

ON TWO MEDICINE-BASKETS FROM SARAWAK.

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[PRESENTED FEBRUARY 10TH, 1903. WITH PLATE XVI.]

THE objects figured on Plate XVI are two medicine-baskets (*lupong*), with some of their contents, of late the property of two Sea-Dyak witch-doctors (*manang*). The basket shown on the right was bought by a Sea-Dyak, Garaman by name, a former collector for the Sarawak Museum, from a *manang* in the Saribas district, who, having retired from his profession on account of old age, was not unwilling to part with his stock-in-trade and secrets for a consideration. Garaman, on his own initiative, carefully labelled each simple and charm with its name and supposed action, and then sold the outfit to me. The other basket is from the Undup River, and was presented recently to the Sarawak Museum by the Rev. W. Howell, a gentleman whose zeal and generosity in collecting and presenting to our Museum numerous objects of ethnographical interest, I take this opportunity of acknowledging with cordial thanks.

An account of Sea-Dyak *manang* and the ceremonies known as *pelian*, which they practise, has been given by the Ven. Archdeacon J. Perham in the *Journ. Asiat. Soc.* (Straits branch), No. 19 (1887); and is quoted in Ling Roth's work on the *Natives of Sarawak and British North Borneo*, vol. i, pp. 271–283. Messrs. Bailey and Howell have added to this account in their valuable *Sea-Dyak Dictionary*,¹ under the words *manang* and *pelian*; and, in the appendix to the dictionary, have included, amongst other songs and prayers, a portion of a *manang's* incantation (Appendix, p. 7, No. vi). They also give a list of Sea-Dyak terms for the various ailments known to them (*l.c.*, p. 22, No. xxvii).

With such well-recognized authorities already in the field, I content myself in this paper with giving merely a catalogue of the contents of these two medicine-baskets, noting at the same time the supposed properties of each charm and simple. Even in this humble task I owe much of my information to the generous aid of Mr. Bailey.

The articles in a *lupong* may be divided into two classes:—

I. *Charms*, which are, of course, supposed to possess magical properties. These again might be subdivided into—

1. Charms that frustrate the attacks of evil spirits, and are, therefore, purely *supernatural* in their effects. A good example of these is *ubat pansa utai*.

¹ This Dictionary is now completed; it can be obtained at the Printing Office, Sarawak.

2. Charms that act directly on such diseases as are not attributed to evil spirits, e.g., *ubat enda batok*. Were it not rather a contradiction in terms, these might be styled *natural* charms. It is not always easy to distinguish the latter from—

II. *Simples*, which have actual curative properties.

The *dukun*, a term borrowed from the Malays, is, amongst the Sea-Dyaks, a man who cures ordinary ailments by means of simples, but who does not employ charms, nor perform the *pelian* ceremony. He is naturally considered to be an inferior class of being to the *manang*, but on the other hand his fee is much smaller.

It is well to note that no two *manang* employ exactly the same remedies in their doctoring ceremonies, though they may have a few in common. Some of the simples and charms are revealed to the *manang* in dreams, the use of others may be determined by pure fancy, and very potent charms may be handed down from one generation to another. Such causes are sufficient to account for the difference between the contents of the two *lupong* described below.

PL. XVI, FIG. 2. THE *Lupong* FROM SARIBAS RIVER.

The Saribas *lupong* (Fig. 2) is cylindrical, 40 centimetres in height and 17 centimetres in diameter. It is made of *entli* wood, *Shorea rugosa*. *Heim* (*Dipterocarpaceæ*), and covered on the outside with rattan plaited into characteristic Sea-Dyak designs; two loops of rattan, on which are threaded small rings of brass and rattan, coloured black and red, encircle the basket, one at the rim, the other a little below; a looped string of beads with small brass bells attached to alternate loops runs round the basket below the lower rattan loop. The mouth of the basket is closed by a long flap of the inner bark of the *garu* wood,¹ *Aquilaria malaccensis* (*Thymeleaceæ*), the "eagle-wood" of commerce. This cover, together with the good workmanship shown in the manufacture of the basket, denotes that the owner was an experienced and wise *manang*. Shoulder-slings of common white cloth are attached, at one end to the bottom, at the other, to the sides of the basket.

