CHAPTER 5

GENDER, ECONOMY AND CHANGE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with examining economic production in the study village, in the forms of use-value and exchange-value production. In the latter, emphasis is given to commodity production and wage labor, as these were the villagers' main economic activities in this sphere. In looking at economic production, more attention is given to the investigation of sex roles, gender division, gender relations and social organisation.[1]

Finally, an analysis is extended to explore the issue of gender differentiation within the above socio-economic context. This issue is examined in terms of gender division of labour and women's economic autonomy, women's control of productive resources and their access to the sharing of food and labour, or their lack of it.

5.2 USE-VALUE PRODUCTION

5.2.1 Agriculture

Paddy cultivation was a major activity among the villagers soon after it was introduced in South Perak in the early twentieth century.[2] Hill paddy (*Oryza sativa*) was grown and

[1] See also Nicholas, Tijah and Tiah (1998).
[2] Evans (1918:194) observed that the Semai of the Behrang Valley in South Perak was already cultivating hill paddy in 1917. Nicholas (1985:74) contested that hill paddy was introduced to the Semai of north-

soon supplanted other crops such as cassava (*Manihot utilissima*) and foxtail millet as staple food (Skeat, 1906:343). However, paddy was usually grown with other supplementary crops such as cassava and maize. These crops were cultivated in random fashion in swiddens or *selai baq*. Of these crops, the first to be harvested was maize, followed by paddy and finally cassava, which took around six months to mature.

Traditionally, paddy cultivation was headed by a *halak*[3] who led in the appropriate rituals. The main production unit was the conjugal family, and either husband or wife initiated the idea. The couple then invited relatives and friends to join in the endeavour. Both males and females voiced their opinions in choosing the location of the swidden, after which the males would survey the area, oftentimes accompanied by the women. Before clearing the swidden, the *halak* headed a ritual to discern if the guardian spirit of that place had given permission to work it, and to request for blessings from *Nyenang* and their ancestors. Then both women and men cleared the land of undergrowth. After this was done, all took part in the felling of the trees, with the men handling the larger trees and women, the smaller ones. The area was left for a few weeks to allow the wood to dry before the men torched it, an activity that improved soil quality. The land was then divided into individual plots for the families involved and left to cool before the men began the dibbling and the women, the sowing of seeds.

After the sowing, the women planted supplementary crops in the swidden, such as corn, cassava, sweet potatoes, yam and vegetables. Flowers such as marigold were also planted to act as pest-deterrents by attracting pests and thus kept them away from the

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west Pahang around 1930 while citing that Hill (1977:165-6) mentioned rice-growing was practiced only after 1915, before which *sekoi* or foxtail millet was grown.

[3] A *halak* is a shaman who can be male or female although they have more often been male.

crops.[4] The women did most of the harvesting of these crops though the men sometimes assisted.

As the crops matured, women weeded the swidden. Men seldom had the patience for this work, which they deemed "tedious". They preferred to hunt and trap animals, especially the wild pig that could threaten their crops.

Meanwhile, in preparation for the harvesting season, the women wove the mats used to dry the paddy and baskets used to store it. The men, on the other hand, fashioned the pestle, mortar, harvesting knives and the large container called the *gepog* they used to store rice. When it came to the harvest, both men and women were actively involved, though the drying, husking and winnowing were considered women's tasks.

We could thus see that though there was sex typing of roles in certain processes in paddy cultivation (see Dentan, 1968:43-6 and Nicholas, 1985:74-7), with men and women assuming different responsibilities, the functions of both men and women were important to the production process. There was also sexual integration in some processes, such as harvesting. It must be noted however that women were mainly responsible for the cultivation of supplementary crops though men assisted.

When the Emergency was declared in 1948, villagers from the interior hamlets decided to congregate with Atuk Renjok in the *Gepai* area. Paddy cultivation was limited to areas close to the settlement as villagers were fearful of meeting military forces in the

[4] In the use of plants to deter pests among indigenous peoples, Rambo citing Yepsen (1976) mentioned that "plants with strong odours such as garlic, chives or marigolds were interplanted with crops in the belief that they repelled pests. Such repellent planting was a major theme of organic gardening literature" (1995:47).

forest, as some had witnessed the massacre at Ulu Kenyor in 1950 and many had heard of other atrocities towards the OA.[5] It was in 1951 when the Adviser of DOA advised villagers to plant rice again did they become more bold in their efforts. However, these efforts were stalled in 1957, when the DOA resettled the villagers in a camp in Bidor to prevent them from assisting the communists. Nevertheless, villagers eventually stole back from the camp to continue with their economic activities. From that time on, they continued with paddy cultivation, though still close to their settlement. Meanwhile, logging activities started by the Chinese in 1955 within their *nenggrik* played a significant role in preventing villagers from more active cultivation.

It was only after the Emergency that villagers felt secure enough to open swiddens further in the interior, though logging activities were still hampering their efforts. However, since 1980, villagers stopped planting paddy. This was due mainly to the availability of alternative work that brought in immediate cash returns, such as collecting and selling *petai*, *durian*, rattan, wood and tapping rubber. The men, especially preferred these activities as they needed cash to buy the consumer items that they were beginning to covet such as motorbikes, radios, televisions and video players. Furthermore, Forestry officials had begun to issue warnings that trees in the Bukit Tapah Forest Reserve were not to be disturbed. Since the reserve overlapped greatly with their *nenggrik*, vast tracts of the latter could not be used. In addition, encroachment from external parties, including vegetable, pig and cattle farmers, diminished land available for swiddens. Finally, the state government in implementing land legislation had forbidden the OA in Perak to open up state land except that which had been

[5] Please refer to Chapter 3, Section 3.2.4.

allocated for their use. Juli Edo (1989) noted that this had seriously caused the decline of shifting agriculture among the OA in the seventies.

In 1982, a few families opened cassava plots again though this was abandoned five years later for similar reasons. Recently however, some women returned to cassava planting and were the primary actors though husbands and children sometimes assisted. This might be due to the fact that women were the traditional cultivators of supplementary crops such as cassava, whilst the men were more concerned about earning money (Tijah, 1997c:7).

5.2.2 Gathering: Edible shoots, leaves and roots

Traditionally, where gathering forest produces was concerned, any *mai pasak* or *mai numpong* could be involved for it was believed that these resources belonged to no one person but *Nyenang* or God. Nonetheless, they could only gather within their *nenggrik pasak* or *nenggrik numpong*. The collector had full rights over the produce but one should not collect more than was necessary, for wastage was actively discouraged.

Gathering was often done by conjugal couples or in small bands. Bands of women often gathered together close to the settlement, for they feared wild animals and seldom ventured into the forest without accompanying men. Men sometimes gathered individually or as a group while hunting, trapping or going to and from the swidden.

In collecting edible shoots and plants, only a day or two's needs were usually gathered and produce was often shared among friends. In order to ensure sustainability of these

shoots for future use, villagers took only the shoots without harming the rest of the plants or trees. Vegetables were seldom bought but gathered or home grown.

During the Emergency, this activity continued[6] though much closer to the settlement for the same reasons given in Section 5.2.1. This was possible as the villagers were still living in forested areas and have not yet been resettled in a patterned settlement out of the forest. This would take place in 1968.

However, after the Emergency, more villagers were involved in commodity production and wage labour, especially the men. With that, there was also an increase of cash earnings, which families often used to buy vegetables. This was considered easier than foraging in the forest or planting their own. Thus, villagers began replacing their safe organic greens with those tainted by chemicals.

Those less able to afford it continued gathering or planting their greens. As men increasingly spent more time trying to earn an income, women became mainly responsible for these activities. Although women were also often in exchange-value production, they were not as deeply involved as their men were and they tended to choose work which demanded less of their time, such as rubber tapping or working at vegetable farms. This was to enable them to fulfil their increasing responsibilities in reproductive work and subsistence production.

