

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 THE ORANG ASLI AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Much of the documentation on the OA could generally be divided into three main categories. These were the ethnographic studies done by anthropologists, many of whom were foreign and wrote before Malaya gained its independence; official documents produced by the Government on OA affairs; and studies on social change among the OA.

2.1.1 Ethnographic studies

The ethnographic studies have proven to be rather static and descriptive in nature, where anthropologists “tend(ed) to concentrate on selected groups as a ‘holistic entity’ and ... (did) not attempt to relate the OA to the wider economic and political spheres” (McLellan, 1985:81). Thus, there was little reference to the historical and social forces that played a significant part in shaping the lives of these people. Some of these studies included Evans’ work on the traditional beliefs, customs and folklore of the Semai of the Korbu River (1916), Behrang Valley (1918) and Ulu Sungkai (1915), Noone’s study on the Senoi of northern Malaya (1936, 1939) and Dentan’s study on Semai lifestyle (1968), rituals and methods of classification (1970).

Meanwhile, Clayton Robarchek studied the psychological aspects of the OA, especially the Semai, such as the notion of fear (1979), concepts of depression and violence (1977a,

1977b) and their image of “non-violence” (1980). Carole Robarchek on the other hand, delved into kinship ties and territoriality (1980) whilst Rambo looked into OA knowledge of their environment and their adaptation to it (1980b). In addition, Carey (1976a) and Ratos (1957) did general studies regarding the OA. Though mainly descriptive, all these studies were useful in giving a detailed background and history of the lives of the OA. This would act as an important foundation for a study on social change among the OA from a gender perspective.

2.1.2 Official government documents

The government has produced a number of official documents on the OA, largely through the *Jabatan Hal Ehwal Orang Asli* (JHEOA). These provided an insight into state policies designed for the OA. One major document was a policy statement regarding OA administration (Ministry of the Interior, 1961) which proved to be an important referential point for future government policies on the OA. In general, official documents were designed to give a general background on the OA and inform of its policies for them, while often propagating and defending these policies.

It was stated in these documents that one of the main objectives of the government policies was “to integrate them (the OA) fully with the rest of our national community” (Carey n.d.:10) by firstly integrating them into the Malay community (Baharon, 1972:2) which included a conversion to Islam. Therefore, integration into modern capitalist mainstream society was to take place through integration into an ethnic group. This meant that if the objective was fulfilled, the OA would lose their cultural identity and traditional lifestyle.

The documents also reflect the government's belief that economic growth was important in bringing about a successful integration of the OA into mainstream society. This growth was to be in line with the five stages of growth propounded by Rostow in his Modernisation Theory¹ (Baharon,² 1972:3-4). The modernisation process was to involve a movement from the traditional to modernity. Developed countries would portray their images onto less developed countries and insist that the latter followed in their footsteps. Meanwhile, less developed countries would create policies that would move them towards achieving such modern images. As stated by Lauer this process had as "the end goal, (a desire to create) a nation very similar to those in the contemporary West" (1977: 305). The social change involved was seen to be sudden and was imposed from the outside. Therefore, modernisation was seen to be "westernisation" and the process had to occur to the detriment of old trends and lifestyles. (Lerner, 1968, Etzioni and Etzioni, 1964:254)

This theory was much critiqued for firstly, it was seen to be too dichotomous in nature. There was evidence to prove that economic growth and modernity could coexist with traditional values, beliefs and ways of life (Gusfield, 1973, Salisbury, 1962). What more, it was found that traditional forms of kinship (ie. extended families) could survive amidst change and even assisted in entrenching the modern capitalist economy. Therefore, traditional culture could be a boost to economic growth rather than a barrier, as traditional ties of friendship and kinship could be used to promote entrepreneurial productivity and

¹ Rostow W. (1960) in his general theory of modernisation stated that every society had to go through certain stages in its process of economic growth. The first stage was characterised by the traditional system with its limited economic production. The second stage occurred when the conditions which were needed for industrialisation existed such as the emergence of a new breed of businessmen or foreign interference which stressed on trade and economic growth. In Stage Three, growth would "take off" with the use of modern technology as market forces were established, investments spread and industrialisation grew. In the fourth stage, modern technology was used to drive the economy to maturity where the local economy was incorporated into the international economic system. Lastly, there was the age of high mass consumption where the standard of material living heightened and there was a shift from primary to secondary industries as services were emphasised.

success (Long, 1977, Wilmott and Young, 1971). Another significant critique concerned the question of limited resources if developing countries were to industrialise in the same manner as the western world. Environmentalists stressed that it was impossible for all nations to progress and develop in the western model without creating an ecological disaster (Mies and Shiva, 1993).

