

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **THE SETTLEMENT AND ITS POPULATION**

In order to have a better understanding of the dynamics of interacting social forces which affect (and are affected by) women and gender relations within a particular community, one needs an in-depth comprehension of its general and historical background. These would be forwarded in this chapter.

The general background would consist of a description of the location and geographical aspects of Kampung Chang Sungai Gepai (hereafter known as Kampung Chang) and the infrastructure available. Here, the location would be significant in determining the level and nature of contact with outside forces and the consequences on the community, especially the women. The historical background, meanwhile, would give an account of the journey of the community through the ages, the forces encountered and their responses to them. This account was mainly based on the major events that occurred during different leaderships<sup>1</sup>, for this was how the villagers organised their own history.

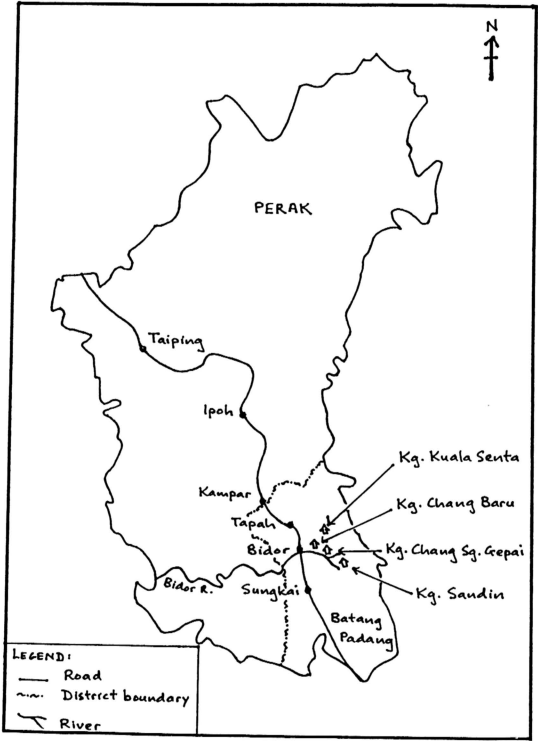
### **3.1 GENERAL BACKGROUND**

#### **3.1.1 Location and geographical aspects**

Kampung Chang is situated around five miles east of Bidor town in the Batang Padang District in South Perak (refer to Maps 1 and 2) and got its name from two rivers which

MAP 1

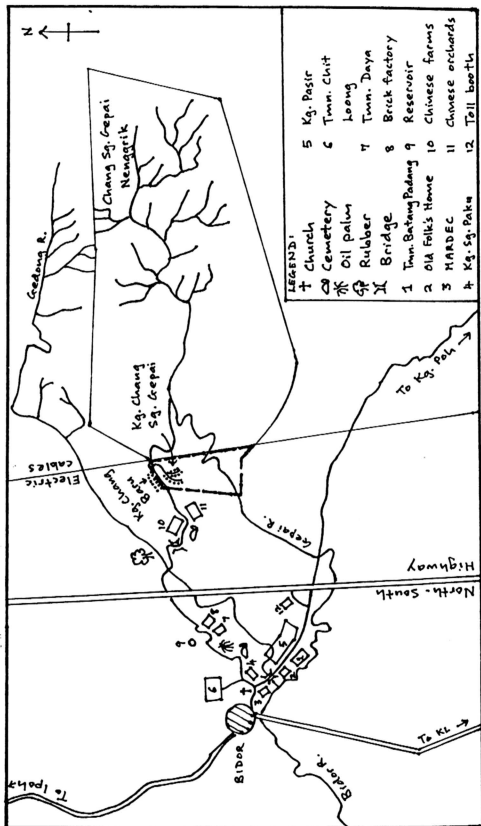
PERSPECTIVE MAP OF KAMPUNG CHANG SUNGAI GEPAI (A)



<sup>1</sup> The major events that occurred under different leadership were sourced from Memorandum (1994:BT1-6) with the permission of the villagers involved.

# MAP 2

## PERSPECTIVE MAP OF KAMPUNG CHANG SUNGAI GEPAI (B)



flow close to the village, the Gepai and Chang (*Cabang* or “Forked”) Rivers. Next to Kampung Chang is Kampung Chang Baru, another OA village whose inhabitants were originally from Kampung Pelantar in Langkap, Teluk Intan.<sup>2</sup>

These “twin villages” are located between two other traditional Semai villages within their own respective *Nenggrik* (customary land), which have been there for generations. These are Kampung Kuala Senta in the north and Kampung Sandin in the south. These two villages share traditional boundaries with Kampung Chang. All these four villages are located in a hilly area close to the foot of the western part of the Main Range or the Titiwangsa Range. Kampung Chang, and a part its inhabitants’ rubber smallholdings and fruit orchards were first surveyed by the DOA between 1959-62 and in 1969, a map was produced by JHEOA based on the survey (refer to Map 3). These lots of land at that time held the status of TOL (Temporary Occupation License) Land and was already approved for gazetting as Orang Asli Reserve Land. However, till now it has not been gazetted by the state government. This area consists of what is now known as Lot 6519 (145.8865 acres) and Lot 6520 (99.0870 acres) in another survey done in 1994 (refer to Map 4).

On the other hand, the *Nenggrik*, which was never applied for gazetting as OA Reserve Land, measures around 31,000 hectares (refer to Map 5). A part of it was already gazetted as the Bukit Tapah Forest Reserve. The *Nenggrik* covers the whole river basin

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<sup>2</sup> Kampung Chang village elders still remember how these people came to the Gepai area. According to them, the people of Kampung Pelantar were cheated by Nafitapuloh (also mentioned by Leary, 1995:18, Williams-Hunt, 1995:182 and Carey, 1976a:327), a Batak from Sumatera and the first Christian pastor to go to the Batang Padang area. In the 1960’s, this pastor took land grants from a number of villagers in Kampung Pelantar and sold them to a mining company. Due to this, these villagers found themselves landless and in 1966, they were forced to shift to the Sungai Gepai area next to Kampung Chang Sungai Gepai. They were very poor then and often had only tapioca for food and lean-to shelters for protection. Out of goodwill, the Penghulu of Kampung Chang Sungai Gepai, with the approval of his people decided to give them part of their communal land for their resettlement.



of the Gepai River and accommodates the orchards and gravesites of the ancestors of the villagers of Kampung Chang.

