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**\*SEMAI WOMEN IN TRANSITION:  
A CASE STUDY IN KAMPUNG CHANG  
SUNGAI GEPAI, BIDOR, PERAK**

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## SYNOPSIS (ENGLISH)

This study documents and analyzes the environmental, economic and ideological changes that have occurred among the Semai of Kampung Chang Sungai Gepai. The study looks at these issues from a gender perspective.

The research method is eclectic and primary data was collected through a number of methods, including group discussions, participatory observation, non-structured and structured interviews. Meanwhile, secondary data was gathered from journals, books, newspapers, dissertations and other written material.

The social changes that have occurred among the Semai of Kampung Chang Sungai Gepai have generally been brought about by the dual forces of modernization and development in Peninsula Malaysia. Due to these, traditional Semai subsistence farmers have transformed into the commodity producers and wage labourers of today. Emphasis is given to the roles of the state, merchant capital and land-appropriating agents as the main agents of change. In addition, modern mainstream ideology has had a profound influence on traditional Semai ideology and consciousness, which in turn, influenced their social actions.

The findings reveal that these social changes have been largely detrimental to the lives of the Semai concerned. Firstly, state laws and policies, and the encroachment of land-appropriating agents have caused traditional land to diminish radically. Furthermore, the traditional system of land ownership and use which was more communal and egalitarian in nature was transformed into one that stressed on the commoditization,

individualization and male appropriation of land. Meanwhile, the undiscerning use of water by outsiders and villagers alike have caused the deterioration of water quality and quantity and diminished the aquatic life found within. These factors have led to a loss of land and access to natural resources among the Semai. This pattern was more pronounced among the womenfolk and eventually created a double burden for them.

Secondly, the very same agents of change have strongly enhanced gender differentiation among the villagers by further dichotomizing male and female spheres of activities and influence. Women have been relegated to domestic tasks and use-value production whilst men have become predominantly involved in the public sphere and exchange-value production, which was nonetheless exploitative of them. This trend has allowed men to have much control over limited productive resources. This has caused many women to become economically dependent on their men. Furthermore, there has been a decline in women's access to the traditional sharing of food and labour. Lastly, the more egalitarian traditional Semai ideology has been influenced by patriarchal mainstream ideology and has been developing patriarchal traits.

## SINOPSIS (BAHASA MALAYSIA)

Kajian ini mendokumentasi dan menganalisa perubahan-perubahan sosial yang telah berlaku di kalangan penduduk Semai Kampung Chang Sungai Gepai. Kajian ini mengkaji perubahan-perubahan sosial ini dari segi alam persekitaran, ekonomi serta ideologi dan dibuat dengan menggunakan perspektif gender.

Kaedah penyelidikan ini adalah eklektik dan data primer dikumpul dengan pelbagai kaedah, termasuk perbincangan dalam kumpulan, pemerhatian sambil melibatkan diri, dan termuramah yang formal serta tidak formal. Data sekunder pula dikumpul dari bahan-bahan tertulis seperti jurnal, buku, akhbar dan disertasi.

Secara amnya, perubahan-perubahan sosial di kalangan penduduk Kampung Chang Sungai Gepai adalah disebabkan oleh proses-proses modernisasi dan pembangunan yang sedang berlaku di Semenanjung Malaysia. Akibat dari ini, petani-petani sara-hidup Semai tradisional telah berubah menjadi pengeluar komoditi dan buruh bergaji pada zaman kini. Dalam penyelidikan ini, peranan kerajaan negeri, pihak kapitalis dagangan dan pihak-pihak penceroboh sebagai agen-agen perubahan yang utama dikaji. Selain daripada itu, ideologi masyarakat luar telah banyak mempengaruhi ideologi Semai tradisional.

Kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa perubahan-perubahan sosial ini telah membawa banyak kesan-kesan yang buruk kepada kehidupan penduduk-penduduk kampung. Pertamanya, perundangan dan dasar-dasar kerajaan negeri serta pihak-pihak penceroboh telah mengakibatkan penduduk kampung kehilangan sebahagian besar daripada tanah saka

mereka. Tambahan pula, sistem pemilikan dan penggunaan tanah tradisional yang mengutamakan masyarakat kampung dan bersifat adil telah berubah menjadi sistem yang mengutamakan pemilikan dan penggunaan tanah secara individu, komoditisasi tanah dan pengawalan tanah oleh kaum lelaki. Penyalahgunaan air pula oleh pihak luar dan penduduk kampung telah menjejaskan kualiti dan kuantiti air dan kehidupan aquatik. Faktor-faktor ini telah membawa beban yang besar kepada kaum wanita. Ini adalah kerana mereka telah kehilangan lebih tanah dan hak penggunaan terhadap sumber-sumber semulajadi, berbanding dengan kaum lelaki.

Keduanya, agen-agen perubahan yang sama telah menambahkan lagi perbezaan gender di kalangan penduduk kampung. Bidang kegiatan dan pengaruh pihak wanita bertambah asing dari bidang yang dilibati oleh pihak lelaki. Pihak wanita diserahkan tugas-tugas domestik dan pengeluaran sara-diri manakala kaum lelaki terlibat dalam bidang awam dan pengeluaran bahan-bahan untuk penukaran (yang bersifat eksploitatif). Ini telah membenarkan pihak lelaki mengawal kebanyakan daripada sumber-sumber pengeluaran yang tertinggal. Oleh kerana itu, semakin ramai wanita kini hidup bergantung pada kaum lelaki dari segi ekonomi. Lagipun, hak wanita terhadap amalan perkongsian makanan dan tenaga buruh yang tradisional telah kian luput. Akhirnya, ideologi Semai tradisional yang bersifat adil terhadap pihak lelaki dan wanita, telah dipengaruhi oleh ideologi luar yang lebih bersifat patriarkal.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title	i
Synopsis (English)	ii
Sinopsis (Bahasa Malaysia)	iv
Acknowledgements	vi
Table of contents	viii
List of tables	xv
List of figures and maps	xvii

## CHAPTER 1

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Statement of the problem	1
1.2 Objectives of the study	2
1.3 Research problems	3
1.4 Limitations of the study	4
1.5 Significance of Kampung Chang Sungai Gepai	5
1.6 Methodology	7
1.6.1 Timing and duration of the fieldwork	11
1.6.2 The study sample	12
1.6.2.1 Sample 1	12
1.6.2.2 Sample 2	15
1.6.3 Methods used	17
1.7 Organisation of the thesis	19



## CHAPTER 2

<b>REVIEW OF LITERATURE</b>	<b>20</b>
2.1 The Orang Asli and social change	20
2.1.1 Ethnographic studies	20
2.1.2 Official government documents	21
2.1.3 Studies on social change among the OA	23
2.2 Gender and capitalist development	29
2.2.1 Studies of women and development	29
2.2.2 Studies of rural Malaysian women	34
2.2.3 Studies of Orang Asli women	39

## CHAPTER 3

<b>THE SETTLEMENT AND ITS POPULATION</b>	<b>42</b>
3.1 General background	42
3.1.1 Location and geographical aspects	42
3.1.2 Infrastructure and services provided by the government	46
3.2 Historical background	53
3.2.1 Early history: An account of OA slavery	54
3.2.2 Leadership of <i>Mairaknak</i> Mertak	57
3.2.3 Leadership of <i>Mairaknak</i> Mawai a/l Mertak and <i>Mairaknak</i> Mangut	63
3.2.4 Leadership of <i>Penghulu</i> Renjok a/l Mangut	67
3.2.5 Leadership of <i>Penghulu</i> Ahmad a/l Omar	72
3.2.6 Leadership of <i>Penghulu</i> Bandok a/l Renjok	73

