CHILDBIRTH AND CHILDREN IN THE IBAN SOCIETY OF SARAWAK

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ABSTRACT

Childbirth is closely linked to the continuity of the family in the Iban society, the largest ethnic group in Borneo (particularly in Sarawak, the Land of the Hornbills). A couple's marriage is expected to "bear offsprings" or "to produce shoots" (beranak, betelesak). Among the Ibans, children are greatly prized and barreness is looked upon as a curse. It is a general belief in Iban society that a pregnant woman is considered both vulnerable and a source of possible danger. She is not only physically handicapped by her condition, but more prone than at other times of her life to illness and supernatural attack. Thus, a pregnant woman should observe special restrictions such as not going out of the longhouse at sunset, or during the night, and not to leave articles of clothing by the riverside or on the open-air platform overnight, not to cut creepers that grow across the paths, not to dam streams, not to nail or fasten objects or plug holes, or even to weave baskets or mats. Failure to observe these prohibitions may cause a difficult delivery or the child will be borned with defects or physical deformities. When a woman goes into labour and her water breaks, she is generally assisted in delivery by a number of experienced elderly women. After delivery, the umbilical cord and the afterbirth are placed in a small jar or a small tin, that is placed inside a basket, wrapped tightly, and taken immediately across river and buried in a special plot, known as 'the cemetery of the afterbirth'. This afterbirth and cord has to be buried, because it affects the infant's life hereafter. It is a common belief that if the child is fretful or colicky, it is because insects have gotten into the afterbirth and are bothering it. With regards to the rituals traditionally associated with infancy in the Iban communities, there are three important ones – firstly, 'tasting salt'; secondly, 'introducing the day' and 'naming' infants and thirdly, 'bathing'. These three rituals signal the end of the mother's confinement and marks the final ritual reintergration of her and her infant into the longhouse community. Children are highly prized, both for the affection and attention they give and receive, and as caretakers in parents' old age.

Keywords: childbirth, restrictions, infancy, offsprings, confinement, teknonyms, shaman

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, during the prayers recited at the time of a couple's marriage in the wedding ceremony, the pair are customarily asked to "bear offsprings or to produce shoots" (Gana, 1988: 14). The particular word for this in Iban is *beranak, betelesak* – that is, to "produce shoots" or to bear offsprings. Among the Ibans, children are greatly prized and barreness is looked upon as a *curse* (Sutlive, 1978: 41). Therefore it is very important that a married couple bear offsprings in order to continue their households or families. Children are also valued in their own right as objects of nurturance and affection. So, until a couple bear children, their marriage is said to be 'not yet complete' (Gana, 1988: 14).

In any Iban family, the birth of a first child additionally signals a significant change in the status of its parents. For example, following birth, the husband and wife are no longer addressed by their personal names, but instead, are called by teknonyms among their immediate neighbours and kin, as 'father of' or 'mother of so-and-so', using the name of their child. Later, new teknonyms such as 'grandfather of' or 'grandmother of so-and-so', are adopted with the birth of grand children (Vinson and Joane Sutlive, 2001: 218). The result is a three-generational stratification of address status in which each individual is identified by his or her parental status, as a 'parent' 'grandparent' or one who has yet to attain parental status.

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this seminar paper are:

- To show that childbirth is closely linked to the continuity of families in the Iban society in Sarawak
- To identitify the shamanic rituals associated with pregnancy
- To discuss the rituals of infancy in the Iban communities
- To describe how the Ibans appreciate their children for the affection and attention they give and receive

THE IBAN OF SARAWAK

The Iban is the largest ethnic group in Borneo (particularly in Sarawak, the Land of the Hornbills) who speak the same language and share many features of their cultures in common (Vinson and Joane Sutlive, 2001: 737). They resemble some of the people of Sumatra in customs, traditions and dress. Sometimes, they are being called "Sea Dayaks" because of the participation of Ibans in alliances with Malays for coastal piracy in the 19th century. However, Charles Hose in his book, *The Pagan Tribes of Borneo,* co-authored with anthropologist Wiliam McDougall, has used the term "Iban" long before it was accepted and used in Sarawak (Hose, 1912: 17), to avoid the confusion generated by the term "Dayak". It is generally accepted that the Iban originated in West Kalimantan which is supported by Iban myth (Sandin, 1967:1) that the Iban first migrated into Sarawak at the end of the sixteenth century. In fact, some centuries earlier the Iban ancestors left the southwest coast of Borneo (Sandin, 1967:2) and pushed up the Kapuas and its tributaries before crossing its watershed into Sarawak. Prior to migration into Sarawak the Ibans, according to the legends of the Merakai Ibans, lived for a time with the gods at a place called Panggau Libau (Sandin, 1967:2).