Slung to the outside of the *lupong* are the following:—

1. A tuft of dried leaves of bamboo, *ubat enda perba* (lit. "medicine not ague"), a remedy for ague.
2. A small china pot covered with skin, and containing oil obtained from *Kapayang* seeds, *Pangium edule* (*Bixineæ*); this when smeared on the *manang* renders him invisible to the spirits.
3. Two porcupine quills, for dispensing the oil.
4. Two canine teeth of a bear, and a little cylinder of horn, *pransang manang pelian*, charms to make the *manang* bold in attacking evil

¹ Cf. Skeat, *Malay Magic*, pp. 206–212, for an account of Malay superstitions concerning this wood.

spirits; *pransang* is also applied to a medicine given to hunting dogs to make them keen and fearless.

5. A small piece of wood, wrapped up in cloth (*engkrabun*), a charm which causes blindness (*rabun*, dimness of sight) to any unauthorized person who looks into the *lupong*, and apparently amongst the Saribas Dyaks, effective also in shielding the *manang* and his patient from the observation of evil spirits.

The contents of the *lupong* (Pl. XVI, Fig. 1) are as follows:—

I. CHARMS.

1. *Batu ilau* or *Batu enggau meda samengat*.

- i. These are quartz crystals, and are used by the *manang* as glasses in which to view the condition of the patient's soul (*samengat*); whereby he is enabled to judge of the severity or nature of the illness, which he can then treat by the *pelian* ceremony best adapted to the purpose. Mr. Bailey informs me that the patient's soul may be seen in the "sight stone," either mingled with the souls of people who are well, or else separated from them; in the latter case the condition of the patient is considered serious.
- ii. To detect the whereabouts of the soul, which, perhaps, has been expelled from the body by evil spirits. The *manang* having discovered the position of the soul in his crystal, goes into a trance, as described by Perham, and wakes from the trance with the soul of the sick man in his hand; this soul may be a small bit of wood, or stone, or, perhaps, a small beetle. My Dyak friend, Garaman, informed me that his father once underwent treatment at the hands of a *manang*, and his soul when retrieved by the *manang* proved to be a minute black beetle. The movements of the insect on the open palm of the *manang's* hand were watched with interest; since, should the beetle walk towards the wrist, the patient would recover; if towards the fingers, he would die; in this case, fortunately, the omen was favourable, and the beetle was then put back whence it was supposed to have come, viz., from the patient's head.

The Malay belief in the sevenfold nature of the *samengat* (Skeat, *Malay Magic*, p. 50), induced me to make some inquiries as to whether a similar belief is held by the Sea-Dyaks or not; the Right Rev. the Bishop of Singapore and Sarawak very kindly made similar inquiries of the Sea-Dyaks of his extensive diocese on my behalf. The general result obtained is to show that these people do *not* hold a belief in the manifold or plural nature of the *samengat*. The answers to our queries were diverse, and I venture to transcribe a few of the more interesting.

(a) Laga (a Balau Dyak) and Dasu (a Saribas Dyak), both retired *manang*, said that a man had one *samengat*, and each of his possessions, such as his sword, his coat, his boat, also had a *samengat* which departed from them if broken, or when

old and worn out; in such a sense only could a man be said to have a manifold soul.

(b) Bunyan, a retired *manang* of the Undup River, stated that the idea of a plural soul might have originated in the minds of some, through the chicanery of a *manang*. The soul of the *manang* can descend into Sabayan (the Sea-Dyak Hades) in quest of the soul of a sick man, and for this he obtains a fee; in order to increase his fee, a *manang* might assert that his search for the errant soul was unsuccessful, but that he would be willing to search again in consideration of another fee, and so on, till his greed of gain was satisfied, or the patience of his victim exhausted.

