

Development – Led Marginalisation: A Historical Analysis of the Jahai in RPS Air Banun from the Early 1900s to the 1980s

Keterpinggiran Berasaskan Pembangunan Orang Jahai di RPS Air Banun: Satu Analisis Sejarah dari Awal 1900 hingga 1980-an

RONZI MOHD YUSOFF, SHARINA ABDUL HALIM, MUSTAFFA OMAR, JOY JACQUELINE PEREIRA & HOOD SALLEH

ABSTRACT

The Jahai from RPS Air Banun are amongst the indigenous ethnics found in Peninsular Malaysia who still grapple below the stated level of poverty. Various efforts have been initiated with intentions of extracting them from their traditional ways of life in order to live on par amongst the multicultural – multiracial Malaysian population. Even so, fast paced development and urbanization has caused them to be left far behind when compared with their non-indigenous Malaysian counterparts. Despite extensive planning and implementation, development programmes have shown little success in changing their socio-economic status for the better and they have only been further marginalized and threatened by these initiatives. The deterioration in socio-economic status of the Jahai from RPS Air Banun is found to be closely related to the history of this nation's development especially after achieving independence. Rapid urbanization and economic growth during the post-communist period had vastly changed the country's physical landscape, thus changing the lives of the indigenous minority whose livelihood was still greatly dependant on natural resources. By employing the historical perspective, this paper examines the socio-economic status of the Jahai in RPS Air Banun who still live below the poverty level even after three decades of involvement in the Orang Asli Resettlement Programme.

Keywords: Jahai; socio-economic; period of emergency; Resettlement Programme

ABSTRAK

Jahai di RPS Air Banun merupakan antara kelompok peribumi di Semenanjung Malaysia yang masih hidup di bawah paras kemiskinan. Tahap sosioekonomi mereka yang masih lagi rendah menjadikan mereka komuniti yang hidup dalam keadaan terancam. Sebagai warga minoriti, mereka sering dipersalahkan apabila usaha-usaha pembangunan yang dirancang tidak membuahkan kejayaan. Namun sejarah telah membuktikan bahawa kemerosotan hidup warga peribumi hampir di seluruh dunia adalah disebabkan oleh proses penjajahan itu sendiri yang menjadikan mereka terpinggir dan terpencil. Kemerosotan sosioekonomi Orang Jahai di RPS Air Banun juga didapati sangat berkait rapat dengan sejarah yang berlaku di masa lalu. Zaman darurat telah mencetus evolusi baru dalam kehidupan warga peribumi di Tanah Melayu. Pelbagai usaha dirancang dilaksanakan untuk membawa mereka keluar dari cara hidup tradisional dan berada seiring dengan masyarakat Malaysia yang majmuk dan berbilang kaum. Namun kebanyakan program-program pembangunan yang dirancang dan dilaksanakan menyebabkan mereka semakin terpinggir dan terancam. Perbincangan dalam makalah ini akan menyorot kembali sejarah sosioekonomi Orang Jahai di RPS Air Banun yang sehingga kini masih hidup di bawah paras kemiskinan walau pun telah lebih tiga dekad terlibat dalam program Rancangan Pengumpulan Semula Orang Asli.

Kata kunci: Jahai; sosioekonomi; darurat; Rancangan Pengumpulan Semula

INTRODUCTION

Escalating growth in worldwide economic transformation since two decades ago has brought rapid change in the global development. In the process of rapid urbanization, major townships play the role of nucleuses in the economic development agenda (United Nations World City Report 2016). Urban areas have served the purpose of being major

economic catalysts and have supported and aided the population in millions when it comes to eradicating poverty through increased productivity, creating job opportunities, improvement in quality of life and massive scaled investments in infrastructure and service (United Nations World City Report 2016).

The 21st century stands witness to how globalization had dominated world economy by introducing new concepts to the existing economic

system and has thus created more extensive and complex trade networks. The development in the field of information technology has seemingly created a world without borders and this influences the process of global urbanization. The urbanization process has become more complex and large townships no longer play singular roles of being catalysts in local economies – they have now turned into hubs of global economy.

The existence of fast paced communication and transportation networks have reduced travel distances thus enabling more effective integrated economic development. This situation has created a new concept of township known as mega urban region. The existence of these mega urban townships has created extensive economic opportunities by providing various international level economic infrastructural facilities.

Transportation networks have also enabled easy access and economic growth in rural areas. Tropical jungles have been explored thus creating avenue for logging, mining, industrial development and new placement of population. Therefore, indigenous dwelling areas that project high commercial value in terms of geographical location or existence of natural resources have been targeted.

Aiken & Leigh (2011) claimed that indigenous settlements have constantly been targeted for extracting natural resources, agricultural activities and building townships, and this causes decline in the natural environment and the waning of natural resources, thus creating conflicts related to confiscation and accessibility of resources and ancestral lands that have been passed on from one generation to another. This is a common struggle amongst the indigenous communities from around the world. The lands of the Mirar people from a district in Northern Australia had been intruded for mining purposes. The dwellings of the Kwe in Kalahari, Botswana was confiscated for diamond mining, and various indigenous ethnics in Bolivia have been threatened with logging and natural gas mining issues (Johansen 2003).