Today Ibans are to be encountered in all of the national divisions of the island of Borneo, but in the largest numbers in the Malaysian state of Sarawak. They have lived predominantly in the middle-level hills of the island (King, 1975: 300) and the delta plains. Ibans have lived near other ethnic groups with whom they have interacted. The most important of these societies have been the Malays, Chinese, Bidayuh and the Orang Ulu. The dynamic relations between Ibans and especially these other societies have produced profound changes (McKeown, 1983: 65) in Iban society and culture.

PREGNANCY AND THE SHAMANIC RITUALS

When an Iban woman misses her second menstruation (Jensen, 1967: 168), she realizes that she is pregnant. But in the Iban traditional view, pregnancy is said to last nine months and nine days (Sandin, 1980: 64). During the first three months, the embryo within the mother's womb is said to be still 'only blood' (Gana, 1988: 15). This period is known as the 'just coagulating' stage during which time the expectant mother typically craves special foods, especially sour fruit. Her pregnancy begins to be noticeable in the next stage, and the woman is now referred to, indirectly, as 'the body which contains something', that is, *betubuh bisi,* a term to describe the pregnant woman now. When the woman is heavily ladened by preganancy, this stage is called 'advanced pregnancy' or *ngandung sarat* (Richards, 1981: 325). The final days before delivery are known as *nganti hari* (Gana, 1988: 15) or 'waiting for the day', a term generally accepted among the Iban communities.

According to Iban beliefs, the body of each newly conceived infant is said to be shaped by the god *Selempandai* at his forge. Thus, the Ibans often hear metallic ringing sounds, believed to be made by *Selempandai* cricket. This sounds resembles a hammer-blow striking an anvil, is said to foretell a birth within the longhouse. Most Ibans believed that *Selampandai* tempers the newly conceived infant by plunging it into a trough of water. *Selempandai* thereby gives the body

permanency and imparts to its owner (the infant) elements of character, such as courage and industry (Sather, 1988: 174), that are thought to be set for life.

It is a general belief in Iban society that a pregnant woman is considered both vulnerable and a source of possible danger. She is not only physically handicapped by her condition, but more prone than at other times of her life to illness and supernatural attack (Gana 1988: 15). A pregnant woman is not physically sequested, however, and in rural areas most common women continue to farm and perform other types of family labor until close to the time of delivery. When a woman is pregnant, she should observe special restrictions (*penti*). Hence she should not behave in ways that attract the notice of spirits, for examples:

1. she should not go out of the longhouse at sunset, or during the night,
2. she should not leave articles of clothing by the riverside or on the open-air platform overnight
3. neither the expectant mother or her husband should cut creepers that grow across the paths
4. neither the expectant mother or her husband should dam streams
5 neither the expectant mother or her husband should nail or fasten objects or plug holes
6. she should not weave baskets or mats
7. she should not use dyes or other colours.

Failure to observe these prohibitions may caise a difficult delivery (Gana, 1988: 18, 19, 22). These are the important restrictions related to the newborn, and if neglected may cause the child to be born with defects or physical deformities. In addition to these negative restrictions, a pregnant woman may seek dreams and other signs during pregnancy that indicate the future success of her child-to-be.

The Ibans believe that a pregnant woman can be a possible source of ritual danger to others, particularly if her pregnancy occurs out of wedlock. For example, an illegitimate pregnancy may cause the longhouse in which she lives to become 'hot' (*angat*). This is a very serious condition, and if it is uncorrected, it may result in other longhouse members falling ill, suffering injury or dying. If others are harmed, the woman responsible may be fined (Sandin, 1980: 30) the *adat* (longhouse rules). That is why, as soon as it is realized that an unmarried woman is pregnant, her parents on a close relative will ordinarily ask her to identify the man responsible. If she refuses to name the child's father, the matter is referred to the longhouse headman. It is a serious offence (Heppel, 1975: 135) against *adat* to refuse divulge the man's name, for it implies that the couple liason is incestuous. If the father is named, the danger is at least partially neutralized. If the man who is named by the woman refused to maary her, he may be fined too (*tunggu kandung*). On the other hand, should the woman refuse to name her lover, she is fined by the longhouse headman on behalf of the rest of the community and he family must present a pig to be sacrificed in an expiatory rite of longhouse 'cooling'. In many parts of Sarawak, particularly in the area of Saribas, it is considered a social disgrace (Gana, 1988: 21) to be fined in this manner, and the child, when it is born, bears the stigma of "having a pig for its father' (*beapai ka babi*).