(c) Apai Bada, an old Undup Dyak, seemed to think that to say of a man that he had seven *samengat*, was as much as to say that he was seven-lived (in the sense that we talk of a cat with nine lives); he himself had survived many dangers, and had perhaps lost some of his souls; eventually he would doubtless lose the last, and then he would really be dead. All this was, however, thrown forward as a suggestion to account for a hypothetical belief, and not held as an article of faith.

(d) One of the Sibuyaus, a tribe closely allied to, if not identical with, the Sea-Dyaks, told the present Rajah of Sarawak¹ that there are seven *samengat* or lives, the life in this world being one, after which there are six more existences, in the first of which punishment for sin committed on earth must be undergone.

The very remarkable statements subsequently made by His Highness's informant concerning the nature of the punishments inflicted, and the bliss of the seventh heaven finally attained, lead one strongly to suspect that the man was romancing, as natives are only too prone to do when questioned about their superstitions and ideas of the immaterial world. Certainly none of the statements of belief of this Sibuyan, can be paralleled amongst the other tribes of Borneo; most probably they originated from vague ideas of Christian and Mohammedan religious beliefs, acquired during an intercourse with missionaries and Malays.

(e) The following quoted from *Bailey and Howell's Dictionary*, part iv, p. 146, will accentuate the fact that the ideas of the Sea-Dyak concerning the immaterial world are neither very definite, nor universally held:—"Dyaks have very vague notions respecting the soul and its attributes. The *Manang* are generally agreed that it is similar to a man's shadow (*baka kelemayang mensia*). Some state that everybody possesses *seven* souls. When a man dies, it is asserted by some medicine men, his soul goes to Hades (*Sabayan*) and there abides until the feast to the dead (*berantu*) is given on earth. This it attends. It then travels to *Mandai Mati* (a mountain in the Netherlands-India Borneo), where it stays an indefinite period, finally becoming dissolved into dew. The dew is then taken up into the paddy ears, and they become rice, which is eaten by people who, in their turn, die, and the process is continued."

¹ Quoted by Ling Roth, *loc. cit.*, vol. i, p. 218.

The triple soul of the Toradja of Celebes, alluded to by Mr. Hartland in his review of Dr. Haddon's *Head-Hunters, Black, White and Brown*,¹ can certainly be paralleled amongst the Sea-Dyaks by the *nyawa* or breath, the *enselua* or *personal soul*,² and the *samengat* or vital essence, but these are all separate, and, as I think I have shown above, there is no reliable evidence to show that the Sea-Dyaks retain a definite or universal belief in a manifold *samengat*.

2. *Pengelela* ; chips and knots of wood kept in a scooped out betel-nut. A charm which enables the *manang* to visit all parts of the world, and the spirit-world (*sabayan*), in his search for the soul of his patient ; the journey, no matter how great the distance, occupies but little time.

3. *Ubat kena betampal* (Pl. XVI, 1a). A portion of the nest of the "frog-mouth," *Batrachostomus auritus* (Sharpe), two boars' tushes, and a water-worn pebble ; a charm to patch up (*tampal*) that part of the body which has been torn by evil spirits. The treatment is as follows :—the *manang* makes an imaginary cut on the finger, wrist, or affected part of the body of the patient, places on the imaginary wound a pinch of the down with which the *Batrachostomus* makes her nest, and to this applies the point of one of the boar's tushes ; the tush is gently hammered with the stone, and the pinch of down is supposed to be driven to the torn part of the body, and to patch it up.

4. *Pemenat* (from *penat*, "tired," "stiff," "numb"). Two pieces of wood which, when rubbed on the skin, deaden the pain of a cut such as that described above.

5. *Penyampu*. A small piece of wood ; a general remedy, supposed to overcome any evil spirit that causes the illness of the patient ; the skin of the patient is cut in the manner just described, and the *penyampu* ignited and waved about ; the evil spirit escaping from the imaginary wound is overcome by the fumes.

