**The Tattooing of Women**

Egerod 1974, pp. 286–295

Record date: Mar 3, 1962 in Tampia, Wulai

Speaker A: male, Gogan, 38 years old

Speaker B: female, Sbtunux area, South of Tranan (east of Tach’i), 70 years old

a: aki’ aa, pkaial ku’ cikai. ima’ lalu’ su’ pi isu’, aki’?

e: Old woman, I would like to talk a little with you. What is your name, old woman?

a: Iagu’ Siat.

e: Iagu’ Siat.

a: aa. Iagu’ Siat ga.

e: Oh. Iagu’ Siat.

a: aau.

e: Yes.

a: ru’ pira’ kauas su’ la?

e: And how old are you?

a: aa, baqau ta’. ii, kia pitu’ pgan hazi’ la ai. nkis ku’ la ru.

e: Oh, I do not know. Maybe seventy or something like that. I am very old.

a: pitu’ pgan lga?

e: Seventy?

a: agu la ru.

e: Yes.

a: aa, kahul inu’, kahul inu’, ii, inkhulan su’ hia’?

e: Where was your original home?

a: Stunux.

e: At Stunux.

a: Stunux inu’.

e: Where in Stunux?

a: Stunux kia, ii, shasa qalang ga.

e: In Stunux, in the villages over there.

a: aau, baqun mu Istunux hia ga’, qalang su’ qenu’ son misu’?

e: Yes, I know Stunux. I am asking you which village.

a: baqau ta’, ini’ ku’ qbaq lasa la ai.

e: I am not sure. I do not know where.

a: ha ha.

e: Ha ha

a: ini’ maku’ baqi la.

e: I do not know it.

a: sua’ su’ gngian qu’ iaqu’ qalang su’ hia ’la pi?

e: How could you forget your own village?

a: aau ga. bali ku’ muha’ mkal ana qutux kriax la pi. ual mhoqil mnkis maku’ raral la ga. ini’ maku’ baqi la ru. ini’ ku’ qbaq kuzing, laqi’ sami hia’ la rua.

e: Oh yes. I have never been back there to visit a single time. My old relatives have died a long time ago. I do not know that place. I could not know it, since we were children then.

a: ini’ ga’ ulai, ulai bstunux, ini’ ga’ ziheng, ini’ ga’ kiopan, ini’ ga’ …

e: Perhaps it was Ulai, I mean the Ulai in Stunux [B lives in Tampia, close to another Ulai], or Ziheng, or Kiopan, or …

a: aki aau. niux ini’ baqi.

e: Maybe. I do not know.

a: iiat isu’ qu’ kahul kia ga.

e: Did you not come from there?

a: iiat kuzing, k’aia’ mu.

e: Not I, my (deceased) mother.

a: k’aia’ su’ kahul kia ru’ isu’ hia ga’ muah su’ maki’ sqani.

e: Your mother came from there and you got to be born here?

a: laqi’ saku’ nia’ sqani kun la.

e: Yes, I am her child from here.

a: haan. ruu inu’ qu’ iutas hia’ la?

e: Oh. Where is your husband?

a: ual mhoqil raral la.

e: He died a long time ago.

a: ima’ lalu’ nia’ pi?

e: What was his name?

a: uu, Kbuqa’.

e: Eh, Buqa’.

a: Kbuqa’?

e: Buqa’?

a: aau.

e: Yes.

a: iasa ubui kahul, ii, rua ga?

e: Was his lineage from that same place, whatever its name is?

a: kahul stunux uzi sa. kahul, ii, gogan.

e: They were also from Stunux. From Gogan.

a: mgluu ki Iaui’ Puna’ ga?

e: Did they arrive [in Ulai] with Iaui’ Puna’?

a: iiat, kahul stunux uzi. kahul stunux lasa uzi. nanu qu’ qsuian nia ga’ maki ’stunux, Kuatan Buta’ ga’.

e: No, [directly] from Stunux. His people were also from Stunux. His older brother lived at Stunux, Uatan Buta’.

a: Watan Buta’ qsuian nia’ ga?

e: Was Uatan Buta’ his brother?

a: aau. iasa qu’ qsuian nia’. iaqu’ son nha’ Kbuta’ Naui’ ga, iasa qu’ iaba’ nha’.