A woman is also believed to be a source of danger if she dies while she pregnant or in childbirth. The Ibans believe that her soul in the event of such a death, may become a malevolent

spirit known as *antu kuklir* (Sather, 1978: 326). Therefore, death in childbirth is regarded as one of a number of 'bad', 'ill-fated' or 'abnormal deaths'; and the souls of those who die such deaths are consigned to areas of the Otherworld set apart from those inhabited by the ordinary death. One such area is 'the realm of women who have died in childbirth'. As the *antu kuklir,* the dead pregnant woman is thought to re-enter the living world and attack male victims, whom she emasculates by tearing off and devouring their testicles (Sather, 1978: 328, 330, 334). So, as a ritual defence, the soles of the feet and the palms of the hands of a woman who dies in childbirth may be pierced with citrus throrns immediately before her burial. Sometimes, porcupine quills are used for the same purpose, to immobilize the womsan and prevent her in death from using her hands and feet as claws (Jensen, 1967: 173).

Traditionally, a shaman (*manang*) was often called to a woman's apartment during pregnancy in order to perform protective rites (*pelian*) to ensure her safe delivery. Today this practice is becoming increasingly obsolete as younger women make use of local maternity clinics and hospitals. The simplest of these shamanic rites is known as the *pelian jereki* which is normally performed early in a woman's pregnancy, between the third and the fifth months. In Iban society, jereki means literally'to fence', but in this rite, the shaman creates an invisible fence around the pregnant woman in order prevent the approach of harmful spirits (Sandin, 1978: 58). During this rite, this fence is represented by a circular enclosure of mats in which the woman sits, while the shaman performs the rite on the surrounding gallery. In the event of a more advanced pregnancy, the shaman is likely to perform 'the wrap up' (*belimbu ayu*) rite, particularly if members of the woman's family have been troubled by bad dreams. So, 'to wrap up' (*belimbu*) rite is considered to be very necessary because 'to wrap up' means 'to cover with cloth'. *Ayu* refers to the spirit of a man or a woman, which is tended by *Raja Menjaya*, the patron-gof of Iban shamans in charge of health. If the bad spirits attack the *ayu* (that is, the spirit of the pregnant woman), its owner becomes sick and vulnerable. Therefore, during 'the wrap up rite' or *belimbu ayu,* the shaman destroys the attacking spirits, shields the *ayu* (spirit) of the pregnant woman from further attacks, and restores the patient's (woman's) soul.

CHILDBIRTH AND INFANT DEATH

This sub-topic discusses the subject of childbirth (*beranak*) or 'delivery of infants' in the Iban society. When a woman goes into labour (*radai ka beranak*) and her water breaks (*entupan pechah*), she is generally assisted in delivery by a number of experienced elderly women. Traditionally, there are no midwives, doctors, nurses or hospitals like what we have today. The newly delivered child is received by one of these attending 'midwives', who immediately lifts up the infants, holding it upside down so that the mucous may drain from its nose and mouth (Gana, 1998: 24).

At the same time the relatives who have gathered at the place of birth, make noise in order to startle the child, so that it will cry and therefore not be timid when it grows up. Sometimes today a shotgun is fired for the same reason (Sandin, 1980: 64). The umbilical cord is then cut with

silver of bamboo. The remaining cord that is still attached to the navel is sprinkled with dried powdered earth from the family's hearth (Vinson and Joane Sutlive, 2001: 220). Sprinkling is repeated thereafter every until the cord drops off.