6. *Ubat pansa utai* (Pl. XVI, 1b). Knots of wood in a small basket. A man who is *pansa utai* is afflicted by evil spirits, more particularly by *Antu Gergasi*, a demon who, with his dogs (*pasun*), hunts the souls of men, wounding them with darts from his blowpipe (*sumpitan*).

7. *Pemuta antu*. A piece of *dammar* or resin ; the fumes of this, when burnt, blind the evil spirits.

8. *Pengelembut antu* (Pl. XVI, 1c). Portion of *lukai* bark, *Goniothalamus malayanus* (*Anonaceæ*). Burnt near the sick to weaken (*lembut*, to weaken) the attacks of the spirits. The fumes are very aromatic.

9. *Ubat enda busong* (Pl. XVI, 1d.) Part of a root, and part of the horn of *Cervulus muntjac* (Brooke), the muntjac or barking-deer. Medicine to prevent the infliction of supernatural punishment (*busong*). A man may not pronounce

¹ Supplement to *Nature*, April 24, 1902, p. iv.

² *Enselua*, the soul. The use of this word is peculiar. If any article is missing, it is said to have been taken, if not by persons, by the soul of the owner of the missing article. E.g., *Duku aku nyau nadai temu engka, udak diambi enselua*, "My chopper is gone, and I can't find it ; perhaps it was taken by the soul." (Bailey and Howell, *Sea-Dyak Dictionary*, p. 43.)

the name of his father-in-law or mother-in-law without incurring the wrath of the spirits; since a Dyak reckons as fathers and mothers-in-law, not only his own wife's father and mother, and the fathers and mothers of his brothers' wives and sisters' husbands, but also the fathers and mothers of all his cousins; and further, since many Sea-Dyak proper names are words in everyday use, *e.g.*, *Tedong*=cobra; *Rimau*=tiger, leopard; *Jawa*=barley; *Jamban*=a bridge; *Bulan*=moon; *Panggau*=lucky, etc., it not infrequently happens that the *manang* in his incantations mentions a tabooed name; this charm is supposed to counteract the evil results that should by rights ensue. There are many other ways also by which a man may become *busong*.

10. *Batu penawar burong*. Pebbles; to counteract evil omens. A list of the mammals, birds and insects, employed by the Sea-Dyaks as omens, is given in Dr. Haddon's *Head-Hunters, Black, White and Brown*.

11. *Batu pemadu*. A water-worn pebble. *Pemadu* is from *badu*, "to come to an end," to cease, and with this charm the *manang* brings to an end his *pelian* ceremony; its use is to counteract any evil omens that may have been forgotten when No. 10 was used.

12. *Pemansut*. A portion of a betel-nut. This is grated into water, and the decoction is effective in removing thorns embedded in flesh. The word is derived from *pansut*, "to come out," "to cause to come out." As Mr. Bailey suggests, the *manang*, when applying this, is able to squeeze out the thorn, or to exhibit another one, with a little sleight-of-hand. (Compare Haddon's account of a Punan medicine-man, *l.c.*, p. 366.)

13. *Ubat enda batok*. A water-worn flint. Medicine for a cough.

14. *Ubat enda lasa*. A tarsal bone of *Cervulus muntjac* (*v.* No. 9 above). Powder from this, wrapped in a cloth and tied round the wrist or ankle, will soothe pain in the joints of the limbs.

15. *Batu enda penat tuboh* (Pl. XVI, 1c). A piece of igneous rock (syenite); a cure for weariness after a hard day's work; it is used like No. 14. Both these are apparently examples of sympathetic magic.

16. *Ubat muda beranak*. Knots of wood, a lump of clay, and a fragment of a tortoise's humerus; a mixture of powder from these, compounded with water and applied externally, is supposed to render child-birth easy.

17. *Ubat enda ungoi*. Part of a feather. Chips of this in water are given to sickly and stunted infants to make them grow.

