen lali*, see Chapter III.

7 Prattis (1963:81) says that he came in 1954, but Sandin (1961) confirms the date of 1952. Prattis's article must be read with caution.

8 One informant reported a payment of an old sword-blade (*umuh*), others mentioned 4 meters of bleached cotton (*dua' batang blasu*) or batiks. In 1970, I attended a ritual of conversion to *adat Bungan* for Along, a Christian from Indonesian Borneo who was about to marry a Bungan woman. He and the priest went near the river, downriver of the house. Along sat on his heels besides two egg offerings and a small white flag. In simple words, the priest informed Bungan of Along's decision. The flag was 'returned to God' (Tuhan) so that He would know that Along was leaving Him. For another description of the conversion ritual, see Prattis (1963:69).

1973:296). Even though they did not proselytize in far away villages such as Long Nawang, Kenyah travellers who had come in contact with Christianity during trading trips raised an interest in this new religion (Whittier 1973:40). By 1938, over half the members of the large Uma Kulit village of Naha Kramo, downriver from Long Nawang, were Christian. 'In 1940, [the missionary] Fiske brought a small seaplane to East Kalimantan and made the first plane flight to the Apo Kayan, landing and staying at the Uma Leken village of Data Dian' (Whittier 1973:40). Christianity was perceived as an improvement on the old religion because it enjoined fewer prohibitions, although some elements were irksome, such as the obligation to refrain from work on Sundays. The Kenyah also felt a loss of autonomy, as fundamentalist Christianity rejected much previously-valued tradition. Indeed, some converts found fundamentalist Christianity oppressive and, in the 1960s, many Christian Kenyah left KINGMI (Kemah Injil Gereja Masehi Indonesia), the offspring of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, for the Indonesian Protestant Church (Gereja Protestan Bagian Indonesia), because of KINGMI's focus on sin (Whittier 1973:147). In the Apo Kayan, Christianity and *adat Bungan* continued to compete. By the late 1950s, about half the Apo Kayan Kenyah were Christian and the other half Bungan (Apoi Injou 1958:1).

Meanwhile, Roman Catholic and fundamentalist (Borneo Evangelical Mission) missionaries had been active in the Baram area before the Second World War, but started conversions only after the War. By 1949, 'almost half the longhouses in Baram District had converted' to Christianity (Metcalf 1977:102). In 1950, *adat Bungan* was introduced to the Baram from the Baluy and from Indonesian Borneo. Once in the Baram, it came into direct competition with Christianity (Griffin 1951:93-4; Metcalf 1977:102). It had considerable success at first, replacing the old religion and even making inroads in Christian villages. In the 1960s, Christianity had gained the upper hand and *adat Bungan* has been in decline since then. In the Mahakam region, Roman Catholic missionaries were already active in 1907 (Glaudemans 1938:278). Because Christianization was established long before the appearance of *adat Bungan*, the latter had no chance of implanting itself. Where *adat Bungan* had to compete against established missionary activity, initial success was ephemeral. In the Baluy area, by contrast, there had been almost no missionary activity and *adat Bungan* had no external competition.

We saw in a quote from 1950 that, when *adat Bungan* first arrived in the Baluy area, it showed some syncretistic elements, as Jesus occupied a place in the system. A few years later, this aspect was still present: a Kenyah from the Belaga river narrated a dream in which he had met both Bungan and Jesus. By 1970, however, all references to Christianity had disappeared among the Baluy Kayan. Christianity was not sufficiently relevant in the region for these syncretistic elements to have remained.

The fundamentalist missionaries of the Borneo Evangelical Mission (later called Sidang Injil Borneo, or SIB) came to the Baluy region after *adat Bungan* was solidly established. They had their greatest success among the Kenyah, who had maintained links with their relatives in the Apo Kayan, where the majority was already Christian. The fundamentalists succeeded in converting only one Kayan village, Uma Kahe, although a few families adopted Christianity in other villages. A few boarders at the Methodist school in Kapit were converted by their teachers without their parents' permission. They were told that conversion was an irreversible process and they could not revert to paganism. In the belief that there are separate afterworlds for Christians and followers of Bungan, some of these boys' parents reluctantly adopted Christianity because they did not wish to be separated from their children after death.[9] Given the absence of Methodist missionaries in the Belaga sub-district, these converts joined the SIB.

