

COMMUNICATION ROLES OF IBAN COMMUNITY STRUCTURES IN RURAL
DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN KANOWIT, SIBU DIVISION, SARAWAK

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects and consequences of development upon community structures and traditional processes of communication among Iban community in Kanowit district, Sarawak. The principal presumptive premise of development programmes is that newer is better, the development agencies know best, and by whatever strategy development is to be effected—co-optation or intervention—the recipients also are beneficiaries. The effectiveness of development routinely is measured in units or terms of production, viz., more is better. Other effects of development upon community structures and traditional processes of communication are innocently or intentionally disregarded. In light of this premise, the main focus of this study is to study the communication roles of Iban community structures in rural development projects in Kanowit district, Sibul Division, Sarawak.

The research methodology employed for this study is a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research method, based on one shot cross-sectional survey design which focus on the role of community structures as facilitators and inhibitors of development communication between the Iban community and government authorities in Kanowit. Field survey, using both structured and semi-structured interview schedule, was conducted throughout the rural areas of Kanowit district, involving 339 respondents selected at random among 2,267 families/households from 138 longhouses.

The main findings of this study were related to the problems of power relations between the Iban community (project beneficiaries/participants) living in rural areas and the authorities (government departments/agencies and politicians); and the lack of effectiveness of the Iban community structures, especially co-opted leadership structures and the traditional institution of *randau/aum* as channels of communication and in the decision-making process. This study has also found out that the institution of *randau/aum* operates differently in the different types of development projects implemented in the rural areas of Kanowit district.

This study concludes by highlighting some of the major findings of this study which are expected to generate some interests among researchers and scholars of development. Some of the issues and recommendations for future research were highlighted at the end of this study.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini adalah untuk meneliti kesan dan impak pembangunan keatas struktur masyarakat dan proses komunikasi tradisional di kalangan masyarakat Iban di daerah Kanowit, Sarawak. Premis andaian dan anggapan utama tentang sesuatu program pembangunan ialah sesuatu yang terbaru adalah terbaik, agensi pembangunan lebih arif, dan dengan apa jua cara strategi pembangunan dijalankan – pemilihan anggota atau pemimpin atau campurtangan pihak tertentu – penerima tetap menjadi perwarisnya. Keberkesanan pelaksanaan sesuatu program pembangunan lazimnya diukur dalam unit atau cara pengeluaran, iaitu, lebih banyak lebih baik. Kesan-kesan pembangunan yang lain terhadap struktur masyarakat, seperti struktur kepimpinan dan proses-proses komunikasi secara tradisional tidak diberi perhatian dengan sewajarnya, samada secara sengaja atau tidak. Berdasarkan kenyataan tersebut, maka focus utama kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji peranan komunikasi struktur masyarakat Iban dalam projek-projek pembangunan di daerah Kanowit, Bahagian Sibuan, Sarawak.

Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah analisis kualitatif dan juga kuantitatif, berdasarkan kepada rekabentuk survei yang memfokuskan kepada peranan struktur komuniti / masyarakat sebagai fasilitator ataupun penghalang kepada komunikasi pembangunan diantara masyarakat Iban di Kanowit dan pihak kerajaan. Survei lapangan, menggunakan borang jadual temuduga berstruktur dan juga bukan berstruktur telah dijalankan di seluruh kawasan luar bandar di daerah Kanowit, melibatkan seramai 339 orang responden yang telah dipilih secara rambang dikalangan 2,267 buah keluarga dari 138 buah rumah panjang.