## CHAPTER 4

<b>GENDER, LAND, WATER AND CHANGE</b>	<b>74</b>
4.1 Introduction	74
4.2 Historical development and government intervention at state level	75
4.3 Land	81
4.3.1 The <i>Nenggrik</i> , principles of land ownership, use and management according to <i>adat</i> and its application	81
4.3.2 Agents of change at village level	85
4.3.3 Impact on local land ownership, management, use and local responses	88
4.3.3.1 Slavery	88
4.3.3.2 Malay settlements	88
4.3.3.3 British road and rock quarry	89
4.3.3.4 Chinese tin mine	89
4.3.3.5 The Second World War	90
4.3.3.6 Convergence of hamlets	90
4.3.3.7 Aboriginal Peoples Act 1954 (revised 1967 and 1974)	91
a) Land ownership, use and management	91
b) Disengagement from land	93
c) Encroachment	95
4.3.3.8 Logging	100
4.3.3.9 Resettlement policy	100
a) Diminution of OA land	100
b) Creation of a second type of <i>nenggrik</i> : "the land measured by DOA"	103

	c) Land as individually owned and commoditized	105
	d) New system of ownership and use	106
	e) Land conflict – a clash of two land tenure systems	111
	f) Group settlement or “Kampung Tersusun”	113
4.4	Water	114
4.4.1	Principles of the management and use of water according to <i>adat</i> and its application	114
4.4.2	Agents of change at village level	115
4.4.3	Impact on local management and use of water and local responses	117

## CHAPTER 5

### GENDER, ECONOMY AND CHANGE 121

5.1	Introduction	121
5.2	Use-value production	121
5.2.1	Agriculture	121
5.2.2	Gathering: Edible shoots, leaves and roots	125
5.2.3	Gathering: Fruits	127
5.2.4	Gathering: Medicinal plants and roots	129
5.2.5	Gathering: Firewood	130
5.2.6	Hunting and trapping	132
5.2.7	Fishing	134
5.2.8	Material culture	136
5.2.9	Reproductive tasks	138

5.3	Exchange-value production	139
5.3.1	Commodity production	139
5.3.1.1	Tin	143
5.3.1.2	Rubber	143
5.3.1.3	Rattan	147
5.3.1.4	<i>Petai</i> ( <i>Parkia speciosa</i> )	148
5.3.1.5	<i>Durian</i> ( <i>Durio</i> spp.)	151
5.3.1.6	Wild fruits	151
5.3.1.7	Wood	152
5.3.1.8	Bamboo	153
5.3.1.9	Wild game	153
5.3.1.10	Commercial farming	154
5.3.1.11	Oil palm	155
5.3.1.12	Poultry	155
5.3.2	Wage labour	156
5.3.2.1	Road construction	160
5.3.2.2	<i>Kongsi</i> construction	160
5.3.2.3	Porters	160
5.3.2.4	Rock quarry	160
5.3.2.5	Awana Resort at Genting Highlands	161
5.3.2.6	Vegetable farm	161
5.3.2.7	Pig farm	163
5.3.2.8	Fish farm	163
5.3.2.9	Oil palm mini-estate	164
5.3.2.10	Restaurant	164

	5.3.2.11 Others	164
5.4	Gender differentiation	165
5.4.1	Gender division: use-value versus exchange-value and domestic versus public sphere	165
5.4.2	Economic dependency	176
5.4.3	Male control of major productive resources	183
5.4.4	Decline in female access to sharing of food and labour	189

## CHAPTER 6

	<b>GENDER, IDEOLOGY AND CHANGE</b>	<b>192</b>
6.1	Introduction	192
6.2	Traditional beliefs and practices	193
6.2.1	Semai folklore: An analysis of sex roles and gender relations	193
6.2.2	Prestige system for men and women	203
6.2.3	Courtship, marriage and divorce	208
6.2.4	Socialisation of children	217
6.3	Actualisation of cultural conceptions in the present	219
6.3.1	Patterns of decision-making	220
6.3.1.1	Joint decisions	221
6.3.1.2	Decisions predominantly made by women	224
6.3.1.3	Decisions predominantly made by men	226
6.3.2	Public involvement	228
6.3.2.1	Village meetings	229
6.3.2.2	Expressing opinions in village meetings	230
6.3.2.3	Communal activities	232

