

KENYAH SOCIETY IN TRANSITION: A BARAM CASE STUDY

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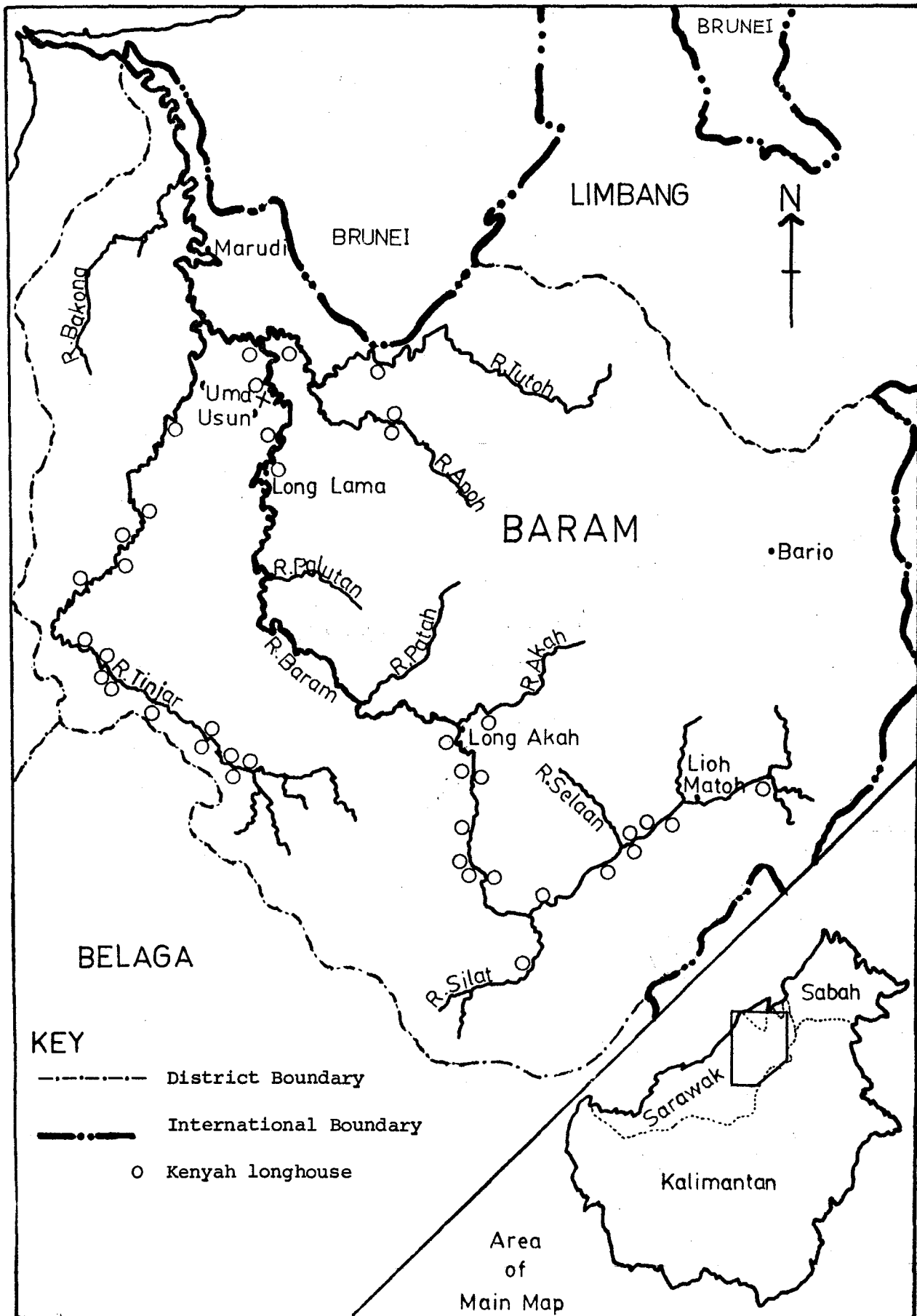
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Sketch Map of the BARAM DISTRICT



BRUNEI

LIMBANG



Marudi

BRUNEI

R. Bakong

'Umd Usun'

R. Tutoh

Long Lama

R. Apoh

BARAM

•Bario

R. Palutan

R. Patah

R. Akah

R. Tinjar

R. Baram

Long Akah

Lioh Match

R. Selan

BELAGA

R. Silat

Sabah

Sarawak

Kalimantan

Ringkasan Tesis

Tujuan tesis ini adalah untuk mengkaji organisasi ekonomi, sosial dan politik tradisional Uma Usun, satu masyarakat rumah-panjang Kenyah yang berdekatan dengan Sungei Baram di Bahagian keempat Sarawak, dan perubahan-perubahan organisasi ini, akibat dari tekanan interaksi masyarakat ini dengan ekonomi pasaran moden. Kesan-kesan ekonomi secara langsung akibat dari interaksi ini telah mengakibatkan satu penambahan perdagangan dan ekonomi kewangan dan pengenalan tanam-tanaman dan sistem penanaman baru, dan ini pula mengakibatkan perubahan dalam penggunaan tanah dalam kampung itu. Suatu premise utama kajian ini ialah perubahan-perubahan dalam sistem pengeluaran telah mengakibatkan perubahan-perubahan penting dalam sistem pelapisan sosial tradisional, pimpinan politik dan kepercayaan-kepercayaan yang mempunyai kaitan dengan bentuk sosio-budaya cara hidup orang-orang Kenyah.