18. *Ubat pemambar darah*. A small piece of wood. Medicine to induce blood to flow. *Pemambar* is from *pambar*, "to scatter." The *manang* supposes that in certain cases, *e.g.*, a developing abscess or carbuncle, the blood becomes congealed round the affected area. This medicine causes it to dissolve and flow through the veins and arteries in a natural way.

19. *Entimut* and *bigi jerangau*. *Entimut* wood (*Curcuma aromatica*, Salisb.), and slices of the root of *jerangau* (*Acorus gramineus*, Schott), threaded on a string like beads. A general prophylactic.

20. *Sumua penyakit tau sumua.* Odds and ends of bark, and knots of wood. A little of each in a mixture cures all diseases.

21. *Ubat enda mabok.* Molar of some small carnivore, a water-worn pebble, and a piece of mace. To sober a drunken man.

22. *Ubat sakit jugal.* Portion of a deer's antler. Medicine for a liver complaint due to distension of the gall-bladder.

II. SIMPLES.

23. *Ubat enda nyengut.* A piece of bark. *Nyengut* is perhaps best rendered by peripheral neuritis.

24. *Ubat enda nyang.* Knots of wood. *Nyang* is an eruptive disease.¹

25. *Ubat enda bira.* A knot of wood. A preventive of diarrhoea.

26. *Ubat sakit bengkok.* A knot of wood. Medicine for tumours.

27. *Ubat enda engkual.* A piece of bark. To stop vomiting.

28. *Ubat enda tara.* Fruit of *kapayang* (*Pangium edule*, Miq.). Medicine applied in cases of *prolapsus uteri*.

29. *Ubat enda rabus.* A bunch of sweet-smelling herbs, and a piece of *entimut* wood. *Rabus* is a disease known to medical science as *aphtha*, a form of thrush, caused by a fungus, *Öidium albicans*.

30. *Ubat enda kayap.* Two pieces of bark. Medicine for shingles, *Herpes zoster*.

31. *Ubat enda betu.* Some lumps of red clay. These are mixed with water to form a paste, and smeared on to wounds produced by scalding.

32. *Ubat enda senampun.* Part of a betel-nut. *Senampun* is a whitlow. The betel-nut is ground up, mixed with cooked *pulut* rice (*Oryza glutinosa*), and applied as a poultice.

33. *Ubat enda sakit kemih.* *Tuba* root (*Derris elliptica*). Medicine for gonorrhœa.

34. *Ubat enda meliur.* Fruit of *ikau*, *Cocculus macrocarpus*, Wigh. (*Menispermaceæ*). *Meliur* means excessive discharge of saliva in infants, and is apparently regarded as an ailment by the Sea-Dyaks.

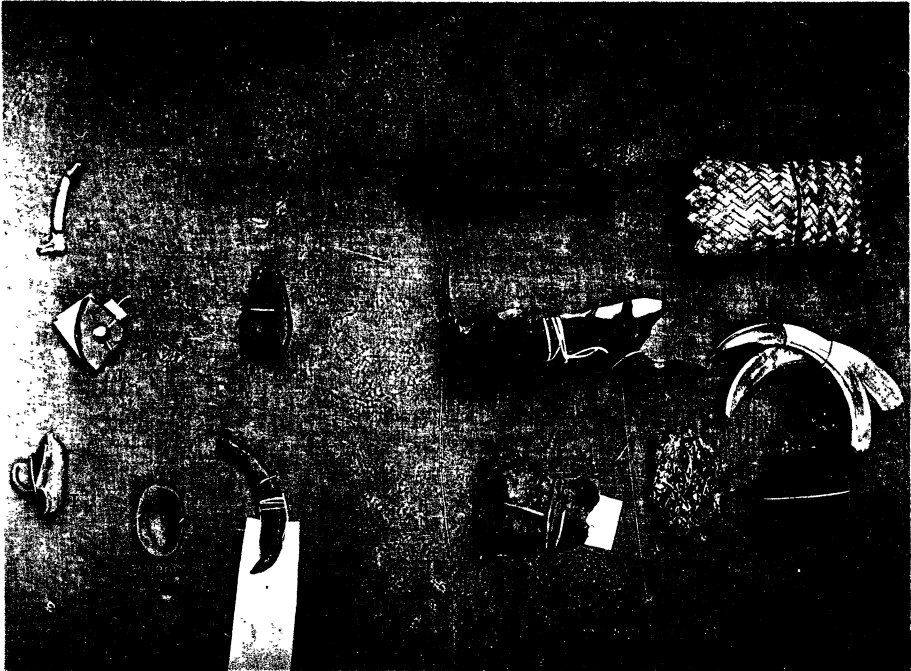
35. *Ubat enda bejuak.* Bark of *lawang*.² A preventive of colic. It will, of course, be clearly understood that a complaint such as colic might be attributed by the *manang* to evil spirits tearing the body of the sufferer, in which case some such a charm as *ubat kena betampal* would be used, but if the *manang* diagnosed the complaint correctly, he would use this simple, though perhaps in conjunction with a charm.

