

SOCIAL SPACE AND OF LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN THE LOAGAN BUNUT NATIONAL PARK, TINJAR, SARAWAK.¹

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Abstract

Loagan Bunut, in a local native language literally means Bunut Lake. In 1990, the Loagan Bunut area, which is located within the Lemiting Forest Reserve, was gazetted as Loagan Bunut National Park (LBNP) under Section 8 (1) of the National Park and Nature Reserve Ordinance in 1998. It has been a general conception prior to the establishment of LBNP that the forest, land, rivers and streams, mountains and wildlife were perceived as a common property regime by the stakeholders who depended on these natural resources for their livelihood. They have a commonly accepted cultural principle of reciprocity as far as inter-ethnic relations and sharing of natural resources are concerned, and the two have been regulated by and through their cultural institutions as defined by the *adat* system of three respective ethnic groups. But the state-determined park boundaries have changed the structure of socially constructed space where these three Sarawak ethnic groups – the Iban, Berawan and Penan - have cohabited for a very long time. Even though it may be socially acceptable to brush aside the plight of the Iban because they are considered as new comers to the area, ignoring the Penan community by giving exclusive fishing rights and access to land and control over other natural resources in favor of the Berawan, may not necessarily be morally realistic, considering the fact the Penan have been hunting and gathering in the area and have burial sites to prove their co-existence with the Berawan since the 1800s. The purpose of this paper is to examine how this externally sponsored monopoly has impacted the livelihood of the Penan and Iban longhouse communities in LBNP.

Key Words: Space, territory, boundaries, co-existence, property rights and ethnicity.

1. Introduction

The politics of resource control (Leigh, 2001) and "sustainability" (Majid-Cooke, 1997) related to tropical rain forests and land took center stage during the 1970s and 1990s. Because land and forestry are state matters in Malaysia's federalism (Majid-Cooke, 1997), influence and power flow through hegemonic relation underpins the timber politics of the Sarawak's tropical rain forests (Colcherster and Lohmann, 1995; Majid-Cooke, 1997). Apparently, a direct social, cultural and ecological impact of the timber

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