The urbanization process that is rapidly growing on par with the growth of current economy has changed the properties and uses of the natural world thus affecting the lives of the indigenous minority that is still very much dependant on the existing natural resources for a living. The indigenous people have been forcefully swept into the mainstream course of economical systems that requires them to compete with the non-indigenous population in order to make

a living. But, fast paced development in mainstream economy and their low socio-economic status has cause the indigenous people to be left far behind compared to their non-indigenous counterparts.

Similar issues have been face by the indigenous population residing in Peninsular Malaysia including the Jahai community. Due to rapid development and urbanization, issues such as loss of rights over ancestral lands, low socio-economic statuses, and destruction of the environment have become barriers to efforts directed towards their advancement (Hood 1995). These issues have been highlighted by Hood for more than two decades to no avail and the indigenous minority continues to be plagued by poverty and live their lives in constant lacking.

Therefore, this paper attempts examine the issues of marginalization and threat against the indigenous communities in Malaysia as a result of resettlement with focus on the Jahai people from RPS Air Banun, Perak. This is because, the decline in the socio-economic status of the Jahai has been found to be closely related to the country's development that has indirectly side-lined them from mainstream growth patterns. This paper has been written using historical perspective in order to further study the socio-economic status of the Jahai from Hulu Perak, beginning from the early 1900s till they were permanently placed in RPS Air Banun.

In accordance with economic growth and global development, Malaysia has also gone through the process of modernization. Upon achieving independence in 1957, Malaysia has continuously grown and developed as a country. This growth has been driven by various development policies such as New Economic Policy (1970-1990), National Development Policy (1991 – 2000), Vision 2020 (1991- 2020) dan National Vision Policy (2001-2010) (Jabatan Penerangan Malaysia 2016). This was the followed by the New Economic Model that was introduced in 2010. These policies serve as the passage through which the Malaysia is expected to attain the status of a developed country by the year 2020.

National growth policies have been created in order to eradicate poverty but it seems to have minimal effect in changing the socio-economic status of the Orang Asli population. According to Wazir Jahan Karim and Razha Rashid (2016), the development programmes have only further marginalized the Orang Asli from mainstream growth. The urbanization process that grows on par with national growth has caused them only more

struggle since most of them are still dependant on natural resources to make a living.

ORANG ASLI IN PENINSULAR MALAYSIA

The indigenous community residing in Peninsular Malaysia is known as Orang Asli in acknowledgement

of them being the original tribe or group to live in this country (Hasan Mat Nor 1996). In the early 20th century, the Orang Asli were divided into three main groups, namely, Negrito, Senoi and Proto Malay (Carey 1976). This division was made based on the differences found in their physical, lingual and traditional traits (Hasan Mat Nor 1996). Refer to Table 1.

TABLE 1. Indigenous communities in peninsular Malaysia according to groups and ethnics.

Group	Ethnics
Negrito	Kensiu, Kintak, Jahai, Lanoh, Mendrik, Batek
Senoi	Semai, Temiar, Jah Hut, Che Wong, Mah Meri, Semaq Beri
Melayu-Proto	Temuan, Semelai, Jakun, Orang Kanaq, Orang Kuala, Orang Seletar

Source: Official Portal - JAKOA, 2014

The Negrito are easily identified based on their physical traits – their frizzy curls and dark skin (Carey 1976). They live in the areas surrounding the Titiwangsa range for example Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang, Perak and Kedah (Amran 1991). It is stressed here that even if the Negrito live in mountainous or hilly regions, they are not highlanders. According to Evans (1937 [1968]) and Endicott (1979), they are in actuality a nomadic community that lives at the base of higher grounds and valleys. The Negrito groups is made up of the Kensiu, Kintak, Jahai, Lanoh, Mendrik and Batek tribes.

The Senoi have a stout and healthy body, fair smooth skin and curly hair (Carey 1976). They are usually found residing in higher grounds and mountainous regions in central Malaysia which covers states like Perak, Pahang and Selangor. The six tribes in the Senoi group are Semai, Temiar, Jah Hut, Che Wong, Mah Meri and Semaq Beri.

The Proto Malay group has the closest traits to the non-indigenous Malay population and are similar physically, culturally and in the way, they

speak (Amran 1991). Compared to the Negrito and Senoi, the physical traits of the Proto Malay group are heterogeneous in nature because of the differences that exist in their tribal variations (Carey 1976). They have been residing in areas south of the peninsular namely, Selangor, Pahang, Negeri Sembilan, Melaka and Johor. The Proto Malay group is made up of the Temuan, Semelai, Jakun, Orang Kanaq, Orang Kuala and Orang Seletar tribes.

Amongst the three different groups, the Negrito are the most threatened since their population is far smaller compared to that of the others. According to the data provided by the Orang Asli Development Department, till 2010, the overall population of the Negrito was only 5009, compared to the 97,856 Senoi population and 75,332 Proto Malay population (refer to Table 2). This data is revised and updated every five years. This is not a new issue since the population of the Negrito has always been smaller than the other indigenous groups in the past. According to Carey (1976), this situation is caused by their nomadic way of life that makes it difficult for them to live in small groups.