In 1983, another far-reaching document was officially produced by the government entitled “Strategies to Proselytize the Islamic Religion Among the Orang Asli” (JHEOA, 1983). This was in alignment with the government’s policy to islamise the OA in order to facilitate their assimilation into the Malay population and the mainstream society (Dentan et al., 1997:80).

Here, we need to question the efficacy in which these state policies were implemented and the impact they had on the OA. We also need to take into consideration the role of the OA themselves in determining the clout these policies had. These issues would be examined in the following chapters.

2.1.3 Studies on social change among the OA

The final category of documentation consists of studies on social change among the OA. Among those who first studied this area was Carey (1968) who at that time acted as the Commissioner of JHEOA. He discussed the different aspects of social change.

² Baharon was the Deputy Commissioner of JHEOA.

Kirk Endicott (1979) on the other hand studied the effects of modernisation on the economy of the Negrito and Temiar. He stated that the government via JHEOA, proved to be the main agent of modernisation among the OA. It implemented development policies based on western models, but due to their alien nature did not gain the acceptance of the OA and generally resulted in failure. He showed how the government, through its resettlement and sedentarization policies, tried to place the Negritoes in limited resettlement areas and encouraged them to participate in family farming. It must be noted that at that same time the government was encouraging rural Malays to move out from that field in order to improve their standard of living. Due to such a policy, the Negritoes lost large tracts of their traditional land and with that, their natural resources. Thus, they had to be involved in a mixed economy, which could not adequately sustain them. Where the Temiars were concerned, resettlement in limited areas caused the land to be used more intensively, resulting in less productive land. Those who were involved in rubber growing also did not profit much due to the low price of rubber. Endicott thus concluded that both tribes ultimately did not gain much from these policies.

Along the same lines, McLellan (1985) looked at the effects of governmental intervention in OA affairs, especially through its development policies. In her article, McLellan stated that governmental efforts to integrate the OA into mainstream society had ulterior motives, which were to defend and protect the interests of the government and the Malays. She further mentioned that the inclusion of the OA under the category of *bumiputera*³ did not benefit the OA much. Rather, they became more constrained by the government through its laws, especially in the control of land and the movement of outsiders in OA areas. These

³ The OA were treated by the government as *bumiputera* for certain purposes such as "occasionally being grouped with Malays and Borneo natives as *bumiputera* in official pronouncements and statistics" (Dentan et al., 1997:72). However, they were not "included in the category of peoples having special

laws protected the economic and political interests of the government and further isolated the OA whilst stripping them of their traditional rights.

On the other hand, Gomes gave an in-depth study on the economy of the Semai tribe (1987, 1990, and 1991). He stated that the Semai were currently practising diverse economic activities, which were flexible and adaptive in nature. They were involved in the cash economy with activities such as wage labour and gathering and selling forest products. Yet they also partook in subsistence activities. This mixed economy was seen to be effective because the Semai could choose whichever activity or combination of activities which were most profitable to them at that moment in time (depending on certain factors such as the season, market forces, etc.). However, Gomes also showed how the Semai were increasingly producing commodities to acquire cash to buy consumer goods, which they were increasingly dependent on. Eventually, their subsistence activities decreased, as they became heavily dependent on the market economy. This move proved to be less profitable and effective for them than if they were to be involved in a mixed economy.

Nicholas (1985, 1990, and 1994) went one step further and stressed on the role of the state in the process of social change among the Semai. Like McLellan, he saw that the state's management of the Semai through the JHEOA had more an objective to protect its own interests and was often not beneficial to the Semai. Due to state policies, the Semai were pushed into simple commodity production. In fact, according to Nicholas, they were kept in this form of production within the non-capitalist mode for the interest of the capitalist. They became dependent on the market economy, which was influenced by external market

rights, the *bumiputera*" (Dentan et al., 1997:21) and were thus not given the special privileges granted by the Federal Constitution to the Malays and the natives of Sabah and Sarawak.

forces over which they had no control. Similar to Gomes, he stated that the Semai desire for consumer goods pushed them further into the market economy. With this, Nicholas showed that traditional Semai structures increasingly broke down without effective alternative structures to replace them. As a result of this, the Semai became increasingly dependent on the government. He said that true development should not bring about such consequences but should instead instil a sense of autonomy and self-reliance in their economic, political and socio-cultural life.