Tesis ini pada mulanya mengidentifikasikan ciri-ciri utama ekonomi tradisional yang telah berasaskan kepada pertanian pindah (swidden). Berikut ialah huraian peredaran pertanian pindah (swidden). Dalam sistem pengeluaran tradisional terdapat suatu sistem buruh kerjasama atau sistem buruh komuniti, buruh paksaan (tribute labour) dan buruh hamba-abdi yang telah mencerminkan hubungan-hubungan ekonomi yang tertentu di antara kumpulan-kumpulan sosial atau kelas-kelas dalam masyarakat itu. Hak-hak dan tanggung-

jawab-tanggung-jawab yang berkait dengan proses buruh telah menjadi asas bagi sistem pelapisan sosial tradisional. Perbezaan-perbezaan dalam peringkat penguasaan faktor-faktor pengeluaran (terutamanya tanah dan buruh) juga telah mengakibatkan perbezaan-perbezaan dalam kuantiti keluaran yang dapat diperolehi oleh kumpulan-kumpulan.

Kelas bangsawannya, keta eu, telah berjaya menguasai lebih ini diguna juga menjadi sasaran kajian ini. Ahli-ahli keluarga bangsawan merupakan kumpulan yang terbesar diantara kelunan latak, atau majlis kampung, yang bertanggung-jawab membuat keputusan-keputusan utama dalam Komuniti ini, seperti peperangan, pertanian dan proses undang-undang.

Sistem lapisan sosial telah dipertahankan oleh suatu pandangan dunia (world view) yang dikenali sebagai adet Kenyah. Tesis ini bertujuan menunjukkan bagaimana organisasi sosial selaras dengan perhubungan-perhubungan ekonomi asas masyarakat itu, dan bagaimana susunan moral berpadan dengan sistem pengeluaran ekonomi. Adet merupakan suatu falsafah hidup yang meliputi aspek-aspek ekonomi, politik dan ugama dan ia merupakan mekanisme yang menyatupadukan semua interaksi sosial. Sistem kepercayaan ini juga meliputi alam ghaib, dan dengan itu merupakan sebagai pandangan dunia yang menyeluruh untuk komuniti ini dari segi duniawi dan kepercayaan ini telah diperkukuhkan lagi kerana masyarakat Kenyah tradisional telah terpencil dan bersendirian (self-contained), dan perdagangan telah memainkan peranan yang kecil dalam aktiviti ekonomi kampung itu.

Kajian ini meneliti perubahan-perubahan organisasi komuniti Uma Usun dari zaman tradisional hingga ke masa kini. Ia menun-

jukkan pengaruh sistem pasaran kewangan yang kian bertambah dan keruntuhan adet secara beransur-ansuran sebagai akibatnya. Kajian ini meneliti perubahan-perubahan ekonomi, politik dan sosio-budaya dan sistem organisasi tradisional dibezakan dengan sistem masa kini. Perubahan-perubahan yang telah berlaku dipercepatkan, terutamanya, oleh Brooke dan selepas itu oleh pemerintahan penjajah, dan kemasukan Sarawak ke dalam Malaysia. Ini telah ditunjukkan dengan pengenalan penanaman getah dan pengeluaran tanaman-tanaman tunai yang telah mengubah corak-corak penggunaan tanah, pemilikan tanah, dan proses buruh. Perubahan-perubahan ekonomi ini telah mengakibatkan kesan-kesan keatas aspek-aspek lain dan perkara-perkara ini dikaji secara mendalam dalam tesis ini.

Bersama-sama dengan ekonomi moden, suatu sistem kewibawaan luar telah dikenakan keatas sistem kewibawaan tradisional. Untuk memudahkan perdagangan dengan kawasan dalaman, kerajaan British/Inggeris dibawah keluarga Brookes telah terpaksa memberhentikan peperangan-peperangan yang selalu berlaku di antara puak-puak yang saling bermusuhan ini telah dapat ditentukan melalui perjanjian-perjanjian perdamaian, undang-undang dan dasar-dasar yang telah dipengerusikan oleh wakil-wakil Brooke, dan telah dilaksanakan oleh pentadbir-pentadbir dan kakitangan-kakitangan pelaksanaan undang-undang. Pentadbiran negeri telah beransur membangun ke kawasan dalaman, menegakkan dasar-dasarnya ke atas sebahagian besar cara hidup dalam komuniti itu. Pentadbiran yang telah berkembang di peringkat kampung telah diselenggarakan oleh pemimpin-pemimpin tradisional yang sekarang telah menjadi wakil-wakil kerajaan.

Dengan ini pemimpin-pemimpin komunitas yang pada suatu masa dulu mempunyai kuasa-kuasa otonomi membuat keputusan, sekarang terpaksa mengikut dasar-dasar suatu kuasa luar; kekuasaan tidak lagi berasaskan kepada komunitas mereka tetapi kepada pihak kerajaan negeri. Pengikisan kewibawaan tradisional bertambah lagi akibat dari kemasyarakatan komunitas ini ke agama Kristian, dan ini telah memusnahkan kepercayaan bahawa pemimpin-pemimpin tradisional mereka mempunyai kuasa-kuasa ghaib. Kesemua ini telah mengancam sistem politik tradisional komunitas itu, dan pemimpin-pemimpinnya terpaksa bertindak balas secara positif dan juga secara negatif kepada situasi ini.