### **3.1.2 Infrastructure and services provided by the government**

Kampung Chang is easily accessible, as there is a tarred road from Bidor town leading to the village. The road was built by the British in 1926 to link a quarry in the Gepai area to town, and was first tarred in 1929. There is also the North-South Highway built in the early 1990s, which cuts perpendicularly across the town-village road, near the middle. To reach Kampung Chang from the North-South Highway, one could emerge from the Bidor Exit, bypassing in sequence: Taman Batang Padang, a Malaysian Rubber Development Corporation (MARDEC) latex collection point, a Catholic Church, Kampung Melayu Jalan Paku, a Chinese cemetery, Taman Daya, another Chinese cemetery and a few Chinese farms.<sup>3</sup> In addition, there is a waterfall near the village where the road meets the Gepai River, which is much frequented by outsiders. Thus, we can see that the study village is very close to mainstream society and the road allows frequent contact and communication between the villagers and outsiders.

Since 1962, the government has provided the village with certain facilities and services. This was done in line with the policies of sedentarization and integration, which will be explored and analysed in depth in Chapter 5. Meanwhile, a simple account of these are given below in a chronological manner (refer to Map 6 for the location of the structures mentioned):

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<sup>3</sup> Please refer to Map 2.

- In 1962, the DOA started the “Rural Project” in the village, with the collaboration of villagers. It encompassed the building of a village school,<sup>4</sup> a hostel for students from the interior<sup>5</sup> and a community hall.<sup>6</sup> It also included a fish-rearing project to generate income for the villagers.
- In 1968, Kampung Chang and Kampung Chang Baru were resettled in their present location and wooden settler type houses were built for the villagers. Under this scheme, the JHEOA gave high yielding rubber and coconut seedlings to the villagers in 1969.<sup>7</sup>
- In 1976, the JHEOA provided bus transport for students who went to the Bidor National Primary School in town when the village school was closed down the previous year.
- In 1987, the Health Ministry supplied villagers with PVC pipes to channel water from a spring in the hills. In that same year, *Kemajuan Masyarakat* (KEMAS)<sup>8</sup> opened a branch in the village and its members started cooking lessons for female villagers.<sup>9</sup>
- In 1989, the National Electric Board provided electricity for villagers with wooden houses.<sup>10</sup>
- In 1990, a double-story building was built with the top floor serving as a *surau* or prayer room and the ground floor, the community hall. However, the *surau* was

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<sup>4</sup> Since 1993, this school was discontinued and used instead as a hostel for students from neighbouring villages in the interior, such as Kampung Sandin, Senta and Pos Gedong, who were studying in Bidor town.

<sup>5</sup> This no longer exists.

<sup>6</sup> This is presently the hostel canteen.

<sup>7</sup> Although the rubber thrived, the coconut project eventually failed.

<sup>8</sup> Community Development, a Division of the Ministry of National and Rural Development.

<sup>9</sup> These carry on till today, though with very few participants.

<sup>10</sup> According to them, bamboo houses would be too much at risk in the event of a fire outbreak.

eventually turned into a community hall<sup>11</sup> and the ground floor was made a KEMAS kindergarten in 1991. •

- In 1996, a public telephone was provided and was located in Kampung Chang Baru.
- In the same year eight wooden houses were built for new families without wooden homes.<sup>12</sup>
- In the 1990's (the women could not remember when), a mobile clinic with nurses from the Bidor Clinic provided medical attention for villagers every Thursday from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, especially for mothers and children.

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<sup>11</sup> After completion, the *surau* was soiled by village youths as a sign of protest, for there were no Muslims in the village and the *surau* was built without any consultation with the villagers. Due to that incident, the place could no longer be used as a *surau* and was turned into a community hall.

<sup>12</sup> Although these houses were wired for electricity, they were not supplied with it.





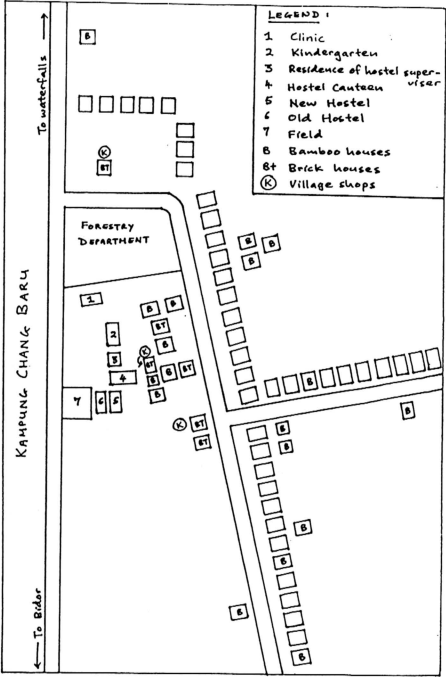
MAP 5

A SKETCH MAP OF KAMPUNG CHANG SUNGAI GEPAI AND CUSTOMARY  
LAND (NENGGRUK) (See also Memorandum, 1994:13)



MAP 6

A SKETCH MAP OF KAMPUNG CHANG SUNGAI GEPAI SHOWING THE INFRASTRUCURE AVAILABLE



### 3.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The community of Kampung Chang has had a long tradition of oral history, which they not too long ago documented in a Memorandum (1994) as part of the process in claiming their land rights. As they organised their history under different leaderships (listed in Figure 1),<sup>13</sup> this approach would be emulated. Meanwhile, a short account of an earlier part of their history that involved the issue of slavery would also be given. This was included as it was deemed a very significant part of their history and was still very vivid in their communal consciousness.<sup>14</sup> In fact, Ijah with great insight once stated that:

