

## THE DOG-MOTIVE IN BORNEAN ART.

BY ERNEST B. HADDON.

AMONG the inhabitants of Borneo tattooing of the body and limbs is very common, and the motives of the designs vary considerably. An animal motive is readily apparent in some patterns, but so conventionalised has it become in most, that it is difficult to discover its identity; and it is only by comparison with more simple figures that it can be understood.

Dr. A. W. Nieuwenhuis,<sup>1</sup> found that it was possible to divide the inhabitants of Netherlands Borneo into three groups according to their method of tattooing. The tattoo patterns of the women should alone be studied, because the men are often tattooed with foreign patterns when on their travels. The three groups are:—

1st Group.	2nd Group.	3rd Group.
Bahau, Kenyah, Punan.	Bukat, Beketan.	Tribes of the Barito and Melawi Rivers, and the Ulu Ayar of Mandai River.
Patterns of dark lines in isolated figures.	Whole body tattooed so that the pattern is left in skin-colour.	The whole body decorated with dark lines.
Men have shoulder, breast and thigh decorated.	Bukat youth tattoos on chest after an heroic deed, and later all over.	Men commence with calf of leg.
Women have fore-arms, hands and ankles tattooed.		Women chiefly hands and legs.
Tattoo patterns on blocks ...	Pattern drawn free-hand on skin.	Pattern drawn free-hand on skin.
Black colour only ... ..	Black colour only ... ..	Red and black.
Women tattooers ... ..	Women tattooers ... ..	Men tattooers.

It is interesting to note that the first group, in addition to the Punans, contains the low-brachycephalic Bahau-Kenyah tribes to whom the Kayans are related; the second consists of nomadic hunting peoples; and the third contains the dolichocephalic element of Netherlands Borneo. These three groups nearly agree therefore with the classification of these peoples by their physical characters.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Hose has stated<sup>3</sup> that the Punans do not tattoo. He was evidently

<sup>1</sup> *Quer durch Borneo, Ergebnisse seiner Reisen in den Jahren, 1894, 1896-97 und 1898-1900, Erster Teil*, 1904.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Man*, 1905, 13, February.

<sup>3</sup> *J.A.I.*, xxiii, p. 167.

referring to the Punans in a wild state, free from foreign influence, for the Punans of the Baram District who have come under Kenyah or Kayan influence, tattoo themselves in Kenyah-Kayan fashion.

Ling Roth,<sup>1</sup> quotes de Windt's description of tattooed Punans. There is no evidence that de Windt ever came across wild Punans, those he met were Punans who had lived with Bakatans or Kanowits, and, from the description he gives, their tattooing was evidently borrowed from the Kanowits, who seem to belong to Nieuwenhuis' second group. The Punans that Nieuwenhuis observed were probably in the same way under Bahau-Kenyah influence and therefore used their patterns.

Dr. A. C. Haddon<sup>2</sup> says that the Ibans (Sea Dayaks) did not tattoo before they came under Kayan influence, and they themselves admit, as is quite obvious, that they use Kenyah or Kayan designs. The women do not tattoo or only very slightly.

Under these circumstances we may regard the first group as containing the Bahau-Kenyah-Kayan peoples, together with the Punans and Ibans, both of whom have copied the designs of the Bahau-Kenyah-Kayan peoples.

Dr. A. W. Nieuwenhuis<sup>3</sup> says quite definitely that a tattoo pattern used by the men of the Bahau or Mendalam tribes, and called by them *aso*, "dog," represents either the head or the whole body of a dog.

Dr. W. H. Furness,<sup>4</sup> speaking of the isolated tattoo patterns of the Kayans of the Baram District, says, "The designs consist of extremely conventionalised representations of 'dog,' 'scorpions,' and 'heads of a prawn'; these are the native names given to different patterns: in none of them is it possible to recognise the animal after which it is named. Professor Alfred C. Haddon has expressed to me the extremely ingenious explanation, that, notwithstanding the native names, all these patterns represent the head of a dog. To this I modestly and most humbly demur, and incline to the belief that it is rather the head of that animal which enters so largely into all their ceremonials, namely, the pig. It may be noted, furthermore, that this same pattern, whatever be its origin, enters into all Kayan decoration, whether of doors, of beams, of implements, of bead-work or of graves."