TABLE 2. Tribal population statistics of the indigenous community in peninsular Malaysia till the year 2010.

Group	Ethnic	Total	Overall Total
Negrito	Kensiu	327	5 009
	Kintak	194	
	Lanoh	382	
	Jahai	2 387	
	Mendrik	362	
	Batek	1447	

Senoi	Temiar	31 038	97 856
	Semai	51 313	
	Semoq Beri	5 313	
	Che Wong	651	
	Jahut	5 618	
	Mah Meri	3 799	
Melayu - Proto	Temuan	27 590	75 332
	Semelai	7 727	
	Jakun	34 722	
	Orang Kanak	148	
	Orang Kuala	3 525	
	Orang Seletar	1 620	
Total	18	Total	178 197

Source: Adapted from Dewan Budaya (Mei 2013)

JAHAI NEGRITO

The Jahai are a tribe from the Negrito group of indigenous people in Peninsular Malaysia. Even though there are no clear records on the arrival of the Jahai people in peninsular Malaysia, the Negrito have been claimed as the first indigenous community to live in peninsular Malaysia (Evans 1937 [1968]; Carey 1976). Solid evidence is scarce, but there are claims that the Negrito have resided in peninsular Malaysia for the past 25,000 years (Carey 1976). The earliest written records regarding the Negrito, according to Carey were made by a John Smith, an advisor of the Patani Queen in the year 1600. Endicott (1979) states that specific records on the Negrito were made starting from the 1920s by I. H. N Evans and Fr. Paul Schebesta.

Even so, research on the Jahai people is relatively limited. A simple description of the Jahai had been made by Anandale, Skeat & Blagden in the early 1900s in their research on the Negrito (Slyus 1999). The only ethnographic research that studied the Jahai in detail was conducted by Paul Schebesta in the 1920s. When the Second World War started, the researches regarding the indigenous people in Malaysia was interrupted for a period of time and was then reignited after Malaysia achieved its independence. Due to communist threats, research on the Jahai was delayed and was only initiated in the 1980s by Gomez and Rambo who studied the Jahai in Hulu Kelantan. The research on the Jahai in Hulu Perak started only in the 1990s after the communists officially surrendered in December 1989, and was initiated by Itam Wali Nawan, Corrie van der Sluys and Niclas Burenhult. However, Niclas Burenhult's research only focused on the language aspect of the Jahai people.

In general, the Jahai people have lived in the eastern and western areas in Peninsular Malaysia – in Perak and Kelantan. According to the JHEOA (2005) in Kelantan, their focus areas are in Hulu Kelantan, namely in Sungai Rual and Jeli. In Perak, they live in the Hulu Perak area in Air Banun, Sungai Tiang and in the areas surrounding the Temenggor dam. Based on early records by Schebesta & Blagden (1926) in Perak, the Jahai people lived near the Pergau river bank and Sungai Bala (refer to Illustration 1).

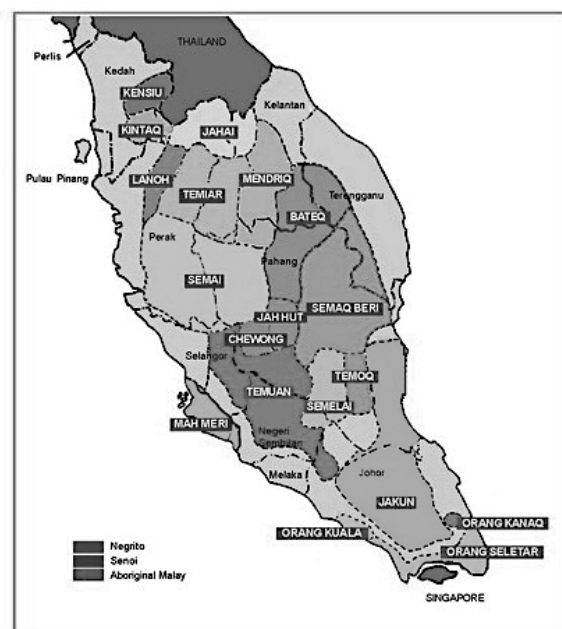


ILLUSTRATION 1. Map depicting the Orang Asli settlements in Peninsular Malaysia.

Source: JAKOA 2014

Similar to other Negrito tribes, the Jahai are also nomadic in nature and their main economic activities are hunting and collecting resources from the jungle. However, recent changes and involvement by the government in managing the welfare of the indigenous population has led to deviations in the economic activities of the Negrito. Carey (1976) has classified the economic activities of the Negrito people into four types as follows; (1) entirely dependent on hunting and collecting resources from the jungle, (2) involve in simple agricultural activity (3) live a nomadic life but create lodgings near Malay villages in order to gain money from working in paddy fields and doing other odd jobs (temporary and seasonal), and lastly (4) construct permanent lodgings in a certain area (usually with government aid).