Dalam masyarakat Kenyah tradisional, perhubungan-perhubungan keluarga dan kekeluargaan adalah rapat dan ini adalah kerana keluarga merupakan unit asas pengeluaran. Oleh kerana itu, tiap-tiap ahli keluarga mempunyai peranan-peranan tertentu yang meliputi tanggung jawab-tanggung jawab ekonomi, keluarga, agama dan komunitas. Ibubapa sesuatu keluarga memainkan kedua-dua peranan sebagai ketua dalam pengeluaran dan ketua aktiviti-aktiviti keluarga, dan ahli-ahli generasi muda terpaksa mengikut perintah-perintah dan kemahuan-kemahuan kaum tua, dan keseluruhan rangkaian perintah dan sistem hak-hak dan nilai dikuasai oleh adet.

Dengan terbukanya komunitas ini kepada sistem ekonomi dan politik moden, tiap-tiap ahli keluarga boleh mencari pekerjaan di sektor moden (misalnya balak), dan kanak-kanak dan belia mempunyai peluang mendapat pelajaran di luar kampung ini. Peluang-peluang yang disediakan untuk mendapat pekerjaan dan pelajaran bermakna bahawa generasi baru tidak lagi bergantung kepada komunitasnya untuk

menyara hidup. Juga, pendedahan kepada kebudayaan moden apabila sedang bekerja atau belajar di kawasan-kawasan bandar dan kawasan-kawasan lain telah mengubah nilai-nilai generasi baru. Pembebasan ekonomi telah mengakibatkan keruntuhan asas adet sebagai suatu sistem hak dalam sistem pengeluaran sementara penyeresapan nilai kebudayaan baru telah mengakibatkan kehilangan pengaruh sistem adet ke atas kaum mudanya. Dengan ini, susunan sosial, ekonomi, politik dan kebudayaan tradisional telah mengalah di bawah tekanan ekonomi pasaran moden dan institusi-institusi pentadbiran dan politik yang telah mengiringnya.



Thesis Abstract

The purpose of the thesis is to examine the traditional economic, social and political organisation of Uma Usun, a Kenyah Longhouse village community on the Baram River in the Fourth Division of Sarawak, and the transformation of this organisation under the impact of the community's interaction with the modern market economy. The direct economic effects of this interaction resulted in a rapid increase in trade and monetisation and the introduction of new crops and cropping systems, giving rise to changes in village land use. A major premise in this study is that changes in the system of production in the village have given rise to important modifications in the traditional system of social stratification, political leadership and beliefs related to the socio-cultural pattern of the Kenyah way of life.

Initially the thesis identifies the dominant features of the traditional economy which was based primarily on swidden agriculture. The agricultural processes of the swidden cycle are thus described. Within the traditional system of production there existed a system of family labour, cooperative or community labour, tribute labour, and slave labour which were expressive of certain economic relations between social groups or classes in the society. The rights and obligations connected to the labour process were the basis for the traditional system of social stratification. Differences in the level of command over the factors of production (mainly

land and labour) also gave rise to the differences in the quantity of products which different individuals and groups could enjoy.

The aristocrat class, the keta eu, managed to control the bulk of surplus produced; how this surplus was utilised is also a subject of investigation. Members of the aristocracy formed the majority among the kelunan latak, or village council responsible for the making of the major decisions in the community, such as war, agriculture and the judiciary process.

The social stratification and leadership system was sustained by a world view known as Kenyah adet. The thesis attempts to show how the social organisation was consistent with the basic economic relations within the society, and how the moral order was compatible with the economic system of production. Adet comprised a philosophy of life covering economic, political and religious aspects and it was the integrative mechanism for all social interaction. This belief system also encompassed the supernatural realm, hence constituting for the community a coherent world view in both secular and sacred terms. This was further reinforced as traditional Kenyah society was self-contained and insulated, with trade playing only a minor role in the economic activity of the village.

The study traces changes in the organisation of the Uma Usun community from the traditional period to the present. It illustrates the increasing influence of a monetised market system and the gradual breakdown of adet as a result. The study deals with economic, political and socio-cultural change where the tra-

ditional system of organisation is contrasted with the present system. The changes that have taken place were mainly under the catalyst of Brooke and later Colonial rule, and Sarawak's entry into Malaysia. It was manifested in the introduction of rubber cultivation and the production of other cash crops which altered patterns of land use, land ownership, and the labour process. These economic changes had important ramifying effects on other aspects of the society, and these are examined in detail in the thesis.

Together with the modern economy, an external authority system was superimposed on the traditional authority system. To facilitate trade with the interior, the British regime under the Brookes, had to end the constant state of warfare between rival tribes. This was done through peace agreements, laws and policies presided over by the Brooke representatives, and enforced through administrators and law-enforcement personnel. Gradually the State administration expanded more and more into the interior, imposing its policies over wide spheres of life in the community. The expanded administration at village level was manned by traditional chiefs who thus were transformed into government agents. Hence community chiefs who once enjoyed autonomous powers of decision-making now had to follow policies of an outside force; their source of power no longer lay on the community but on the larger State. Further erosion of traditional authority was the result of the conversion of the community to Christianity, which destroyed the belief in the supernatural qualities of the traditional leaders. All these

threatened the traditional village political system, and leaders were forced to react both positively and negatively to the situation.

In traditional Kenyah society, family and kinship relations were closely knit as the family constituted the basic unit of production. Hence, each member of the family had well-defined roles which encompassed economic, household, religious and communal chores. The parents combined the roles of chief in production and household activities, and hence the younger generation followed the orders and wishes of the elders, and the entire chain of command and system of rights and values were sanctioned by adet.