Drs. Hose and McDougall<sup>5</sup> say, "It is usual for the Kenyah men to have one or more designs tattooed on their forearms, and shoulders. Among the commonest of these designs are those known as the scorpion, the prawn, and the dog. It is said that the dog's head design was formerly much more in fashion than it is at the present time." They inform us that the dog, though not a sacred animal, is allowed to prowl about, in and around the house, as it wishes, and no Kenyah dare kill a dog, indeed it is rarely kicked or struck. When a dog dies in a house its carcase is pushed out of the house and into the river with long poles. The spot

<sup>1</sup> *The Natives of Sarawak and British North Borneo*, London, 1896, vol. ii, p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> *Head-hunters, Black, White, and Brown*, London, 1901, p. 326.

<sup>3</sup> *Quer durch Borneo*.

<sup>4</sup> *The Home-life of Borneo Head-hunters*, Philadelphia, 1902, p. 147.

<sup>5</sup> *J.A.I.*, xxxi, 1901, p. 187.

where the dog died on the floor of the house is fenced round for some days to prevent the children walking over it. Although Dr. Hose says the dog is not treated with any particular respect, yet enough regard is paid to it to enable us to understand why it might appear as a common motive in designs.

The Kenyah-Kayan people carve their tattoo designs on wooden blocks. These are covered with soot and an impression is made on the spot to be tattooed. Certain designs or varieties of a design are always used to decorate a special spot of the body. Dr. Furness speaks of the impossibility of recognising the animal motive represented on the blocks; and from isolated specimens it is well-nigh impossible to do so.

Fig. 1 shows a tomb of a Murik woman. At each upper angle is a dog's head and body, near the middle of the fretwork is another dog facing to the right, and it is worth noticing that the artist has not been fettered by the idea of symmetry. We may regard the wavy pattern in the fretwork as the continuation of the conventional undulating body and tail of the dog. This suggestion is supported by the

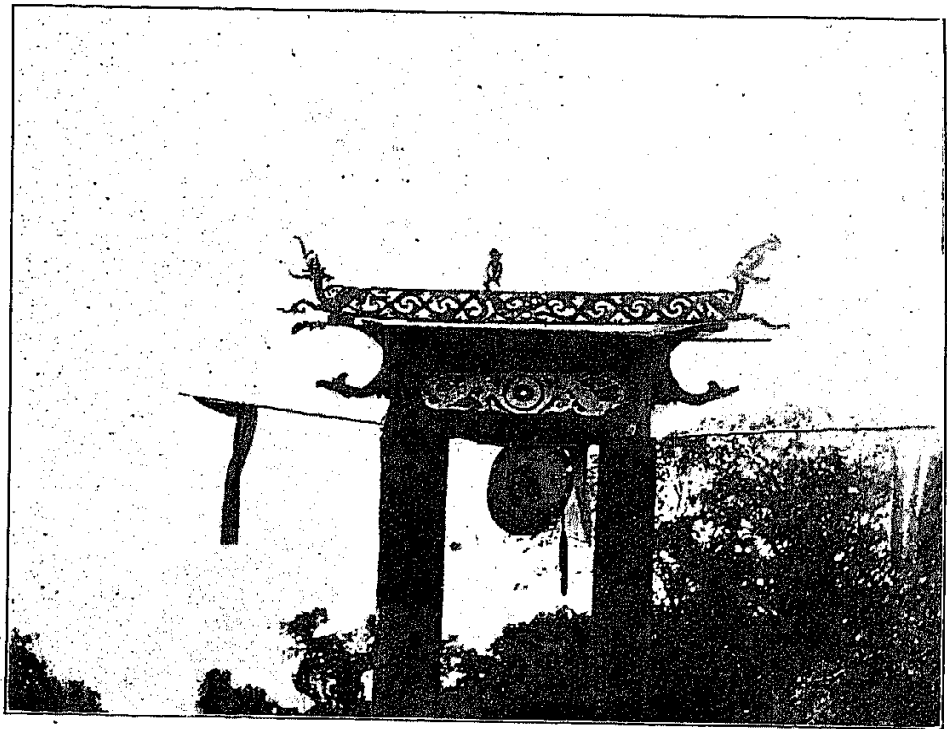


FIG. 1.

figure, Taf. 36, Fig. 66, given by Kükenthal<sup>1</sup> of a Long Kiput (Kalamantan<sup>2</sup>) tomb in which there is a dog's head at one end of the design at the top of the tomb, and a tail at the other end, the pattern being a wavy band with characteristic small scrolls in the sinuosities, the legs have quite disappeared.