THE JAHAI IN BELUM – TEMENGGOR IN THE EARLY 1900S

Belum-Temenggor is known as the *sakak* or the ancestral territory of the Jahai people who live in Hulu Perak. The topography of this area is hilly and mountainous. It is part of the Titiwangsa range, which serves as an important water catchment area and is also known as the backbone of Peninsular Malaysia. Before the existence of the Temenggor dam, Sungai Perak was the main river flowing across this area. According to Schebesta & Blagden (1926), the Jahai people made the Sungai Perak river bank as the location of their main settlement. The regional biodiversity at that time provided amply to their basic needs throughout the year.

According to Schebesta (1928, [1973]) their temporary lodgings were called *kem* and were usually built near the Malay villages situated near to Sungai Perak, for example in Bersia, Temenggor and Kuala Temenggor – if their ancestral territory is near the Temenggor forest. Where else, in Belum, they usually built *kem* around Kampung Belum. Dobree (1994), was a British officer who served in Malaya, claims that before the start of the Second World War, indigenous villages were accessible on the way to Belum. The ethnicity of the population was not clearly stated, but the location described was a *sakak* of the Jahai people.

Even if they lived nomadic lives, the Jahai residing in Belum-Temenggor at that time had already been exposed to the outside world. Their relationship with the Malays in that area had long been in existence. Schebesta (1928 [1973]) in his expedition to these areas in the 1920s claims that trade

using the barter system existed between the Jahai and the Malays. They exchanged their forest collections, especially rattan with basic needs such as rice grains, steel knives and clothes. Besides that, the Jahai also worked with the Malays in their paddy fields and did odd jobs around the villages for example, making and mending roofs and making huts. The nature of these jobs was quite temporary and in no way changed their ancestral nomadic living styles.

THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION IN MALAYA (1941-1945)

Records are scarce regarding the Jahai people in Belum-Temenggor during the Japanese occupation in Malaya (1941-1945). Even so, their lives in Belum-Temenggor during that period was also described as tough. There were no specific rules or governing systems imposed upon the indigenous population during the Japanese occupation in Malaya (Carey 1976), but the Jahai were affected when the main Malay villages in Temenggor were attacked and raided by the Japanese soldiers. According to Sluys (1999), during the Japanese occupation, the Malay population was moved out of the rural areas and the Jahai escaped deeper into the forests. They had to solely depend on forest resources to live at that time.

The Malay villages in Belum that were previously important stopover locations for the Jahai people, were no longer safe. Dobree (1994) claims that the Malay villages in Belum were constantly ravaged by the Chinese raiders who were also known as *Kuomintang*. Therefore, in order to avoid being victimized Japanese brutality and the Chinese *Kuomintang* the Jahai hid themselves deep in the Belum and Temenggor forests.

The difficulties faced by the Orang Asli in that region during that period of time was recorded by Dobree (1994) who stated that there were two different indigenous ethnics residing in their hideout namely, the Orang Temiar who lived in the high lands and, another unidentified ethnic tribe. This unidentified tribe lived in low lands and river banks. Based on the characteristics provided, it would be right to conclude that these people were the Jahai in hiding.

Based on Dobree's records (1994), the Jahai peoples' lives in Belum-Temenggor during that period of time was extremely difficult. Schebesta (1928, [1973]:32) states that even if the Negrito were to live a nomadic life, their existence was rarely devoid of the Malay people. They were willing to work with the Malays for minimum wages in order to guarantee

their safety and security (Leary 1995). This would also include the assurance of sustenance in the form of food for daily consumption. Even if they were dependent on natural resources, under certain circumstances, they did depend on the Malay people as an alternative to obtain basic necessities with ease. When the Japanese moved the Malays, who lived in that area, the Jahai were forced to depend entirely on natural resources in order to get food and other necessities. Besides, the unsettled war atmosphere made it difficult for them to move around freely.

THE EMERGENCY PERIOD AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE JAHAI

The emergency period marked the beginning of modern history of the Orang Asli population in Peninsular Malaysia (Mahani 2011). During the first period of emergency (1948-1960), the indigenous minority was made to involve in the Briggs Plan (1950-1960) that was carried out in order to weaken the communist movement that hid in forests. The Briggs Plan was introduced by Sir Harold Briggs in order to sever communist ties with those who lived near the forests, especially the Chinese, by moving them to safer and easily monitored areas known as *Kampung Baru* (Mahani 2011).

Sluys (1999) claimed that the Jahai in Belum-Temenggor were involved and were moved to a *Kampung Baru* in accordance to the Briggs Plan. However, there are no clear records as to the welfare and attitudes of the Jahai in that area during that time. In the beginning of the emergency period, according to Carey (1976) and Leary (1995), the community who were involved were not given appropriate treatment. There are records of indigenous people dying from being ill suited in the new environment that was very different from their original surroundings (Carey 1976; Leary 1995). These records do not clearly state the number of deaths but it is estimated that thousands died due to poor conditions in these camps (Leary 1995). This situation forced some of the people to escape deeper into the forests and indirectly aided in communist hideouts (Carey 1976). Repressing and destroying communist influence became more difficult. Under these circumstances, the indigenous community started getting attention from the government at that time in order to weaken the communist movements deep in the forests and to further strengthen strategies against the communists (Mustafa 2008).