e: Yes. He was his brother. Buta’ Naui’ was their father.

a: aa. nanu iasa qu’ pqutai cikai muci nanu’ ia’ qu’ kneril raral hia’. sua’ nha’ xun, ii, matas qani?

e: Oh. Well, I would like to ask about the position of women in the old days. Why did they want to tattoo them here [on the forehead] [A shows where]?

a: aai. baqau ta’ mrhuu raral hia’. nanu’ sika’ ptasan lasa lga’, nanu iasa qu’ ki’an squliq la ma. ini’ ptasi ga’, ini’ agal squliq uzi ma.

e: Alas! What do we know of the intentions of the ancestors. Only those who were tattooed could be married. Those who were not tattooed could not be married.

a: aau.

e: I see.

a: ini’ kiia’ gaga’ na’ misuu qani. kia iasa gaga’ na’ mrhuu raral.

e: It was not like the customs of today. I suppose the customs of our ancestors were like that.

a: kia qu’ ini’ qbaq cminun cninun mga’, iasa qu’ ini’ nia’ ptasi uzi ma rua?

e: If they did not know how to weave, they did not permit them to be tattooed, was not that so?

a: sua’ baha ini’ ptasi lasa hia’, ptasan tasan hia’, ana qu’ ini’ qbaq cminun.

e: No. They did not keep them from being tattooed. They permitted them to be tattooed, whether they knew how to weave or not [This does not tally with the usual story].

a: nanu qu’ rua nii, nanu qu’, ii, spatas nia’ sa pi?

e: Anyhow, what instrument did she [the tattooer] use for tattooing?

a: iia’ na’ rom khi’ balai ga ketun nia’ niia’ nqa ltung qu’ uaqit nia’, ketun nia’ ru’ iasa qu’ s’atuk nia’ la.

e: She fastened pieces [of wire] as thin as needles, [on a bamboo stick], for teeth this short, fastened [ < wound] them on the hammer] with thread, and then she hammered with it.

a: ketun nia’ nanu’?

e: What did she use for fastening [the teeth]?

a: baqau ta’. iia’ na’ sket nia’ kia rakis na’ iia’ na’ iokai hazi’ qalux gau.

e: I am not sure. The usual method was like weaving [putting thread back and forth between the teeth and round the shaft] them on with something like black thread.

a: aau.

e: I see.

a: liqun nia’ kmobit na’ nanu’ sa uah.

e: She fastened them well by weaving the thread, whatever kind it was, [in and out and around].

a: son nia’ nanu’, son nia’ nanu’ smi’ uah aring nia’?

e: How did she do, when she started applying [this instrument]?

a: baqau ta’ an nia’ niux son nanu’ matuk. nanu iasa qu’ qnsai na’ patas qani ual nia’ splgan kia mu’. nanu iaqu’ niux biru’ qani hia’ ga. an nia’ ui son sqani ru’ ui nia’ son sqani, iasa niux mbiru’ ziau nia’ qani rua.

e: I am not sure how she hammered. Anyhow she punched following the outline of the tattooing here [B shows the tattoos on her own face]. That is, this pattern [points to her own tattoos]. Maybe she did it first this way, then that way [B shows how the hammer was placed], so that in between there was a drawing [the outline shows the whole design].

a: oo. nanu iaqu’ si qalux nia’ hia’?

e: Oh. What is the black stuff used in tattooing?

a: iziu’ na rua na’ haiung mataq raral ga. u kia haiung mataq raral rua.

e: The drug from, you know, the pine logs used in the old days. You know in the old days they used pine logs.

a: oo. haiung mataq.

e: Oh. [Soot from] pine logs.

a: aau. lomun nia’ ru’ sian nia’ ana ngon sa supeh ga, nanu’ maki’ kia qu’ iziu’ nia’ kgusan nia’ la.

e: Yes. She made a fire and placed [a pot] over it, and waited for the soot to settle on the pot, then she scraped it off.

a: kgusan nia’ lga’?

e: And then?

a: aa. nanu iasa qu’ qziu’ nia’ kia la.

e: Then she rubbed it in there [on the face].