The desire for a domestic unit to have the same religion has been a basis for a general disapproval of mixed marriages. One reason is that the parent who is not of the same religion as the children cannot pray for them when they are sick. There were two mixed marriages in Uma Bawang; both couples had been wed in a Bungan ritual. During the rituals where the presence of both parents was required, the Christian left the room and was replaced by a stand-in.

Economic factors were relevant in some conversions: a Christian Kayan persuaded his mother to convert by arguing she would impoverish herself by paying Kayan priests, while Christianity was free. His sister became Christian because Bungan rituals had not cured her and she decided to try her luck with Christianity. In the early 1970s in Uma Bawang, out of a total of 26 households and 213 individuals, 33 people in four households were Christian and there were seven other Christians in households where most members were Bungan followers. In the Baluy, Christian missionary efforts were hampered by the fundamentalist intolerance of everything 'pagan' which they identified as satanic.[10] The missionaries were bitterly opposed to traditional songs, dances, and plastic

[9] In one typical example, an adolescent became Christian in secondary school in Kapit in 1963; his father followed suit in 1968. His mother was the sister of the foremost Bungan priest, who tried unsuccessfully to persuade her to divorce her husband; she also adopted Christianity. Her daughter did not wish to become Christian; however, the mother, who fostered one of her daughter's children, had the latter baptized and the daughter felt compelled to become Christian to be with her child in the spirit country.

[10] A missionary who was active in the Kayan river area demonstrates an identical attitude: 'If a spirit-filled man will do the will of God he will find himself engaged in a spiritual warfare. Satanic power and devices materialize in pagan ritual, belief and paraphernalia' (Conley 1973: 324). In the same way, a SIB missionary active in the Baram region described to me an occasion when he baptized all the members of a community. When he had finished baptizing the last person, he saw a cloud rising from the longhouse; this cloud was the visible manifestation of evil spirits who had clung to the longhouse as long as a single pagan remained.

arts, to tobacco, rice beer, and alcohol, to premarital sex and divorce. Proud of their culture, the Baluy Kayan found it easy to resist proselytization.

Because they were a small minority and, without a trained catechist, Christians in Uma Bawang were not sharply differentiated from the rest of the population. They did not observe the most extreme fundamentalist prohibitions against rice beer, dancing, and singing. While they observed Sunday as a day of rest, they engaged in other productive activities on that day, such as hunting, fishing, and making artefacts.

As we will see, the end-of-year *dayong* (Chapter VII) plays a crucial role in affirming the unity of the community because it is an occasion for all households to entertain each other. Christian households were willing guests at such *dayong*, but they could not reciprocate in kind. For this reason, they reinterpreted 31 December – which they saw as the end of the Christian year – in the same way. After making prayers for the new year, all Uma Bawang Christians joined in one household to offer coffee, rice pastries, and even rice beer to their fellow villagers. All households were invited and the feast was well attended. The atmosphere was more subdued than Bungan end-of-year festivals, in part because there was relatively little rice beer, but also because this was a strange ritual of a religion about which many people had reservations. Given their minority position and their isolation from a mission, Christians did not abandon traditional Kayan beliefs: for instance, a Christian woman explained that her son was a skilled *sape'* player because of the guidance of a spirit helper.