Thus, efforts were made to win the hearts of the people and amongst them was the establishment of the forest bases in forest areas that had large indigenous communities. According to Leary (1995), the establishment of forest bases by stationing security officers was important in order to regain the lost trust of the indigenous people towards the government at that time due to the incidents and deaths during the implementation of Briggs Plan. In the year 1954, the Orang Asli Act was constructed in order to recognize the indigenous population in Peninsular Malaysia (Hasan Mat Nor 1998). Under this act, the Orang Asli Department was established in order to manage them, to look after their welfare, and to avoid them from being victimized by the communists at that time (Hasan Ishak 1998). This led to the communists growing weaker since they were dependent on the indigenous community for food. After the emergency period ended in 1960, what was left of the communist movement had retreated to the forest region bordering Malaysia and Thailand – to reorganize themselves and to plan new strategies to topple the government in order to establish Malaya as a Communist Republic (www.arkb.gov.my).

THE EMERGENCY II: THE RELOCATION OF THE JAHAI

A decade after Malaysia achieved its independence, in the year 1968, the communists launched another armed rebellion in an effort to attain their goal forcing the government to declare emergency for the second time. The Belum-Temenggor region was placed under the surveillance of the National Security Council (NSC) since it was black listed as an area for communist hideout and activity. In the mid-1970s, based on the recommendations of the NSC, 13 Jahai groups that were scattered near the Banun area were placed in the *Rancangan Pengumpulan Semula* Pulau Tujuh as a strategy to segregate them from the communist rebels (Nicholas 2000). According to Mohd Reduan (2008), the government's actions of relocating the indigenous community to more secure places had ensured their safety and also cut off all possibilities of food extortions by communist rebels – this in turn also weakened the communists since life became harder for them in the forests without proper food source.

However, after a few months of being in RPS Pulau Tujuh, the Jahai who had already started a new life and begun cultivating the land, were once again relocated to a new area – RPS Air Banun. This relocation was

done because studies indicated that Pulau Tujuh would be submerged when the Temenggor hydroelectric dam was ready (Nicholas 2002). Besides producing electricity, the Temenggor hydroelectric dam was part of a government effort to eradicate communist activity in that region (Zaini 2010). The 152km square water catchment area that was formed after the dam was completed has not only submerged the communist hideouts, but had also destroyed the original Jahai territories in that area (refer to Illustration 2).

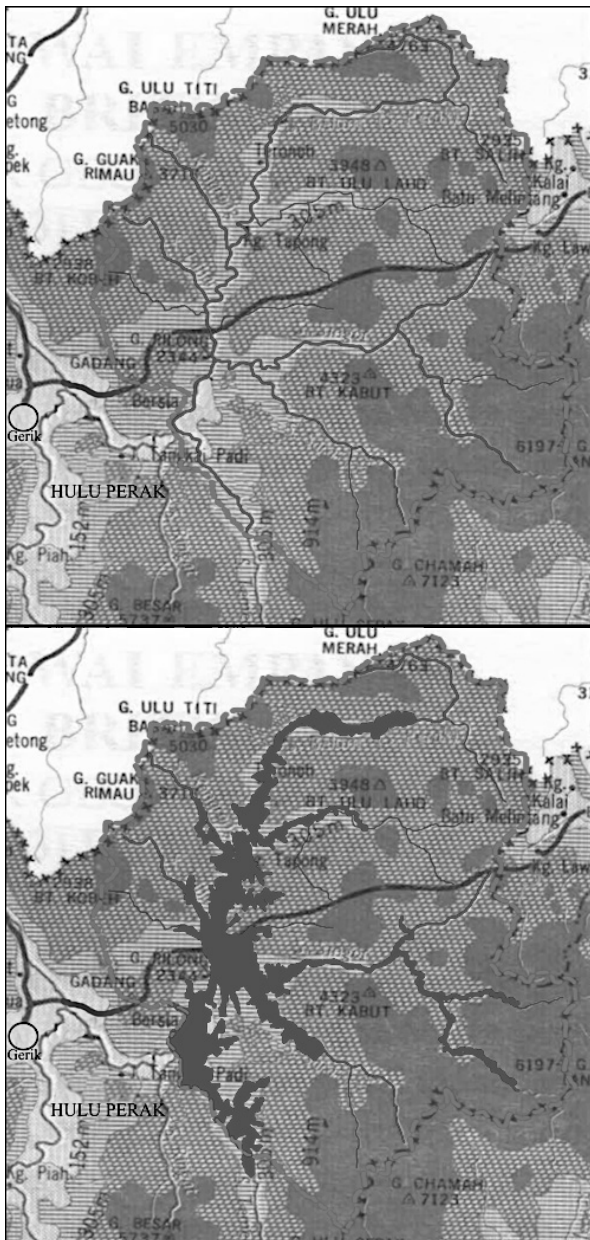


ILLUSTRATION 2. The Orang Asli settlements before and after the construction of the Temenggor dam.