a: nan u’ aring balai ga’, soman nia’ na’ iziu’ ha ru’, ruu, iasa qu’…

e: So first she smeared the soot on, and then…

a: ini’. tukun nha’, si nia’ tmai matuk ha. si nia’ tmai matuk ha. tmon nia’ qmsai na’ u kia nanak u kia nanak. gasil qalux rua. son nia’ sqani smpung ha. nanu’ si nia’ plgan

kia matuk ru’, nanu’ sramu’ lga’, iasa qu’ gran nia’ iziu’ mha sqani la. nanu’ kia nanak kugus nia’ ia’ na’ rima’, son nia’ sqani, san sqa kmugus ramu’ nia’ lga’, tukun nia’ lozi ru’ qmasan nia’ lozi, mha kia kriax.

e: No. First they hammered, she hammered without any further preparations. She simply hammered without further preparations. She just marked the outline with a special kind of black string. She measured the outline here like this first. Then she hammered along the string so it bled, then she smeared on the soot like this. Then she had a special razor, something like bamboo, which she used like this, she scraped the blood away, then she hammered again and scraped again, all the time like that.

a: ru’, pinpira’ nia’, ii, matuk.

e: How many times did she hammer?

a: aa. aia, bsiaq, qutux riax ru’.

e: Oh, a long time, a whole day.

a: ru’, aring balai ga’, muci nanu, ii, ini’ nha’ khungi [~khoni’], ini’ nha’ an shgup, aring matuk ga.

e: At the very beginning, when they started hammering, did they not worship and perform magic?

a: ini’.

e: No.

a: pbiun nia’, pbiun nia’ rua ma rua, aa.

e: They had them lie down (and sleep), did they not?

a: aau. m’abi’.

e: Yes. They lay down.

a: m’abi’ inu’?

e: Where did they lie?

a: mosa’ m’ahi’ izik khu’.

e: They went to lie down under the storage house.

a: haan. maki’ zik na’ khu’ ga.

e: I see. They were under the storage house.

a: aau.

e: Yes

a: ini’ p’bi ngasal.

e: They did not permit them to lie in the house?

a: ini’.

e: No.

a: haan. ru’ hngan nasa m’abi’ kia ha ru’?

e: I see. And did they not sleep out there the night before [being tattooed]?

a: iiat.

e: No.

a: qlian ga.

e: [They only lay there] in the daytime.

a: suqun nia’ gbian lga’ quaxan la ru’ iasa qu’ mosa’ ngasal la.

e: In the evening when she [the tattooer] had finished, she washed the face [of the tattooee] and then she [the tattooee] went home.

a: haan. kina m’ba’ bal ai lpi.

e: I see. Probably it would swell.

a: ia’ na’ qani balai nquaq nia’. ini’ qbaq maniq mami’ la ai.

e: Her mouth was like this [B shows how extensive the swelling was]. She could not eat.

a: oo.

e: Oh.

a: ini’ qbaq maniq ai. mxal ai.

e: She could not eat. It hurt.

a: si nia’ suqi qutux riax ga?

e: Was she through in one day?

a: aau. ai. qutux riax.

e: Yes. Certainly. In one day.

a: ru ’suqun nia’ lga’, ii, quaxan nia’ na’ qsia’. qsia’ lga’, nanu’ squax nia’ pi?

e: And when she was through she washed her face with water. When she applied the water, what did she wash with?

a: qsia’ balai.

e: Just water.

a: qsia’ ga.

e: I see.

a: aau. pman nia’ na…

e: She washed her by means of ...

a: pali’ na’ ngta’ ma rua?

e: …chicken feathers. Is that not right?

a: aau. ii, rua la. smgom lasa la.

e: Yes. That is it. They wiped [the face with feathers].

a: muci nanu’ smgom hia’ pi?

e: How did they wipe?

a: kia qu’ qsia’ siun ta’ taku’ rua.

e: The water is put in a bottle gourd scoop.

a: aau.

e: Oh yes.

a: son sqa hmau na’ pali’, son sqani hmqul la.

e: She scooped up the water with the feathers, and rinsed away [the badness].

a: ru’ tnahuk nha’ ga qu’…?

e: Did they boil the water?

a: iiat. trtu’. aau.

e: No. It was cold. Of course.

a: ini’ sngahoq ga.

e: Was there no pus.