II. THE *Lupong* FROM THE UNDUP RIVER.

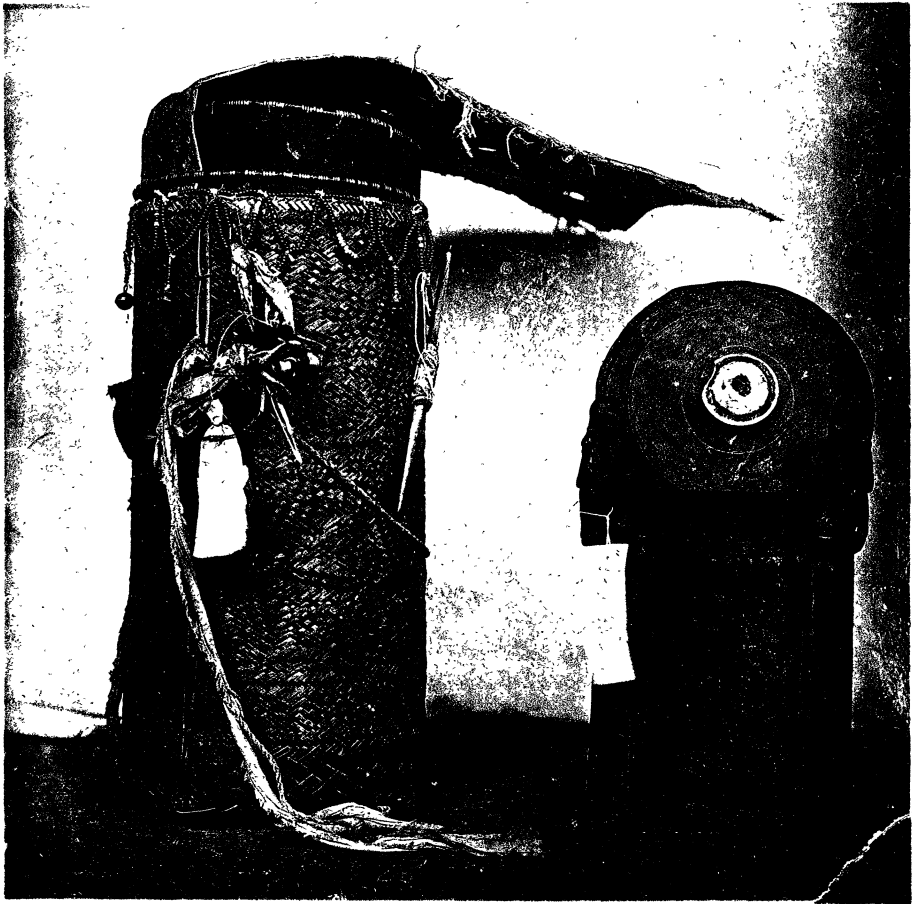
The *lupong* from the Undup River (Pl. XVI, 2) is a cylindrical basket, or rather a box, made of *entli* wood, 29 centimetres in height, and 16 centimetres in diameter ;

¹ It is quite possible that these pieces of bark and wood possess valuable astringent or antiseptic properties, but they are so fragmentary that I am not able to identify the plants from which they have been taken ; I believe however that the *manang* is not particular in his choice. Still I hesitate to call these charms.