With the opening of the community to the modern economic and political system, individual members of the family could now seek employment from the modern sector (e.g. timber), while children and youths had access to State education outside the village. The opportunities provided for outside employment and education meant that the rising generation no longer were dependent on the community for a living. Moreover exposure to modern culture while working or studying in the urban or outside areas changed the values of the younger generation. Hence economic independence resulted in the collapse of the basis of adet as a system of rights in production while the adoption of new cultural values resulted in adet losing its ideological influence over the young. In this way the traditional social, economic, political and cultural order was giving way under the impact of the modern market economy and the administrative and political institutions that accompanied it.

Preface

In this thesis, I have used fictitious names for the people and villages directly related to this study. Hence Uma Usun the village of study, Bawang Tau and Long Bau the neighbouring villages are assumed names, as are some related names of lakes and rivers which might give away the identity of the village studied. All other villages in the Baram retain their real names. All the names of people mentioned, regardless of the villages they come from are however fictitious.

The ideas which have emerged in the writing of this thesis have come a long way from the earlier thoughts and aims I had when first I immersed myself in this task. This thesis was written between June 1976 and February 1977. From the first seminal ideas to the final printed word, this thesis has seen the contributions and assistance of many people. Not only has this laid open a deeper insight into and understanding of the problem, it has also sharpened my knowledge and analysis in the study of a society like Uma Usun. Most of all this has given me a purpose to continue, and the deep satisfaction that it has been done. However, this thesis remains my sole work and effort, and whatever shortcomings that appear, is solely mine much as I would have liked to minimize and improve on them if not for the time and financial constraints imposed thereon.

To the Kuok and Sarawak Foundations, which financed the research in Sarawak, I would like to express my thanks, especially to the latter which also kindly provided me accomodation when I was

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This thesis would not have been possible without the hospitality, warmth and cooperation of the peoples of the Baram especially the villagers of Uma Usun. For all their faith and effort I truly hope I have lived up to their trust in attempting to draw a better understanding of the people and a way of life, which is fast fading. I shall not forget the delightful boat-trips back and forth from Marudi thanks to Ah Peng who not only extended to me the hospitality of his boat but his home and family as well. To all those in the Kubu, the Post Office, the Malarial Eradication Unit in the Health Department and all others who have made my sojourn in the Baram a most memorable one in one way or the other, I wish to say terima kaseh.

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U.S.M.

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Part I

THE BACKGROUND

CHAPTER I

AN OVERVIEW: CONCEPTS AND THEMES,LITERATURE AND METHODOLOGY

This thesis is a study of the processes of social change in a rural community in Sarawak. In this thesis social change refers to changes occurring in institutional structures within a society, and to the transformation of human relationships that result from such institutional changes. In the past century, rapid change has taken place in the underdeveloped countries of the world as a result of the exposure of small-scale tribal and peasant societies to ^{the} market economy and modern bureaucratic government introduced by technologically superior Western forces. This has often led to the transformation of the traditional economic, political and socio-cultural systems of these communities. In the process of these rapid, even traumatic, institutional changes, these communities were forced out of their isolation, lost their autonomy and became dependent parts of the world market system.

In this thesis, an attempt is made to analyse the traditional socio-economic, political and cultural institutions of a Kenyah community and to show how the market economy and bureaucratic administration introduced under Brooke rule and further developed under British rule and Sarawak's entry into Malaysia, transformed these traditional institutions, and hence

the relationships between social classes, groups and individuals in the community. This introductory chapter comprises three parts:

- 1) a discussion of the dominant concepts and themes of this thesis;
- 2) a brief review of the available literature on Sarawak and of the contribution this thesis hopes to make to it; and
- 3) an account of the methodology used in this thesis.

CONCEPTS AND THEMES

Key Concepts

This thesis is a study of the traditional institutions of the Kenyah and the changes occurring in these institutions as a result of their coming into contact with Western economies and political forces, administration and culture. In this section, the dominant concepts and themes of the thesis are introduced and explained.

Throughout the thesis the term 'traditional' refers to elements of the institutions of Kenyah society which existed in the period immediately prior to the advent of Brooke rule in Sarawak. In so far as these elements still persisted in the period of Brooke rule, or still persists today, they can also be termed 'traditional'.

One fundamental concept of this thesis is that the economic, political and socio-cultural institutions of society are closely inter-related. This concept is of course widely accepted in anthropology, as well as other social sciences. Writing of tribal societies, Gluckman, for instance, points out that "...There is a systematic interdependence running from the structure of economic and social relations, to ideas of property and types of economic exchange, political processes, ideas of law and morals, and ritual beliefs and practices" (Gluckman 1965:pxxv). If society comprises people whose lives are regulated by inter-related institutions, then a proper understanding of the processes taking place in a society requires a perception of these inter-relationships.

While the inter-relatedness of institutions is widely-accepted, there is no agreement as to the nature of this inter-relatedness. The perspective adopted in this thesis is that conditions under which people make a living have a dominating influence over patterns of leadership. The existence of a community presupposes that its members adhere to some arrangements by which basic necessities are procured through the process of exploiting the natural environment. In traditional society, hunting, gathering, fishing, simple agriculture and handicraft are activities through which members of a society obtain the food, shelter and clothing necessary to their

survival. In the process of appropriating from nature, or of production, members of a society interact with one another in a manner determined by the laws of the particular economic system they are in. Dalton explains this point as follows:

"All societies have some type of systematic economic structure for the following reasons: the exploitation of natural resources requires the use of technique for the acquisition or creation of material goods (horticulture, farming, hunting, manufacture). The use of technique and of natural resources together with the need for distributing material goods among all the inhabitants, requires definite institutional arrangements - structured rules of the game - to assure continuity of supply, that is, to assure repetition of performance. The participants are mutually dependent for other reasons as well: the use of technology, division of labour, natural environment, and the fact that economic processes take place within a social community - all make necessary recognised rights and obligations. It is the rules which integrate the use of natural resources and technique and assure continual cooperation in the provision of material goods that we call an economic "system". Mutual dependence among persons is structured in all economies, but, of course, may be structured very differently in different economies" (Dalton 1971:p49).

