LAND USE AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGES IN RURAL BIDAYUH COMMUNITY OF BAU DISTRICT

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MASTER OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT PLANNING
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Land Use and Socio-economic Changes in Rural Bidayuh Community of Bau District
Declaration of original work

I Semuel Belawan, a student of SLUSe: Master of Environmental Management (Development Planning), Unimas and bearer of UNIMAS Metric No. 04-03-1092 570526-13-5140, hereby declare that this dissertation is product of my original work and where otherwise are duly acknowledged or diligently quoted.

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Letter of Submission of Dissertation

Topic: Land Use and Socio-economic Changes in Rural Bidayuh Community of Bau District

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DEDICATION

This research piece is fondly dedicated to my wife Suling for her constant encouragement and support while undergoing the academic programme, and the children Tekola, Usun, Orai and Booa who are adorable to me.

God bless us and provide abundantly, Amen.
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Glossary and Acronym

SSL  Self Sufficiency Level
Salcra  Sarawak Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority
LCDA  Land Custody and Development Authority
NCR  Native Customary Rights
NCL  Native Customary Land
JKKK  Jawatankuasa Keselamatan, dan Kemajuan Kampong (Committee for Village Development and Security)
Felda  Federal Land Development Authority
DOA  Department of Agriculture (State)
MOA  Ministry of Agriculture
PI  Poverty Index
SR  Selectivity Ratio
WEDA  Women Development Agency
MARA  Majlis Amanah Raya Malaysia
ABSTRACT

This study brings forth a local community's perception of land use changes, from the perspective of livelihood options, natural resource and environmental status, land tenure and market place. Since the 1980s rural land use shown dynamic changes with growing interest in export commodities from rubber to pepper and cocoa and oil palm, and now revisit of rubber following price revival in 2004. With current initiative in modernization of agriculture, more deliberate effort in knowledge transfer is expected of government and agencies to empower rural community to embrace new technology and operational technicalities required in land use programmes ushered in the 9MP plan.

The field findings on four Bidayuh villages, namely; Serasot, Sebumbok, Skibang and Stass have raised important rudimentary issues relating to rights to clean, sufficient water supply, improved transport and fair opportunities to participate in operations of land development and particularly plantation contracts. Despite growing trend in diversification of traditional livelihood towards urban-based employment in industries and service sector, the remaining village farmers have shown their aspiration to improve farm production and desire to be abreast with new agriculture information and latest farm technology to improve productivity. Most local farmers tend to be passive about acquiring new knowledge and farming methods because of relatively low level of education. Therefore it demands more determined and coordinated outreaching efforts on the part of relevant agencies and department to introduce of new farm inputs, clones, breeds and organize appropriate marketing strategies. The State leadership has indicated that in the current phase of politic of development, constructive strategy has to be found to move beyond the existing palm oil industry; to explore new frontiers in emerging growth sectors especially tourism, aquaculture and biotechnology to
complement with conservation of natural resource and environmental ecology. These investments however entail leveraging for capital and empowerment of local communities to be able to participate, and which planners have to facilitate. All these issues come under the responsibility of the state development planners, government agencies especially at Bau District level to deliver the real essence of economic distributions and development to the affected communities surpassing the interest and benefits of few technocrats and business class behind land development programmes.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Prelude

Land use development programme and landscape transformation in Sarawak is perceptible from two prominent primary resource based industries which are characterized by extensive disturbances to the natural environment since early 1970s. First the extractive logging industry followed by extensive plantations and mini estates. Ostensibly both activities are justifiable to support state revenue and simultaneously create productive industry to meet employment and socio-economic needs of the society at large. These environmental and infrastructural changes have directly influenced community’s social behaviour and response in interest of defending livelihood security, common access to resources and space, social and ecological integrity.