Source: Adapted from Dobree (1994)

Efforts to destroy communist rebels was given

much importance by the ruling government at that time. In order to further pressure the communists in the Belum-Temenggor area, the East West Road (JRTB) was constructed across those lands. The construction of the new road and the Temenggor hydroelectric dam was greatly shunned by the communists. According to Mohd Reduan (2008), the communists tried to sabotage the constructions a few times since they were afraid that it would make things difficult for them. Both these constructions were completed towards the end of the 1970s – early 1980s. The communist movement finally became too weak to rebel and in the year 1978 the decade long second emergency period was declared over. However, according to Sluys (1999), even though the emergency period had ended, the Jahai territory in Belum-Temenggor was still under strict control resulting in that area being more secluded from the outside world till the communists surrendered in 1989.

The government's efforts in eradicating the communist movement in the Belum-Temenggor region had a large impact and implication on the Jahai people who lived in that area. The construction of the Temenggor hydroelectric dam had entirely destroyed Jahai ancestral lands in the area. Indigenous people hold their ancestral lands and their territories in very high esteem – not only as a natural resource but also as a territory that holds their values, traditions and aesthetic meanings that is handed down from one generation to the next (Aiken & Leigh 2011). The existence of the JRTB opened passage for outsiders to enter these locations and thus creating a competitive situation in acquiring natural resources – threatening the livelihood of the Jahai. The construction of the dam and the road had in itself caused massive destruction of the natural environment in that area making the Jahai peoples' life difficult and future, bleak.

AFTER THE EMERGENCY: EFFORTS TOWARDS PROGRESS AMONGST THE JAHAI

Early initiatives to promote and develop the indigenous minority in Peninsular Malaysia was closely related to issues of national security (Itam Wali 1993; Hasan Mat Nor 1998; Lim 2003; Mustaffa 2008). Efforts to curb the progress of communism, which was a major threat at that time, had inadvertently dragged the indigenous community into the mainstream political scene. The declaration of the Orang Asli Act 1954, followed by the establishment of the Orang Asli Department

in the same year, had placed the entire indigenous community under one management in order to make things easier for the government to create progress amongst them. Based on claims on factors related to national security, they were given special attention by the ruling government at that time and various programmes were conducted in order to change their socio-economic status for the better.

The Jahai in Belum-Temenggor were first relocated permanently to RPS Air Banun. By collecting all the indigenous people in one location surveillance and monitoring became much simpler. At the same time, development initiatives could be conducted more effectively. In RPS Air Banun, facilities such as security posts, schools, hostels, clinics and tar roads were provided in order to prepare them for a new life. A few projects had been planned in order to improve the socio-economic status of the people for example, creating rubber plantations, fruit orchards, short term plantations, animal farms, fisheries, rattan industries and small shops (Itam Wali 1993). These projects show the government's genuine efforts to create change in the Jahai's traditional way of life and also to introduce them to the mainstream way of life.

Nevertheless, after the end of the second emergency period in 1978, the situation influenced the efforts to develop the indigenous community in Peninsular Malaysia including the Jahai in RPS Air Banun. Even after a few months in RPS Air Banun, the proposed projects were not conducted. The Jahai fell back to their old ways of life, by depending on natural resources and collecting forest products as a livelihood. However, according to Nicholas (2000), the rapid growth in population at that time caused great decreases in natural resources and many of the Jahai who were involved in RPS Air Banun were forced to retreat to other rural locations since it was difficult to compete for natural resources. Whoever

was left in RPS Air Banun made rattan collection and fishing in the lake as their main economic activity (Itam Wali 1993).

The involvement of the Jahai in RPS Air Banun programmes indirectly changed their economic pattern that was till then was focused on subsistence to a cash based economy. According to Nicholas (2000), the Jahai who were involved in RPS Air Banun, were given a subsidy of RM50 a month – an amount which was not enough to sustain their daily needs. Therefore, collections from the forest, and lake were sold to earn more money to improve their income. Towards the end, in the late 1990s, the natural resources had been exhausted and it was difficult to obtain them.

The deterioration of natural resources caused the Jahai to involve in more mainstream economic activities in order to earn a living. However, their involvement was limited to coarse labour and it provided minimum wages - this did not help to elevate their socio-economic status beyond the poverty level (Kamarudin & Ngah 2007:129). According to Hasan Mat Nor (1996) and Mustaffa Omar (2008), this situation is caused by their low level of education making it difficult for them to secure a stable job. As a result, they are continuously shrouded in poverty and live in constant lacking.

Itam Wali (1993) who conducted a research on the aspects of social change in RPS Air Banun concluded that, the programme was a success in the sense of security strategy by assembling all indigenous people in the same area – but, it was a failure in terms of improving their socio-economic quality. Even so, he stressed that there has been a positive transformation in the lives of the Jahai people resulting from their involvement in RPS Air Banun that can be summarized as follows (refer to Table 3).