“...slavery was one of the major reasons why others looked down upon the OA and saw us as possessing no human dignity. Eventually our existence was not valued and we were seen as little more than beasts. It was from this attitude that we were eventually exploited in many, many ways.”<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> According to Dentan (1968: 67) the Semai traditionally did not have formal leaders. However, there were a few elders whom they greatly respected and who could be very influential in the community, though the community was not obliged to follow their advice. The fact that the current community in Kampung Chang could not remember their leaders before Atuk Mertak might demonstrate their traditional lack of formal leaders. However, one could suggest that Atuk Mertak's status as a well acknowledged leader by the group which followed him from *Cangkat Silih* to *Darat Baruh* and their descendants (the villagers of Kampung Chang) was due to his role in leading the migration of this group. Like the Temiar, who traditionally had “no incumbent headman with a designated authority who passed it down through a fixed order of succession...”, it is possible to speak of great leaders, simply because they had exhibited some commendable social ability when they were alive” (Hood, 1989:79). The present myths surrounding the figure of Atuk Mertak could further attest to this. Later, when the community moved into *Darat Baruh*, an area which was geographically much closer to the Malays, the Malay model of leadership might have rubbed onto the community and the Semai informal leadership might have eventually taken on more formal meaning and status. This became even more so when Atuk Mangut was given the Malay designation of *Penghulu*. Thereby, the community's current organisation of their history around their leaders might reflect the transformation of their traditional authority system from one that was flexible and informal to one that was more fixed and central to the community.

<sup>14</sup> Female villagers till this day are often distrustful and afraid of Malay men for fear of being kidnapped and/or raped. Howell (1983:64) observed this among the Chewong as well.

<sup>15</sup> The reason for such an attitude was forwarded by Dentan et al. (1997:52-8). According to him, in the very early centuries, outsiders (mostly traders or earlier Malays) looked upon the OA with more respect due to their significant role as suppliers of jungle produces for trade. However, by the eighteenth century, the local Malay chiefs had begun to tighten control over OA collectors. Meanwhile, in the eighteenth to the nineteenth century the OA had to compete with migrant “Malays” settlers for access to land and in collecting jungle produce for trade. These often raided the OA communities for slaves as they saw them as non-humans and often treated them as such for “To Malays, OA were jural non-persons, living outside the web of ethical, political and moral ties which bind people together and govern their behaviour” (Andaya and Andaya 1982:160-1 cited in Dentan et al. 1997:57). The OA had to run into the interior to escape the raids and they could no longer be actively involved in trading jungle produces. Thus, they



**FIGURE 1**

**A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF TRADITIONAL LEADERS IN KAMPUNG  
CHANG AND THEIR PERIOD OF LEADERSHIP**

<p align="center"> <b>Mairaknak Mertak (unknown)</b>  <b>Mairaknak Mawai a/l Mertak (early 20<sup>th</sup> century -1920's)</b>  <b>and Mairaknak Mangut (early 20<sup>th</sup> century – 1942)</b>  <b>Penghulu Renjok a/l Mangut (1945/6 - 1973)</b>  <b>Penghulu Ahmad a/l Omar (1973 - 75)</b>  <b>Penghulu Bandok a/l Renjok (1975 – )</b> </p>
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### 3.2.1 Early history: An account of OA slavery

The elders of the village, both male and female could still recount vividly their ancestors' experience of slavery. Ijah's own account,<sup>16</sup> which she received from some elders, is given below. It includes mythical elements, which denotes resistance, and would be allowed to speak for itself:

*This is the story of **Perang Sangkil** (Sangkil War) that happened before the British came to Perak,<sup>17</sup> when the Gepai River was the main mode of transport and its waters deep and wide enough for boats and rafts to move up and down it. At the time when the trees*

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eventually lost the more respected role of collector and trader. Due to the above events, the OA came to be deemed as the lowest social group in the Peninsula, which then paved the way for further exploitation.

<sup>16</sup> This account ran parallel to that given by Dentan et al.: "Orang Rawa from Sumatra moved into south Perak, establishing bases from which in the latter part of the nineteenth century they launched a sustained campaign against OA, forcing Jah Hut to seek refuge in southern Pahang. Semai and Jah Hut still tell stories of the "Sangkil War" with the Rawas; for although they could not resist the superior technology of the slave raiders, they could wage a successful guerrilla campaign against would-be occupiers" (1997:56).

were tall and large, the Rawas came from Sumatra and reached the place that is now Teluk Intan. They reached **Darat Baruh**,<sup>17</sup> looking for slaves as they went along. Many people were killed, especially the weak and the elderly. Young men and children were taken as slaves to the Raja and **Orang Besar**,<sup>19</sup> while the women were made slaves and concubines. However, they did not do too much harm to my people, my ancestors, for they outwitted the Rawas. Also, their area was very much in the interior before.

The Rawas eventually arrived at a place, which was close to the settlements of my ancestors. The villagers then decided to build bamboo and wooden platforms high up in the trees, connecting tree to tree so there was eventually a road up in the canopies! They also built their houses up in the trees so they could camouflage themselves from the slave raiders. Even the young children of those times were smart. When the Rawas were close, they would keep very silent when asked to do so. Even the very young ones could understand the imminent danger and not make a sound or cry.

One day, the Rawas were seen to head towards the settlements. All the men, women and children quickly went up the trees and ran across the platforms away from the village. As they were doing so, they noticed that an old man was not making a move to run away. They urged him to go but he said he was too old to run. Anyway, he would use whatever means he could to keep the Rawas at bay. So the old man was left to face the oncoming raiders.

When the Rawas arrived, they saw the old man alone in his village. They asked him where the villagers had gone and threatened to kill him if he did not say. The old man

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<sup>17</sup> The British arrived in Perak in 1862.