a: ini’ kiaqu’ iaqeh ga’ iaqeh uzi. iaqeh ru’ skobit la.

e: No. There might be some badness. If there was badness the tattoos would be entangled [with uneven, rough scars].

a: sua’ lux sngahoq? iaqeh gaga’ na’ sa ma ga.

e: What would be the reason why pus formed? I have heard it was because of previous bad behavior.

a: baqau ta’ lasa la. kia pziang nanak iaqeh lasa la. ki’a hi’ na’ nasa qu’ iaqeh lasa la.

e: I do not know about that. Maybe the person has deliberately been bad. Maybe her body is bad.

a: aa. ru’, muci kia qu’ patas nha’ raral hia’ ga.

e: Oh. So that is what their tattooing was like in the old days.

a: aau.

e: Yes.

a: ru’ pira’ bingi’ lga’, tuliq la?

e: Then how many days did it last before they got up?

a: aia. bsiaq ru’ qutux biacing ki’an nha’ ngasal ru’ maki’ libu’, a baqau ta’ mpuu msiau bingi’, baqau ta’ pusal msiau bingi’, giahan qu’ libu’ ktan kuara’. ini’ ktai ha ru’.

e: Oh! A long time! They stayed inside their house for a whole month and lived in an enclosure [within the house] for perhaps more than ten days, or perhaps more than twenty days, before they opened the enclosure so everybody could see her. Before nobody saw her.

a: aa. ptasan nha’ ru’ suqun nha ’matas lga’, siun nha’ libu’ ga.

e: Oh. They tattooed her, and when they had finished tattooing her, they put her in an enclosure.

a: oo.

e: Yes.

a: libu’ nanu’?

e: What kind of an enclosure?

a: nanu ia’ na’ sakau qa ga, tlbuan nha’ rua pi hilau ga.

e: They closed off a place like this bed [B points to her own bed] with cloth.

a: ru’ si nha’, ii, si nha’, ii, ini’ nha’ pktai ana qutux ga? ini’ nha’ pktai ga?

e: Then they did not permit people to see her even once? They did not let them see her?

a: ini’. kiaqu’ niux manga’ ga’, iasa qu’ gmeh mita’ muah miq qnaniq, miq qsia’.

e: No. Only a person who brought her something could open the curtain and look, when she gave her food or water.

a: aa. ru’, matuk ga’, ana nha’ ktan sa?

e: Oh. At the time of hammering [tattooing]. could people look?

a: sua’, aau sa.

e: Oh yes.

a: ru’, masoq matas lga’?

e: And after the tattooing is finished?

a: ktan uzi ha. mima’ ha.

e: At first people could look. First they washed her face.

a: aa, pman ha ru’ masoq lga’ si nia’ tlbui la ru’ iasa ini’ htuu ana qutux uzi.

e: So first they washed her face and when they were through they put her in an enclosure, and then she could not come out even once.

a: ini’ ru’.

e: That is right.

a: ru’ ini’ nha’ ktai uzi.

e: And also people could not see her.

a: ini’.

e: That is right.

a: sika’ hmakut qnaniq ga’, iasa mita’.

e: Only if somebody brought her food could she look.

a: aau.

e: Yes.

a: ru’ pira’ bingi’ lga’ mhtuu la…?

e: After how many days did she come out?

a: baqau ta’, mpuu bingi’ lga’, ktan nha’ la, kiohan nha’.

e: I am not sure. Maybe after ten days people could look and open the curtain.

a: ciuqan nha’?

e: [hears ciuqan instead of kiohan] They could spit?

a: kiohan nha’ la qu’ libu’ nia’.

e: They opened the curtain.

a: giahan nha’ la ga, iasa qu’ mhtuu la ga, kia iasa qu’ sqleh la pi?

e: When they pulled the curtain aside and she came out had the swelling gone down by then?

a: aau.

e: Yes

a: haan. muci kia gaga’ nia ga. ru’ ini’ nha’ hbgi hia’ ga.

e: I see. So that was what that custom [ritual] was like. They did not use any witchcraft?

a: ini’.

e: No.

a: baq su’ hmgup aki’?

e: Do you know any witchcraft?

a: ai, agu’ squ’ raral hia’ ha ai.

e: Well, in the old days I did.