

Wray JRASB 21,

These airy, stilted, wide-roofed pavilions...show us how to build properly in hot, humid climates, and all of our tinted, sun-resistant glass and costly air-conditioning will not save us if we ignore such basic lessons.

A. Temko 1961 A plague on certain houses. NYTimes Book Review (10 Dec): 7 (article is on pp. 7, 38)

a typical Sakai [Semai] house on very tall posts and with a considerable sized raised platform on a level with the lanti [Malay *lantai*] floor (Wray 1890:125)

Semai in contact w Malays construct small huts according to the Malay model.... [Other Semai] at a distance from the Malay kampongs occupy temporary Pondos [Malay *pondol*, US boondock] in the jungle which serve them as night quarters for one day or more at a time {Miklucho-Maclay 1879:212}

See also Leech 1880q:29, Wms-Hunt 1952:52-53; Wilkinson 1926:22, "flimsy huts".

Photos: Skeat and Blagden I(facing pg): 38, 157, 178, 179, 182 [*Maay Cngriik* Semai, pole walls patched w banana leaf]. II:137 (*Maay Cngriik* Semai, pole walls), 786 [bark & flattened bamboo walls], Schebesta 1926:84, Ooi 1963: ill 7; Wms-Hunt 1952: pls Ib, 10a, 18b; roofing 5a, 6b, 17a; ties 5a. Polunin 1953:65 (45 degree props), 75, [raisable eaves for ventilation], Comte Encclo Fr 1936:30-17 ill 5.

For wood, see MS Building a Semai house & 1995 Stewards of the Green and Beautiful World: A Preliminary Report on Semai aborigiculture and its policy implications. In Rokiah Talib and Tan Chee Beng, eds., Dimensions of traditions and development in Malaysia, pp. 53-124. Pelanduk Publications. (with Ong Hean Chooi).  
Mat Ariff of Mncaak and Teiw R'eeis says *Mahaak* (*Macaranga* spp.) wood would make you sick. *Slnuur* attracts *kment*, mosquitoes, and other biting insects.

1995 Stewards of the Green and Beautiful World: A Preliminary Report on Semai aborigiculture and its policy implications. In Rokiah Talib and Tan Chee Beng, eds., Dimensions of traditions and development in Malaysia, pp. 53-124. Pelanduk Publications. (with Ong Hean Chooi).

attap: *cmc00p*, *spaal*, *blt00p* (*Eugeissona tristis*).

**Why build?** Stiib (of MS Building a Semai house) says 6.26.62 (1) that there are *kcmooc*, all around his house since Lg00s buried some people just across the river; they come and gibber on the rafters, little red eyes gleaming, and Lg00s and Stiib have quarreled about it; (2) there's a big tree near his present house that quakes in storms; (3) his JHEOA-provided goats, which nibble at other people's crops, are getting him in trouble with his neighbors.

**Where build?** After the Emergency of the late 1940s and early 1950s, houses in east Semai settlements tended to be clustered. Land pressure tended to produce the same pattern in the west. Earlier patterns were scattered, with people living in groups of from eight to ten to as many as twenty or even thirty, but seldom more (Leech 1880a:29). By the Emergency, west Semai --> 50-100 folks, mostly in nuclear family houses (Wms-Hunt, p. 47). But in the 1960s, Ulu Jelai houses were reportedly still scattered in the swiddens, in the old pattern, and in Mncaak people still built temporary houses in the fields.

The Bamboo hut stands on top of a hill in the middle of the field. (Schebesta 1926:87)

Nowadays, says T of Kuuy Grnt00b, 25.10.75, build houses, *dvvk kngr00h*, in the woods for a specific purpose, like gathering fruit, perhaps several miles from other people's houses. [Means and Means define *kngrah* as a rat trap]. You can't use *wool* (*Ochanostachys amentacea*) wood, tho you can for regular house, since it attracts tigers.

For *wool*, see *wool*, in 1995 Stewards of the Green and Beautiful World: A Preliminary Report on Semai aborigiculture and its policy implications. In Rokiah Talib and Tan Chee Beng, eds., Dimensions of traditions and development in Malaysia, pp. 53-124. Pelanduk Publications. (with Ong Hean Chooi).

NH of Mncaak (west) Semai (25.8.91) says that, in the old days, we'd sketch the plan on the ground first, then go whom a sleep. A good dream (fish, flowers, crops) --> build there. Bad dream (feast [=demons gathering to eat souls], animals [=demons])--> don't build.

**Taboos:** housebuilding is subject to the same lunar taboos as working in the fields, for which see my articles 1971 Some Senoi Semai planting techniques. Economic Botany 25: 136-159 and in press How the Androgynous Bird God Brought Agriculture to Semai of West Malaysia: Discipline, Hard Work and Subordination to the Cycle of Time. In Pierre Le Roux, Christian Coiffier and Bernard Sellato, eds., Les Messagers Divins: Aspects Esthetiques et Symboliques des Oiseauxen Asie du Sud-Est. Aix-en-Provence/Marseille:Presse de l'Universite de Provence; and Paris:Editions SevenOrientes. NH of Mncaak would fear living in a multistory dwelling; fires.

*Mahaak* (*Macaranga* spp.) wood would make you sick.

NH of Mncaak (west) Semai (12.2.63) says that only a few people work to build a particular house. If you use many people, the dwellers in the house will later fall sick.