<sup>18</sup> Darat Baruh is the plain south of what is now Bidor town.

said he would tell them, but only on one condition. He showed them a big durian tree heavy with fruits. He told them that if they could shake the tree so that the fruits dropped, then he would willingly tell them where the villagers went and was even willing to be killed. But if they could not do so and he, an old man could, then they must turn back. They laughed at him and said that such a task would be ridiculously easy, as there were so many of them. So they shook the tree, and shook the tree. But not a fruit fell. They tried for hours but did not succeed. In exhaustion, they allowed the old man to try. The old man took hold of the tree with one hand, shook it and all the fruits fell! The Rawas stood in awe and amazement of the old man and soon went off. That was why the Rawas managed to reach only the **Gedang** area<sup>20</sup> and did not go beyond that. However, the Teluk Intan area was badly hit for the Rawas came inland from there. So were Cenderiang,<sup>21</sup> Batu Berangkai and Sungkai.

Slavery was not a new occurrence among the OA. Dentan et al. noted that “enslaving OA is an ancient tradition in the Peninsula, going back before the arrival of Pasisir (aristocratic Malaccan) culture and perhaps before the arrival of the Malays themselves” (1997:55). Although the British abolished slavery in 1883 (Sullivan, 1982:16), the slave trade continued till the early part of the twentieth century with the OA as a major source of slave labor (Leary, 1995:18).

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<sup>19</sup> These were the Malay noble men.

<sup>20</sup> Please refer to Map 7.

### 3.2.2 Leadership of *Mairaknak Mertak*

On the question of OA leadership, it could be noted that before British colonization, leadership was rather informal and communal leaders were known as *Mairaknak* or “elderly persons”, who acted as village elders. Men filled this role as far as the community could remember. According to the community, a leader should have the following characteristics: he should be good-hearted, possessed good debating and facilitating skills, knowledge and fluency in local customs and traditions, a just disposition and wisdom.<sup>22</sup>

As far as the elders of Kampung Chang could remember, their ancestors have existed as a communal group in the Batang Padang area even before the appearance of the Malay Sultanate in the state, which began with the rule of Sultan Muzaffar Syah in 1528<sup>23</sup> (Wilkinson, 1971:148-50, cited in Sullivan, 1982:1). According to them, their ancestors’ first settlements were in a place called *Cangkat Silih*<sup>24</sup> and its surrounding hills. There, men and women practiced shifting agriculture, planted *durian* and *petai* trees and collected rattan and *damar* which the men traded for salt, bush-knives, pots and sarongs.<sup>25</sup> The women were not involved in trade for they feared outsiders, as they did not have much exposure to them. In addition, they were afraid of being kidnapped or

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<sup>21</sup> OA villagers in Cenderiang can to this day show where the Rawa Malays sharpened their swords on large rocks, before they raided Semai settlements. Deep scars were eventually created on the rocks and it was appropriately named “Batu Musuh” or “Enemy Stones” (Leary, 1995:18).

<sup>22</sup> Please refer Dentan (1968:65-70) for a detailed account of Semai leadership.

<sup>23</sup> This was the official version from the early twentieth century. According to legend, the first Malay Sultan was seen to be Sultan Ahamad Taj-Uddin Syah. He was a Raja from Johor invited to rule Perak by Tun Puteh, who till then governed the state. It was interesting to note that a woman was the first ruler of the country and she was the daughter of an aborigine, though this account could have been invented to legitimize rule (Sullivan, 1982: 1-2).

<sup>24</sup> Please refer to Map 7.

<sup>25</sup> Sullivan (1982:2) documented active trade between the OA and the Malays in Perak where native produce such as rattan, gutta, wax, ivory and other jungle products were brought from inland districts for Perak’s external trade. In fact, it was recorded that jungle produce and tin were shipped from Perak to Malacca from the early sixteenth century and continued to the nineteenth century.

raped by slave raiders. Till now, villagers from Kampung Chang claim land and tree rights to this area, and they still actively collect *petai*, *durian* and other fruits from trees there, which were planted by their ancestors.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, a part of the original population at *Cangkat Silih* broke away and moved to *Darat Baruh*, led by Atuk Mertak. This group then broke up into five different bands, which then created five different hamlets in *Darat Baruh*. These were Kampung Tanggoh, Kampung Canang, Kampung Kemik, Kampung Panyag and Kampung Tamut (refer to Map 8)<sup>26</sup> and still came under the jurisdiction of Atuk Mertak. In these hamlets, Atuk Mertak and his followers grew crops and fruit trees, collected jungle produces and began to pan for tin,<sup>27</sup> which the men traded with Malays from Teluk Mat Intan.<sup>28</sup>

After a long while settling in this area, which they called their *Nenggrik* or homeland, news arrived that the British would interfere with Perak Malay rule<sup>29</sup> and that the Malays would soon be creating settlements in their *Nenggrik*.<sup>30</sup> When they heard this news, Atuk Mertak invited his people to shift to an area close to the Barah, Panggang

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<sup>26</sup> These settlements would now cover the area from the Indian Crematorium in Bidor town right till the fourth mile at Teluk Intan Road and would now consist mostly of former mining areas, a Chinese New Village and housing estates.

<sup>27</sup> Although Chinese tin miners first appeared in Perak around 1830, the aborigines in Perak have been mining tin from the sixteenth century and certainly have done so in the nineteenth century (Sullivan, 1982:2,13).

<sup>28</sup> This is now known as Teluk Intan.

<sup>29</sup> Treaties were created between the British and Perak rulers in 1825, which guaranteed the latter's independence from Kedah, Siam and Bugis invasions. However, the British only took control of the state in 1862 and effective power only began after its military conquest in 1876 following the first Resident, James Birch's murder. Hugh Low took over the position in 1877 and established an effective administration of Perak (Sullivan, 1982:13-6). Here, it was most likely the earlier era that the ancestors of Kampung Chang villagers were referring to.