Dapatan utama kajian ini adalah berkaitan dengan masalah hubungan kuasa diantara masyarakat Iban (peserta/ penerima projek) yang tinggal di kawasan luar bandar dan pihak yang berkuasa (Jabatan Kerajaan/agensi dan ahli-ahli politik); dan kurangnya keberkesanan struktur masyarakat Iban, khasnya struktur kepimpinan yang dilantik dan institusi tradisional *randau/aum*

sebagai saluran komunikasi dan di dalam proses membuat keputusan. Kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa institusi *randau/aum* berfungsi atau berlaku secara berbeza-beza mengikut jenis projek pembangunan yang dijalankan di kawasan luar bandar di daerah Kanowit.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAP	Affirmative Action Programmes
ACT	Audio-Cassette Technology
ADC	Area Development Committee
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
ARC	Agriculture Research Centre
ATC	Agriculture Training Centre
AZAM	<i>Angkatan Zaman Mansang</i>
BN	<i>Barisan Nasional</i>
CDP	Community Development Program
Cr	Councillor
CT	Communist Terrorist
DO	District Officer
DOA	Department of Agriculture
EPU	Economic Planning Unit
FELCRA	Felcra Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority
FELDA	Federal Land Development Authority
FO	Farmers Organisation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HYV	High Yielding Varieties
IADP	Integrated Agriculture Development Project
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
JKKK	<i>Jawatankuasa Kemajuan dan Keselamatan Kampung</i>
JV	Joint Venture
JVC	Joint-venture Company
KDC	Kanowit District Council
LCDA	Land Custody and Development Authority
LSD	Least Squared Difference
MP	Member of Parliament
MRP	Minor Rural Project
NCR	Native Customary Right

NEP	New Economic Policy
Ng.	<i>Nanga</i> ¹
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NOC	National Operations Council
OPP	Outline Perspective Plan
PIBG	<i>Persatuan Ibu Bapa dan Guru</i>
PLI	Poverty Line Income
PTA	Parents-Teachers Association
R & DO	Resident and District Office
R & R	Regrouping and Resettlement
RASCOM	Rajang Area Security Command
Rh.	<i>Rumah</i>
RGC	Rural Growth Centre
SADIA	Sarawak Dayak Iban Association
SALCRA	Sarawak Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority
SBPKP	<i>Skim Bantuan Padi Kerajaan Persekutuan</i>
SDNU	Sarawak Dayak National Union
SDO	State Development Office
SEDC	Sarawak Economic Development Corporation
SESCO	Sarawak Electricity and Supply Corporation
Sg.	<i>Sungai (river)</i>
SIDS	<i>Sarakup Indu Dayak Sarawak</i>
SLDB	Sarawak Land Development Board
SLC	Sarawak Land Code
SLDC	Special Land Development Committee
Tr.	<i>Tuai Rumah</i>
T & V	Travel and Visit
VDSC	Village Development and Security Committee
WEDA	Women Economic Development Assistance
WI	Women Institute

¹ Refers to a mouth of a river. However, it is often used to refer to places, for instance *Nanga Jagau*, *Nanga Ngungun* and *Nanga Tada*.

IBAN WORDS AND PHRASES

<i>Adat</i>	Customs, traditions, ways of life
<i>Aum</i>	Official meeting, discussion or dialogue whereby there are opportunities for a two-way communication among those who are attending the function. There is a proper agenda to be discussed leading to a community-wide consensus over matters discussed or deliberated. However, there are instances whereby the term <i>aum</i> is used interchangeably with <i>randau</i> .
<i>Bilik</i>	Family. Can also refer to a household within a longhouse.
<i>Baum</i>	A process of an official/important meeting, discussion or dialogues among longhouse residents.
<i>Berandau</i>	A term to describe a process of meeting/discussion, either official or just ordinary meeting/discussion.
<i>Dayak</i>	Term to describe non-muslim natives in Sarawak such as Iban, Bidayuh and Orang Ulu.
<i>Gawai</i>	Refer to harvest festivals celebrated by the Iban and other Dayak communities to mark or celebrate the end of their harvesting seasons. Commonly known as Gawai Dayak and it is a public holiday for Sarawak.
<i>Manah gamal</i>	Good looking or good in appearance
<i>Mubuk menoa</i>	Traditionally refers to migration among the traditional Iban society
<i>Pemanca</i>	Head of the Iban community leaders in a district. A district normally has one Iban community leader. For example, Kanowit district currently has one Pemanca whose name is Jantan anak Besi.
<i>Penghulu</i>	Head of Iban community leaders at a locality area within a district. The number of Penghulu in a district usually depends on the size of its administrative area as well as the number of longhouses in a certain locality areas of a district.
<i>Randau</i>	Meetings, discussions, dialogues. The term <i>randau</i> is often used interchangeably with the term <i>aum</i> .
<i>Sea Dayak</i>	Refer to the Iban people
<i>Sigat</i>	Handsome or good-looking