At first sight one might think that this figure is derived from a dragon; Chinese or Siamese jars, on which the dragon is so frequently depicted, are found in considerable numbers right into the interior of Borneo. Professor A. R. Hein<sup>3</sup> has discussed the whole question of these Chinese jars, but nowhere does he suggest that the dragon has been copied by the natives of Borneo. The dog-motive certainly does, in many cases, resemble the dragon, but it seems to be another

<sup>1</sup> *Forschungsreise in den Molukken und in Borneo*, Frankfurt a.M., 1896.

<sup>2</sup> For an explanation of this term see *Man*, 13, 1905.

<sup>3</sup> *Die bildenden Künste bei den Dayaks auf Borneo*, Wien, 1890.

example of convergent evolution, the two motives developing along their own lines, gradually becoming more and more similar. There is no recorded evidence that Chinese designs are copied by the people in the interior of Borneo. Very occasionally in Iban mural decoration we find Chinese symbols employed, but the Ibans are a coast people who are ascending the rivers, and have moreover been in contact with Chinese traders for a considerable period of time.

Dr. Nieuwenhuis gives a very complete series of tattoo blocks, illustrating the evolution of the dog-motive in Netherlands Borneo. Fig. 2A shows what the natives informed him was a dog; in general appearance it closely resembles the animal on the Long Kiput grave (*cf.* Kükenthal); in fact it might be taken for a snake, but for the legs, which are, however, not conspicuous. Fig. 2B is a