[6] The exception to this was when villagers were resettled for a short while in the Bidor camp in 1957. During this time, villagers were under curfew and were only very minimally involved in basic subsistence production that was gathering shoots, leaves and roots for their consumption. Other subsistence production was discontinued or continued in a very limited manner. This was due to the fact that they were resettled in a town area (please refer to Chapter 3, Section 3.2.4).

Meanwhile, there was a decline of edible shoots and leaves due to logging activities and an increase in the local population. Encroachment was also a problem. Pig farmers who had changed the flow of some parts of the river destroyed the habitat of edible fern shoots in those areas, while cows reared in the vicinity grazed extensively on them. Furthermore, aggressive gathering of bamboo for sale by mainly male villagers has caused its decline.

Diminishing resources further burdened women who were now responsible for preparing family meals. Yet, gathering remained a popular activity among women especially as food prices increased. This only acted to further diminish the availability of these plants.

5.2.3 Gathering: Fruits

Fruit trees within the *nenggrik* were traditionally communally owned and used in the *cak samak* fashion. During the fruit season, villagers gathered the fruits together and divided the produce equitably among themselves at the end of the day. There was no sexual differentiation in this activity. Fruits harvested were not sold but consumed or given to relatives and friends. There was also an unwritten imperative that unripe fruits were not to be taken especially the *petai*. Those found collecting young *petai* would be questioned in a village moot and punished.

This activity continued in a more limited manner during the Emergency, for it took place much closer to the settlement for the same reasons given in Section 5.2.1. This was possible, as the settlement was still located within forested areas. However, while

the villagers were placed in the Bidor camp during the Emergency, this activity continued only in a very limited manner.

The ownership and inheritance of fruit trees changed dramatically some time after the Emergency. In terms of ownership, fruit trees especially petai and *durian*, could either be individually or group-owned in a bilateral manner. A man or woman who has planted[7] or inherited a tree has individual ownership and control over it. Trees could be bequeathed to individual relatives[8] in the *cak halui* or "eating alone" manner, or to a group of siblings in the *cak samak* fashion. The latter was often done to encourage sibling cooperation in tending the trees and harvesting and sharing the fruits.[9] Meanwhile, fruits from wild trees[10] and trees planted by ancestors within the *nenggrik pasak* could still be used by any *mai pasak* or *mai numpong* in the *cak samak* fashion. In spite of these changes in the ownership and inheritance system, women nonetheless had equal rights to the trees. As observed by Gomes, "...bilateral inheritance and its provision for equal access to and control over property alongside the high degree of individual autonomy favored by Semai allows women to be economically independent and autonomous" (1991:189).

However, this pattern changed again in later times. Eventually, in spite of the supposedly bilateral ownership system, fruit trees, like land, were often inherited from father to son, though the latter was expected (not compulsorily so) to share them with his siblings, either in *cak samak* or *cak halui* manner. A woman was often excluded

[7] S/he could only plant tree crops within his/her *nenggrik pasak*. However, if s/he was on *nenggrik numpong*, s/he could plant them on behalf of spouse or children.
[8] This was done with usually the older and closer relatives receiving more.
[9] In fact, Carole Robarchek mentioned that "The ideal of *caa' sama* is expressive of the high value Semai place on group harmony and on sharing, especially among siblings. Siblings are supposed to help each other work, share their food and cooperate in general" (1980: 99).

because she was expected to "eat" off her husband's trees whilst men were responsible for supporting his family. These changes were likely due to villagers being increasingly exposed to the influence of patriarchal mainstream ideologies.

From the sixties onwards when fruits were sold, harvesting intensified greatly, especially among the men, to increase cash returns. From the seventies, logging and encroachment further threatened the fruit trees in the *nenggrik*.

5.2.4 Gathering: Medicinal plants and roots

Traditionally, villagers had only traditional medicine to rely on in the face of illnesses or injuries. Villagers frequently depended on spiritual healing rituals but oftentimes, roots, leaves, barks and fruits were used. The latter could usually be used directly, such as applying sap squeezed from a leaf upon a sore, or by boiling the ingredients. The boiled liquid could be drunk, or used externally. Commonly, both men and women had some knowledge of folk medicine and medicinal plants and roots could be retrieved from the forest by men and/or women during their forages in the forest.

This activity continued during the Emergency though much closer to the settlement (which was still located within the forest) for the same reasons given in Section 5.2.1. Again, the transfer of villagers to the Bidor camp in town disrupted this activity.

In later times, medicinal plants and roots were still used, though decreasingly so and usually only among older men and women, for few of the younger generation have

[10] These trees were not planted by any human person, as far as villagers could remember.

taken the trouble to learn folk medicine. Furthermore, diminishing forest resources meant the dwindling of these plants and roots. In addition, villagers were already being socialised by the government and media that they should embrace modern medicine and leave behind the unscientific and untested folk medicine. The increasing availability of modern medical services further encouraged such a conversion.

5.2.5 Gathering: Firewood

Traditionally, villagers used firewood as cooking fuel. They had no problems getting dead branches and twigs from the forests while they practised shifting cultivation or from the rubber holdings they started in the 1910's. The *selaru'* and *helbat* wood were among the many kinds of forest wood that were used as firewood and conjugal couples usually foraged together, sometimes with their families and relatives. Here, there was no sexual distinction in the activity.

This activity continued during the Emergency, though much closer to the settlement for the same reasons given in Section 5.2.1. It was not very difficult to collect firewood during this period, as the settlement was still located within the forest. An exception was during the villagers' stay in the Bidor camp, where they had much difficulty in getting firewood.

Under the resettlement scheme launched in 1968,[11] villagers were relocated a distance away from their sources of firewood, the forest and their rubber holdings. Due to this, villagers often had to make double trips of considerable distances to tap rubber and

[11] Please refer to Chapter 3, Section 3.1.2.

gather firewood, as transporting both latex and firewood together was too heavy a burden.

Gathering firewood was increasingly a task pushed onto women as men placed more importance on exchange-value production. This irked some women, especially when some men did not care to assist even when they had bicycles or motorbikes, or worked close to the village or were at home for the day. Meanwhile, young boys were often taunted if they carried firewood on their bicycles (Tijah, 1997b:17). This was due to the emerging belief that this was a woman's job. Yet women pushed on for the sake of their children, for the latter needed their meals which women prepared.

In the eighties, it became easier to acquire firewood for in the early seventies, some rubber smallholdings were opened closer to the village.[12] Even then, women in small groups often spent four to five hours collecting wood per trip. However, from 1990 onwards, sources of firewood diminished again as many of these Chinese holdings were transformed into oil palm holdings, fruit orchards or vegetable farms. Women began to compete among themselves, seldom thinking of the needs of friends and relatives. Those who could afford it began relying on the more expensive kerosene and coal as fuel (Tijah, 1997b:17).

In the early nineties, male villagers requested for their unproductive old rubber smallholdings to be replanted with oil palm. Many women opted for rubber trees, which they could tap and which provided them with firewood, but they were ignored. As the

[12] These mostly belonged to Chinese families though some villagers had their own smallholdings as well. Here, villagers preferred to retrieve firewood from Chinese holdings, as their trees were bigger and shed more branches compared to OA trees, which were smaller as no fertiliser was used. In addition, branches from OA trees tended to rot on the trees and did not drop much.

rubber trees were bulldozed recently, women clambered to retrieve as much wood as they could, worrying for their future supply. Some women voiced the potential problem of cooking for the wedding feasts of their daughters or female relatives. These burdens were especially heavy on the women for these tasks were deemed their responsibility. However, the men did not seem to be overly concerned about the problem, as they did not perceive it to be their responsibility. Some men even suggested that there was no need for village wedding feasts as was customary (Tijah, 1997b:17).