**Other Rituals:** Most seem to be of Malay origin: NH describes making the neutralizing rice paste (Skeat 1900): soak husked rice in a cup for half an hour. After cutting the *cn00l* house posts and clearing the site (see MS Building a Semai house) collect *tabar* & *pmoleeh* leaves, *-ham slaa't.* & *p.* Make an asperger, *cnaaw*, of *pmoleeh* leaves. Go to the house site and *-cag00h*, pray [in the usual format: don't give heat, etc.] at the site. Then plant the *cnaaw* in the cleared area. Next day, get the *cn00l* and dig four post holes. Make more paste and another *cnaaw*, and asperge, *-caaw*, the post holes and the

part of the four corner *cn00l* which will enter the ground. No need to asperge the other holes or *cn00l*.

This ritual, says NH, is for *Jnaak/Nynaak*, God, not for demons, *nyanii*. Spit ginger vs. demons as in the east.

But, he added 30 yrs later, you shdn't enter the completed hse for 3 days,

Floor poles should not jut out beyond the walls (they wd attract the Bird Spirit, see Dentan 1978]. There's no taboo on bamboo stairs, says NH, because there's no bamboo around Mnaak any more, and bamboo stairs don't last anyway.

For details on similar rituals, see 1978 Notes on childhood in a nonviolent context: the Semai case. In Ashley Montagu ed., *Learning nonaggression*, pp. 94-143. London: Oxford University Press.

For plants involved, see my 1999. monograph 'Semai-Malay ethnobotany: Hindu influences on the trade in sacred plants, *ho hiang*.' 33 pp. *heritage paper series, Occasional paper no. 3*. AKASS Heritage Paper Series. Gen. ed., Wazir Jahan Karim. Acad. of Soc. Sciences (AKASS) in cooperation with Universiti Sains Malaysia and Royal Netherlands Government. 33 pp.

NH of Mcaak (west) Semai (12.2.63) says that only a few people work to build a particular house. (Houses in Mncaak are almost all nuclear or stem family houses, Malay style). The owner, *tuwaan dvvk*, head of household, and his wife are the usual builders, though he may call on his brothers. In the olden days, he'd call on co-villagers for help.

The *tuwaan dvvk* would feed his helpers a meal better than most meals, though not elaborate enough to be called a feast, as Stiib did for me after I helped him with his house in Jnteer (east Semai, see MS Building a Semai house).

10/91. People upstream on the Teew Waar complain that although they've petitioned the JHEOA and other development bodies for Malay style plank houses as they were urged to do in 1988--no results. It's part of a pattern, people say. They're urged to ask for stuff but it does no good.

**Thatch** <-- fan palm leaves. The stems of the palms are too hard to cut so left uncut when felling swidden (Wray 1890:155). Also, esp, *Eygeissona tristis*, stemless palm, *Nipah fruticans* [Kuuy Grnt>>b]

### **Shacks/Lean-tos.**

*Dvvg sapaw* (Mncaak, 1960s; Kuuy Grnt>>b, Means & Means). Cognate with Perak Malay *sapar*, a temporary hut put up for the night by travelers in the jungle (Wilk II:386).

Along stream [or in swampy areas], to catch fish and frogs, says T of Kuuy Grnt00b, 25.10.75. Also to wait for durians to fall, see Wms-Hunt 1952:48; 1995 *Stewards of the Green and Beautiful World: A Preliminary Report on Semai aboriculture and its policy implications*. In Rokiah Talib and Tan Chee Beng, eds., *Dimensions of traditions and development in Malaysia*, pp. 53-124. Pelanduk Publications. (with Ong Hean Chooi).

*daneep*, (Mncaak, 1960s] nest, perch, temporary shelter in which to spend the night. Tree huts are found in areas infested by elephants [and slavers] and serve as refuges... (Schebesta 1926:87). from *-deep*, to land, perch or alight, *dndeeep*, perching, alighting (Means and Means).

*dvvk prender* (Mncaak, 1960s] jungle house. if the rain comes on they can get a shelter erected in ten minutes (Leech 1880a:30)

*dvvk jambur* (Mncaak, 1960s] Field house, on poles like other houses, but smaller, takes only a few hrs to make.

*dook rvb* [Tluup, 1962]

The houses in which we lived in the Ulu Tengi [in the far south of Perak state] were all big ones, but in three other places we made small houses on the ground near the large swamp where we would occasionally go and live for a while while we caught fish. These three places were all on the edge of the Sg. Tengi. We has another small clearing roughly north of our houses where we had a small house -- this was the place we collected durian.

There is a good path leading to this clearing, but nothing going north from it. Statement of Pgh Mat s/o Busu, taken by RTM Henmry at Tj Malim, 3.30 pm, 9.1.50.

HJKelsall 1894 met no Semai, although we constantly met with evidence of their presence... rough leantos...consisting of a long pole supported at each end on a forked stick stuck in the ground against which palm leaves are leant....small platforms in the forks of trees, 15 or 20 feet from the ground....a group of seven small huts or booths made of palm leaves tied together at the top in the shape of a bee hive with a thick bed of palm leaves in each of them. Account of a trip up the Pahang, Tembeling and Tahan Rivers.

JSBRAS 25:33-

cf. Clifford 1925:85

Gingerwort or wild banana leaf roof covering, *mam00k* *Musa malaccensis* (Lim 1992:394), *M. violascens?*, *M. gracilis?*, *jaay*, *Alphonsea* cf. *elliptica* (Lim 1992:388, 396) T of Kuuy Grnt00b, 25.10.75 says the first roof is of *lmp00s*, gingerwort, the permanent roof of *jvooy* (= *jaay*) or *jvooy c0k*.