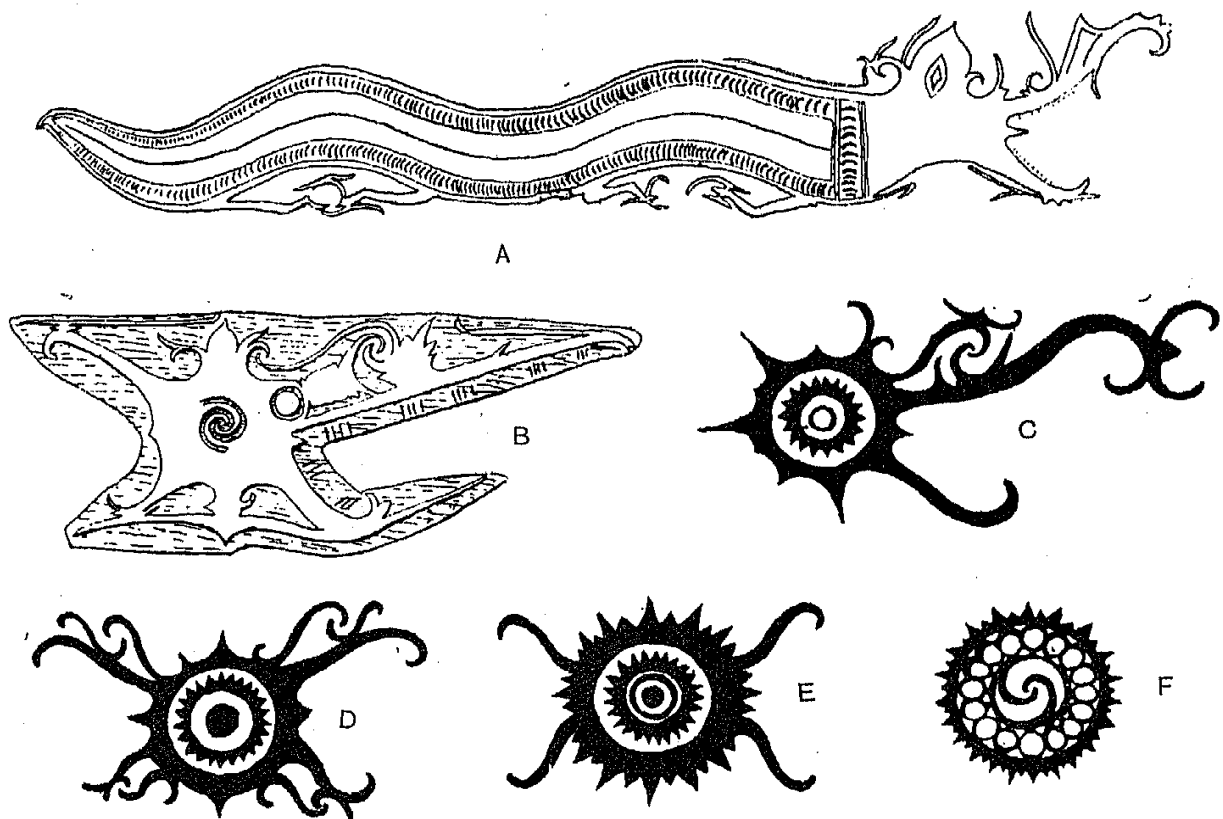


FIG. 2.

“dog’s” head, but complicated by scrolls. In this the teeth have been left out. The carver has, however, incised them in position, but in such low relief that they would not appear in an impression of the block, thus satisfying the feeling of expectancy. Fig. 2C illustrates a still more conventionalised dog’s head, from which the teeth have quite disappeared. Fig. 2D represents two dogs’ heads facing right and left, one eye serving for the two heads. Fig. 2E shows a simpler form of D, in which the jaws are quite simple, and the eye has become the most important feature of the pattern. Figs. A, B, C, D, E, are all called *aso*, “dog.” Fig. 2F is a rosette which, judging by this series, is obviously derived from the eye of the dog’s head; Dr. Nieuwenhuis does not say whether the natives realise this, but he leads one to believe that they are totally ignorant of the fact. The rosette tattooed on the shoulders of Bahau-Kenyah people of Netherlands Borneo,

is found on the same spot on all the Kenyah-Kayan people of Sarawak. Among the Ibans, Kalamantans and Punans, similar patterns are found tattooed on the same spot. The rosette was brought by the Kenyahs and Kayans on their immigration into Sarawak, and possibly even they, at that time, did not realise that it was a conventionalised dog's eye.

Adopted by the Ibans it appears as a star-shaped or cruciform device, which according to unpublished information collected by Dr. Haddon and the figures published by Dr. Furness (p. 148), is called by them after the name of a fruit or flower.

Undoubtedly the Ibans consider the rosette as a floral design, especially as the representation of plant forms is traditional among them, but that is no reason why this so-called



FIG. 3.

flower design should not be derived from a dog's eye. The Iban name of this design carries no weight, since even the Kayan or Kenyah introducers of the rosette appear to have ceased to remember its origin.

According to Dr. Hose, the Kenyahs and Kayans immigrated into Sarawak some three hundred years ago, and thus it is not surprising to find that their patterns have become specialised.

I have not been able to obtain intermediate links connecting the isolated tattoo designs of the Kenyahs and Kayans of Sarawak with the designs obtained by Dr. Nieuwenhuis in Netherlands Borneo, though when further work has been done, it is possible that a complete series will be made out. The designs tattooed on the forearms and thighs of the Kayan and Kenyah men of the Baram District of Sarawak are on the whole remarkably well defined and constant, they are called *aso*.



FIG. 4.

In Fig. 3A, which is a tracing of bead-work on the scabbard of a *parang*, we see a dog pattern. The representation on the right shows a very typical dog's head, with a decorated upper jaw, and a simpler lower jaw. In Fig. 3B, also bead-work, are two dogs with interlacing bodies. The upper jaw is complicated, and half way along its length appears a scroll, which is very characteristic; this scroll I believe to be the representative of the eye-tooth, which has been accentuated and used as a decorative feature of the upper jaw. The ears are enlarged, and highly decorative. The lower jaw is simple, and is balanced on the

other side of the head by a projection, which may either be the representation of the fore-leg, or the expression of the idea of symmetry. Above it the body curls away in a sinuous curve. The figure to the left repeats the main features of the other. In Fig. 4 we find the embodiment of the same idea as in 3B;

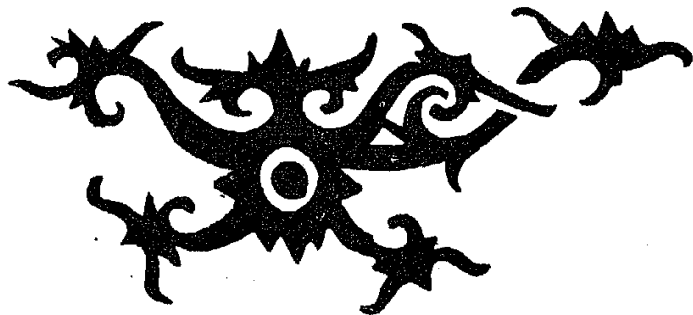


FIG. 5.