An economic system comprises a particular combination of man, technology and the natural environment. This operates within the framework of a set of laws, oral or written, or "rules of the game". In most tribal societies, the "rules of the game" are structured such that the rights to control over the "use of natural resources and technique" are not distributed equally. This inequality in the control over the process of production, and consequently in the distribution of the output

produced, is the basis for these societies being stratified into social classes.

In this thesis, a 'class' is taken to mean a group of people whose members share a similar position in relation to ownership or control over the means of production. 'Means of production' can be defined as the resources used in the process of production, such as land, labour and various tools. The existence of separate classes arises from differences in ownership and control of or rights to these means of production. The class that is able to control more of these means of production or the dominant class is also able to obtain a larger say in the production process and in the distribution of the products.

To understand the relationship between the various classes, the concept of surplus¹ is important. 'Surplus' can be defined as the difference between what is produced and what is consumed by the direct producer. This surplus can either be enjoyed by the producer himself (for instance in the form of fashioning tools or investment goods) or by someone else. In a stratified society, a large part of the surplus of the producers is obtained by the dominant class. In tribal societies, this transfer of surplus usually takes place during the process of production. In these societies, land and labour were the crucial

¹The concept of surplus used here is derived from Baran (1957: 132-157).

factors in the production process. The ability to control labour meant the ability to use more land and hence obtain more output. To understand the production process, therefore, an analysis must be made of the type of labour processes² existing in the society. Some important forms of labour process which are relevant to this thesis are as follows:

(1) Slave labour: Labour services which slaves perform for their masters or members of the dominant class who own the slaves and thus control the total product of the slaves' labour as well as the slaves' liberty. The slaves are fed and sheltered by their masters.

(2) Tribute or Corvec labour: the labour services which a subordinate class of commoners had to contribute to a chief, ruler or members of a dominant class for which the dominant class rendered protection and aid in return. This tribute labour comprised only a fraction of the total labour available to the commoners, the remainder of which was performed for themselves.

(3) Community labour: labour services contributed by members of a community for its own maintenance, such as labour expended in repairing the community's water supply, or shrines or in defence against invaders.

²For an elaboration of types of labour processes and their significance in analysing a social structure, refer to Terray (1972:99-100).

(4) Family labour: labour controlled and performed by members of a family group constituting a unit of production with access to its own means of production and control over what it produces.

(5) Wage labour: labour performed in a market economy by a class of workers who do not own or control their own means of production. They work for employers or owners who pay them a wage. The output is shared between the workers (who get wages) and the employers (who get profits).

Traditional Society

In traditional Kenyah society, there were three classes - aristocrats, commoners and slaves. The aristocrats obtained a larger share in the distribution of the products of the community because they owned slaves, and controlled their labour, as well as controlling the corvee labour of the commoners. This was the basis for the traditional social system in Kenyah society which is elaborated in chapter three.

Traditional Kenyah society can be called a subsistence or marketless economy. In marketless economies, according to Dalton:

"...No appreciable quantities of labour or land are hired or sold - there are no resource markets - nor are there market sites for the buying and selling of produce. In primitive economies with peripheral markets only small quantities of produce are sold in face-to-face transactions at market sites; but most people do not depend for livelihood

on such sales, and the market-place prices do not affect the production decisions of subsistence producers. We shall include two other features as defining such subsistence economies: modern machine technology and applied science are not used in production processes; and traditional social organization and cultural practices remain in force" (Dalton 1967:p156).

Besides the self-subsistent nature of this economy, there are other important features: the family as the basic unit of production, cooperation among families in the process of production and 'reciprocity' and 'redistribution' in the distribution of the surplus output. According to Sahlins,

"The family is as such directly engaged in the economic process, and largely in control of it. Its own inner relations, as between husband and wife, parent and child, are relations of production. What goods the people produce, as well as how their labour is allocated, are for the most part domestic stipulations. The decisions are taken with a view to domestic needs: production is geared to familial requirements" (Sahlins 1968:p75).

In Kenyah society, the lamin family was the basic unit in traditional longhouse social organization, as well as in production. It had rights over its own plots of land, shared out the tasks among members of the family, controlled its own labour process and shared in the enjoyment of the products. In the act of production, family units engaged in various forms of labour exchange among themselves, as in sowing and harvesting. This was an efficient and even necessary method of cooperation in swidden agriculture. In the distribution of the output, two processes of disposal of surplus output have been

noted: reciprocity (or gift-giving and counter gift-giving among commoner families) and redistribution (or the re-channeling of part of the dominant class' surplus back to the subordinate classes). Hence 'reciprocity' took place between members of the same class and 'redistribution' between members of different classes. These two processes were present in traditional Kenyah society, and described in chapter 4. Given the nature of the traditional Kenyah society, there were very few ways in which surplus can be converted into savings or 'reinvested' in the commercial sense. Hence a large part of it took the form of reciprocal exchange or redistribution. This exchange, which arose from the structure of the economy, was couched in obligatory terms and made a virtue of cooperation and generosity. As Gluckman points out:

"...This spirit of generosity...has to be referred to the general 'economic' situation which ...was basic to the structure of all tribal societies. Given the limitations of that situation it was impossible to use goods - even productive tools - to raise one's own standard of living and there was no point in hoarding" (Gluckman 1971:p51).

A system of values arose in which reputation was enhanced not by accumulating possessions but by giving them away.