<i>Tuai Burong</i>	Bird leader or head of augury
<i>Tuai Kayau</i>	War leader
<i>Tuai Mubuk Menoa</i>	Pioneering leader/head for new settlement area for the traditional Iban society. He leads his followers in opening/clearing up virgin land for their hill paddy cultivation.
<i>Tuai Rumah</i>	Headman or longhouse chief

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter provides background information related to the conceptualisation of the statement of the problem for the present study. The research is concerned with three major issues. First, the traditional role of the institution of *randau/aum* (a participatory dialogue in Iban) as a channel of communication, as a mechanism for decision-making and as a vehicle for upward influence in policy decisions or grassroots demands for better treatment from higher authorities, is scrutinized. Second, this study examines the impact of co-opted community structures on the institution of *randau/aum*. This leads to the third issue, which concerns the extent to which co-opted structures facilitate or inhibit the roles of communication in four selected government-sponsored projects that have been implemented in the Kanowit district of Sarawak, Malaysia.

1.1 Background: Development -Traditional and Modern Dichotomy

The term 'development' has been interpreted in many ways, depending on which theoretical perspective one argues. It is commonly used to mean the state of being developed or the process of developing or becoming developed – either because of the subject's own actions or as a result of some sort of outside force (Conyers & Hills, 1984). Development also denotes improvements in the quality of life of the people that extend beyond direct gains from the increased production of commodities and services (Dale, 2000). During the post-war decades of the 1950s and 1960s, mainstream theories of development and modernization, which stemmed from the Industrial Revolution in the West, were grouped under the general rubric of developmentalism (Berberoglu,

1992). One of the most influential sources of developmentalist literature during this period was Rostow (1960). His stages of economic growth model framed the parameters and shaped the direction of development, and even specified the prerequisites and various stages of economic growth. Rostow's argument emphasises the trickle-down benefits of economic growth from the modern to the traditional sectors. The study of this dual society, traditional and modern dichotomy, led to a belief that for development to occur, capital, technology, supporting institutions and values must be diffused from the former to the latter.

Given the traditional and modern dichotomy, an agrarian change in the traditional sector, according to Lerner (1958) in his groundbreaking book, *The Passing of Traditional Society*, implies that media have been perceived as a prerequisite for facilitating the transition from a traditional to a modern state. This was followed by Wilbur Schramm's (1964) influential book, *Mass Media and National Development*, which reinforces Lerner's argument, a belief shared by many social scientists who understand the nature and role of communication in development (Rogers, 1976). The Lerner-Schramm modernisation theory was supported by Rogers' (1962; 1995) diffusion of innovations theory (Kim, 2005), because to change from a traditional to a modern man involves the adoption of new ideas and practices and forgoing what are considered ancient and traditional. These three theories became the core of a dominant paradigm of development communication in the field of development studies between the 1960s and 1980s. What is important to note here is that Rogers' diffusion-adoption pathway extended a macro-level analysis of the role of mass communication in development into the micro-level interpersonal framework, which emphasizes the role of opinion leaders in disseminating new knowledge and convincing target audiences to adopt new ideas and practices.

However, despite a well-grounded conceptual framework and empirical evidence provided for by the dominant paradigm, Rogers (1976) admits that after two decades (i.e., from the 1970s to the 1990s) of intellectual debate about how development should be defined and measured, and what role communication plays in the development process, the assumption of the