the upper jaw is more decorative, and the scroll in its middle is more complicated; the ears have lost their symmetry, and the eye is left out. The body is reduced, and the curve below the head more nearly balances the lower jaw. This block is labelled by Dr. Hose "*Tuang orang*. The *Tuang* means a 'pattern' and *orang* is the Kayan for 'prawn.'” Fig. 5 shows further complication in the upper jaw. The body, represented by the upper curve to left, is shortened, and the lower left curve is symmetrical with the lower jaw. This figure is a very typical Kayan or Kenyah tattoo block. (Cf. Furness, p. 148.)

The Kayan tattoo block, Fig. 6, shows further modification; the upper jaw is relatively longer, and the lower jaw shorter. The upper curve on the left, representing the body, is now quite short, and is symmetrical with the lower one.



FIG. 6.

Fig. 7 is a block used by Lelak men. Its interest lies in the fact that conventionalised teeth are placed on the upper jaw. This block does not seem to be used by Kenyahs or Kayans, but it is a type used by Kalamantans or Punans, who have copied Kenyah-Kayan designs. As a variety of these designs, it shows that the Lelaks have realised its motive, and have placed teeth in their proper position.

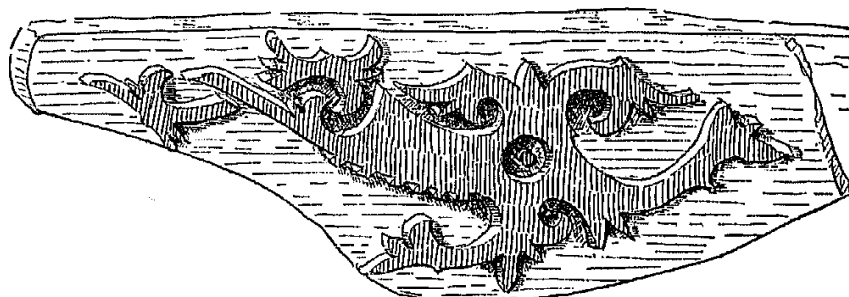


FIG. 7.

In the decoration of bamboo tobacco boxes the Kenyahs and Kayans very frequently have incorporated the dog as the motive of the design. In Fig. 8, a rubbing of such a box, one sees how the dog has been treated; in all cases the dog is represented with its head looking backwards. In the two upper figures, the tail and the lower jaw are produced into beautiful interlocking spirals, the upper jaw is decorated with elaborate scrolls, and the eye-tooth is plainly distinguishable. The ears are prolonged into delicate spirals. The two lower figures, which are upside down,

have the lower jaws differently treated; the jaw of the one to the left passes right through the great spiral, and terminates in a small spiral. The upper jaws and ears are quite characteristic.

In Fig. 9 the upper jaws and ears are characteristically represented. The lower jaw is variously treated, in the upper middle dog it is turned backwards and quite short, in the lower middle dog it crosses the tail of the animal in front. The curious crossing of parts as if they passed through holes in the bodies, is quite characteristic of the art of these people. Mention might here be made of the breaking of the straight lines of the border pattern, which occurs in this and other figures. This also is a very noticeable feature in