TABLE 3. Positive transformation amongst the Jahai after their involvement in RPS Air Banun

Changes	Explanation
1) Attitude change towards economic activity	They showed effort in owning their own permanent source of income once they started working on their own rubber plantation. Traditional economic activities such as collections from the forest and river were commercialized in order to increase their monthly income.
2) Attitude towards non-indigenous people	The bonding that was created through economic activity made them more open to receiving outsiders even if there was a sense of exploitation. Their communication with outsiders became more effective with the construction of roads connecting RPS Air Banun to the outside world.
3) Changes in lifestyle	Even if there were still those who followed the nomadic way of life, the number was reducing. More permanent lodgings were provided and this enabled them to live in a certain location.

4) Ownership	Contact with outsiders had somewhat changed their traditional lifestyle to a more modern way of life especially in terms of material ownership for example, owning cooking utensils, televisions and radios. This indirectly influenced them to live permanently in a certain location instead of living a nomadic life.
5) Awareness towards education	Their awareness towards education was quite encouraging amongst the Orang Asli in RPS Air Banun. This is depicted in the slow but constant increase in the number of attendees in school on a daily basis.

Source: Adapted from Itam Wali Nawar (1993)

These changes have to a certain extent transformed the traditional Jahai in RPS Air Banun to a more modern indigenous community. However, this situation does not guarantee the improvement of their socio-economic status. This is because, the failure of long term projects economic development projects may cause problems for the Jahai from RPS Air Banun in the future. The predicted problems are listed below:

1. Failure of projects caused areas that have been logged to be left to grow groves that are not productive.
2. Dependence on money based economy has caused them to exhaust the natural resources in the forest and lakes – it also causes source extinction.
3. Deterioration of traditional knowledge and practices due to the loss of resources causes them to neglect the traditions and practices.
4. Creates a new generation of indigenous children who do not have knowledge of the natural world around them.

CONCLUSION

Rapid growth in the urbanization process has severely impacted the socio-economic status of the Jahai, who till today are still dependent on natural resources to make a living. Even though the government has put in effort to enable the Jahai to participate in mainstream development, these efforts are deemed less effective in improving their socio-economic statuses. The fast-paced growth and the wave of development has left them far behind compared to the non-indigenous population since their socio-economic status has not developed on par with that of the others. Therefore, there exists a large socio-economic gap between the Jahai and the mainstream population.

After more than 50 years of independence, the Jahai in RPS Air Banun still live below the poverty line, without a guarantee of a stable sustained

source of income. With their relatively low level of education, restricted job opportunities, deteriorating natural resources and the constant change in their natural environment, certainly posed serious sustainability threat to the Jahai in RPS Air Banun in achieving sustainable livelihoods.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to LRGS research LRGS/BU/2011/UiTM/UKM/PB/03 for the financial assistance. Our heartiest appreciation goes to the Jahai community, especially for RPS Air Banun, in assisting and sharing their stories with us thorough out the whole research journey.

REFERENCES

- Abdul Ghani Abu, Muhammad Rafiq Abdul Rahman & Nur Ain Farhana Mohamad Nor. 2013. Senoi beq: Menjejak puncak. *Dewan Budaya Mei*: 10-28.
- Aiken, S. R. and Leigh, C. H. 2011. Seeking redress in the courts: Indigenous land rights and judicial decisions in Malaysia. *Modern Asian Studies* 45(4): 825–875.
- Amran Kasimin. 1991. *Religion and social change among the indigenous people of the Malay Peninsula*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Arkib Negara. 2015. www.arkb.gov.my. Retrieved on [15th of Disember 2015].
- Carey, I. 1976. *Orang Asli: The aboriginal tribes of Peninsular Malaysia*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Dobree, P. G. J. 1994. *Hujan Panas Bawa Bencana*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Endicott, K. M. 1979. *Batek Negrito religion: The world-view and rituals of a hunting and gathering people of Peninsular Malaysia*. USA: Oxford University Press.
- Evans, I. H. N. 1968. *The Negritos of Malaya*. London: Frank Cass and Company Limited.
- Hasan Ishak. 1998. Orang Asli dan cabaran masa kini: Usaha dan tindakan yang direncanakan oleh JHEOA. Dlm. Hasan Mat Nor. *Warga Peribumi Menghadapi Cabaran Pembangunan*. Bangi: Jabatan Sosiologi dan Antropologi, UKM.