Thus, Nicholas has used the Bernstein (1979) "penetration" model as a framework for his analysis. This approach was a modification of the Mode of Production and Articulation Theories⁴ developed in the seventies as a critique to Underdevelopment and Dependency Theories.⁵ Nicholas contended that unlike the articulation model where pre-capitalist and capitalist modes exchanged commodities without the latter dominating the former's process of production, Bernstein proposed that capital controlled the processes of production without fully denying the producers their means of production. In such a manner, the capitalists could acquire cheap labour and raw materials without having to invest much in developing the productive forces. They would be under no obligation to improve the living conditions of the producers, as they might need to do for full time workers in the capitalist mode.

⁴ Mode of Production and Articulation theorists tried to explain why the non-capitalist mode of production was at times resistant to being totally subsumed by capital. They state that it is sometimes in the interest of capital to conserve the former rather than dissolving it. Such a strategy could secure "internal" markets, raw materials or a reservoir of cheap seasonal or migrant labour (the traditional sector bears part of the cost of their biological reproduction) (Nicholas, 1985:30-33).

⁵ A major propounder of this theory is A.G. Frank (1969) who stated that the development of the First World was borne out of the underdevelopment of the Third World. This process allegedly emerged with colonisers imposing the capitalist system on the colonies and exploiting them of their natural resources. Even after independence, the system of dependency is maintained through the workings of the multinationals, which subordinate the local economy to their own interests by appropriating cheap local labour and resources from the Third World to the First. The former cannot free itself as foreign debts, limited military and technological power and the introduction of new currency, economic, political and land systems which have usurped much of traditional systems and practice, have created dependency.

Williams-Hunt (1995), on the other hand, looked at OA ancestral laws and the role of the Aboriginal Peoples Act 1954 (Revised 1967, 1974) or better known as Act 134, in dispossessing the OA of their traditional land. According to William-Hunt, settled OA traditionally practised communal ownership over their land, which provided them their basic needs for food, shelter, income and medicine. Land rights were usufructuary in nature where only the original residents of the land had full claims over it and villagers related by marriage could use the land as long as they remained married to members of the land owning group. Villagers who used the land nonetheless only had rights to the tracts they had cleared and cultivated, or to hunt and gather forest produces. Nevertheless, they could not hold on to more land than they could use. This was to ensure that future generations could continually use the land. However, as maintained by William-Hunt, the existence of Act 134 changed all that. The OA now were only “tenants-at-will” where their rights to the land were temporary and they could be asked to leave for any project or reason that the government saw fit. Although there were certain sections within the Act, which recognised OA ancestral rights over their land, yet these were excluded from the National Land Code. This exclusion made it difficult to use Act 134 to protect OA land rights. Other academicians who have written about legislation and the land rights of the OA were M.B. Hooker (1976, 1991), S. Rachagan (1990) and Hasan Mat Nor (1991). Their findings were similar with that of William-Hunt and they agreed that the change in the legal system with the adoption of the British Torrens System, and the creation of Act 134 was more damaging to OA traditional land rights than beneficial.

This third category of documentation on the OA gave a good insight into the OA situation within the context of historical and socio-economic change from the pre-colonial times to the current era of capitalist development. However, it was noted that a major part of these

studies did not acknowledge the role of the OA as active social agents in determining their social realities. The structural approach was instead overemphasised, with much attention given to the part played by the state and its agencies. This could be seen to be a partial view of the true situation as the creation (and re-creation) of social realities is a dialectical process, an interplay between external forces and local efforts/action responding to these forces.

Secondly, many of these studies tended to be materialist in nature, accentuating the economic forces at play (although the political aspect was also deemed to be a significant social factor). There was little mention of the role of ideology in the process of social change and in the construction of dynamic social realities.