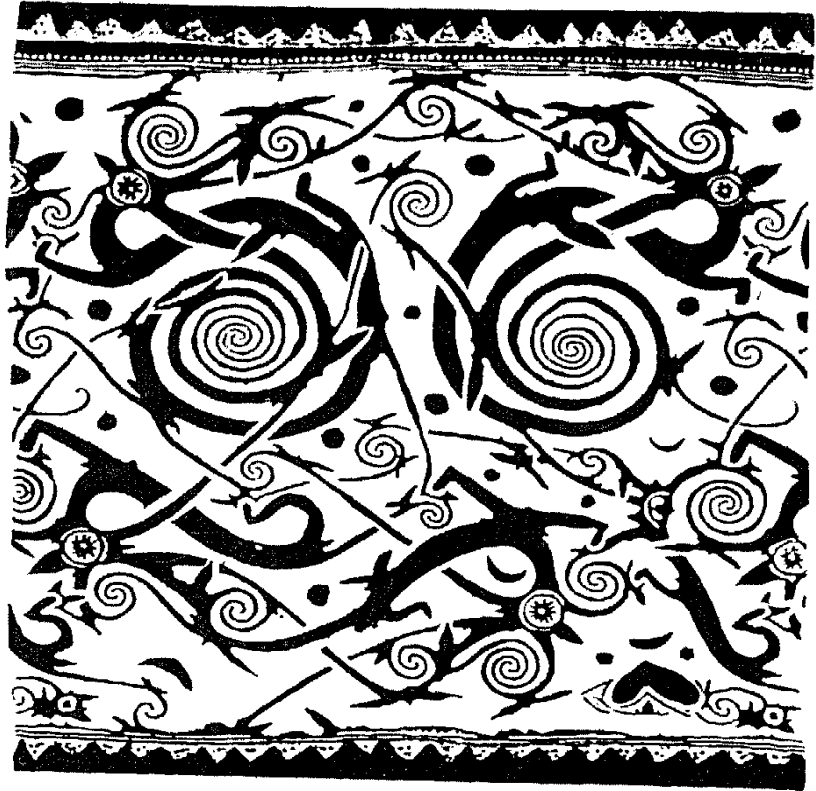


FIG. 8.

the decorative art of the Kenyah-Kayan peoples, and it gives a pleasing appearance of lightness to their designs.

In copying a design it must of necessity often happen, that the space to be



FIG. 9.

decorated is not so large as in the original, and in order that the space may be artistically filled, the design must be altered to suit the requirements of the space. Besides the alteration of the design to fit the needs of the case, a pattern always loses its character in successive copyings. In Fig. 10

the animals are much cramped and distorted, and are represented with their jaws widely gaping, and ending in simple spirals. In the figure in the left hand

upper corner, the upper jaw is to the left, the eye-tooth and scroll being readily seen, and the lower jaw lies to the right; both are toothed. The middle figure, in



FIG. 10.

which the body is present, likewise has its toothed upper jaw to the left and the toothless lower jaw to the right. The figure to the right, which is upside down, shows the toothed lower jaw to the left, the upper jaw, showing the characteristic scroll, being to the right. Fig. 11 is very similar to Fig. 10, and the animals bear the same relative position to one another, and though they are still more conventionalised, no detailed description is necessary. But an important change has taken place, the jaws are now called, according to information obtained from Dr. Hose, *ulu orang*, that is, "head of a prawn." The dots which in Fig. 10 represent the teeth are in the case of the middle figure placed on both sides of the upper jaw, and no doubt to the native eye represent the annulations of the antennæ of a prawn. What most probably has happened is that in successive copyings the jaws lost their true character, and at one time, as the carving appeared to look like a prawn, it was so-called and the name has persisted.



FIG. 11.

Fig. 12 shows how the stage represented by Fig. 11 may become still more simplified. Here the animal to the right represents the central dog of Fig. 11; the central design is still less dog-like than the corresponding upper left hand design of Fig. 11; whilst the scroll pattern to the left is the vestige of the animal on the right in Fig. 11. In Fig. 12 Dr. Hose has not obtained the native names for these animals.



FIG. 12.

In Fig. 13, acknowledged on Dr. Hose's authority as a prawn-pattern, the design is more complicated, but the three animals are still depicted in their usual positions. On the right is an obvious dog, corresponding to the central animal in Fig. 10. The central design in Fig. 13 though complicated is



decipherable. The upper jaw stretches away to the left with the teeth and the scroll in the normal position, the lower jaw forms a spiral with the upper jaw of the next animal. On the upper left angle we see the body of the corresponding dog represented on the right in Figs. 10 and 11, but though the head has disappeared, yet the two toothed jaws appear, the lower to the left interlocking with the lower jaw of the first dog and the upper sweeping down to the right. In this rubbing, only the head of the central animal is called *ulu orang*, and it is possible that it is this part alone of the pattern that they identify with a prawn. On the other hand it is equally probable that the Kenyahs and Kayans have completely forgotten the origin of these complicated patterns.



FIG. 13.