<sup>30</sup> Sullivan recorded of how the "growth of Malay population had driven them (OA) to the hills and jungle of the interior" (1982:2).

and Mahang Rivers (refer to Map 9) which is now part of Bidor town.<sup>31</sup> Thus, they built their homes there, opened swiddens and mined for tin.<sup>32</sup>

However, not long after, the Malays began to settle and farm in a place the OA called *Gedang*, which was close to the settlements of Atuk Mertak and his people. Based on this and the news that a road would soon be built for horse carriages due to the expansion of tin mining in the area, Atuk Mertak and his people decided to move again. However, this time Atuk Mertak and the heads of the different hamlets decided to go their separate ways, though the latter agreed to continue being under the main leadership of Atuk Mertak. The heads of these hamlets were Atuk Mangut, Yok Chek, Atuk Nerampek, Atuk Saguk and Atuk Mertak's son, Atuk Mawai.<sup>33</sup>

Atuk Mertak and a few families shifted back to *Cangkat Silih* and the surrounding hills. Meanwhile, Atuk Mangut and his followers moved to Kuala Sengkwok in the Gepai area, which is now known as Lubuk Panjang. Yok Chek and his group settled in *Cangkat*, near what is now called Titi Sungai Paku, Bruseh Road. Atuk Nerampek and his people moved to Kuala Sungai Terbul, which is now occupied by Kampung Melayu Kuala Gepai. Atuk Saguk, in turn settled in Bukit Balang. Finally, Atuk Mawai and his group shifted to the area known as *Lubuk Degong* at the Gepai River waterfalls. There, he started a settlement known as Kampung Teow Empaat.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> At that time, Bidor did not yet exist; in its stead was uncleared and unoccupied land.

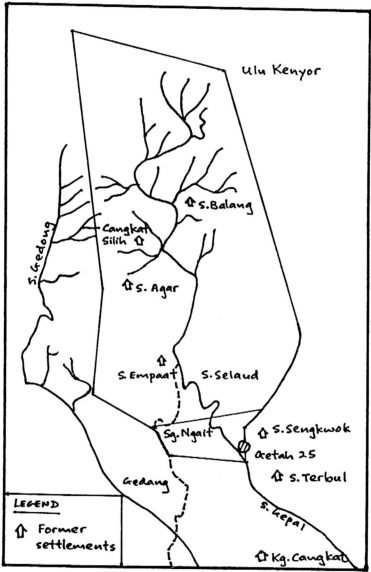
<sup>32</sup> This turn of events must have occurred before the 1850's or 1860's for it was at that time that Sultan Ja'far (1850-1866) and a Malay merchant called Haji Musa started tin mining in Bidor and Kinta (Sullivan, 1982:21,35). In that same century, Bidor was founded as a tin mining center and became a major source of tin in Perak at that time.

<sup>33</sup> Atuk Mawai was the great-granduncle of a current villager who was forty years old at the time of writing.

<sup>34</sup> Please refer to Map 7.

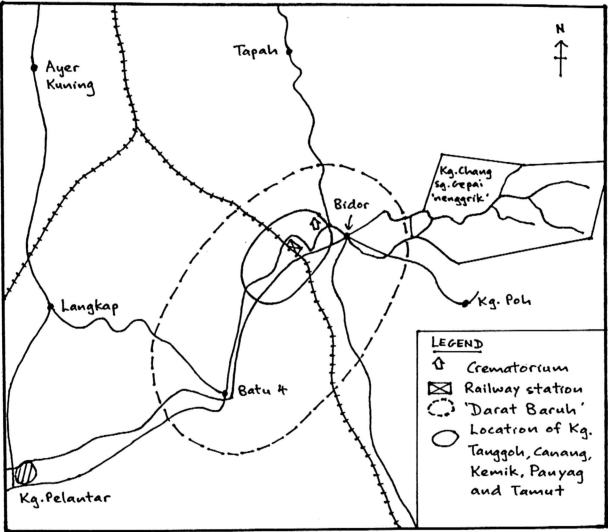
MAP 7

A SKETCH MAP OF FORMER SETTLEMENTS IN CANGKAT SILIH  
AND SUNGAI GEPAI (See also Memorandum, 1994:5)



MAP 8

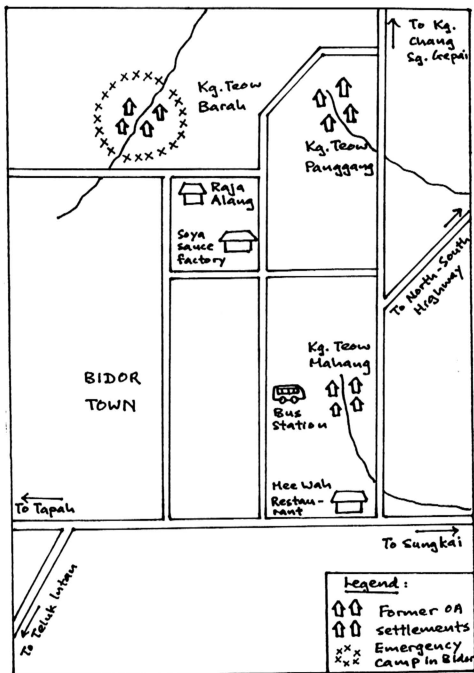
A SKETCH MAP OF FORMER SETTLEMENTS IN DARAT BARUH  
(see also Memorandum, 1994:14)





## MAP 9

A SKETCH MAP OF FORMER SETTLEMENTS IN THE BIDOR AREA  
 (Source: Memorandum, 1994)



### 3.2.3 Leadership of *Mairaknak* Mawai a/l Mertak and *Mairaknak* Mangut

After the death of Atuk Mertak, his group from *Cangkat Silih* moved to an area close to the Agar River.<sup>35</sup> Two *Mairaknak* replaced him; one would be guardian of the interior and the people therein and the other would be guardian to the hamlets in the Gepai area that were closer to town. Atuk Mawai took the former position and was called *Mairaknak Darat* (Forest Elder) whilst Atuk Mangut was elected into the latter position and was simply called *Mairaknak*. Atuk Mawai in turn appointed Atuk Anep as *Yenang*,<sup>36</sup> to assist him in administering the hamlets in the interior. He also appointed Atuk Niwin as an assistant to be responsible for Kampung Cangkat Silih, Kampung Sungai Agar and a few other settlements.