During my fieldwork, the Christians did no evident proselytizing. They practised their religion privately and were careful not to interfere with communal Bungan rituals, which require community members to refrain from work on that day. This presented some Christians with a dilemma: if they did not work, they would appear to participate in a pagan ritual; if they did, they would incur the wrath of Bungan followers. They avoided the problem by spending the day and night at their farmhouses. Christianity created other problems because of the injunction against work on Sundays. Among the Baluy Kayan, most agricultural work is carried out by cooperative groups (Rousseau 1990:98). Because they had to be idle on Sundays, Christians usually cooperated among themselves. This was seen as a breach of solidarity, as cooperation groups are expected to change their membership to avoid the formation of cliques. For all these reasons, Christianity occupied a marginal position.

In 1971, Roman Catholic missionaries came to the Belaga area. Tajang La'ing, a prominent Kayan politician from Uma Nyaving (Long Lino), decided to try to convert the people of the Baluy area to Catholicism. He was following the lead of Temenggong Oyong Lawai Jau, the paramount leader of the Baram area. The Temenggong wished to unite all central Borneo people under the banner of Roman Catholicism, in part because he thought it would foster greater political solidarity, in part because Catholic priests had no objection to the maintenance

of cultural features which were not obviously incompatible with Christianity. Soon after their arrival, the missionaries inadvertently demonstrated how they differed from fundamentalists. During the Chinese New Year, the shopkeepers of Belaga invited me and the missionaries for drinks. After we had done the rounds, we were rather cheerful and, as I remember it, I had to help one of the missionaries home. The next day, I was interviewed by several Kayan and Kajang who wanted to know whether these were indeed missionaries; I confirmed this, but pointed out that they were of a different denomination. They opined that if these missionaries could have a good time in this way, it must be a good religion!

Tajang had lost his Sarawak State Assembly seat to a cousin, an SIB Christian from Uma Kahe, in the last election. He thought that bringing about religious conversion might be to his political advantage. At first, he had misgivings about taking this step, because he was the descendant of one of the foremost Kayan culture heroes, Belawan, who was also his spirit helper. Eventually, he took the plunge.

Tajang convened a meeting of chiefs in the village of Uma Belun. He extolled the virtues of Roman Catholicism: missionaries would be stationed in Belaga, they would make the rounds of villages, provide various forms of assistance, and open a private school. (Two missionaries were in fact posted in Belaga; they never promised to open a school and they did not do so.) Catholicism was superior to SIB, he said, because it was 'European Christianity' (*sebayang orang puti*) with white priests, in contrast to SIB, which had Sarawakian prayer leaders. Catholicism was preferable to SIB because it lacked taboos on smoking, drinking alcohol, working on Sundays, or using traditional charms. Those who were SIB could join the Catholics. Tajang approached SIB converts to invite them to become Roman Catholics. They diplomatically agreed, but on the condition that the SIB hierarchy give their approval, which they had no intention of doing. The arrival of Roman Catholicism was not well received by SIB. The minutes of a meeting held on 24 May 1971 noted that there was an urgent need to have a permanent SIB representative in Belaga, 'because the R.C. people are starting to create confusion in the area'. The State Assembly man who had replaced Tajang recognized the political motivation behind the push towards Catholicism and felt the need to proselytize for the SIB denomination. To get converts, Tajang went so far as to say that, after conversion to Catholicism, shamans could still practise their art and use the old charms. When I pointed this out to the Catholic missionaries, they did not contradict Tajang. In the following months, they indeed confirmed that shamanism was acceptable to them. Only after they had achieved some conversions in villages of the lower Baluy did they state that there was no part for shamanism in Christianity. They explained that, because of their limited knowledge of Kayan, they had misunderstood the situation at first and thought that shamans were only herb-

alists. The priests did not inform potential converts that Catholicism forbids divorce.

After this initial meeting, Tajang and the Temenggong managed, with some difficulty, to persuade the Bishop of Kuching to post two missionaries to Belaga (the bishop was reluctant to do so because of limited resources). A big meeting was convened in Tajang's village in April 1972, to which all chiefs and notables were invited. The keynote speaker was the Temenggong, who spoke for five hours – the most stunning example of oratory I have ever witnessed. The Bishop of Kuching, one missionary, and the administrator of the Belaga sub-district were also guests.