6.3.2.4 Cash economy	232
6.3.3 Geographical mobility	233
6.4 Conclusion	236

## CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION	238
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## APPENDIX

A. Massacre at Ulu Kenyor, Bidor	250
B. Case study reflecting current land inheritance pattern in Kampung Chang	253
C. The <i>Penghulu</i> 's letter of complaint regarding encroachment into villagers' land	256
D. The <i>Penghulu</i> 's letter of application to gazette villagers' land as an OA reserve and for a communal grant	259
E. The candidate of the local constituency's letter of support for Kampung Chang's application to gazette villagers' land as an OA reserve	262
F. Newspaper cutting mentioning the presentation of the Kampung Chang Memorandum to the Sungkai Seat Barisan Nasional Candidate	263
G. Mystical tales of <i>Lubuk Degung</i> which have played an important role in preserving its sacredness	264
H. Water problems accredited to the disrespect of the guardian spirit of the waters	270
I. Letter to the Editor of <i>Berita Harian</i> regarding "petai taxes"	272
J. Semai folk tales	273

GLOSSARY	298
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BIBLIOGRAPHY	302
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## LIST OF TABLES

Table	page
1. Household composition of village residents in the study village	5
2. Age cohort of residents in the study village	6
3. Representation of Sample 1 with respect to marital status	14
4. Representation of Sample 1 with respect to gender	14
5. Representation of Sample 1 with respect to age	14
6. Representation of Sample 2 with respect to gender	17
7. Representation of Sample 2 with respect to age	17
8. Average prices and availability of commodities in study village as at 31 October 1997	141
9. Mercantile interests in study village as at 31 July 1997	142
10. Male villagers involved in wage labour as at 22 March 1998	158
11. Female villagers involved in wage labour as at 22 March 1998	158
12. Wage labour in study village as at 22 March 1998	159
13. Gender division for use-value production in present times	169
14. Utilization of labour for use-value production and homestay by the heads of 12 families for the month of October 1997 in workdays	171
15. Gender division for reproductive tasks in present times	172
16. Utilization of labour for exchange-value by the heads of 12 families for the month of October 1997 in workdays	174
17. Villagers involved in exchange-value production as at 22 March 1998	175
18. Income of the heads of 12 families for the month of October 1997 in RM	181
19. Average expenditure of the heads of 12 families for the month of October 1997 in RM	182
20. Ownership of productive resources of the sexes in present times	183

21. Decision-making in the family in present times	221
22. Public involvement of the sexes in present times	229
23. Geographical mobility of the sexes in present times	235



## LIST OF FIGURES AND MAPS

Figure	page
1. A chronological list of traditional leaders in Kampung Chang and their period of leadership	54
Map	page
1. Perspective map of Kampung Chang Sungai Gepai (A)	43
2. Perspective map of Kampung Chang Sungai Gepai (B)	44
3. Map of Kampung Chang Sungai Gepai as surveyed by the JHEOA in 1969	49
4. Map of Kampung Chang Sungai Gepai (Land Office, 1994)	50
5. A sketch map of Kampung Chang Sungai Gepai and customary land ( <i>nenggrik</i> )	51
6. A sketch map of Kampung Chang Sungai Gepai showing the infrastructure available	52
7. A sketch map of former settlements in <i>Cangkat Silih</i> and <i>Sungai Gepai</i>	60
8. A sketch map of former settlements in <i>Darat Baruh</i>	61
9. A sketch map of former settlement in the Bidor area	62
10. A sketch map of Kampung Chang Sungai Gepai and <i>Nenggrik</i> showing areas encroached upon	96
11. A sketch map of Kampung Chang Sungai Gepai showing the <i>Nenggrik Pasak</i> and <i>Tanah Yang Disukat JOA</i>	104