In the early 1910's when the villagers from Atuk Mawai and Atuk Mangut's areas were already selling tin to the Chinese, Atuk Mawai unearthed a vein of tin ore from *Teow Empaat* which was as thick as a man's lower arm.<sup>37</sup> He then hired OA villagers from other settlements in Sungkai, Kuala Senta, Sandin, and *Darat Baruh* to pan for tin in the area, and got Atuk Mangut to get coupons from Tapah to enable him to sell the tin. In the 1920's, Atuk Mawai passed away and the people who worked with him moved to another area close by, for it was heard that the *Teow Empaat* area would soon be made into a quarry.

Meanwhile, Atuk Mangut who resided in the Gepai area was put in charge of dealings with the townspeople and *Orang Besar*. Eventually, due to the nature of his

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<sup>35</sup> Please refer to Map 7.

<sup>36</sup> The *Yenang* acted as a general assistant to the *Mairaknak*.

<sup>37</sup> Please refer to Tale 2 found in Appendix G.

responsibilities, the Malay ruler appointed him as *Penghulu*<sup>38</sup> or village headman. Atuk Mawai was appointed *Setin* or Assistant Headman. These titles were not official but given orally without letters of appointment. However, from that moment onwards, the terms *Penghulu* and *Setin* were used for OA leaders, rather than *Mairaknak*. These positions were Malay in origin, where the *Penghulu* who held more social and political power than the assistant headed the hierarchy of Malay leadership. Thereby, in a short while, the OA leadership structure was transformed. The main traditional leader at that time was Atuk Mawai, the *Mairaknak Darat* but his new designation as assistant headman put him in second place after the *Penghulu*, Atuk Mangut. Nonetheless, this did not have serious repercussions then as these designations were not formalized and the OA more or less followed the traditional forms of leadership. However, later the choice of *Penghulu* did not need to be based on his deep knowledge of traditional customs and laws, and his good relational style (apart from other qualities needed of a traditional leader) though the choice of *Setin* often was. Thereby, the *Setin* was found to be more in touch with the villagers' and their needs. However, the decisions of the *Penghulu* held more weight than that of the *Setin*. This has in instances angered and confused the villagers.

In the meantime, Atuk Mangut's domain or the Gepai area was under the rule of a Malay *Orang Besar* called Raja Alang and Atuk Mangut's people were asked to send tribute once a year. This included rice, tapioca, sweet potatoes, yam and *petai*. Such a practice was common where *Penghulus* came under the domain of the *Orang Besar* who

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<sup>38</sup> In Kampung Chang, the *Penghulu* mainly dealt with affairs relating to external parties, especially government agents and traders. The *Setin* would assist the *Penghulu* in such matters. The *Setin* was also well versed in traditional customs and laws and would advise the *Penghulu* in these matters. The *Yenang* would act as an assistant to both *Penghulu* and *Setin*.

levied taxes on goods produced, and who were in turn under the authority of the Sultan, remitting part of the taxes to him (Sullivan, 1982:38).

In the early 1910's, Atuk Mangut heard about rubber trees from a Malay man, and its valuable yield.<sup>39</sup> He bought twenty-five seeds from him at RM0.25 a seed and planted them in the village. This area was thereafter named *Getah Dua Puluh Lima* (Twenty-five Rubber Trees) and belongs to the OA of Kampung Chang to this day.<sup>40</sup> When Atuk Mangut realized these seeds were not enough to produce sufficient latex for his people, he and the villagers picked more from the Malay man's smallholding and planted them. These were ready for tapping in 1927,<sup>41</sup> and the villagers learnt the method of processing the latex into rubber sheets from the Malays. At that time, formic acid was not used and the rubber was made into sheets with the use of wooden sticks or hands. The price of rubber then was RM4.00 a kati.

In 1929, the villagers bought a mangle from a Chinese smallholder to produce ribbed sheets, paying in installments. By that time, rubber price had dropped to RM3.90 a kati. According to the village elders, during the late 1930's or early 1940's, a coupon system was created where RM0.25 was deducted for every kati of rubber sold to get a coupon, which acted as a license to sell rubber. These coupons were collected and would later be exchanged for money at the same rates of RM0.25 a kati. Each time the villagers wanted

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<sup>39</sup> Rubber had become the main commodity in Malaya with the boom of 1909-1912 but was mainly confined to plantations owned by the British until 1910. However, by then the Malays had caught up by actively growing rubber in smallholdings in spite of colonial policies to discourage this so as to ensure that the profits go to the colonizers (Stevens, 1996:78).

<sup>40</sup> Please refer to Map 7.

<sup>41</sup> These were wild rubber trees and took many years to produce latex, in contrast to the new high yielding variety introduced later, which matured in approximately seven years.

to sell their rubber, Atuk Mangut as their head had to go to Bidor to acquire those coupons.<sup>42</sup>

In 1926, the British built a road from Bidor to *Teow Empaat*, as they wanted to open a quarry there. This road was made of wood, banana leaves, sand and stones and some OA villagers were paid as laborers to build it. The quarry was opened in that same year. By then, villagers no longer panned for tin for the task was difficult, tin was more difficult to obtain and there were other alternative sources of living such as tapping rubber.

The quarry was owned and managed by the British till the 1950's. Initially, no villagers were hired to work there. However, in the late 1940's, during the Emergency when most villagers had escaped into the interior, a family and a young female relative of theirs decided to remain and a few of them were hired to work in the quarry.