5.2.6 Hunting and trapping

Traditionally, males mostly undertook these activities with traditional equipment such as the blowpipe and homemade snares. Smaller game, such as squirrels, monkeys and birds were the usual targets. Wives often accompanied their husbands on these trips and could be adept at making snares and trapping small game themselves, though they seldom used the blowpipe[13]. Bigger animals were snared by the men, before being shot with the blowpipe. Men who were productive were termed *berias*, and were highly respected especially as potential marriage partners. Women, too were sometimes conferred such a status. In addition to hunting, men and women often foraged for food on these trips.

When game was killed, the men would singe off the fur and cut the meat into large chunks whilst the women would cut these into smaller pieces to facilitate sharing with relatives and friends, a task that most men considered tedious.

[13] It must be noted here that women were not forbidden to use the blowpipe for even now, there was a female villager who hunted small game with the blowpipe, though she was an exception. Women also frequently helped their husbands make the darts though the men prepared the poison. Meanwhile, Howell observed among the Chewong that "Women very rarely went blowpipe hunting... (but) within living memory this was not an infrequent occurrence, and some women were said to be as good with the

Up to the sixties, hunting and trapping were practised only for subsistence. Game was easily available as the forests were thick and there was little encroachment from outside parties. However, due to certain food taboos,[14] villagers did not take much meat in their daily diet and therefore, there was no need to hunt continuously and relentlessly. This was one way the Semai could conserve food stock.

This activity continued during the Emergency (with the period in the Bidor camp as an exception, for game could seldom be found in the vicinity) though much closer to the settlement for the same reasons given in Section 5.2.1. During this period, common game such as wild boar, monkeys, squirrels and birds could still easily be found not far from their settlement as the latter was located within forested areas.

After the Emergency, this activity was increasingly done as a commodity production and would be dealt with in depth in that section. However, hunting for subsistence continued, though decreasingly so. This was done more as a hobby, especially when the family finances were relatively stable. If family finances were tight, the men would prefer to be involved in hunting as a commodity production and focus on big game for sale.

Subsistence hunting was also done when there were no other available sources of income and the men had to supplement their families' diet with wild meat. Here, the

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blowpipe as most men.", and that "Women help in the erection and inspection of the pig traps in the fields ..." (1983:55).

[14] These food taboos were called *penalik*. For example, meat was not to be eaten with fish or vegetables. In fact, each of these food types had to be eaten alone, though either one was usually consumed with cassava or rice. Furthermore, menstruating women could only eat greens during this period. If they did mix their diet, untoward incidents called *terlaid* might occur. This included flash floods, massive storms and the like.

target was usually small game for which there was less demand in the market.[15] Bigger game was targeted for sale to earn cash to buy consumer food and non-food items. Families usually only consumed the head, organs and a little meat. Thus, where traditionally, free and good meat was easily available for family consumption, currently the choicest parts were sold to buy inedible goods and less healthy or totally unhealthy food. Gomes (1991: 186) citing Gianno (1985: 91) observed the same trend among the Semelai and added that game was also sold so that there was no need to share it with other villagers as was the custom, and money gotten from the sale could be kept by the hunters.

5.2.7 Fishing

In the olden days, the Gepai River was clean and supported many species of fish, which were plentiful and thereby easily caught. Villagers then and the present elders knew every species of fish that was available in the river, their behavior and habitat.

During this time, villagers often fished in mixed groups and group fishing was required in certain fishing methods.[16] Hook and line fishing was also popular among men and women who often went as conjugal couples or in groups. Meanwhile, fish traps were also used, usually by men though women would sometimes accompany their husbands. Villagers often shared whatever fish they caught with friends and relatives.

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[15] Nonetheless, at times, squirrels and frogs would be sold to Chinese restaurants as exotic delicacies.

[16] For example, there was the *mareg* where bamboo sticks were set across the river to trap the fish or the method called *hi wegwag*, which used fish traps, called the *ceag*. Here, villagers shooed and directed the fish into the *ceaq*, which was set between stones in a corner. There was also the method called the *kak-rok* where villagers in a large group stunned the fish using natural poisons like *pelek kenrok* or *nyenuk* before collecting them off the surface.

This activity continued during the Emergency (again, the time villagers spent in the Bidor camp was an exception) though much closer to the settlement for the same reasons given in Section 5.2.1. This was possible for the settlement was located close to the Gepai River in this era[17].

A new mode of fishing became popular in later times, which was destructive to the aquatic ecology. This was *menuba* or the poisoning of fish with weedicide by villagers and non-villagers alike. According to an elderly villager, the river would need five to six months to restock itself and for some while after that, only small fish was available. However, a big flood could wash away traces of the poison sooner. Most villagers were angry about such practices but seldom took steps to prevent it.

Meanwhile, villagers who currently still used traditional fish traps numbered only three as many have lost their skills or never bothered to acquire them. However, many OA from the Bidor military camp close by fished at the *Gepai* River[18] using such traps and thus competed with villagers for fish.

Due to the above factors, fishes decreased in numbers and species. Those caught tended to be smaller, even during the rainy season when fish was usually aplenty. Finally, fishes caught now were seldom shared with friends and relatives as was customarily done.

[17] Villagers have always built their settlements close to rivers to have easy access to water.

[18] In September 1997, a villager saw many fish traps called *kabom* up the *Gepai* River. These belonged to Temiar soldiers from the Bidor Camp. According to her, if there were *kaboms* upriver, a person who fished down river would not be able to catch many fishes. Yet they believed that if one disturbed someone else's *kabom*, the person's stomach would swell up like the *kabom* and would be constantly hungry. Due to this belief, villagers dared not remove the fish traps belonging to outsiders and had to bear the

5.2.8 Material culture

Traditionally, villagers were skilled in producing the material items they needed. Women wove the *ten-naid* mat used as bedding and for drying paddy, the *raga* or basket to carry things on a journey, the *karug* or sack to store paddy and baskets to keep the clothes. A married woman also wove the intricate basket called the *sumpit perempuan* to present de-husked rice as gifts to her mother-in-law as a show of respect and diligence (Tijah, 1997c:6).[19] In addition, a woman who could weave the *ten-naid kerawog* or sacred headband was considered very skilled and commanded a higher social status (Tijah, 1997b:23).[20]

Men too were expected to be skilled in making the blowpipe and its darts, the various fish traps and animal snares, different kinds of baskets, houses and household utensils, among others.[21] Such men were deemed good providers and/or potential husbands.

Material needed for these items were collected by men and women in bands or as conjugal couples and families. Women seldom went alone but were usually accompanied by men for fear of wild animals.

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consequences. Meanwhile, the villager only caught ten small fishes that day, a miserly amount by OA standards.

[19] During the rule of the Malay sultanate, such crafts were considered very important in decorating offerings to the *Orang Besar* or Raja. The quality of one's craftsmanship was very important and great significance was given to how fine and tidy the workmanship was.

[20] This headband was considered sacred as it was believed to have a spirit and would be made if a *gunig* asked for it in a religious ritual called the *kebut*.

[21] According to a respondent, most men knew how to weave mats as well though they seldom did so. Howell mentioned that "(Although) mat weaving and basket making are again primarily female tasks…(yet) just as women help their husbands in preparing darts, so most men too know how to weave mats and make baskets" (1983:56).

The process of collecting material to make the items needed for villagers' use continued during the Emergency (again, the exception was during villagers' stay in the Bidor camp, where they could find little or no raw material) though the activity took place much closer to the settlement. This was due to similar reasons given in Section 5.2.1. Here, villagers still had access to these resources, as their settlement was located within forested areas.