After the baby is delivered, it is sponged with water, clothed and laid on mats beneath a canopy of *pua* (woven) cloth. According to Masing (1981: 175), immediately after birth an Iban baby is laid on a large plate, and not on a mat. A mat according to the Iban is not only dirty but magically dangerous, for untold numbers of charms have been placed on it. After the placenta has been delivered, the mother's abdomen is massaged by her attendants and bath with ginger water. In fact, a poultice of pounded ginger is placed over her abdomen, which is then bound with bandanges made of *tekalung* bark from above the pelvic region to just below the breasts. She is then seated beside a fire place (*bedilang*), where she is fed three slam mouthfuls of rice symbolizing her return to life (Gana, 1988: 25).

The umbilical cord and the afterbirth (*entemuni*) are placed in a small jar (*kebuk*) or a small tin, that is placed inside a basket, wrapped tightly, and taken immediately across river and buried in a special plot, known as 'the cemetery of the afterbirth' (*pendam entemuni* as it is called in Baleh). This afterbirth and cord has to be buried, because it affects the infant's life hereafter. For example, if the child is fretful or colicky, it is because insects have gotten into the afterbirth which is not buried and are bothering it.

Meanwhile, at the time of birth the mother and infant are confined to the *bilik* (family) apartment. Here, following delivery, the mother undergoes a period of heating called *bekindu*, literally means 'to heat' or 'warm by a fire, traditionally for 14 – 30 days, its duration reckoned by the use of a string tally (*tali menuku*), one knot of which was untied each day. 'Heating' ended when the last knot was untied. Throughout 'heating time', the mother was not allowed to drink ordinary water or 'raw water' but was given instead, an infusion of warm boiled water and ginger, in order to keep the mother's body warm. During 'heating time' too, the mother was also expected to restrict her diet, for example, not permitted to eat fats, fish with sharp spines, and the cabbage of palms. Instead, favoured foods included cooked *pulur* fruits (breadfruit), smoked fish and ginger (Sandin, 1980: 64). Heating and observing postpartum dietry taboos were said to preserve the woman from *benta*, a state of being 'giddy', forgetful and unable to see or walk properly. Although the mother and infant were expected to remain in the family apartment, throughout 'heating' time, they were not isolated or kept from public view, but were visited by a steady stream of well-wishers coming from other longhouses who brought small gifts for the infant's family.

THE RITUALS OF INFANCY

With regards to the rituals traditionally associated with infancy in the Iban communities, there are three important ones – firstly, 'tasting salt' (*ngetup garam*); secondly, 'introducing the day' (*nengkadah hari*) and 'naming' infants (*ngaga nama*) and thirdly, 'bathing' (*meri anak mandi*). As soon as the remains of the child's umbilical cord have dropped off (usually 3 – 5 days after delivery), the rite of 'tasting salt' is held. During the rite, the child is taken from its mother,

brought out of the family room, and carried for the first time, usually by a grandparent, to the open-air platform at the longhouse which called *tanju*. Here, the infant is made to look up into the sky. This is called 'being made away of the daylight' or 'being introduced to the day' (Sather, 1988: 65). After this, a tiny piece of salt is placed is placed in the child's mouth. This is said to make its body 'salty' (Sandin, 1980: 65). Salt is associated with effectiveness and toughness of both body and character (Gana, 1988: 27).

A short prayer is then recited over the infant, in which the officiating elder introduces the infant to the *petara* (the principal gods inhabiting the sky that overcovers the world). The elder prays and asks the gods to take notice of the infant's presence, grant it long life, and protect it from danger. In Iban society, a child's introduction into ritual life is graduated and progressive. Thus 'tasting salt' signals the first engagement of its relational field beyond its family. With the act of 'tasting salt', the infant is taken from the room and carried to that part of the longhouse which is most removed from the family apartment to the open platform. Here, outside the darkened room in the family apartment, with its skylights shuttered during the 'heating' time for the mother, the infant now is introduced for the first time, to the principal temporal dimensions of the Iban world – darkness and daylight – and to the boundaries of the longhouse and the sky beyond that encloses this world and to the gods who inhabit it.

An infant did not receive a name until some time after its birth. The infant is traditionally and initially called 'little larva' (*ulat*). Names then were sometimes chosen in a brief ceremony. Usually, preference was given to names borne by past ancestors three generations removed from the present, provided that the namesake had not died a 'bad' or 'ill-fated' death. There is a ceremony, in which balls of rice, each representing an individual name, were placed in front of a cock called *manuk tawai* (a fighting cock). The name represented by the riceball that the cock pecked first was given to the child (Sandin, 1980: 65). In the past, that fighing cock which picked the name for the child was thereafter allowed to die a natural death; anyone who killed it was fined. Jensen (1967: 175 – 176) reports that names in Lemanak (Lubok Antu) are conferred immediately after the infant's first bath. The name is usually given by the man or woman who bathed the child and is conferred in a small observance as soon as the bathing party returns to the longhouse.