The interrelatedness of the various institutions in self-subsistent societies can be seen in the relationships between the economic, the political and the socio-cultural spheres. These are the three areas under study in this thesis.

If political leadership means authority to make major decisions affecting the community and the control of mechanisms of maintaining law and order, then it is clear that authority is held by the dominant economic class in tribal societies. "Higher social standing was associated with both greater control over productive resources and with greater claims on the labour of others" (Gluckman 1971:p72). The control of surplus by the dominant class enables them to control material resources which can either maintain a following or influence the members of the community, on both. As mentioned earlier, part of the surplus accruing to the dominant class is redistributed back to their subordinates in the form of community services, feasts, gifts and aid in times of distress. Hence a system of reciprocity exists - in which the commoners pay tribute to the chiefs who use this surplus "...For its own maintenance, to provide community services (such as defence or feasts), to reward those who have rendered specific services, and as an emergency source of subsistence in time of personal or community disaster" (Schapera c.f. Dalton 1968:p158). Hence "...They turn economic imbalance to political inequality" (Sahlins 1968:p88). Surplus thus gave the dominant class the economic basis not only for a higher standard of living but also for the patronage it wielded in the community and the domestic and military services it could command. In his study of the pre-colonial Malay States Gullick noted that political power rested on the

control of manpower. The material surplus that accrued to the Malay chief was re-directed to his armed following and domestic servants which in turn provided for military security and personal comforts respectively (Gullick 1965:125-126).

In the process of production in tribal societies, there is ~~much~~ interaction and cooperation among families, and among individuals within families. These close-knitted relationships are also reflected in the cultural life of the people. Social relationships are determined by rights and obligations which a family adheres to, these depending on its position in the social hierarchy. Hence the commoners pay tribute to the aristocrats, show respect in their presence, listen to their bidding and obey their orders. In return the aristocrats are expected to exhibit benevolence, charity and mercy to their subordinates, as well as make wise decisions affecting the community. Among commoners the close cooperation in economic activities and reciprocal exchange of gifts is reflected in their generosity and mutual cooperation in household chores and activities, the raising of children, the preparing of feasts and celebrations and participation in ceremonies such as deaths and weddings. This mutual dependence between families is also seen among individuals within a family. Since the basic production unit is the family, there is a overlapping between kinship and production relations. Hence the men or women are not just

husband and wife but co-partners in work and they together are not only parents but educators and supervisors in the children's economic activity. In this respect the children's reliance on their parents is twofold. That is, the family unit not only socializes them into the community's culture but also trains them to assume its economic functions. This differs from the modern nuclear family in the free enterprise system in which the children are educated in school and often economically independent from their parents when they start working. Hence in this closed Kenyah society, every individual had a place, knew his rights and obligations and performed them accordingly.

In Kenyah society, this unified economic, political and socio-cultural system was sustained and internalized through a belief system known as adet. The notion of adet or cognate concepts is common to societies of insular South East Asia, especially those of the Malay-Indonesian world in which it is known as adat. Adet is both a moral and religious system; its religious and moral aspects were inseparable. Hence the system of morals was given a religious quality, and religion implied the practice of a moral code of behaviour. Kenyah adet involved rules, canons and sanctions accepted by the whole community and applied in all fields of life, economic, social, religious and political. When asked "What is adet?", a Kenyah would say, "It is the Kenyah way of life, how we live and become farmers. It is our adet to plant rice and live in the longhouse." Thus

adet was a universally shared world-view or ideology which regulated the behaviour of members of the community, and specified the rights and obligations of each social strata in Kenyah society. But socialization alone does not ensure that values will be upheld by all members. Adet had not only to be accepted but needed to be systematically enforced and breaches in community^{life} redressed. This was possible because there were mechanisms of enforcement within the community. Through the control of the courts and public opinion in the community, the village elders and the aristocrats were able in their judicial decisions, penalties and their speeches to the people, to interpret and enforce adet in the community. Village elders were constantly reminding the people what was wrong and right and what kinds of behaviour were expected of them. They were told to display generosity among neighbours, to listen to the village elders and to be good farmers. Kenyah way of life gave rise to Kenyah adet and adet in turn ensured its continued existence, including fulfilment of the tribute, the patron-client relationships and thus the social hierarchy.

Social Change

When traditional subsistence societies came into contact with Western systems of production, in many places under Colonial Rule, the traditional structures within these societies were altered. This was especially so when subsistence farmers

left their communities and worked for large-scale capitalist enterprises such as plantations, hence being transformed from farmers with their own means of production into wage labourers working for private businessmen. As Dalton points out, this was significant not only in that these farmers lost control over their means of production,

"...but they come to depend for their livelihood on the impersonal market sale of their labour. Material income thereby depends upon forces, people, and institutions outside of and not controlled by the indigenous social community. Work becomes a thing apart from the other aspects of life, organized as a separate association, and not merely one facet of community life" (Dalton 1967:p78).

This disruption of the community's economic and social relations also applied to those who remained farmers but switched from subsistence agriculture to cash cropping on their own land. In ^{they developed} this case/a new dependency on the external market and on a chain of traders and middlemen. As Dalton puts it,

"Here they own the instruments of production, but like the wage labourers also come to depend for their livelihood on market sale for a money income. The latter mode of entering the exchange economy can be as disruptive to indigenous social and economic organization as wage labour, and for the same reasons. It is not alienation from the means of production which is socially divisive, but rather the dependence upon impersonal market forces unrelated to indigenous social control; the separating of economy from society by divorcing resource allocation, work arrangement, and product disposition from expressions of social obligation. And, to be sure, the consequent loss of socially guaranteed subsistence, as well" (Dalton 1967:p78).