As forest resources, such as the wood and *bertam* used to make houses and roofing, dwindled in quantity and quality with logging activities and encroachment that increased after the Emergency, villagers often had to wander far to get them, which made transporting these home very difficult. Due to this, local craft production abated. Furthermore, exposure to the more intricate crafts and craftsmanship of others made villagers, especially younger ones, ashamed of their own items and embarrassed to use them. Thus, youths often did not bother to learn these skills or when they did, produced items of poorer quality as they had little training and experience.

In addition, due to the decline of traditional material for home-building, men who could afford it would use bricks or planks. Those who could not were beginning to procrastinate in the building or repairing of their homes. In order to motivate them, some women accompanied their husbands in search of material, in spite of it being predominantly a male task by this time. Some even went in groups without their men to embarrass them. Here, we could see that though gender division for this task was ideologically more rigid by this time, in reality it was still flexible within certain limited contexts.

5.2.9 Reproductive tasks

Traditionally, although women were mainly responsible for domestic work such as childcare, meal preparation, collecting water and firewood, men as husbands were also very actively involved.[22] Conjugal couples often went about their daily work together, whether working the swiddens, foraging for food or hunting. Oftentimes their children would accompany them. Daily chores were also usually a family affair. The family collected water in bamboo containers whilst bathing at the river. Meals were usually prepared by women but often assisted by husbands and children. As villagers used leaves for plates and bamboo for cooking, there was no need for much washing. Furthermore, there was little to sweep or tidy as there was little compound area then and families had few belongings. Finally, villagers had few clothes and they washed these themselves whilst younger children often went around naked. Thereby, women were not so burdened with reproductive tasks.

The above pattern generally carried on during the Emergency, though closer to the settlement.

In later times, women were increasingly burdened with reproductive tasks, which were shared before, as men spent much of their time in exchange-value production. Typically, women, especially those with younger children or without older daughters to help them, started the day early in the morning by making breakfast for the family. When the men and children left for work and school, they tidied the home and retrieved water, washed the dishes and did the family's laundry at the stream some distance away or at piped

[22] In fact, Gomes mentioned that among the Semai, "...cooking and childcare which are considered women's work are frequently done by men" (1991:188).

water sources next to their homes or at a friend's home. Upon returning, they dried the clothes, kept the washed plates and utensils and started preparing the afternoon meal for husbands and children who would soon return. After the meal, there was the big compound[23] to sweep or they went fishing or gathering shoots or firewood. They normally came back by teatime to make tea for the family, after which they took their baths, bathed the younger children and washed the dishes. By then it was time to cook dinner and after eating, they cleared the kitchen and set dirty plates and utensils aside to be washed the next day. However, women from more well to do families seemed to have less work as they could afford to use gas for cooking and bought vegetables from town.

5.3 EXCHANGE-VALUE PRODUCTION

5.3.1 Commodity production

Commodity production was practiced by villagers from the early centuries with the production of jungle produce and later tin and rubber, and has continued to this day in different forms. An account of commodity production in earlier times would be given below, though limited to what present villagers could remember. As Nicholas mentioned, "... contacts (with non OA) were for the most part limited to occasional exchanges of forest produce for other goods such as cloth and iron. In the main, however, the traditional economy of the Semai has been one dominated by subsistence-oriented production" (1991: 74). Therefore, the traditional Semai lifestyle was not

[23] Due to the resettlement scheme launched in 1968, families were provided with wooden houses with large cleared compound areas that had to be kept clean.

radically disrupted with the adoption of limited commodity production in earlier times. This would be looked at more closely in the following sections.

However, since the sixties and seventies, and right until today, commodity production has grown increasingly aggressive. Here, details of commodities produced in current times, including prices, availability, measurements needed for produce and merchants involved were given in Table 8.[24] Table 9[25] gave additional information on merchants trading in the village, whether they sold items or purchased them, vehicles they used, frequency of trade and commodity traded. These tables showed there was presently much bi-directional trade going on, where merchants sold goods to the villagers and vice-versa. This reflected that villagers were currently much exposed to the market and its forces. As would later be seen, this had a serious impact on villagers' lifestyles and social relations.

[24] The format of Table 8 was based on that used by Nicholas (1994:62).
[25] The format of Table 9 was based on that used by Nicholas (1994:59).

TABLE 8

AVERAGE PRICES AND AVAILABILITY OF COMMODITIES IN STUDY VILLAGE AS AT 31 OCTOBER 1997

Commodity	Price range (RM)	Average Price (RM)	Measurements-where applicable	Season/ Availability	Merchant
Petai/100 pods	Grade AA – 45.00 Grade A1 – 30.00 Grade B – 14-16 Grade C – 8-10	45.00 30.00 15.00 9.00	Three fingers broad	Aug-Oct	Man at Kg Chang and Endeh at Kg Poh
Durian/unit	0.50-6.00	3.25	5-10 inches in length	mid Oct-mid Nov	Ah Ba comes to kg in 4WD
Scrap rubber/kg	1.00-1.35	1.18	Irrelevant	Non rainy season	Chinese shop in Bidor
Manau rattan/unit	Grade AA – 5.00 Grade A1 – 2.50 Grade B – 1.50 Grade C – 1.50	5.00 2.50 1.50 1.50	9ft x 2 ½ in diameter 9ft x 1 in diameter 9ft x ½ in diameter Base/head of rattan	Non-seasonal	Merchant with lorry goes to collection site
Bantang rattan/unit	1.20	1.20	9 feet	Non-seasonal	Ditto
Bamboo/unit	0.30	0.30	7½-8 ft in length 1½-3 inches diameter	Non-seasonal	Ditto
Wood (guava) /unit	0.20	0.20	8ft x 1-1½ in diameter	Non-seasonal	Ditto
Wood (long beans)/unit	0.50	0.50	8ft x 1½ in diameter	Non-seasonal	Ditto
Wood (chillies) /unit	0.07-0.10	0.08	4ft x ½ in diameter	Non-seasonal	Ditto
Cempedak/kg	0.60-3.00	1.80	Irrelevant	May-June	Merchant goes to kg in lorry
Jering/100 units	2.00-3.00	2.50	Irrelevant	May-June	Ditto
Larah/100 units	5.00	5.00	Irrelevant	May	Ditto
Perah/kg	0.50	0.50	Irrelevant	July	Merchant brings collectors to site
Orchid/plant	2.00	2.00	Small plants	Non-seasonal	Merchant goes to kg to collect
Turtle/kg	7.00-10.00	8.50	1-2 ft in length	Non-seasonal	Merchant at Bidor Camp
Wild pig/kg	1.10-1.20	1.15	3 ft or more in length	Non-seasonal	Merchant in Bidor
Kampung Chicken/kg	Male – 6.00 Female – 9.00	6.00 9.00	Before breeding	Non-seasonal	Merchant in Bidor
Legumes/kg	1.10-3.00	2.05	1½ ft in length Long and straight	Non-seasonal	Merchant goes to kg in lorry
Berangan/kg	0.50	0.50	Irrelevant	December	Merchant brings collectors to site
Duck/kg	Serati duck– 9.00 Water duck – 3.50-5.00	9.00 4.25	Before breeding	Non-seasonal	Merchant in Bidor