Finally, there was a general neglect of the gender perspective in these analyses. Most researchers examining the OA situation were males who tended to focus on male subjects. Therefore, observations were done through mostly male eyes and interpreted through male minds, which were constructed from male experiences. Such observations would certainly differ from that of a female researcher. In addition, male researchers would have difficulty in entering the personal and private spaces of OA women to record their experiences. This was especially true when there were existing boundaries (which however, could be flexible in nature) between the male and female spheres/spaces, as in most OA societies. A female researcher would find these issues less a problem. Therefore, what Stivens observed in studies on Malay peasantry would also hold true in OA research:

“(F)irst, gender as an analytic object has been almost totally absent from social theory’s central discussions of ‘development’ ...Moreover, gender has been almost totally hidden in the very construction of the categories used to analyse such societies ... (and) (e)qually serious has been the use of male subjects in almost all

of the more theoretical discussions of the past, present and future of peasantries worldwide" (1996:7).

Efforts thereby will be taken in this study to overcome these shortcomings.

2.2 GENDER AND CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT

Many studies have been done on the above theme, using various models of analysis. An effort was made here to cover the wide spectrum of readings and condense it whilst keeping the main arguments and debates that have been raised. The central theories that elaborated on this issue would include biological determinist theories (Tiger and Fox, 1972, Wilson, 1975 and Barash, 1979), the different spheres approach (White and Hastuti, 1980), Marxist feminist theories (Deere, 1976, Beneria, 1979, and Mies, 1981) and the subordination-of-women perspective (Young, 1979 and Mackintosh, 1981). All these would be analysed below within the context of different gender studies, within and outside the Malaysian milieu. An exception would be the reproductionist theories, which were the initial explanations to the subordination of women. These were heavily critiqued for their simplistic theorising, as they asserted that women's inferior social position was due to the biological differences between men and women. Thereby, these would not be replicated here.

2.2.1 Studies of women and development

Among the earliest to have written on women and social change was Engels (1972) whose text formed the basis of Marxist Feminist writings. Although there was heavy critique that his theory was based on unreliable anthropological evidence, nonetheless parts of it have

proven useful in explaining the rise of sexual inequality with private ownership of property. Engels stated that as societies evolved through different stages, gender relations within these societies also changed. In primitive communal societies, there was essentially gender egalitarianism. Though there was gender division of labour, it was flexible and reciprocal. The means of production and productive resources were communally owned and both men and women participated actively in economic production. Thus, "the distinction did not exist between a public world of men's work and a private world of women's household service ... both sexes worked to produce the goods necessary for livelihood" (Leacock, 1972:33). However, with the emergence of a new mode of production which gave rise to private property, men began to become property owners. To ensure they would accumulate more private property and that it would be inherited by their heirs, they began to subjugate women for their labour and reproductive abilities. Thus males took control over the public domain and economic production, leaving women to the private and domestic domain, where the former had more power over the latter.

Meanwhile, Mies and Shiva (1993) wrote about the effects of development on the environment and subsequent dire consequences for Third World women. They used the modernisation and Marxist underdevelopment or dependency theories to a large extent in their analysis. They called the former "catching up development" which extolled industrialisation and technological progress. According to them, this process was spearheaded by the West. Under this development model, the world would be ruled and dominated by man (white man) with the tools of science and technology and people would be made to believe that constant and perpetual growth was possible. However, such a belief was only possible if the world's resources were unlimited as growth could only come about by turning the former into consumer goods. Such was not the case, thereby the

above logic could only be viable when one group dominated and appropriated the resources of another. Mies and Shiva claimed that this was exactly what has been happening in our world since the Enlightenment period. They stated that the constant growth of the North came at an economic, social and ecological expense to the South. The scarce resources of the latter would be diminished, mountains of waste would be produced which would destroy the ozone layer and bring about the greenhouse effect and much of this waste, and especially toxic waste would be dumped in the South. Women in the South were usually doubly affected as they depended on the environment for their daily sustenance and maintenance.

Mies and Shiva's account included an analysis of the relationship between ecology, women and development, a trend that only took off in the seventies. This gave a deeper insight into women's situation in the Third World, especially indigenous women whose lives were closely tied to the local ecology. They also included the role of ideology in bringing about social change. However, they tended to make generalised claims about capitalist growth and development and its ill effects on women, without putting this analysis within a particular historical or situational context. Also, they seemed to ignore that capitalist development was not a straightforward or unified process (Stevens, 1996:86).