Fig. 14 shows some very interesting features. In the first place, the dots, which in the foregoing figures represent the teeth in position along the conventionalised jaws, are, in this carving, placed indiscriminately along various



FIG. 14.

portions of the body. The right-hand animal is apparently a dog looking back over its shoulder, and the two jaws are represented facing to the right. What, by the light of the evidence in the preceding figures, must be regarded as the lower jaw, is seen on the left of the head, and has no connection with the upper jaw. If, on the other hand, the upper jaw were turned forwards, so that the eye-tooth pointed upwards instead of downwards, then the animal would be gaping widely as in the foregoing figures. In the figure on the left, the lower jaw forms an incipient spiral with the lower jaw of the animal on the right. The upper jaw is reversed as in the other figure. The carver was evidently under the impression that he was carving a dog design, and therefore depicted the dog on the right hand side,

but did not leave himself room to carry it out on the left. Moreover he was fettered by the traditional spiral interlockings of jaw with jaw, and for this reason, partly because he neither blindly followed others or boldly drew his idea of a dog, he produced a design, which varies in many respects from other examples of Kenyah art.

It is more than probable that he has been influenced by designs in which the dog does look over its shoulder as in Fig. 8. It will also be noticed that the tail of



FIG. 15.



FIG. 16.

the right-hand dog interlocks with the curve of the design on the left, this curve probably representing the body; and that the interlocking parts have dots along their length, as if they represented the teeth of interlocking jaws.

In the interspaces are carved the head of a hornbill and a dog design. The latter is upside-down, and is only a slightly modified copy of the tattoo patterns of these people as in Fig. 6.

In Fig. 15 one sees how far a design may be complicated and contorted. In

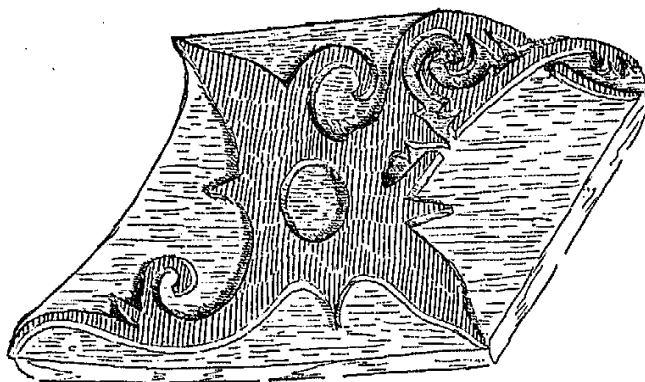


FIG. 17.

the centre is a figure with a widely gaping mouth, opening upwards, the upper jaw being to the left, and the lower to the right where it forms a spiral with the lower jaw of the animal to the right. The hypertrophied upper jaw of the right hand figure stretches downwards and backwards. The ears are well represented in both animals. The body of the central animal curls

right round, and passes across the upper jaw, the tail and hind legs appear at the top of the design, above the eye. The body of the right hand figure has a similar curvature, the hind legs appearing at the bottom of the design below the eye.

Fig. 16 is a sketch of part of a drawing of a "Dayak" bamboo carving in the k.k. Hofmuseum at Vienna, figured Taf. 10, No. 14, by Professor A. R. Hein.<sup>1</sup> One element of the pattern has been blacked in for the sake of clearness, the

<sup>1</sup> *Die bildenden Künste bei den Dayaks auf Borneo*, Wien, 1890.

design being repeated to form a running pattern. At first sight the design appears to be a floral pattern, but on comparison it will be seen that it bears considerable resemblance to the dog-motives of Fig. 15. This view is further strengthened by its resemblance to the Berawan tattoo block, Fig. 17. We are, I think, quite justified in thinking that the design in Fig. 16 is a modification of the conventional dog-motive, but one would like to know the exact name of the tribe.

In a publication by J. A. Loebèr, Jr.,<sup>1</sup> twenty-one bamboo carvings collected by Dr. A. W. Nieuwenhuis are figured. Many of these examples show how the dog-design is treated by the Kayans of Netherlands Borneo. On *Plaat XI*, No. 16, is figured an animal design, which, on comparison with various Kenyah designs figured in this paper, is clearly seen to be a conventionalised dog. The design, which is upside down, shows a very typical upper and lower jaw, but the body and limbs are rather confused and degraded. In *Plaat V*, No. 9, at the base of the central triangle, there is an example of a dog, with widely gaping jaws, and the body shows the sinuous curves found on the Murik sarcophagus (Fig. 1), and another dog is seen above the triangle. In *Plaat VI*, No. 10, most of the ornamentation owes its origin to the dog-design. Dogs are also to be seen in *Plaat IV*, Nos. 6, 7, and elsewhere.