A few days later, Tajang was baptized. He first took leave of his supernatural ancestors and spirit helpers, in particular the Thunder. In a prayer, he explained why he was becoming Catholic and asked the Thunder not to be angry. His conversion was a major topic of conversations in the following weeks, but it did not start a trend. There were few converts. Not a single member of Uma Bawang became Catholic because its chief, Lihan, normally a staunch supporter of his cousin Tajang, decided on this occasion not to follow his lead. Roman Catholicism was all right, he said, but it was not the perfect religion, *adat Bungan*. Despite what he had heard, Lihan was not convinced he would be allowed to keep his charms or use the services of shamans; he feared that Sundays would become days of idleness. In any event, the proselytization process petered out and the missionaries were removed from Belaga after a few years. (When I met Tajang in 1994, he had returned to *adat Bungan*.)

Circumstances which gave rise to adat Bungan

Adat Bungan was not the only new cult to appear in Borneo. Other revitalization movements arose, at least in part, because of the complex changes brought to Borneo by colonial penetration. The earlier instances of new cults took place in areas which were first affected by outside influences (King 1978). Early examples were the Malingkote cult in Sabah around the turn of the century (Black 1976:31) and the *nyuli* movement of 1920 in what is now Kalimantan Tengah (Van der Kroef 1962). In the late 1930s in the Mahakam region, local prophets appeared in reaction to missionary activity. Among the Aoheng, Nyurei, known as the Blind Master, cured people by laying on of hands. He ordered people to cast away images of guardian spirits and charms and he attacked old traditions. He was jailed by the Japanese and died in Tenggarong (Sellato 1986:367). It is possible that Jok Apuy might have heard of him.

In what ways could the changes brought about by colonial penetration affect religion in central Borneo? I need not review here the fascinating literature on crisis cults, nativistic movements, revitalization movements, and cargo cults, which studies the effects of foreign influences on new religions. The remoteness

of central Borneo insulated it for a long time against major dislocations and intrusions. *Adat Bungan* is not a typical crisis cult, as it appeared in a remote area whose 'traditional' social system was almost intact, except for the disappearance of headhunting. The elimination of headhunting brought social and economic advantages. Travel and commerce became easier; chiefs were not threatened by the ban on headhunting, as its practice was not the basis of their authority. At first, the ban on headhunting did not affect religion (which required fresh head trophies from time to time to maintain the community's health and prosperity) because the Brooke administration supplied head trophies. To stamp out headhunting, administrators organized punitive expeditions during which Dayak allies were allowed to take trophies; some of these were stored by administrators and given to peaceful communities when they needed a new head. By 1924, headhunting had virtually disappeared in the Third Division of Sarawak and fresh heads ceased to be available. The Kayan continued to practise headhunting rituals with old trophies, but this was not satisfactory, because old trophies lost their effectiveness and became malevolent. Bungan provided an answer to this problem, as it did not require headhunting.

While social change was not the direct reason for the Bungan reform, epidemics were an unintended consequence of colonial penetration (Rousseau 1990:36, 112) and this affected religion. In central Borneo, health and well-being are religious matters: rituals serve to maintain the health of individuals, communities, fields, and the whole environment. The unprecedented disruptions brought by epidemics suggested the existing religious system had deteriorated.

Dissatisfaction with the old religion was evident well before the appearance of *adat Bungan*. In 1939, Baluy chiefs discussed with the District Officer the possibility of adopting Christianity: 'They gave as their reasons that they wished to discontinue their pantangs [taboos], that they desired education and finally that they wanted to eat deer. The Kayan adat prevents them from eating this animal' (Jacks 1946:59). This came to nothing, as no missionaries were available. Soon after, the Second World War broke out and brought fresh misery to central Borneo; it was a period when 'life was broken' (*urip tasa*), as the Kayan say. This new dislocation presumably heightened the potential appeal of *adat Bungan*. Another factor may have helped to foster conversion to *adat Bungan*: in 1950, the harvest in the Belaga sub-district was 'even worse than usual' (Smith 1951a:120).