Bathing the child is the culminating rite of infancy and is more elaborate than any of the rituals that precede it, bringing together both longhouse families and visitors from other communities (Sather, 1988: 159). The bathing rite gives public recognition to the child's presence within the community and places it in a protective relationship with regards to the spirits that are believed to be present in the natural world beyond its boundaries. Today, in many longhouses, first bathing is usually performed in connection with the annual celebration of *Gawai Dayak.* Being held once a year, it is typically conducted for several children at the same time. Thus, for families outside the longhouse, particularly those residing in urban areas, the *gawai* is a time of return, so that the rite serves to re-affirm Iban identity and through its performance, the young Ibans including those growing up outside the longhouse, are initiated into the ritual life of their parents' natal community, getting involved in a ritual expression of longhouse solidarity.

The ceremony customarily starts early in the morning. It begins with the preparation of offerings on the family's section of the longhouse gallery. Typically three sets of offerings are prepared. One is placed inside the family's *bilik* (apartment room), the others are carried by the bathing party to the river. After the offerings have been prepared, the bathing party is formed in single-file procession, led by a specially chosen elder who bears a flag. He is followed by a man carrying a fowl who will recite the main invocation at the riverside bathing-place (*pendai*). If the infant is male, the third person is a man bearing a spear; if female, a woman bearing a *leletan* or shed-stick used in weaving.

Then come two senior women, the first carrying a plate of offerings, the second bearing the infant in a cloth sling such as *pua belantan*, a special carrying cloth, white with a design of *sungkit* (embroidery) technique (Sather, 1988: 169-170). Next in the procession comes a man bearing a shotgun, followed by the others, family, visitors, longhouse members, well-wishers, who have come to witness the rite. The rear of the procession is made up of young men playing gong and drum music. Music is played continuously throughout the rite in ordwer to prevent ill-omens from being heard.

After the circling of the longhouse gallery, the procession descends the entry-ladder and proceeds along the path to the river bathing-place. Upon reaching the river, the procession stops and the elder carrying the cock wades into the water and begins an invocation al prayer. In his prayer he calls upon the spirit of waters, including those of various aquatic animals and fish and *Seragindi* (the creator of rivers and streams), asking them to come in procession from their unseen homes to the river bathing-place. When the spirits have assembled, the elder asks them to become the child's guardians, taking the newborn under their care and protecting it in particular from drowning and other dangers associated with water. The second set of offerings is then tossed into the river. Coins and beads may also be thrown into the water.

Next, the man who led the procession, following the flag-bearer, symbolically slashes the water with his sword to kill any evil it might contain. With the same sword, he then cuts the throat of the fowl he has carried to the riverside. Its blood flows into the water. The woman who carried the infant then immerses the child in the water, immediately downstream, where the blood and water mingled. Along the riverbanks a few shotguns are usually fired to startle the infant. One of the chicken's wings is then cut off and placed with the last set of offerings on a plaited offering tray. If the child is a boy, the tray is hung from the spear; if a girl, from the shed-stick. These objects symbolized the premier activities (Sather, 1988: 182) of man and woman in traditional society- warfare and weaving respectively.

As soon as the last offerings have been set out by the riverside for the spirits of the surrounding bush, the procession returns to the longhouse, where, after a ceremonial welcome, the infant is returned to its mother at the family section of the gallery. Here, the mother with the infant in her arms, sits on a gong covered with cloth while everyone present gathers around them. Another prayer is then offered, which is generally spoken by several elders in turn while a fowl is waved over the heads of the mother and the infant. After each man prays, he dips his hand in a basin of water containing silver, gold, a bathing stone, and charms (Sather, 1988: 183 – 184). He

then touches the heads of the mother and the infant, followed by the other longhouse members and guests. This is the final rite concluding the bathing and it is called *betata* or 'to sprinkle.. When the 'sprinkling rite' is done, refreshments followed or midday meal served by the mother's family on the gallery. 'Sprinkling rite' also signals the enda of the mother's confinement and marks the final ritual reintergration of her and her infant into the longhouse community. So, through the bathing rite, the child's presence is given social and ritual recognition.