In the South East Asian context, Jacoby elaborates this phenomenon as follows:

"The introduction of the Western money economy, however, slowly dissolved the self sufficient village economy, and foreign trade and foreign ideas disturbed the established equilibria within the indigenous society. Almost everywhere peasants turned from subsistence farming to the cultivation of cash crops and became involved thereby in the price fluctuations of the world market and in the system of dependent economy. The degree to which they became involved naturally varied from country to country, but nobody remained unaffected - not even the farmers who were still engaged in pure subsistence farming" (Jacoby 1961:p8).

The free-market system introduced by the Westerners gave rise to the formation of the new classes within the indigenous society, such as the businessmen, traders, professionals, and workers. Those who did not participate directly in the capitalist system were also affected by the introduction of cash-cropping and changes in the land tenure system, which were encouraged by the Colonial Government or the State. What usually happened was that the group most likely to take advantage of government schemes such as subsidies for cash cropping, were the dominant families who through manipulating their economic and political power were able to profit most from the schemes (Jacoby 1961:p30). In the past much of the surplus was redistributed back to the villagers. Now because of the new economic system, surplus could be used to buy more land or to

invest in business enterprises or earn interest from savings. Hence the leaders were now able to combine the role of traditional leaders as well as businessmen. On the other hand the subordinate classes who were in no position to venture into business, were often made worse off because of the fluctuations in the price of the crop and their freedom to open land was reduced by Colonial land laws. As a result, the distribution of wealth and income within the community became more unequal. For instance, in his study of Malay villages, Husin Ali shows that the expansion of cashcrops, the money economy and the restriction of land, led to the increasing concentration of land ownership among the wealthy families and to a situation of landlessness among the poor families (S. Husin Ali 1972: 104-106).

In Sarawak, under Brooke administration, no large-scale capitalist agricultural enterprises were established although there was some business in trade and mining. Hence in the Brooke and Colonial period, the main form of changes in Kenyah economy came in the shift to cash cropping, primarily of rubber, rather than the conversion of farmers to wage labour. In the process of change in cropping patterns, the aristocrats, having greater control over labour and land resources, were better equipped to take advantage of these changes. However not all aristocrats were able to gain equally and hence economic differentiation even among them widened. The differen-

tiation of the successful aristocrats from the unsuccessful aristocrats as well as from the commoners increased with the development of private enterprises by the successful aristocrats, for example the setting up of the syarikat (trading cooperative) and rice-milling business. Although such businesses were found in the community they were small scale in comparison to the timber industry that penetrated into the Baram in recent years (see chapter 2). These timber enterprises run by big non-native businessmen use expensive machinery such as chain-saws and bulldozers, and employ large numbers of natives, as wage labourers. Thus Kenyah society is more and more drawn into relationships of "dependence upon impersonal market forces unrelated to indigenous social control". One major consequence has been a diminishing observance of reciprocity among commoners and redistribution of surplus by the aristocrats, with wider ramifications for political and social relations.

The introduction of Western economic institutions came concomitantly with new political and bureaucratic institutions which were necessary to implement and enforce Colonial policies. This machinery penetrated to even the most remote of these communities. This resulted in a major change in the nature of village leadership. Under Western rule, traditional leaders were given new roles as government representatives, with the function of communicating with the external authori-

ties. These chiefs lost their autonomous authority and became political middlemen and brokers (Bailey 1970:167-176). As Schapera notes, this contributed to the breakdown of the tribal system in South Africa:

"The chiefs were still recognised by the Europeans as a means of government, but their jurisdiction, more particularly in criminal matters, was gradually transferred to European magistrates and commissioners. They were induced to accept fixed salaries from the government, in return for which they had to surrender their right to fines imposed on their people...In this way the chiefs were deprived both of their most important functions in native life and of the chief source by which they derived revenue from their people" (Schapera 1928:pl49-150).

The predicament of the Modern African Chief in trying to adjust roles from tribal leader to government representative is also noted by Fallers (1955:290-305). Husin Ali in his study of Malay village society notes that with the spread of party politics after independence the role of the traditional village chief diminishes even further.

"The elders, religious functionaries and even the village headman are on the decline. As traditional leaders, they perform roles that are required within the framework of a traditional society. However, changes taking place in the rural society are slowly modifying the social structure, altering economic relations and transforming the patterns of leadership" (S. Husin Ali 1975:pl66-167).

In Kenyah society the aristocratic chiefs were co-opted into government service during Brooke rule and continue in this

capacity today. One important source of lending legitimacy or acceptance of their leadership, that is the redistribution of their surplus, has been removed. The chiefs' new middlemen status in which they have to balance the community's demands with the limited ability of the government to comply has further eroded their authority. Another loss of power was the transfer of criminal cases to the government court, leaving only civil cases in the village court, the decisions of which could now also be appealed against. These phenomena are discussed in chapter 8.

These changes in the economic and political spheres had ramifications in the socio-cultural life of the people. In the relationship between aristocrat and commoner the redistributive system which affirmed the patronage of the aristocrats to commoners disintegrated in many tribal societies. Hence the commoners became disillusioned with the traditional leaders and respect for them dwindled. As Schapera noted in the South African case,

"The economic reciprocity which entered so strongly into the relations between chief and subjects, and which formed one of the vital features of the native economic system, has broken down almost completely. The chief no longer plays the part of tribal banker: his function as the holder and distributor of all the surplus wealth has been obliterated by the new economic forces" (Schapera 1928:p150).