There was a clear cultural component to the success of *adat Bungan* in the Baluy area. It was attractive because it preserved many elements of the old religion; it was a reform rather than a foreign system. In explaining the passage from *adat Dipuy* to *adat Bungan*, Baling Avun (1961:122-3) suggests both a break and a continuity: after a long description of the omens and taboos of *adat Dipuy*, he reflects:

> As time went on, there were fewer and fewer people and they did not understand auguries properly any more. They were also confused about ritual prohibitions and this was a cause of misfortunes and death. At each generation, knowledge of the rituals became more uncertain [...]. Agricultural rituals were incorrect because people did not remember them correctly and this disorder caused deaths. Taboos were observed improperly and people died.

In the same way, Avun, the senior priest of Uma Bawang, hypothesized that the improper performance of rituals was the reason *adat Dipuy* had become harsher and less efficacious. Others thought the ban on headhunting – while intrinsically good – deprived the Kayan of the means to avert illnesses. In other words, *adat Dipuy* was not intrinsically bad; the problem was due to forgetfulness and changed circumstances. They could not benefit from *adat Dipuy* any more. *Adat Bungan* was a solution which kept the traditional framework in a new format. At first, the Bungan reform, while preserving many traditional beliefs, was totally distinct from *adat Dipuy* from a ritual viewpoint. Later, as we will see, many rituals of the old religion were reinstated in a somewhat simplified form. Before we turn to this, we must consider another factor which played a significant role in the implantation of *adat Bungan* in the Baluy area.

Adat Bungan and class antagonisms

Central Borneo is a class society; nowhere is this more evident than among the Kayan (Rousseau 1990:163-215). No aspect of life in Kayan society can be understood without reference to social inequality. The development of the Bungan reform was fuelled by class antagonisms. Jok Apuy was a commoner and the new religion appealed most of all to his class. Not only did it do away with time-wasting taboos and periods of ritual inactivity, which affected the labouring classes more than the aristocracy, but it brought about a democratization of religion, where anyone could communicate directly with supernatural beings without the intercession of priests. Initially, the Bungan reform abolished religious features which helped to emphasize the ruling estate's special position: for instance, it advocated throwing away head trophies and charms. It is not surprising that the six Uma Bawang households which initially converted included prominent commoners.[11] At first, the chief sided with the priests in opposing *adat Bungan*. The commoners' boldness in going against their chief's wishes may have been influenced by British colonialism. In 1945, the British Crown had taken over Sarawak from Rajah Brooke and, unlike their

[11] Two households were lower aristocrats (*hipuy*), another one belonged to the 'good commoners' (*panyin jia*), and the remaining three were ordinary commoners. Two of the latter households were close relatives of the first three households. Puso, a powerful Sekapan chief, was very put out by this conversion; he asked the colonial administrator to fine the village of Uma Bawang (because they were disturbing the ritual order). To his dismay, the administrator did not intervene.

predecessors, British colonial administrators expressed reservations about the Kayan system of hereditary strata.

As the Bungan reform gained momentum, chiefs and priests were forced to jump on the bandwagon in order to protect their authority. Everywhere, after initial attempts to prevent its development, the aristocracy joined the movement and managed to reinstate most aspects of the traditional religion which buttressed the stratification system. Conversion to *adat Bungan* did not automatically erase old beliefs, which still served to explain some events. Lake' Lirong, who spearheaded the first conversion in Uma Bawang, took control of the gnomon, with which the appropriate time for sowing rice is established. In the past, the gnomon had been under the exclusive control of the chief. When Lake' Lirong died soon after, this was interpreted as a consequence of his rash action: maybe, after all, the person of chiefs was still sacred in *adat Bungan*. Likewise, in the months following the complete conversion of Uma Bawang to *adat Bungan*, there was a long period of rain. The chief, Lake' Kebing, was told in a dream to retrieve an old shield which he had thrown away with other charms; when he did so, the weather improved.[12] Little by little, the old rituals crept back. The priests reassumed their role as religious specialists, once more receiving fees and sacrificing chickens and pigs. *Adat Bungan* developed into a reform of the old religion rather than an entirely new system. Uma Aging's chief, Baling Avun, came to be the paramount religious authority in his village (White 1956:475). By writing a book on *adat Bungan* (Baling Avun 1961), he had hoped to become the regional religious authority. In this, he was not successful.