In 1936, the Chinese opened a tin mine near the OA settlements at the Selaud River and Kuala Sungai Ngait<sup>43</sup> and a few OA women were hired to cut *bertam* for the roofing of the workers' *kongsi* house.

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<sup>42</sup> Here, based on Lim's study of peasants and their agricultural economy (1977), the coupon system was most likely set up with the implementation of a national policy in 1934 that demanded a new set of rubber restrictions which included the setting of production quotas (Stevens, 1996:79). The first government restrictions to rubber production were set with the Stevenson Scheme (1922-8). The decision to do so was very much influenced by the British plantation owners who suffered great losses due to the Great Depression within the industrial nations (beginning in 1920) which led to many factories and plants closing down. This, in turn decreased sharply the demand for rubber worldwide and rubber prices fell drastically (Lim, 1977:140). It could be noted that the coupon system was used to restrict rubber production in an attempt to hike up its price in the market. For example, 20-30 katis worth of coupons could be issued for a three month period rather than allowing an unrestricted output. The District Officers who also gave out certificates of standard production and quarterly licenses issued the coupons (Lim, 1977:148).

<sup>43</sup> Please refer to Map 7.

Between 1939-40, villagers heard news from the Chinese in Bidor that a war would soon erupt, and that the Japanese would invade Malaya. In 1941, the villagers heard bombs exploding from afar and the sound of warplanes passing above their heads. In December 1941, The Japanese invaded Malaya and usurped British rule. In their armed retaliation, the British were assisted by the Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA), the military arm of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) and Malay nationalists. The situation during this time was very chaotic for the OA villagers and many went about haphazardly. Some ran into the forests deep in the interior, some came out of the forest into *Darat Baruh*, and some remained where they were.

During the war in 1942, Atuk Mangut the *Penghulu* was killed by the communists who suspected him of being a spy for the Japanese, for he often went to Tapah to buy rubber coupons at the District Officer's office. For three years after his death, there was no *Penghulu* in the village.

### 3.2.4 Leadership of *Penghulu* Renjok a/l Mangut

The Japanese were defeated in August 1945 and the British returned in September the same year to take over the government of Malaya. It was at this time that the situation among the OA villagers improved. Those who had run away to escape the Japanese and communists returned and eventually elected Atuk Renjok as their new *Penghulu*, Atuk Hanek as *Setin* and Atuk Asih as *Yenang*. From that year onwards, Atuk Renjok and his assistants administered the hamlets in both the interior and the areas closer to town. Like his father, Atuk Renjok resided in *Teow Sengkwok* in the Gepai area.

However, a bitter and gruesome incident occurred that same year which village elders still remember. According to them, after the return of the British, there was to be a feast in Bidor to celebrate their victory, organized by the British and the MPAJA.<sup>44</sup> Malays, Chinese, Indians and Orang Aslis in the surrounding areas were invited. The OA who came for the feast were from Kampung Pelantar and the settlements within the Gepai area. During the feast, the communists were said to have killed an OA man surreptitiously for allegedly being a Japanese supporter. The other OA were aware of this and were very fearful. However, when they tried to leave, they were asked to remain for the gift of flour that came from the Japanese after they lost the war. As there was some delay in getting the flour, the OA from *Darat Baruh* had to spend the night with the communists in Bidor. While waiting for dinner that night, an OA<sup>45</sup> went to get a drink in the kitchen. There, he saw two Chinese men chopping meat, which happened to be the OA man who was killed that morning. He and his friends immediately ran back to their villages.<sup>46</sup>

In 1947, the villagers under *Penghulu* Renjok heard that another war was forthcoming, this time between the communists and British.<sup>47</sup> According to their sources, the communists were not happy with the British because the latter had not kept their

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<sup>44</sup> This incident most likely occurred before the MPAJA was disbanded in December 1945 (Leary, 1995:11).

<sup>45</sup> He was the father of a current villager in Kampung Chang.

<sup>46</sup> Such incidents of violence against OA who were accused of being supporters of "the enemy" of that particular moment were common in those years as can be attested by Leary (1995: 74-83).

<sup>47</sup> The MCP resorted to armed conflict in May 1948 under the leadership of Chin Peng with its military arm, the Malayan Races Liberation Army or MRLA (formerly Malayan Peoples Anti-British Army). The factors leading to the insurrection included massive labor unrest from 1945-8 between Communist-dominated unions and their employers and the government, which led to a crackdown on union leaders by the Malayan and Singapore governments. This unrest was largely due to the big drop in wages in the mining and plantation sectors, major employment areas for the Chinese who dominated MCP membership. This in turn was caused by the major decrease of tin and rubber prices in the world market. Secondly, the Party's Secretary-General Lai Tek, who was also a British agent who did not support armed conflict, embezzled a major portion of the Party's fund and valuables and mysteriously disappeared, thus leaving the leadership open for more militant candidates (Leary, 1995:11-2).

promise to them.<sup>48</sup> The villagers then heard that the Emergency would be declared.<sup>49</sup> Once again, the villagers were in chaos and did not know what to do. Eventually, all those living in the interior decided to come out and congregate with Atuk Renjok and his people in the Gepai area.

From the days of war with the Japanese to the armed conflict between the British and communist insurgents, the OA have very much been caught in the midst of the strife and hostilities. In the latter conflict, the communists would pressure the OA villagers to help them attain food, either home grown or bought from the town. If they did not want to do so, they were threatened with death.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, the British would accuse them of supporting the communists if they did help them and would arrest them or even shoot them if found out.<sup>51</sup>

In 1949, the villagers were given official identity cards to “enable the government to identify and keep track of the population” (Leary, 1995:75).

Meanwhile, 1950 turned out to be a black year for the villagers of Sungai Gepai. A number of their population was killed by communists in the massacre of Ulu Kenyor<sup>52</sup> where fifty OA were murdered (refer to Appendix A for a detailed account). Among the dead were Atuk Renjok’s charges that had earlier beaten a retreat there in the midst of

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<sup>48</sup> After the surrender of the Japanese, the Communist leaders had hoped that the British would liberate Malaya in view of the worldwide policy to grant independence to colonies. The Communists expected to play a dominant role in a post-independence government but soon realized that this would not be the case and soon resorted to an armed struggle (Dentan et al, 1997:61, Carey, 1976a: 291).