*Kalamantan modifications  
of the dog-motive.*

Kalamantan people who have come in contact with the Kenyahs and

Kayans have, to a certain extent, absorbed their culture. Fig. 18 shows the design on a bamboo tobacco box, which, though artistic, is degraded and obscure. One sees that the design is based on a dog-motive, though the exact figures are quite indistinguishable. In the centre facing to the right is a representation of upper and lower jaws, the former being very long and toothed, and the body extends down to the bottom of the design. Facing to the left is another dog in which the upper jaw alone is distinct. Remembering that the Kenyahs call their own degraded patterns prawn designs, it is not surprising to find that most of the Kalamantan patterns of this type are also called prawn designs, and it is more than probable, that anything resembling an animal motive is called by the Kalamantans a prawn-motive.



FIG. 18.

<sup>1</sup> *Bamboe-ornament der Kujan-Dajaks*, Haag, 1903.

This is borne out by the fact that the tattoo blocks which they have borrowed from the Kenyah-Kayan people are termed *orang*, "prawn." Such a block as is represented in Fig. 6 could be exactly matched by a Kalamantan block, which they would call *orang*. Many of their blocks are evidently derived from Kenyah or Kayan tattoo blocks, and several new designs with various names have thus been formed.

*Iban modifications of the dog-design.*

Besides the modifications of the rosette under the names of fruit and flowers the Ibans have modified other Kenyah-Kayan tattoo designs.

The tattoo design used by the Kenyahs and Kayans for decorating the forearm, has been copied and adopted by the Ibans in the same way as the Kalamantans have done, the main difference being, that the Ibans call the design a scorpion (*telingai*).<sup>1</sup>

For this reason, the pattern tends to become more and more like the scorpion, but even in its most specialised form, the eye of the dog is generally retained.

It is here interesting to note, that, according to Mr. Shelford, the *telingai* or "scorpion" design is often carved on the handle of the *niabor* or Iban *parang* or sword.<sup>2</sup>

Fig. 19 shows a typical "scorpion" tattooing. Other examples are figured



FIG. 19.

by W. H. Furness (p. 148, Figs. 1, 5), under the Iban and Malay name of *kala*, "scorpion." It is worth noting that Dr. Furness on the same plate, Figs. 9, 15, calls a Kenyah tattoo design similar to my Fig. 5, *kala asu*, the "scorpion

dog." This term requires further investigation; perhaps this should be *kalang asu*, *i.e.*, "pattern dog."

To sum up, it appears as if the dog design originated with the Bahau-Kenyah-Kayans, and was carried by them in various migrations from their fatherland in Apu Kayan at the upper waters of the Kayan or Bulungan river. Dr. Nieuwenhuis has described the modifications that occur in their designs in Netherlands Borneo. In this paper I have attempted to indicate (1) the evolution that has occurred in the dog-motive among the Kenyah-Kayan group in Sarawak; (2) the modifications that have taken place in this motive, more especially in the tattoo designs, among the Kalamantan tribes of the Baram District, where the design appears to be regarded as a prawn; and (3) the degradation of the same motive by the Ibans of the Rejang District, who consider it to be a scorpion.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Hose informs me that "*telingai* means a reflection such as would be seen when looking into clear water"; but Mr. Shelford and others give "scorpion" as the meaning.

<sup>2</sup> R. Shelford, *Journ. Anthropol. Inst.*, xxxi, 1901, p. 223.

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I am indebted to the kindness of H. Ling Roth for the use of the blocks, figs. 7, 17, from *The Natives of Sarawak and British North Borneo*, London, 1896, vol. ii, p. 85.

Figs. 11, 12, 13, are from rubbings made by Dr. C. Hose, and given by him to Dr. A. C. Haddon; all have notes on the patterns, made by Dr. Hose, which have afforded me valuable clues.

Figs. 8, 9, 15, 18, are from rubbings made by Dr. A. C. Haddon when in Kuching, from specimens belonging to the Hon. C. A. Bampfylde, Resident of the district.

Figs. 4, 5, 6, 7, 17, are  $\frac{1}{2}$  nat. size.

Figs. 3A, 3B, 8–15, 18, are  $\frac{1}{3}$  nat. size.