At the beginning of *adat Bungan*, anyone could be a prayer leader (*guru Bungan*, lit. 'Bungan teacher'). Unlike the traditional priest, this function did not require supernatural calling. The priests of the old religion managed to reassert their role and they effectively displaced the *guru Bungan*. Some commoners who had enthusiastically embraced the new religion saw the return of the priests as a subversion of the reform; they felt they had won the battle only to lose the war. Lake' Ajang, a commoner elder, was a mouthpiece for commoner aspirations. He had become *guru Bungan* and he was enthralled with the new ritual simplicity. He never fully accepted the final compromise, but there was little he could do, because his fellow villagers, who had initially accepted the simplicity of the new religion, gradually became convinced that the greater complexity of priestly rituals also entailed greater efficacy. While *adat Bungan* now buttresses the stratification system in the same way as *adat Dipuy* did, its egalitarian ideology is not forgotten. I often heard Kayan say that 'In *adat Bungan*, we are all equal, unlike *adat Dipuy*'.

[12] There is an association between rain and charms, at least war charms. Once, when an old sword was taken out of storage, several people commented that it was bound to rain soon. The eventual absence of rain did not cause comment.

The revival of old rituals was legitimated by Jok Apuy himself when he visited the Baluy in 1952. He agreed each village could have different ritual practices, as had been the case in *adat Dipuy*. Jok Apuy died soon after his visit to the Baluy. Some Kayan, such as my neighbour Avun Imang, who in the early days had become *guru Bungan*, thought his death was a punishment for betraying the real *adat Bungan*. While I heard such 'purist' statements on occasion, most people expressed themselves well satisfied with the form which *adat Bungan* eventually took. They felt that the reformed rituals, while similar to those of *adat Dipuy*, were immeasurably superior by being briefer and less costly. In any case, although Avun Imang thought Jok Apuy had betrayed the true *adat Bungan*, he himself became a priest and he administered all these rituals which he originally thought were unnecessary. (Some doubt obviously remained in his mind. When I visited him in 1988, he had abandoned the priesthood and would have nothing more to do with it.)

The egalitarian aspect of *adat Bungan* was part of its initial appeal, but this was subverted when aristocrats managed to regain control of religion. The fact that *adat Bungan* ceased to be a religion of commoners and slaves may have been a factor in its persistence in the Baluy. By contrast,

> In the Apo Kayan it remained a cult of the common man and few *paran* [ruling stratum] adopted it. According to informants, *paran* felt it was a shallow, rootless system. Djuk Apoi was, after all, only a *panyin* [commoner] and it was absurd that a religious system should be based on the dreams of a commoner. They considered the Bungan Cult inferior to *Adat Lama* [the old religion] and some even considered it inferior to Christianity [...]. By the time of my study in 1970, Long Nawang had only two people who claimed to be followers of Bungan Malan. (Whittier 1973:153)

Ritual changes from adat Dipuy to adat Bungan

The original teachings of Jok Apuy presented an extremely simple religion, with Bungan as the only relevant supernatural being and a single, very simple, ritual: anyone who sought Bungan's intercession simply held up an egg in the right hand and addressed prayers to her. In a matter of months after the conversion, the structure of the old religion was reinstated. *Adat Bungan* now has the same annual cycle, the same familial ritual (*dayong*) and the same life-cycle rites as *adat Dipuy*. The main difference is the greater simplicity of Bungan rituals: they are briefer and less expensive, they do not call for the observance of onerous taboos, nor are people subject to the whim of omen animals.[13] In the old religion, rituals were under the authority of Dipuy and other supernatural spirits; now, 'Bungan has the power' (*Bungan aleng hipun kuasa*).