TABLE 9

MERCANTILE INTERESTS IN STUDY VILLAGE AS AT 31 JULY 1997

Merchant	Purchase from villagers (X)	Sell to villagers (X)	Vehicle/Place	Frequency	Commodity
Ah Ba	X		4WD/village	Daily during season	Durian/Petai
Man	X		Motorbike/ Village	Daily during season	Durian/Petai/ Jering
Ah Kui	X		Jering, Cempedak, bamboo-lorry/ village; Petai, durian- villagers bring produce to his house in Bidor	Bamboo-when there is a demand; Others-when villagers have produce to sell	Durian/Petai/ Jering/ Cempedak/ Bamboo
Yok Gerchor (villager's Chinese husband)	X		Motorbike/ Village	Daily during season	Durian
Andeh	X		Motorbike/ Kg Poh	When villagers choose to sell to him	Durian/Petai
Siamese		X	Car	Monthly	Household utensils
Indian		X	Motorbike	2-3 times a month	Indian sweets
Indian		X	Motorbike	Fortnightly	Ice cream
Mustapha		X	Motorbike	Every evening	Bread/cakes
Tok Babek		X	Lorry	Every evening	Household utensils, wet and dry food items
Kampuchean		X	Van	Fortnightly	Clothes
Kampuchean		X	Van	Weekly	Clothes and household utensils
Kampuchean		X	Motorbike	Weekly	Clothes
Benggali		X	Motorbike	Monthly	Clothes
Benggali		X	Motorbike	Monthly	Gold
Benggali		X	Motorbike	Monthly	Carpet

5.3.1.1 Tin

Panning for tin was an activity practiced both by men and women since the nineteenth century while in the *Darat Baruh* area. However, only the men bartered tin for necessities such as salt, knives and pots for womenfolk were afraid of outsiders, having heard of OA women being kidnapped as slaves.

In the 1900's and 1910's, villagers were selling tin panned at the *Empaat*[26] and *Gepai* Rivers to the Chinese. However, panning stopped when the British built a rock quarry near the areas in 1926. Furthermore, tin was getting scarce and other work opportunities which gave better cash returns were available such as tapping rubber and selling rattan. This activity did not resume thereafter.

5.3.1.2 Rubber

Rubber was planted within the *nenggrik* in the 1910's though villagers tapped these only in 1927[27]. Since then, rubber was the main source of income for the villagers. Conjugal couples usually worked together to tap the rubber, collect the latex, solidify[28] it and flatten it with hands or a roller stick before drying and then selling it. At that time, rubber was sold at RM4.00 a kati. In 1929, villagers bought a mangle from a Chinese rubber smallholder to produce ribbed sheets. During this time, rubber price was RM3.90

[26] Please refer to Chapter 3, Section 3.2.3 for more details on mining in the *Empaat* area.
[27] It took many years for these trees to produce latex, for no fertiliser was used and these were not the high yielding variety. Meanwhile, according to villagers, OA trees that did not use fertiliser took around eight to ten years to produce latex.
[28] Before the use of formic acid, the latex was left in pails to coagulate by itself.

a kati. During the late 1930's or early 1940's a coupon system[29] was introduced to regulate and restrict rubber production.

During the Emergency, villagers continued tapping rubber as the holding was close to their main settlement in the Gepai area where everyone had merged during this time. However, this activity was forsaken in 1957 when villagers were forced to resettle in a camp in Bidor.[30] Nonetheless, within a short while villagers were going back to tap their trees and eventually left the camp for good.

In 1969, the JHEOA provided villagers with high yielding rubber seedlings and rubber holdings multiplied after that. In the sixties and seventies, villagers worked these holdings as conjugal couples, sometimes with their children, and usually started tapping around 4:00 a.m., as they had to work their swiddens after that. Rubber production remained thus till 1980 when villagers stopped planting paddy.

By 1980 when *petai* was in great demand, all men, except for two or three, chose to lay off the more tedious work of rubber production and concentrate on *petai* collection instead.[31] Some even mentioned that the former was only suitable for women who were more patient and could not do other work. Furthermore, *petai* prices were high then and brought in a better income.

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[29] Please refer to Chapter 3, Section 3.2.3.

[30] Please refer to Chapter 3, Section 3.2.4.

[31] The men complained that in rubber production, one had to tap the trees, collect the latex and transport it home, coagulate, flatten it into pieces, dry and arrange these in order. Furthermore, one had to collect the sheets for several days before there were enough to be sold. In comparison, *petai* collection was considered easier where one only harvested the *petai* once a day and was finished by early afternoon. One could also sell the harvest, and thereby got the cash returns, within the day. Thambiah (1997a:8) also observed among the Jakun that women predominated in rubber production because the men were involved in other cash-earning activities.

In 1988, RISDA provided villagers with a few mangles and went in to buy ribbed sheets and scrap rubber twice a week. However, this stopped in 1993 when the produce decreased due to aging trees. Since then, villagers only produced scrap rubber, which they sold to a Chinese shopkeeper in town.

In the early nineties, the *Penghulu* officially requested the JHEOA to replant their old and unproductive trees, which covered 37.86 hectares belonging to forty-four families. Representatives from JHEOA and RISDA got the request approved and offered to sell the old trees as firewood at RM100 an acre, though rubber wood was popular in furniture production then, with prices rising from RM50 to RM80 per ton. Some villagers were unhappy with the price offered.

In 1993, some villagers found out that Kampung Sungai Bill at Behrang was facing similar problems. There, the JHEOA had their old rubber trees sold at RM40 an acre. Furthermore, RISDA did not replant their smallholdings after clearing it for the Land Office did not produce them the mandatory letter stating that the area could be developed. This was needed, as it was not an OA reserve/area.[32] Later, villagers had news that replanting might only occur in two to three years. If such was the case, an important source of livelihood for villagers was taken away without compensation, as the trees were still producing latex, albeit in limited amounts. Meanwhile, a similar fate awaited the villagers of Kampung Chang.

[32] RISDA had a policy of being involved in development projects in OA areas only when it had been officially gazetted as an OA reserve/area (Hooker, 1991:65-6, Williams-Hunt, n.d.:7). They gave the excuse that if they did replant the holdings without this status, the government could later lease the land or use it for other development purposes and the project would go to naught.

In the mid nineties, the men of Kampung Chang applied to RISDA to have their smallholding replanted with oil palm instead, hearing it would bring better profits. The women were unhappy, believing that harvesting and transporting oil palm were physically too demanding for them. Furthermore, most of the processes in oil palm production were usually done by males as was also observed by Thambiah (1997a:8) among the Jakun: "Most activities (in oil palm production) – planting, spraying weedicide, cutting branches and cutting fruits – are predominantly done by the men at all levels." Furthermore, the women depended on rubber tapping and work in vegetable farms to supplement their family's income. This was important in many families where males[33] often did not earn enough to support their families sufficiently. In spite of women protesting to their husbands, this went unheeded.

In 1995, agency officials advised villagers to maximise the utilisation of their rubber trees before they were replanted by tapping them randomly all over, which villagers did. However, by mid 1996, replanting still had not taken place. Soon, RISDA officials said they could not do so as the land was not gazetted as an OA area/reserve. Furthermore, any compensation would be little.[34] Villagers grew worried as many trees were close to ruin due to random tapping. A villager mentioned she could only get two to three kilograms of scrap rubber daily, compared to the ten kilograms or so before. By the end of 1997, another villager could only get RM3-4 daily compared to RM8-10 before. After a long wait, RISDA began replanting in 1998.

In 1998, the women were still tapping rubber in a few smallholdings not affected by the oil palm project though these trees too were old and produced little latex. This was made

[33] This was especially true of men who were not involved in the more lucrative *petai* production.

into scrap rubber. This activity was forsaken temporarily whenever other job opportunities were available.

5.3.1.3 Rattan

Villagers were involved in this activity even before the Second World War. Conjugal couples were often involved with their older children. They built temporary shelters in an area with abundant rattan and stayed there till the work was completed. During the day, they collected rattan and transported them to their shelter, cleaning and splitting them at night and tying them into bundles.