<sup>49</sup> The State of Emergency was declared on 18 June 1948 by the British government following the murder of three British planters in the Sungai Siput area in Perak on 16 June 1948 (Leary, 1995:12).

<sup>50</sup> In fact, Leary (1995:38, 75-83) did mention how the MRLA had killed a number of OA prior to 1951, including those in the Cameron Highlands, Tapah, Kampar and Bidor areas because they were suspected of being spies or failed to supply food.

<sup>51</sup> Leary (1995:74-5,81) documented incidents of this happening in the larger OA population.

<sup>52</sup> This was a Semai village close to the Sungai Gepai area.



the chaos of the early Emergency days. Four of his people survived the massacre as they managed to run and hide under a heap of rattan. One of the survivors, Yok Serungkop who was ten years old at that time, lived in Kampung Chang till today and is now fifty seven years old.

In 1950, a formal ceremony to appoint OA *Penghulus* in the district was organized by British officials in Tapah and was officiated by the Raja Muda of Perak who lived in Kuala Kangsar. Every headman was given a letter of appointment, a kris and a formal Malay headgear called the *tenggolok*. It was then that Atuk Renjok's dominion in the Gepai area was officially known as Kampung Chang and he was formally recognized as *Penghulu* of Kampung Chang.

In 1950, Major P.D.R. Williams-Hunt became the first Adviser of DOA, which was created in the same year and enlarged in 1954.<sup>53</sup> In 1951, Williams-Hunt met with Atuk Renjok and advised the villagers to plant rice as they did before. He also handed out banana seedlings to each household and brought medicine for the villagers. It was then that the villagers first had modern medicine. After a few months, the people were called to Kampung Bruseh for some shots to inoculate them against diseases.

According to villagers, there was another DOA official who administered to the OA in the district of Batang Padang. Villagers called her "Gus Mary". This happened to be Pamela Gouldsbury who became Assistant Adviser of the DOA in September 1953. She was said to visit the village often and was the first to build a village school in 1951<sup>54</sup> so

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<sup>53</sup> The reason for the extension, according to the former Commissioner for OA Affairs, was mainly to enable the government to better control the OA so they would have less inclination and fewer opportunities to assist the communist insurgents (Carey 1976b:49 cited in Nicholas, 1985:5.).

<sup>54</sup> This building no longer exists.

those villagers would be settled. According to her, this was to ensure that the communists would not easily influence the OA so that national security would be safeguarded. This was in line with the colonial policy of that time where the OA were urged to resettle in permanent settlements in areas which were easily accessible. This was done to facilitate surveillance so that there was no cooperation between the OA and the communist insurgents, who depended on the OA for food supplies and information.

In 1954, another DOA official known as “Tuan Hely” came to “take care” of the villagers of Kampung Chang. At that time, the villagers were going through a difficult phase due to communist threats. “Tuan Hely” gave the villagers fifteen guns and they bought another four to assist the government in fighting the communist insurgents.

In 1955, “Tuan Hely” was replaced by Tengku Mak Idin and he in turn was succeeded by Tengku Said at the end of 1955. In 1956, Encik Badilah substituted Tengku Said and assumed responsibilities till 1957.

From 1955-88, Chinese contractors logged a large part of the villagers’ forested customary land. In fact, the roads now leading into the forest were logging roads created in those days. The effects of such activities will be analyzed in the following chapter.

In 1957, *Setin* Hanek passed away and was not replaced till 1964. In that year, Encik Badilah issued orders that the whole of Kampung Chang was to be resettled in a camp in Bidor, which was enclosed by barb-wired fences. This was to ensure better governmental supervision and control so that the OA would not be able to assist the communists in any way. The Chinese too were resettled in the same camp. In the

process of shifting, the attap roofing, house poles and all domesticated animals from Kampung Chang were brought along to the camp in an army truck.

However, after some time in the camp, the people of Kampung Chang could no longer endure the situation for villagers were not given any food but were forced to find their own when the camp gate was opened for them every morning. As they had to return by the end of the day, they could not go far to look for food. They could find little, being in a town area. Eventually, the villagers stole home so they could get sufficient food and tap their rubber trees that were being neglected. Finally, all of them returned to the village without any official permission to do so. In 1959, Tuan Badilah was posted to another area and was replaced by Tuan Richard.

Tuan Richard, who was a Filipino, began to survey and measure the area of Kampung Chang.<sup>55</sup> In 1962, Tuan Mahadi who started the "Rural Project" replaced him.<sup>56</sup> Meanwhile, in 1963, *Yenang* Asih passed away and in 1964, Atuk Kerai was elected as *Setin* and Atuk Halap as *Yenang*. It was also in the 1960's that the village was made a medical post and called Post Chang. A clinic was built with a medical assistant posted there to manage it and distribute medicine to those in need. Occasionally, a doctor would be present to attend to the sick.

### 3.2.5 Leadership of *Penghulu* Ahmad a/l Omar

In 1973, Atuk Renjok resigned as *Penghulu* and he elected his nephew into the position, as his son was not mature enough to take it up. *Penghulu* Ahmad assumed duty for only

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<sup>55</sup> Please refer to Section 3.1.1.

<sup>56</sup> Please refer to Section 3.1.2.

two years and there were no significant events that occurred in the village during this time.

### **3.2.6 Leadership of *Penghulu* Bandok a/l Renjok**

Finally, in 1975, *Penghulu* Ahmad rendered the position of *Penghulu* to Atuk Renjok's son, Bandok. As Atuk Renjok is the current *Penghulu*, the events that have occurred and are occurring in his ongoing period of leadership would be dealt with at depth in the following chapters and would not be addressed here.