In the 1970s, some ritual practices were the object of disagreement. I was told on several occasions that specific *adat Dipuy* rites had now been abandoned,

13 There are a few new rituals such as *Bungan tana*; see Chapter VI.

only to find out they were still in use. Also, some individuals objected to rituals which the majority accepted as part of *adat Bungan*. Earlier, I mentioned Lake' Ajang, the champion of commoners' rights. He stated forcefully that a particular curing procedure, the *dayong hudo' kaluy* (see Chapter VIII), had no place in the new *adat* and indeed was now dangerous (*parit*). He also refused to participate in the headhunting celebrations (see Chapter VI), despite his wife's entreaties. In some villages, the Bungan reform has been the occasion for factionalism. In the 1960s and 1970s, the people of Uma Lesong were divided between the followers of Lake' Huluy, who advocated mainstream Bungan, and Lirong Apo Token, an eccentric character, who ingested rice only in the form of rice beer.[14] Lake' Huluy's followers used the gnomon to determine the date of the sowing, the others did not. This apparently innocuous difference marked a deeply divided community, because a whole village should sow rice at the same time. The Kayan do not tolerate persistent conflict within a community and if reconciliation is impossible, one faction moves away, a solution which is itself a source of disagreements.

There was general agreement that *adat Bungan* is a good, simple, and straightforward religion; this was often mentioned in casual conversations as well as in prayers. People often stressed that the taboos and omens of the old religion were no longer in force. But nothing is perfect: some old people felt *adat Dipuy* was more fun because of its festivals and colourful ceremonies, which provided many occasions to be merry. Games formed part of rituals (for instance, spinning tops; Chin (1984) describes a similar use among the Kenyah). Some people found *adat Bungan* easy but dull. The long periods of inactivity imposed by the old religion were a hardship, but also an occasion to socialize, relax, and have a good time. On the whole, however, people were very happy with the new dispensation. Dipuy was harsh; Bungan is gentle and she protects her followers from evil-intentioned spirits.

Other religious reforms

Adat Bungan arose because circumstances favoured religious reform. It succeeded in becoming the dominant religion of the Baluy area, although other religions appeared during the same period. A few Kayan have embraced Islam; they live in Belaga. These conversions happen because they married Malay women. These converts must pledge not to return to their old religion on pain of being brought in front of a Muslim religious tribunal. By becoming Muslim, these men cease to be Kayan.

In 1965 or 1966, Bawang, an aristocratic woman from the village of Uma

14 This is the Lirong whom Prattis (1963:69-70, 84-5) describes as a new prophet of Bungan.

Apan in the lower Baluy area,[15] went in a coma for three days; when she recovered, she recounted a vision. A new religion had been revealed to her: no spirits existed, except Doh Tenangan, the central deity of Kayan religion. The *adat Tenangan* was free of all rituals but one. Clear water (*ata' tening*) was the source of all good things: a sick person only needed to drink clear water or bathe in it. Because of its simplicity, this religion was also called *adat tua*, 'the simple religion', 'the religion with nothing'. Theologically, *adat Tenangan* was linked to the myth quoted at the beginning of this chapter: at the time of Bo' Dale' Gerang and Bo' Dale' Sirang, who preceded Dipuy, life was easy and free of rituals; rice was very big and a single grain of rice provided a generous meal. This is why some followers of Bawang called their religion the *adat pare aya'*, 'the religion of the big rice' and they considered it 'the original religion' (*adat atek pe'un*). It was also called *adat Bawang*, after its prophet.