At that time, villagers sold their rattan to Chinese middlemen at ten cents a bundle. Couples collecting and processing the average ten to fifteen bundles a day earned about RM1.00 - 1.50. However, rattan was the main commodity produced when villagers were not tapping rubber or when it was not the *petai* season. Here, the rattan produced was of the smaller diameter species and not the *manau* or *bantang* rattan.

In the seventies, the price of the smaller diameter rattan had risen to 50 cents a bundle. During this period, men were predominantly involved in rattan production. Due to encroachment from external parties,[35] rattan was now only available in the interior and women and children found it difficult to accompany the men on these long trips. Furthermore, as the fear of communists began to diminish, children were increasingly left behind in the settlement and women often had to stay back to take care of them. By the mid eighties, production of this type of rattan was relatively abandoned due to a

[34] A villager said that compensation for rubber was usually set at RM20 per tree, speaking from her knowledge of what was happening in another village.

decrease in supply and demand, and the increasing popularity of alternative material. Furthermore, there was an increasing demand for *manau* rattan as the furniture industry expanded.

From the very beginning in the sixties, *manau* rattan had always been produced by men[36] as a commodity for the furniture industry. This was because the work involved was physically demanding, for this large and heavy species grew in the steep forested slopes in the interior.[37] Also, there was no need to split or strip the *manau* rattan, as was the case with rattan of smaller diameters. As these processes significantly involved women, either in the forest or at home, and were their significant source of income, *manau* production excluded women and took away this source of income (Howell, 1983:63). Nonetheless, due to a lack of demand, villagers stopped collecting *manau* in 1994. Furthermore, villagers were being paid a lower price as the middlemen tried to compensate for the taxes levied by the Forestry Department. Finally, the price of the *manau* rattan was dependent on its diameter and quality. Young rattan, which was smooth and thick, was categorised under "AA"[38] and sold for RM3.50-4.00 per piece.

5.3.1.4 Petai (Parkia speciosa)

Villagers only began producing *petai* for the market from the sixties. The work was often done by a group of conjugal families, usually during the rainy season when they could not tap rubber, which was the more lucrative source of income at that time. As there was a traditional rule in *petai* collection that pods should be bundled at the base of

[35] Large areas of land were cleared for development projects, mining and logging activities.
[36] Thambiah (1997a:7) observed this among the Jakun and Howell (1983:63) observed the same among the Chewong.

the tree as they were gathered as a sign of respect to the *petai* spirit, men needed women to gather the pods while they harvested. After that, men and women cut off the stalks, tied them in bundles and divided them among themselves, before transporting them down.

Since the seventies, when prices were high, men increasingly predominated in this work. This was mainly due to male access to motorcycles given by the middleman to increase production and also to establish his monopoly over the purchase of these goods. As the men, especially the younger ones, grew more concerned about profits, they preferred to gather alone or with other males on their bikes so as to harvest and transport more *petai*.[39] Some grew reluctant in sharing their harvest with female relatives and friends whom they believed contributed little effort, for the women did not climb the trees and harvest the fruits. Otherwise, they gave them only broken pieces that could not be sold.

From the mid eighties, as prices increased yet again, males grew more reckless in collecting *petai* and competed further among themselves, taking everything they could find without any consideration for others. This problem amplified when some Malays began stealing their *petai* and villagers were pushed to harvesting even young *petai* to prevent them from being stolen, a practice that went against traditional principles. Due to this, *petai* was harvested almost throughout the year. There was also increasing conflict among villagers, as *petai* became a cash crop, such as the case of Bah Ali who

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[37] This was in contrast to other species of rattan with smaller diameters such as the *senini*, which could be found nearer the settlement and were collected by both sexes.

[38] Please refer to Table 8 for the measurements needed for the rattan under this category.

[39] This same trend was also observed by Thambiah among the Jakun, as she mentioned that "...there are more younger married couples who have continued to work in single sex groups to increase productivity when they would formerly have integrated their spouses in their work activities upon marriage" (1997a:6).

harvested fruit from his brother's trees for himself until he finally appropriated the trees altogether.

Currently, villagers sold their *petai* to a middleman[40] at RM10-16 for a bundle of a hundred pods. The market prices in Bidor varied from RM27 a bundle for small seeded *petai* to RM38 for big seeded ones. In spite of low prices given by middlemen, villagers were receiving relatively large cash returns from this activity.[41] However, much of these were spent on food items rather than other consumer or luxury items and little was saved.

Sometime in mid 1996, the Forestry Department imposed a *petai* tax on *petai* middlemen. The middleman in Chang transferred the cost of this tax to villagers by lowering his prices for their *petai*. When villagers sold their *petai* to another middleman who gave them better returns, the Chang middleman complained to the Forestry Department. Officials from the department and the middleman concerned then waylaid villagers by the road to ensure that the latter sold their *petai* to him. Ijah then wrote a letter to the Editor of *Berita Harian* to complain about the taxes (refer to Appendix I), after which the officials no longer interfered and the local middleman gave villagers better prices.

[40] This middleman held the license to trade in *petai* exclusively in Kampung Chang. Here, middlemen needed a license to trade in a particular commodity (i.e petai, durian, rattan, etc.) within a certain area. It must be noted however, that middlemen were required to pay a tax or *cukai* to the *Penghulu* and Assistant *Penghulu* of the village from which the produce was gotten.

[41] A man could sometimes get RM300 a day during the season. According to some villagers, they could get nearly as much as those who had steady incomes as civil servants or wage laborers in the towns.

5.3.1.5 Durian (Durio spp.)

Durians were produced for the market only from the sixties. Here, men and women were involved though women usually collected fruits close to the village whilst men collected those from orchards further away in their *nenggrik*. Sometimes, couples would spend days in the orchards to gather fallen fruits.

Male and female villagers now sold their *durian* to a middleman who came into the village daily during the season. His prices were low, paying RM1 for five to six small *durians* with lengths of five to six inches each. The same *durians* could be sold to a neighboring middleman for forty cents to a dollar each, whilst a Chinese husband of a villager bought at RM3 per kilogram. However, the middleman in Chang has bought over villagers' loyalty by loaning them money, bringing their sick to the hospital or clinic, and buying them cigarettes. Nonetheless, when prices were too low, villagers would sell it to the neighboring middleman.

5.3.1.6 Wild fruits

Wild fruits were only sold as a commodity from 1990 onwards, to earn villagers some side income. Initially, men monopolized the activity but in 1997, a few women and children got involved by collecting *perah*, a local chestnut for RM0.50 a kilogram.

Men were more aggressive in this activity and some even chopped down *jering* (*Pithecellobium jiringa)* trees in the forest to get more fruits, which was a breach of traditional principles. This of course threatened the supply of *jering* and angered

villagers, especially the women. Due to such reckless harvesting, women and children often had little opportunity to taste these fruits, but bought commercial ones from town instead.

5.3.1.7 Wood

Wood was produced as a market commodity from the seventies onwards, on a contractual basis to supplement income from rattan, *petai* and rubber. At that time, vegetable farmers used the wood to build homes and plant tobacco and legumes. Initially, women were also involved though they were no longer interested when other work opportunities became available.[42] Furthermore, due to depleting resources,[43] the men were cycling further away from the settlement to cut wood. This discouraged women from accompanying as few had bicycles.

Currently, only eight men were involved in this activity, though they were also preoccupied with activities called *neradag*. This referred to work that was unfixed and unpredictable, depending on their luck for the day[44]. Presently, the wooden sticks gathered were used to support tobacco, chilli plants, legumes and guava fruits.[45] The trader usually asked for one to three lorries-full (each lorry-full could accommodate three thousand sticks) at one time. A load of three thousand sticks now needed two to

[42] Alternative work included tapping rubber and working in vegetable farms. Whilst wood production was a full day's work, tapping rubber and working at vegetable farms only took half the day and were finished by early afternoon. This left the women more time to be with the family and perform their reproductive chores.