Other Marxist feminist writers have used the "capital accumulation" approach, which emphasised the relationship between women's reproductive role and capital (Beneria, 1979, Mies, 1981, Mackintosh, 1981). Women were seen to be pushed into reproductive activities centred around the household, such as domestic work, socialisation of children and maintaining the welfare of husbands and sons who formed the labour force needed in the capitalist production process. In addition, women were needed to replenish the

work force through biological reproduction of the next generation of workers. Such labour was without payment, appropriated by the capitalist system to accumulate capital. Where women were involved in paid labour, they usually served as a “reserve army” of labour. This was so because their salaries were usually deemed to only supplement the male’s wages. Therefore, they were paid lesser and their work was more easily terminated at will according to the economic situation, for it was assumed that they could always return to the domestic sphere, their supposed main domain. In addition, the women usually held low positions in the work hierarchy and their work conditions were often poor. This sexual division of labor and accompanying gender inequality was also maintained by other social institutions such as the state through its policies, formal religion, the military and police and even the family.

Eventually, feminists have also applied the Marxist mode of production and articulation models, both variants of the above approach, to women’s situation within the periphery (Deere, 1976, Bennholdt-Thomsen, 1981). Firstly, Bennholdt-Thomsen (1981) attested that peasants’ subsistence production within the agrarian non-capitalist mode of production also increased capital accumulation within the capitalist mode of production, and thereby worked towards its interest. She stated that capitalists appropriated peasants’ subsistence labour in a similar manner to that of women’s reproductive labour. Peasants involved in subsistence production would often sell their labour, and/or have relatives sell theirs in the agricultural sector on a seasonal or permanent basis, and usually at a rate that could not sustain them. They would thus have to support themselves and/or their relatives through their own subsistence labour. This increased the surplus labour produced from the agricultural work, which was then appropriated by the employer. In a similar fashion, petty commodity producers sold some of their

produce to acquire some provisions for the family but this money was not usually spent on daily food, which was self-produced with unpaid labour. Therefore, we could see how “the producers themselves are in charge of the work of reproducing their own labour and that of their family. Capital does not assume any responsibility for it. It is unpaid work, which, in turn, is the exact definition of surplus labour” (Bennholdt-Thomsen, 1981:46). Deere (1976) used the above approach to further theorise that women tended to work in the unpaid subsistence sector while men sold their labour to the capitalist in an unequal exchange. Again, the men’s wages were usually not enough to sustain themselves and they would have to rely on their women’s labour in the fields to produce a free means of subsistence for themselves.

These theories have received much critique. Firstly, the capital accumulation model could not account for the fact that women’s subjugation could also occur in non-capitalist modes, although the articulation theories did attempt to explain this. Secondly, the explanation that women’s labour benefited capital as unpaid labour in the subsistence economy or domestic sphere, or paid labour in the cash economy as a “reserve army” of labour, did not specify why it was women rather than men who performed these tasks (Hew, 1990: 38-9). Nonetheless, although giving only a limited view on women’s subordination due to its materialist nature, Marxist feminist theories did give a good economic analysis of the issue.

Meanwhile, Hutheesing (1990) investigated sexual inequality among the Lisu tribal people of northern Thailand. She adopted the subordination-of-women model to a significant degree in her study. In examining ever-dynamic gender relations and women’s autonomy or lack of it, she gave importance to the specificity of the historical

and environmental contexts and gave attention to both economic and non-economic forces. However, her study also hinted at the different spheres approach in looking at Lisu gender relations before their involvement in the capitalist economy. She asserted that although men and women were formerly involved in different activities within different social spheres, nonetheless, gender relations have been rather egalitarian in nature. This latter approach did have its relevance in looking at traditional societies before the onset of capitalist penetration and state intervention.

2.2.2 Studies of rural Malaysian women

One of the earlier studies on women and change within the Malaysian rural setting was done by Strange (1981). She did a study on rural Malay women in Kampung Rusila, Trengganu, and examined how their lives were affected by the development process and social structures within their society. She gave a good account of the transformations within the lives of these women from the economic and non-economic perspectives (i.e. education and family). She seemed to have generally adopted the different-but-equal approach, which argued that male and females have separate yet complementary spheres of influence with women having private power in the domestic sphere whilst men have public power. However, she did acknowledge that the domestic sphere was not really autonomous of the public domain as marriage, divorce and inheritance were often influenced by regulations and policies determined by the male-dominated state.