The study aims to elicit and gauge local community’s perception of land use change process, with emphasis on socio-economic impact and livelihood options relative to changes in natural resource structure, tenure and common access. How the community respond, adapt and develop strategies is assessed based on their own perception towards these structural-environmental changes at village level.

The villages included in the study, namely Serasot, Sebobok, Staas and Skibang are among the earlier villages that went through the era of extractive timber resources exploitation now into new phase of plantation based land use besides pursuing family scale farming. Another important element that characterizes these villages is their imminent inclusion in sub-urbanization process primarily due to improvement in
infrastructural linkages especially roads and communications with urban centres. Past studies carried out prior to the implementation of Salcra oil palm project in Bau observed that these villages have seen significant land use change from traditional subsistence farming to predominantly mix farming attributable to their proximity to major urban township and market (Yaakub N.F, Ayob A.M and Tonga, N. 1993).

1.2 Background of Study Area and the Community

1.2.1 Social Geography

Stass, Serasot, Skibang, and Sebubok villages represent a social rural enclave that has no definite administrative borders between them and other neighbouring communities but generally the area is within an hour distance away from Bau being the nearest township. These villages are linked by the Bau-Stass as main roadway that transits in Bau Town then leads to Kuching City. By geographical orientation, the villages are located South-West of Kuching City. It takes about 40 kilometres from Kuching to reach Bau town on tarred sealed road and then another 25 kilometres eastward to reach Stass-Serikin junction. From the junction road it stretches about 20 kilometers to the farthest terminal village-Stass. Located at about 8 kilometers from the Stass-Serikin junction is Serasot Village, and 5 kilometers North-Westward is Sebumbok village linked by all weather graveled road. Kampong Skibang road junction is about 14 kilometers from Serasot, and also linked by 8 kilometers of loose graveled road all the way from the junction except within the village. The road connection between these villages is displayed in satellite image in Plate 1.1 with black line indicating the stretch of roads surface between the villages.

These four villages belong to a Jagoi-Bratak sub-group of the Bidayuh main ethnic
community whose village livelihood was predominantly subsistent agriculture but now highly diversified into non traditional agriculture and salaried employment within the locality and elsewhere. In agriculture the community has adopted to mix cash crop farming besides passive partner in monoculture plantation managed by regional development authority Sarawak Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority (Salcra) since 1990 under the 6th Malaysia Plan (1991-1995). Stable oil palm price with current breakthrough in development especially new use of vegetative oil in production of bio-diesel and recent appreciation in the price of rubber may bring impetus for up-scaling of production of the commodities with potential to add value and increase demand of native land in this area, as well as some imminent degree of environmental degradation.

Plate 1.1: Satellite Image: Serasot, Sebobok, Staas and Skibang in false colour Band 2 (Feb. 2005)
Historically the land ownership in main Bau town was largely Bidayuh-Native Customary Land NCL. By about 1900s half of the district came under the direct administration of the local council when part of the current sub-urban was consequentially converted into lease-hold or non perpetual (transferable on lease). Bau district was in fact part of the domination of the pre-colonial Sarawak or known as Kuching during the reign of the White Rajahs of Sarawak in the later part of 18th century.

The Bidayuh shares common traditional land use culture pattern as other natives that falls under four main categories, namely the 'Menua' which are land around the villages and normally taking the form of contiguous farm land including those created by pioneering ancestors of the villagers. It includes the natural water that runs through it. This land are normally reserved for gaming and hunting and commonly owned by the village community. The second is the further 'Temuda' which is rejuvenating forested land within the territory of the 'menoa'. The third is the damp or formerly cultivated land that are further away from the village where they may practice 'sweden' agriculture and normally with paddy farming. The fourth category is the 'pulau' which are community reserved forest areas serve to provide the community with 'self-regulated' forest resources stock and protects water catchments. (Ngidang, 2003; Chin, I. H.C. 2001)

By tradition, the value of land to the indigenous was once perceived as intrinsic rather than monetary primarily because land was the main source of food and plays essential role in the cultural and social identity the community. For example wealth and status was associated with inheritance of wide tract of land and honorable family provides land for the purpose of community settlement. The community preserved strict moral code or
‘adat’ regulating succession of inheritance in aspect of rights to land ownership along family line to preserve their land for future generations. Today, land enterprisers tend to consider this rustic and ‘conservative’ outlook as impediment to the community own economic progress, and view that the land fallowed within the system as economically idle.