[43] Wood was plentiful in the peripheral areas of Bidor town before but these had been opened for housing and farming or taken over by government agencies such as FELCRA and RISDA. Now the men went to the area called *Tanah Emas*, close to Tapah town but this encroached upon another OA village's territory. According to OA *adat* this was forbidden for each village had its own territory and one was not to infringe into the territory of the other to take its resources.

[44] For example, while travelling, the men might come across terrapins, which they caught and sold, or were asked to cut bamboo or wood for the day.

three weeks of collecting when it could be done within a week before. Although there was a constant demand, depleting resources were a problem. A male villager complained that one could only get RM10 worth of wood daily compared to the RM20 before.

5.3.1.8 Bamboo

Bamboo production for the market only began in the seventies and became a popular activity, for it was easier to find and gather than rattan. Only bamboo poles as thick as a man's forearm were taken and were sold to vegetable farmers and basket makers[46]. Bamboo was plentiful but contract deals were limited to certain times in the year. Currently, only men were involved though a few women used to accompany their husbands some years back.

5.3.1.9 Wild game

Villagers began selling game meat in the seventies to earn cash returns. Bigger game such as wild pig and barking deer became more popular targets among villagers as demand for its meat increased. However, such game was still relatively plentiful in the seventies and early eighties.

Later, as demand increased further, more villagers were involved and many began using motorcycles and guns. This slowly diminished the supply of larger game. This trend increased when large forested areas of the *nenggrik* were logged or cleared for

[45] Please refer to Table 8 for the measurements needed.
[46] Please refer to Table 8 for the measurements needed.

development projects. Furthermore, villagers could no longer hunt as indiscriminately as before, for many animals such as the larger species of deer, porcupine, mousedeer, monitor lizard, flying fox, terrapin were under full or partial protection under the Protection of Wildlife Act 1972.

Meanwhile, since hunting was practiced for its exchange-value, women were left out of the activity, for men now preferred to hunt by night whilst women had to care for their children during this time. Furthermore, some men were impatient with women who wanted to forage in the forest while hunting. In addition, most male youths now were no longer interested or skilled in traditional hunting, as they preferred using guns. Thus, many did not learn the skills of making traditional hunting equipment. Moreover, with the rise of individualism and materialism among villagers, men nowadays seldom shared the meat from the hunt as was traditionally done, and sold it instead to the middlemen. When there was no external market, they would often sell the meat among themselves.

5.3.1.10 Commercial farming

Villagers practiced commercial farming from the mid-nineties, using the modern approach.[47] Planting legumes of the dark green variety was especially popular due to its constant high demand. As of May 1998, there were seven plots of legumes belonging to seven families, with both men and women equally involved in the activity. At that time, legumes were sold at RM3-4 a kilogram.

5.3.1.11 Oil palm

Plans for planting oil palm as a cash crop to substitute old rubber trees only began in 1997. Villagers involved became members of the *Koperasi Pekebun Kecil Daerah Batang Padang*[48] and would replant as a group. This body would clear the land and plant the seedlings with RISDA as the sponsor agent. The area involved was resurveyed and redistributed with each participant family receiving 0.66 to 1.09 hectares. Each participating family would receive RM227 for the logs of their old rubber trees though they had to pay RM105 per family to the Corporation as membership fees. Although all profit from the produce would allegedly go to the villagers, until now there has been no information as to who would tend to the trees and market the fruits. Furthermore, no allowance was given to participants while waiting for the trees to bear fruit, as took place in RPS[49] and FELDA schemes.

Furthermore, female villagers were worried that they would not be able to be significantly involved in oil palm production as they could in rubber production.

5.3.1.12 Poultry

Villagers have been selling their poultry as individual families for many years. However, for a few male and female villagers who belonged to the *Sinui Pai Nane'*

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[47] This approach, in contrast to the traditional method, utilized weedicide, pesticide and chicken droppings as fertilizer. The villagers were initially unaware of the dangers of such chemicals used, which nearly cost the life of a boy who had eaten off a legume from a villager's farm without first washing it.
[48] Batang Padang Small Farmers Corporation.
[49] *Rancangan Perkumpulan Semula* or Regroupment Schemes.

Sengi group,[50] it became a group project in early 1997. Better chicken coops were built in a cooperative manner with funds from a church group. Meanwhile, feed was bought cheaper in bulk[51] and resold to members at a lower rate. Mature chickens were brought to the market and sold at RM6/kg for males, and RM8/kg for females,[52] whilst prices at the local market were RM7/kg for males and RM9.60/ kg for females at that time. Although most men and women were involved as couples in this project, women tended to spend more time and effort on the chickens.

Some villagers also reared ducks. *Serati* ducks, which had a good demand, were sold at RM9/kg. Mature males could weigh over two kilograms while females weighed one to one-and-a-half kilograms each. The water duck or *itik air* meanwhile could be sold for RM3.50-5.00/kg and weighed about the same as the *serati* duck.

5.3.2 Wage labor

Villagers' involvement in wage labor began in 1926 though opportunities in those early times were few and far in between. There was much more involvement from the seventies and a detailed account would be given below. Meanwhile, villagers' present involvement in wage labor was summarised in Tables 10-12.[53] Tables 10 and 11 showed the different types of waged work available, the number of male and female villagers

[50] Please refer to Chapter 4, Section 4.3.3.7 (b) for details on this group. Meanwhile, though this group was initially started in early 1997 by a small group of women, eventually, the husbands of these women and a few other couples joined in.

[51] The market prices for chicken feed in Bidor at that time was RM1.10/kg for *dedak* or fine feed and RM0.80/kg for wheat meal.

[52] Otherwise, these were sold to middlemen who came to the village when there was a supply, at RM6/kg for males and RM7/kg for females. It must be noted that these chickens (and ducks) were usually sold before they started breeding, usually at 5-6 months after hatching.

[53] The information in these tables was true as of March 1998.

involved, and the age cohorts they belonged to, while Table 12 showed the work hours involved and average wages received.

TABLE 10

MALE VILLAGERS INVOLVED IN WAGE LABOR AS AT 22 MARCH 1998

Age cohort	Vegetable farm	Awana Resort	Pig farm	Fish farm	RISDA contract laborer	Construc-tion	Transport furniture
10-19	0	2	0	0	1	0	0
20-29	2	3	4	4	1	0	1
30-39	5	1	0	0	0	0	0
40-49	1	0	1	0	1	1	0
50-59	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
60-69	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
70+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	8	6	5	4	3	1	1
% of total	28.6	21.4	17.9	14.3	10.7	3.6	3.6

TABLE 11

FEMALE VILLAGERS INVOLVED IN WAGE LABOR AS AT 22 MARCH 1998

Age cohort	Vegetable farm	Restaurant	Community organizer
10-19	2	1	0
20-29	4	0	1
30-39	2	1	0
40-49	3	0	0
50-59	0	0	0
60-69	0	0	0
70+	0	0	0
Total	11	2	1
% of total	78.6	14.3	7.1