In Kenyah society these changes in the chief-commoner relation-

ship also occurred resulting in the loosening of the traditional close bonds between the two classes.

Another feature which has arisen is the increasing individualism and competitiveness among families. According to Schapera the accumulation of wealth became a motive in the lives of the natives:

"The ordinary Native, by his contact with the European economic system, learned the meaning of thrift and of personal property; new wants were created, and so were the means of satisfying them; and as the range of personal possessions increased the Natives began to grow reluctant to part with individual gains" (Schapera 1928:p150).

For Kenyah society this phenomenon was manifested in the diminishing of labour exchange in rubber production and gift exchange in consumption goods as well as diminishing participation in traditional community activities such as weddings and funerals.

The traditionally strong ties within the Kenyah family have also loosened due to two main factors: the education of the children in State-run schools, and the employment of these children outside the community. The modern school has entered the Kenyah village, socializing the children according to the values of the outside world, hence arousing their curiosity and desire to experience the life outside the community. This some of the children manage to achieve if they qualify for secondary education in the urban areas. Later, some of the

Kenyah youth would be absorbed in employment outside the village, either as professionals, administrators, teachers or clerks in the urban areas. This means the ties with the family are loosened and the relationships with parents are less significant as the young no longer depend on their elders for training in traditional Kenyah economic activities. The same happens in the case of the young men and women who seek employment as unskilled labour in various capitalistic enterprises such as timber camps, coffee-shops, trading enterprises, ships and the oil companies. Their economic dependence on the village economy generally and the family unit in particular is severed; and they return to the village only occasionally. In their new working and living environment, they are caught in the culture of the outside commercial and consumer society. Schapera notes for the South African case

"...A growing proportion of the native population are drifting away from their own districts and living in or near the towns in which they work. The Natives are beginning to look for permanent rather than temporary labour, and are becoming urban dwellers who do not return to their kraals at all. They are becoming detribalized, in other words, and many of them have ceased to be agriculturalists and herdsmen, and are now primarily industrial labourers...In the towns they acquire new tastes, new habits, and new vices; they return to their kraals profoundly altered, and with an increasing detachment from the old tribal system. They cannot come into contact with the relative freedom of civilized life, enter into individual contracts, and secure earnings formerly undreamt of, and yet retain their old communal ideas and submit to the caprice and exactions of their tribal superiors. In the

kraals also these economic changes are slowly but surely undermining the tribal system. The regular absence at work of the younger men is beginning to leave its mark upon the social life. As long as the period of work away from the kraal was short, the effect was not so serious; but when the intervals began to lengthen the old routine of life had perforce to suffer. Social ties are being weakened, and the families broken up by the long absence of the breadwinner" (Schapera 1928:pl49).

It can be seen that the new system has profoundly altered the class formation in former subsistence economies. In the case of the Kenyah, slavery has been abolished. The aristocrats no longer attain wealth from slave or corvee labour but have derived new forms of surplus from business. Those aristocrats who are not able to succeed in transforming themselves into businessmen or traders are left behind. Those who do succeed, join the ranks of the new business or capitalist class. As for the commoners, most of them remain as individual farmers as in the past. Many of the youths however, have become wage labourers in the booming capitalistic enterprises while the better educated have joined the ranks of the emerging professional and administrative class.

The breakdown of the traditional economic system and its political and socio-cultural consequences are also manifested in the rapidly diminishing acceptance of the traditional adet as a belief system. Part of this is due to the Kenyah's conversion to Christianity, but much of it is due to the fact that

the values of reciprocity and redistribution which formed the moral core of adat are no longer consistent with the new and emerging economic system.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Existing Literature

Sarawak has captured the interest of many writers and travellers who have come into contact with the country some time or other, even before European conquest. Most of the early writings on Sarawak were however of an exotic and specialized nature, such as on vegetation and wild life, for example, Beccari (1904), Wallace (1913); or comprised travellers' reports which were often sketchy impressions of places visited and people seen, for example, Spencer St. John (1862). Such impressionistic writing dominated especially during Brooke rule. There were however also other writers who were interested in features of tribal life and social organization. The most notable example is Roth (1896) who completed the most comprehensive compendium of Sarawak native art and material culture in his two volumes on the natives of Borneo. Some of these writers also made comparative studies of Sarawak and other societies, for example, Fowler (1920) who has even compared Kayan and Kenyah forms of divination with those of the Romans and Etruscans. During Brooke rule, some of the better contributions came

from Brooke administrators. Hose has written extensively and with McDougall in 1912 published two volumes on the 'pagan tribes' of Borneo. Most of the ethnography of these volumes is centred on the Baram peoples namely the Kayan and Kenyah. Hose was a medical doctor by training and a government official by profession, serving in the Baram District for 20 years, including 17 years as Resident, and retiring in 1907. The perspective he had was thus that of a Brooke administrator who saw Brooke rule and policies as generally beneficial to the 'pagan' and 'primitive' peoples he administered. His long experience in the area enabled him to give first hand descriptions of the major historical developments which took place in the Baram, but he does not discuss the effects of these on the social organization and belief systems of these peoples, which he has described separately in great detail. In terms of ethnography it is a major contribution but it lacks content where it comes to analysis of social structures and change. Another contemporary Furness (1902) also contributed a major work on the Baram peoples, emphasizing on Kayan and Kenyah religious customs and describing colourful native ritual. However, there was no attempt to analyse how these were interrelated with tribal political systems, economy and ideology. Nevertheless, the works by Hose and Furness remain important as these were documented during a stage of Baram history when it was first exposed to foreign dominance. It was the beginning of a period of historical transition and gradual