1.2.2 Topography

The area is basically drained by small tributaries and streams that flow eastward into Indonesian side. Serasot, Sebobok and Staas share the same river system where Serasot is being in the upstream. Where as Skibang lies in Pijiru river system that also flows into the Indonesian side.

The topography or surface configuration of the greater of Bau area may be grouped into
2 categories: slightly hilly-undulating midland and hilly-mountainous interior land that extent towards Siburan and Lundu Districts. Midland is characterized by broken hills and undulating land with slopes ranging from 5 to 25 degrees and belongs to Class 3 and 4 categories of USDI Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) land classification system. Class 3 is suitable for development with restricted irrigation. The class 4 has specific deficiencies like slow profile permeability and poor drainage with suitability restricted to rice and acceptable with terracing for oil palm. The class 5 soils are characterized by its steep hilly terrain underlain with laterite depth range at 1-1.5 meters which determine the designation to the soil capability.

The soil type around the research area falls mainly in the Yellow Merit family of the greater Redish-Yellow Podzolic classification. This soil class is normally describe by its cambic or argrillic horizon and not overlain by any Oxic horizon and occur within depth of 150cm of the surface (Tie 1982). Generally by chemical parameters it has clay content between 32-47 percent and organic carbon ranging from 2-3.5 percent in the upper 12cm, average pH of 4.9, and chemical exchange capability ranging from 13-16. The nutrient content level are usually low as expressed by low base saturation (less than 10 percent) and low level of exchangeable for Calcium (1.18%), Magnesium (0.72%), and Potassium (0.3%) (Siong, 2000)

1.2.3 Climate

The climate of Bau area is closely correlated to that of Sarawak's warm and equitable climate, with an average annual temperature of 25.6°C. Bau District falls within the high rainfall zone of the State. Based on Drainage and Irrigation Department hydrological data, Bau District station records mean minimum precipitation of 3629 mm from 1911-2004 and actual 4324mm for 2004. The rainy season or wet monsoon occurs
between the months of October and February, and the months of October and January usually experience the wettest. This indicates that the location lies within monsoon influence and extreme downpours, rendering the soil as susceptible to heavy leaching and degradation in especially steeper deforested areas. Average rainfall above 2500 mm per annum is considered high and detrimental to soil with low vegetative cover. This rainfall level however is favourable for selected crops like oil palm and could also support a considerable amount of hill rice cultivation. With irrigation and construction rain-fed reservoirs, it is possible to cultivate wet paddy in the low lying grounds.

1.2.4 Social History

The Bidayuh people traditionally lived in the hilly areas surrounding Kuching; mostly in the area now defined by the Kuching and Samarahan Divisions. The main concentration of Bidayuh settlements are found in Serian, Lundu, Bau and Kuching districts. Within the Bidayuh ethnic group, there is a number of different dialect groups, between 4 and 7, depending on the definitions used. These language groups tend to differ corresponding to different locations.

History has it that the Bidayuh lived in the area since 150 years ago and continuously been migrating within the western part of Borneo. The Sarawak Annual report 1952 states that the Land Dayaks (referring to the Bidayuh indigenous group) are found mainly in the First Division. The legendary home of these people is believed by many of them to be “Gunung Sungkung” in West Borneo. Close relationship is claimed to exist with people of the same culture in nearby village in West Borneo. This kinship link is the result of some migratory movement across border. It is common place that some Sarawak Bidayuhs have traces of relatives in Kalimantan Indonesia and vice versa.