On the other hand, Ng, Siti and Syed Husin (1987) looked at Malay women's role in agriculture and their participation in rural development programs, state-sponsored bodies and political organisations. They found that traditionally, women held high economic

status due to their central role in agriculture even though politically and ideologically they were generally subordinate to men. However, with the increasing penetration of the cash economy and introduction of state rural development programs, women's work was increasingly relegated into the unpaid subsistence and reproductive spheres whilst production was taken over by males to supply commodities for exchange in the market. Men also had easier access to cash income as smallholders or workers. Even where women were involved in paid work, their wages were lower and seen to supplement their husband's income. With that, women became more economically dependent on men. In addition, state development plans which targeted males created new forms of agricultural systems (i.e. small-holding settlements and modern plantations) which led to economic differentiation among rural folks, although one could not yet conclude that this has led to the creation of "class". Meanwhile, the state also created female counterparts to its male-dominated agencies (i.e. KEMAS). But these focussed more on the reproductive role of women and reinforced the homemaker image of women while men made the major decisions. Government rural programs did not benefit women much in economic terms, or in increasing female participation, leadership and autonomy. Instead, it "meant further domestication of women through the institutionalisation of women's activities ...(which) in the long run will mean the increased exploitation of poor women's labour as a cheap resource" (1987: 122). Even within the political sphere, female organisations (counterparts to the main, male organisations) existed only to support the male components and were subordinate to them at all levels. Here, women were expected to only play supporting and nurturing roles as wives and mothers.

This analysis reflected the Marxist feminist "capital accumulation" approach. However, studying women's participation in rural development programs was important to see if

women played significant roles as social agents within formal structures in their community. The study showed that this was generally not the case due to male structural and ideological imposition. The study could have done well to look into women's influence in the formal structures through informal means and ways or their role as social agents within the informal sphere. It could also examine how these women perceived rural change and responded to it.

Meanwhile, Husna and Napsiah (1994) did a research on rural women and poverty in the agricultural sector within the districts of Baling and Sik in Kedah. They found that many households, especially female-headed households were in the poor and hard core poor categories due to several contributing factors. Firstly, most were in the rubber and/or paddy cultivation sectors where earnings were very low. Secondly, these households tended to accommodate large families which utilised much household resources and which had high family expenditure. Thirdly, there was often a great lack of education, which did not allow members' accessibility to the marketing skills, information and opportunities needed to break out from the cycle of poverty. Finally, many of these households owned small uneconomical plots of land or were landless. Furthermore, it was also found that although women's productive farm, off-farm and reproductive labour contributed very significantly in poor households, their income and productivity remained low due to inaccessibility to resources, i.e. land, capital, technology and opportunity. In spite of the government offering many poverty eradication programs to improve such accessibility, women's participation, especially those from female-headed households has been very limited. This was the case as women's time and labour were wholly spent in productive and reproductive activities, leaving them little time for such participation. In addition, Malay rural women were culturally constrained from being involved as their main role was seen

to be caring for the family. They were therefore not encouraged to attend such programs, which were usually held outside the village. These reasons were in line with those given by Ng, Siti and Syed Husin (1987) earlier. They saw the lack of women's participation in such programs as caused mainly by the state's biased view on women's role in society as it was informed by the Malay culture and ideology on gender. It was also found that government agencies often did not provide services that rural communities really needed, reflecting a top-down implementation of programs. In fact, most villagers in the study area did not participate in or receive any of the training or assistance supposedly available.

This study, utilising the "capital accumulation" model would be useful as a basis for comparing the issue of poverty among rural women from different social contexts due to social change. This was significant, as there was a high incidence of poverty among the OA.

Meanwhile, Hew (1990) examined the effects of agrarian change on gender relations within the indigenous Iban community of the Batang Ai Resettlement Scheme in Sarawak. She utilised a combination of the Marxist feminist and subordination-of-women perspectives to analyse the role of economic and non-economic factors in this process. She discovered that land development and forest policies had a tendency to increase economic differentiation within the Batang Ai community and created a more rigid gender division as women predominated in food production whilst men predominated in cash cropping. This was a finding similar to that of Ng, Siti and Syed Husin's (1987). Women also lost control over much land as males received the titles in the new schemes. Moreover, whenever women were employed, their wages were very low. Hew also looked at the role of Iban ideology in rationalising and reinforcing women's subordination as it relegated women into

the reproductive and domestic sphere which was accorded a lower status, while males participated more in the higher ranked social and public domain. This study offered a good basis for comparing the effects of rural change on indigenous people.