IBAN CHILDREN

Children are highly prized, both for the affection and attention they give and receive, and as caretakers in parents' old age. At birth, the infant becomes the centre of attention – a fact important in appreciating the high self-esteem most Iban enjoys. From birth until an infant is about six months old, his or her body is regularly rubbed with grated turmeric (*chekur*) and sprinkled with the juice of areca nut. Such treatment is believed to guard the child from stomach ailments and protect his or her feet from infection (Masing, 1981: 176).

Infants are nursed nimmediately when they cry. The system of scheduled feedings is unthinkable, as one mother says, 'an infant's stomach doesn't count time'. Infants and young children are rarely left by themselves. The young are held and fondled, carried on the back in a *sarong* or when sleeping, placed in a *sarong* suspended on a spring near one of the parents. Weaning is casual, and children of three or four years old are suckled. When the child is old enough, he will be left by his parents, along with other children in the community, in charge of older adults. The adult is available in case an accident occurs or a fight breaks out. The adult's supervision is of necessity casual and limited, for as soon as children walk they play over the verandah and porch, on the ground around the longhouse, and in the water if it is near the house and if they have learned to swim.

Children learn quickly that threats of punishments are idle and meaningless, for only rarely is a threat followed by action. Adults are permissive with their children and with those of other adults, and a happy relationship exists between sitters and their wards. In return for baby-sitting, older adults are given a part of the foodstuffs obtained by the children's parents. Parents rationalize their indulgence of children, explaining that young children do not know anything and older ones resent parental inference. Parents also defend their easy going ways in terms of the affection and support they want to win from their children. They dare not be harsh for fear no child will live with them and provide their living when they are old and no longer able to work. On the other hand, children praise their parents for their patience, for love, for never scolding or never took hands on them.

When parents are not at home during the daytime, children learn to fend for themselves at an early stage. Older siblings take care of younger ones, help them out of scrapes, and 'wipe their noses'. Most children learn to cook, or at least to boil rice, by the age of ten. Parents wash the clothing of the very young, but age seven or eight, children begin to assume responsibility for washing out their own few playclothes, and eventually every individual washes his clothes when he bathes. Through such commonplace activities, children early learn the necessity and value of

independence. The absence of physical restraint and the assurance of approval of most of his activities encourage the Ibans to be a confident and self-reliant individual. No greater offense can be committed against an Iban than shaming himself. Members are well are of the 'face game' and learn means both both of avoiding speech and actions that will shame another person, as well as defences for rationalizing any feelings of guilt or shame that may be inflicted upon them.

Among children there exist hierarchial structures in which alliances are formed between moninant youngsters. A considerable amount of teasing and scolding takes place, and serves to develop defences as well as to immunize children against rebuffs and criticism. Teasing is a major form of hostility release. When asked why a group of teenagers incessantly teased one of their group, a young girl replied, 'There is no fun if we are not teasing someone'.

CONCLUSION

The Iban communities expect a couple's marriage to "bear offsprings" or "to produce shoots". As children are greatly prized, they looked upon barreness as a *curse.* Since a pregnant woman is considered both vulnerable and a source of possible danger, illness and supernatural attack, the Ibans require her to observe special restrictions such as not going out of the longhouse at sunset, or during the night, and not to leave articles of clothing by the riverside or on the open-air platform overnight, not to cut creepers that grow across the paths, not to dam streams, not to nail or fasten objects or plug holes, or even to weave baskets or mats. If she fails to observe these prohibitions, she may encounter a difficult delivery or the child will be borned with defects or physical deformities.

A number of experienced elderly women will assist as midwives when a woman goes into labour and delivers the baby. After delivery, the umbilical cord and the afterbirth are placed in a small jar or a small tin, and buried in a special plot, known as 'the cemetery of the afterbirth'. There are three rituals traditionally associated with infancy in the Iban communities - firstly, the ritual of 'tasting salt'; secondly, the ritual of 'introducing the day' and 'naming' infants and thirdly, the ritual of'bathing'. These three rituals signal the end of the mother's confinement and mark the final ritual reintergration of the mother and her infant into the longhouse community. Children are highly prized, both for the affection and attention they give and receive.

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