² I was never able to get the scientific name of this tree.



1. CONTENTS OF MEDICINE BASKETS.



2. MEDICINE BASKETS (*lupong*) FROM THE SARIBAS AND UNDUP RIVERS.
TWO MEDICINE BASKETS FROM SARAWAK.

it is closed by a tightly-fitting lid, which is provided on the top with a button made from the lid of a little china pot; two wooden upright handles, the upper ends carved to represent a squatting human figure (*pentik*), are attached to the box. The contents of the *lupong* are all charms, and are as follows. The numbers in brackets refer to the charms in the *lupong* from Saribas River.

1. *Batu ilau* (cf. No. 1). A water-worn crystal, enclosed in a bamboo cylinder. Several thorns are also enclosed with the quartz crystal.

2. *Engkrabun* (cf. *ante*, p. 79). A small thorn wrapped up in a piece of cloth, and enclosed in a small cylinder of bamboo.

3. *Ubat enda pansa utai* (cf. No. 6). Some knots of wood.

4. *Penyampu* (cf. No. 5). A knot of wood, and a tendril of some creeper.

5. *Batu penubar*. Two water-worn stones, and a knot of wood. A charm to float a disease to the surface of the body, whereupon the *manang* can seize it.

6. *Taring* (Pl. XVI, 1*f*). A small boar's tush. This is used as a probe. When a dart from the blowpipe of Antu Gergasi (cf. p. 78) has entered the souls of the patient, its course must be traced with the *taring*, so that the *manang* may extract it, the operation causing no pain whatsoever.

7. *Bulu landak enggau buloh temiang*. Quill of a porcupine, and a slip of *temiang*, bamboo (*Bambusa wrayi*). This is a charm against the ill effects produced by people who are *tau tepang*, *i.e.*, possessed of the evil eye, people who "overlook" others. Mr. Bailey notes "there are many *tau tepang* persons, and people are very shy of having dealings with them, or of marrying into their families."

8. *Batu penchelap* (Pl. XVI, 1*g*). A water-worn stone, and a mass of quartz crystals. The stones are immersed in water, and the water rubbed on to the patient's body as a universal remedy and preventive.

9. *Batu bliong* (Pl. XVI, 1*i*). A small clay model of an axe-head (*bliong*). Used to hack diseases out of the patient's body. A very rare charm.

10. *Batu prauh penimba* (Pl. XVI, 1*h*). A small clay model of the baling-vessel used in a boat. Used to bale diseases away.

11. *Batu bulang balik* (Pl. XVI, 1*j*). A small triangular block of clay, perforated by a hole in the centre. A very rare charm which enables the *manang* to visit the Sea-Dyak equivalent of Hades (*Sabayan*) and return to earth again (cf. No. 2).

12. *Batu burong undan* (Pl. XVI, 1*k*). The *undan*-bird stone, a rough miniature model of a bird. The *undan* appears to be any large coastal bird, such as a reef-heron or a pelican. The charm secures the presence and help of a friendly spirit¹ who takes the form of a *burong undan*, and who has power to enable the *manang* to get quickly to *Sabayan* (Hades) when he desires to go there in search of a sick man's soul.

¹ This spirit seems to correspond with Archdeacon Perham's description (see Ling Roth's *Natives of Sarawak*, etc., vol. i, pp. 168-191) of the *Petara* or friendly spirits as opposed to the *Antu* or evil spirits. Dr. C. Hose informs me that the *burong undan* is often invoked in Sea-Dyak incantations; but I can find no reference to it in any of the songs and incantations quoted by Archdeacon Perham and Messrs. Bailey and Howell.