More recently, Stivens (1996) explored the position of Rembau peasant women from pre-colonial to current times, examining gender relations and how this influenced Rembau agrarian forms. She stated that generally, the colonial and post-colonial state, capitalist forces and pressures from the wider economy have undermined women's position. However, in particular circumstances colonial and post-colonial forces have reconstituted local matrilineal ideology to the advantage of women. This could be seen in the issue of land, where official land administrators have formally incorporated matrilineal *adat* into the colonial law apparatus, which led to a process she termed "feminisation of land". It was seen that even non-ancestral, acquired land, which was entitled equally to both sons and daughters, was eventually transferred to daughters or/and female relatives as lifetime gifts, or inheritance at the death of the owners. This happened even though it was usually men who purchased these plots of land with their hard-earned cash and spent much time and effort in working them.

She concluded that it was important that social analysis be done within a historical context, as social change was "(a) product of highly specific historical processes occurring within the context of capitalist development and colonial and post-colonial politics" (1996:5). Furthermore, she challenged articulation theorists such as Laclau (1971) and Meillassoux (1981) stating that gender relations were formed through the interplay of social, economic and political forces within specific contexts and not through material factors alone. In addition, she asserted that social practices were determined dialectically by local initiatives

and socio-economic forces. Stivens thus utilised the subordination-of-women approach to a significant extent and offered a more integral approach to the study of women and social change.

2.2.3 Studies of Orang Asli women

There have not been many gender-specific studies on the OA and social change. Among these was Howell's (1983) study on Chewong women and the effects of monetisation on their position and status. According to her, Chewong traditional ideology was generally egalitarian and there was no rigid dichotomy between men and women's spheres. With the introduction of the cash economy, the Chewong became involved in simple commodity production. Initially, men and women participated actively in producing the smaller diameter rattan and both kept the income earned from it. However, with the new demand for malacca cane for the furniture industry, women were excluded from the production process. This was due to the heavy labour involved in gathering and transporting the rattan which was not quartered and thereby heavier. Furthermore, these grew sparsely in the deep forested areas. Thereby, men eventually became the major income earners and women grew dependent on them for cash to buy food and consumer goods. As women preferred to depend on their men for their livelihood, they began to drop out of the production of the smaller diameter rattan. Thus, grew the trend towards gender differentiation with a rigid segregation of male and female domains, with the former gaining more importance than the latter. This pattern was further embedded in Chewong society as they became more exposed to mainstream patriarchal ideology.

Meanwhile, Gomes' (1991) work on the Semai took a broad look at the issue of gender differentiation. He stated that traditional Semai society had a flexible gender division and practised the bilateral inheritance system, which belied gender egalitarianism. However, he noted that women were beginning to be more involved in subsistence activities which was not paid and participated less in commodity production which was paid. According to him, this would work towards more gender differentiation.

In a similar mode, Thambiah (1997a) studied change in the gender relations and social organisation of the Jakun and came up with similar observations. She noted that the desire for consumer goods has driven more Jakun to participate in the market economy to acquire the cash needed to buy these goods. However, job opportunities were limited for women, and as they dropped out of subsistence farming, their economic autonomy diminished as well. They began to spend more time in the domestic domain and depended on male income for the needs of the family and for consumer items which were the new prestige symbols. Thus men played a major role in increasing the living standard of the family and men were also the ones to determine the economic status of the family.

These works on OA women were especially relevant to this study as Semai women were undergoing similar experiences and change. However, these studies tended to be materialist in nature with emphasis on the economic aspect of change, though Howell and Thambiah included short ideological analyses.

Based on the above review, this study would be distinctive from those mentioned as it undertakes to integrate the components of gender, environment, economy and ideology in the study of Semai women and change. It attempts to also incorporate, wherever possible

the responses of these women as social actors in the midst of such change, and notes if these have modified their realities in any way. As such, this study hopes to establish new terrain onto existing literature on women and development in Malaysia.