

Urban Fishermen in Gaya Island, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah: The Challenges

ABSTRACT

Fishing is one of the earliest economic activities in the community, other than hunting and farming. Therefore, the practices of the fishing community that makes a living at sea has often been a subject of interest for social researchers, particularly anthropologists, whether in Asia or in the West. In Malaysia, at least, artisanal fishing activities are still viewed as rural activities. However, the rapid development of a geographical location, especially a city which is located at the seafront, has made fishing activities a source of income for urban dwellers, as seen in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. The development of Kota Kinabalu city has indirectly resulted in various effects and poses a challenge to the community in Gaya Island, particularly the fishermen. What are the challenges faced by the fishermen who live on this island? How do they deal with the developments taking place on the island and the surrounding areas? This paper which is based on an ethnographic study that used in-depth interviews and participant observation will analyse the challenges and experiences of the fishermen in Gaya Island Village in ensuring the survival of their fishing activities. The findings showed that these fishermen are faced with 'congestion space' for fishing because they have to share the same resources with the other stake holder on this island such as those involved in tourism as well as Sabah Parks.