An Uma Bawang man, Lake' Ngo Jok, lived in Uma Apan at the time of Bawang's revelation and he described the initial feeling of excitement. At first, virtually the whole village joined the new religion. Soon after, at least three people died after undergoing the water cure of *adat Tenangan*. This demonstrated that the new religion was not effective and most people returned to *adat Bungan*. In the 1970s, I met a few individuals who still followed *adat Tenangan*. (Some of them lived in the upriver village of Uma Daro'.) This religion failed, not only because it appeared ineffective in treating patients, but also because its lack of rituals was disconcerting. Indeed, Bawang's son, who still professed membership in *adat Tenangan*, may have had some doubts about its efficacy, because he hired an experienced *adat Bungan* priest to perform a cure (*dayong*) for his recurring fits. He drowned in 1972 during an epileptic seizure and this further discredited *adat Tenangan*.

At the time of fieldwork, I frequently heard the expression of a belief which did not take a religious form, but may be worth mentioning here. Many Kayan believed Europeans (*Tuen*) would return to rule the area, bringing with them order, contentment, and prosperity. There was a millenarian flavour to that belief and some people hoped I had something to do with this. I was asked to talk to the Queen of England and persuade her to bring back European rule. In the early 1960s, members of a European expedition to the Usun Apo plateau (between the Baluy and the Baram) buried a bottle with a note in it. The Kayan interpreted this gesture as a proof of the eventual return of the White Men. By 1988, this idea seemed to have completely faded from memory.

Adat Bungan has allowed for the persistence of Kayan religious practices by reforming them. The two religions are similar in the following ways. In *adat Bungan* as in *adat Dipuy*, religion is still part of daily life; there is no radical contrast between sacred and profane. Kayan rituals are a controlled interaction

15 She was from Uma Nyaving Long Mejawa, a village to which she returned later.

with supernatural entities (spirits, souls), usually in an emotionally low-key frame of mind. Supernatural beings are encountered in daily life and many rituals are an extension of daily life, rather than a break from it. Many people, places, and objects are imbued with supernatural force, and contact with the supernatural is similar to contact with powerful people. There is a continuum rather than a break between two realities.

At the same time, the very fact of giving a label – *adat Bungan* – to a religion transforms it into a self-conscious system which can be compared and contrasted to other religions. What we now label *adat Dipuy* was a set of practices which formed an unquestioned part of being Kayan. Lake' Baling's description of the old and new Kayan religions (Baling Avun 1961) illustrates both the beginnings and the limits of this self-consciousness. He wrote it with the express purpose of codifying *adat Bungan* and of providing a tool for its dissemination. It did not have the intended effect, as it was never published and very few Baluy Kayan would have been able to read it if it had been.[16]

Adat Bungan is a reform of tradition rather than the replacement of tradition with external practices. Its success is largely due to the persistence of the traditional structure of authority in the Baluy region, which allowed chiefs and priests to regain control over religion after the initial revolutionary change in which the traditional ritual apparatus had been jettisoned. The return to tradition was successful because there was no attempt to retain the most burdensome aspects of *adat Dipuy*. Hence, people were justified in feeling that the situation had improved. Conceptually, the established Bungan reform was also more satisfying than its initial phase when the near-absence of rituals was too profound a break with the *status quo ante* and gave followers of Bungan the impression that they had lost tools to control their lives. This may also explain why *adat Bungan* was not successful in areas where Christianity was already well-established. It could compete with *adat Dipuy* on the grounds of simplicity, but Christianity, once established, seemed more effective than *adat Bungan*. While there was a strong incentive to abandon the burdensome *adat Dipuy*, *adat Bungan*'s initial simplicity could come to be perceived as a flaw. In the Baluy area, in the absence of alternatives, the solution was to reconstitute *adat Bungan* as a reform of the old religion, while elsewhere it was simpler to stick with Christianity, with its rituals and social network.

16 A booklet on Bungan printed by a Peace Corps volunteer in 1967 was not circulated (Baling Avun 1967).