- Hasan Mat Nor. 1996. *Tanah dan Masyarakat Orang Asli: Kajian Kes di Empat Buah Kampung Orang Asli di Daerah Batang Padang, Perak*. Bangi: Fakulti Sains Kemasyarakatan dan Kemanusiaan, UKM.
- Hasan Mat Nor. 1998. Masyarakat Orang Asli dan Akta 134. Dlm. Hasan Mat Nor. *Warga peribumi menghadapi cabaran pembangunan*. Bangi: Jabatan Sosiologi dan Antropologi, UKM.
- Hood Salleh. 1995. *Dunia Peribumi dan alam sekitar: Langkah ke hadapan*. Bangi: Penerbit UKM.
- Itam Wali Nawan. 1993. *Rancangan Pengumpulan Semula (RPS) Orang Jahai: Kajian kes mengenai perubahan sosial di RPS Air Banun*. Bangi: Jabatan Antropologi dan Sosiologi, UKM.
- Jabatan Hal Ehwal Orang Asli. 2005. *Kehidupan, budaya & pantang larang Orang Asli*. Jabatan Hal Ehwal Orang Asli, Kementerian Pembangunan Luar Bandar: Kuala Lumpur.
- Jabatan Kemajuan Orang Asli. 2014. <http://www.jakoa.gov.my/suku-kaum/bangsa>. Retrieved on 15th of Disember 2015.
- Jabatan Penerangan Malaysia. 2016. <http://www.penerangan.gov.my>. Retrieved on 27th of July 2016.
- Johansen, B.E. 2003. *Indigenous people and environmental issues: An Encyclopedia*. USA: Greenwood Press.
- Kamarudin, K. H. & Ngah, I. 2007. *Pembangunan mampan Orang Asli*. Skudai: Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.
- Leary, D. J. 1995. *Violence and the dream people: The Orang Asli in the Malayan Emergency, 1948-1960* (No. 95). Ohio University Press.
- Lim Hin Fui. 2003. Economic advancement and poverty eradication among the aborigines in Malaysia. This is the original, unedited version of a paper submitted to the XII World Forestry Congress, Québec City, Canada. http://www.fao.org/docrep/article/wfc/xii/0175-a2.htm#P10_167. Retrieved on 20th of June 2013.
- Mahani Musa. 2011. The socioeconomic history of the Orang Kanaq of Johor. *Kajian Malaysia* 29(1): 47-74.
- Mohd Reduan Hj. Aslie. 2008. *Pemberontakan bersenjata komunis di Malaysia*. Edisi Kedua. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Mustaffa Omar. 2008. Rancangan Pengumpulan Semula (RPS) masyarakat Orang Asli: Pencapaian dan cabaran. Dlm. Ma'Rof Redzuan & Sarjit S. Gill. *Orang Asli: Isu, transformasi dan cabaran*. Serdang: Penerbit UPM.
- Nicholas, C. 2000. *The Orang Asli and the contest for resources: Indigenous, politics, development and identity in Peninsular Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: Vinlin Press Sdn. Bhd.
- Razha Rashid. 1995. Introduction: General issue – Identity, land and health. Dlm. Razha Rashid. *Indigenous minorities of peninsular Malaysia: Selected issues and ethnographies*. Kuala Lumpur: Intersocietal and Scientific Sdn. Bhd.
- Schebesta P. P. & Blagden C. O. 1926. The jungle tribes of the Peninsular Malaysia in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, University of London 4(2): 269-278.
- Schebesta, Paul. 1928 [1973]. *Among the forest dwarfs of Malaya*. London: Hutchinson (Reprinted 1973, with an introduction by Geoffrey Benjamin, Kuala Lumpur- Oxford University Press).
- Skeat, W. W., & Blagden, C. O. 1906. *Pagan races of the Malay Peninsula* (Vol. 1). London: Macmillan and Company Limited.
- United Nation, World City Report. 2016. <http://wcr.unhabitat.org/main-report/>. Retrieved on 28th of Jun 2016.
- Van der Sluys, C. 1996. Use and trade of rattan by the Jahai in Hulu Perak, Malaysia. *Akademika* 48 (Januari): 63-83.
- Van der Sluys, C. 1999. The Jahai of northern Peninsular Malaysia. *The Cambridge encyclopedia of hunters and gatherers*. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Wazir Jahan Karim dan Razha Rashid. 2016. Differential responses to development and modernity among the Kintak Bong and the Ma'Batise' in Kirk Endicott (ed.) *Malaysia original people: Past, present and future of the Orang Asli*, 311-332. NUS press. Singapore.
- Zaini Hasssan. 2010. Wajib kunjungi ekosistem Belum, Banding. *Utusan Malaysia*, 23 Februari. <http://www.utusan.com.my/utusan/info>. Retrieved on 23rd of Februari 2013.

Ronzi Mohd Yusoff
PhD Candidate
Institute for Environment and Development (LESTARI)
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)
43600 Bangi, Selangor
E-mail: ronziisa@gmail.com

Sharina Abdul Halim, PhD
Institute for Environment and Development (LESTARI)
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)
43600 Bangi, Selangor
E-mail: sharinahalim@ukm.edu.my

Mustaffa Omar
Fakulti Sains Sosial dan Kemanusiaan
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
43600 Bangi, Selangor
E-mail: momar@ukm.edu.my

Joy Jacqueline Pereira
Institute for Environment and Development (LESTARI)
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)
43600 Bangi, Selangor
E-mail: joy@ukm.edu.my

Hood Salleh,
Institute for Environment and Development (LESTARI)
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)
43600 Bangi, Selangor
E-mail: hoodsalleh1942@gmail.com

Received: 18 April 2017

Accepted: 20 September 2017