TABLE 12

WAGE LABOR IN STUDY VILLAGE AS AT 22 MARCH 1998

Occupation	MALE					FEMALE					Total number of residents	Total % of residents
	No. of residents in wage labor	% of residents in wage labor	Work hours	Wage range (RM)	Average wages (RM)	No. of residents in wage labor	% of residents in wage labor	Work hours	Wage range (RM)	Average wages (RM)		
Vegetable farms	8	28.6	7:30am-1:15pm	21/day	21/day	11	78.6	7:30am-1:15pm	12/day	12/day	19	45.2
Awana Resort, Genting Highlands	6	21.4	7am-4pm 9am-5pm	315-500/ month	407.50/ month	-	-	-	-	-	6	14.3
Pig farm	5	17.8	8:30am-5:00pm	15-28/day	21.50/ day	-	-	-	-	-	5	11.9
Fish farm	4	14.3	8:00am-4:30pm	15-28/day	21.50/ day	-	-	-	-	-	4	9.5
Oil palm mini-estate	3	10.7	9:00am-6:00pm	10/day	10/day	-	-	-	-	-	3	7.1
Construction	1	3.6	Not fixed	2000/ month	2000/ month	-	-	-	-	-	1	2.4
Transport furniture	1	3.6	9:00am-6:00pm	800/ month	800/ month	-	-	-	-	-	1	2.4
Community Organizer	-	-	-	-	-	1	7.1	Flexible	450/ month	450/ month	1	2.4
Restaurant	0	0.0	-	-	-	2	14.3	7am-7pm 8:00am - 4:30pm	10/day 450/ month	10/day 450/ month	2	4.8
Total	28	100.0	-	-	-	14	100.0	-	-	-	42	100.0

5.3.2.1 Road construction

In 1926, a few male and female villagers were paid a daily wage of RM1.40-2.20 by the British to build a road from Bidor to the *Empaat River*, an area within the *nenggrik*. However, villagers could not remember how many people were involved.

5.3.2.2 *Kongsi* construction

In 1936, the Chinese opened tin mines within the *nenggrik* at the *Selaud* River and *Kuala Sungai Ngait*. Here, a few female villagers were paid to cut *bertam* for the roofing of the workers' *kongsi* house, although villagers could not remember how many were involved and how much they were paid.

5.3.2.3 Porters

In the midst of armed struggle between British forces and communist insurgents during the Emergency, some male villagers were made porters by the former and paid RM1 a person for a trip that often took several days. Women were not employed, as the work was too physically demanding.

5.3.2.4 Rock quarry

In the late forties, when most villagers had run away from the *Teow Empaat* area, a family had stayed behind to work in this quarry that the British built in 1926. Two men and three women were employed to smash blown rocks into smaller pieces and transport

them. The men were paid fifty cents a day and the women, twenty cents a day. After the Emergency, the family stopped working there, as the work was difficult and unprofitable compared to other economic activities such as tapping rubber and selling rattan and *petai*.

5.3.2.5 Awana Resort at Genting Highlands

Male villagers started working at this resort around six to eight years ago, with menial jobs such as gardening and collecting garbage. Women were not involved, as villagers actively discouraged them from being so, for they were afraid the women might be negatively influenced. Working hours were in two shifts, starting from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. or 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. In early 1997, the basic monthly wage for a new worker was RM315 with overtime rates of RM3.50 an hour. If a senior person worked hard, he could get RM700-800 a month. Although accommodation was free, they had to pay for meals. Nonetheless, these men were considered relatively affluent and could afford to buy luxury items such as hi-fi sets, video players, televisions and motorbikes. However, this could also be due to the fact that most of them were single and thus had no family to support. As of 22 March 1998, only six men were working there, making up 14.3% of residents involved in wage labor. All were in their thirties or younger, with two of them married.

5.3.2.6 Vegetable farm

Since the seventies, women grew less involved in the production of *petai*, rattan and wood for its cash value. Meanwhile, they began to be more involved in rubber

production and work at vegetable farms instead. Such work allowed women to supplement their family's income to a significant degree. During the seventies, only cassava was grown and women's work involved planting, fertilizing, and hoeing, among others. They started work at 7 a.m. and finished by 1p.m. Men were also actively involved at this time.

By the eighties, the men preferred *petai* production to working at farms, as the former gave higher returns, whilst the latter paid males a daily wage of only RM10 and women RM7. Since then, only two to three men took this job seriously.

By 1983, the Chinese began planting other crops such as turnips, sweet potatoes, maize, chilies and vegetables. At that time, a man's job included spraying weedicide and pesticide, and transporting sacks. Women planted, weeded and fertilized the crops. They rid the cassava, turnip, chilli and maize plants of its blossoms to encourage bountiful harvests. Finally, they put the harvested crops into sacks and pulled out the dead plants after the final harvest. Meanwhile, both sexes were involved in hoeing and harvesting. In 1987, wages for women were raised to RM9 when a few women protested due to increased prices of basic items. However, in 1990 many nearby farms were cleared by FELCRA for an oil palm plantation, depriving these women of a major source of income.

In 1996, work at vegetable farms grew less available. Due to this, women had to pay more attention to rubber production and subsistence activities such as fishing, gathering and swiddening. Also, an increasing number of women opted to be housewives. As of

22 March 1998, eight men[54] and eleven women were involved in this work, making up 45.2% of residents involved in wage labor. These days, when the farms were further away, the women often cycled to work though many still walked. Meanwhile villagers said that in a good month, one could only get ten to fifteen working days.

5.3.2.7 Pig farm

Men were hired to assist in pig farms located close to the village since the eighties. As of 22 March 1998, four men in their twenties and one in his forties were involved. This made up 11.9% of the population involved in wage work. The day began at 8:30 a.m. and ended at 5:00 p.m. with wages averaging at RM21.50 a day.

5.3.2.8 Fish farm

Villagers were employed to assist in fish farms around Bidor since the nineties. As of 22 March 1998, only four married men in their twenties were involved. This made up 9.5% of the local population involved in wage labor. The work involved catching and feeding the fish, among others. Work hours were from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and the men could earn RM15-28 a day, depending on seniority. Average wages were RM21.50 per day, with EPF and SOCSO provided.

[54] Most of these men were not seriously involved, only working at these farms once in a long while when there was no other alternative work.

5.3.2.9 Oil palm mini-estate

Recently, in January 1998, three men were employed by RISDA to show its contractor the borders of their land when the latter started clearing their old rubber holdings to replant them with oil palm. These men made up 7.1% of villagers involved in wage work and worked from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and were paid RM10 a day. The work would only last for five to six months till the contractor finished clearing the land.

5.3.2.10 Restaurant

Women were employed as restaurant helpers since the nineties. As of 22 March 1998, two unmarried women were involved. One worked from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and was paid RM10 a day whilst the other worked from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and was paid a monthly wage of RM450. They made up 4.8% of the total population involved in wage labor.

5.3.2.11 Others

Villagers only took up these activities in the past few years. Each of the following work activities had only one villager involved, each making up 2.4% of the village population involved in wage labor. There was the Chinese spouse of a villager in his forties earning RM2000 a month doing construction work in Singapore. Another male villager, in his twenties earned RM800 a month in Bidor transporting furniture. Finally, there was a woman in her twenties who was sponsored RM450 a month to do community work in her village.

5.4 GENDER DIFFERENTIATION

5.4.1 Gender division: use-value versus exchange-value and domestic versus public sphere

We could see that although gender division existed in traditional economic activities in earlier times, it was less prevalent and more flexible than in the past thirty years or so as villagers began to be more aggressively involved in the cash economy. As stated by Gomes:

> "... (the) division of labour among the Semai is predominantly based on gender. Although there is sex-typing of tasks, there are no restrictions against performing activities assigned to the opposite sex" (1991:187).

Furthermore, in spite of gender division in earlier times, men and women were often significantly involved in production activities together, the main production unit being the conjugal couple[55] or family. For example, though there were different roles for men and women in most processes in paddy cultivation and in building a house, both sexes were significantly involved. In activities such as gathering firewood, edible plants, fruits, medicinal plants and roots, and in most methods of fishing, there was often sexual integration, with the conjugal couple as the main productive unit. Even in generally male tasks such as hunting and trapping, women were known to frequently take part. Presently, a few women could make and use animal snares or were good at catapulting small game and many remembered mothers who did so. Meanwhile, in the predominantly female tasks of cultivating supplementary crops such as cassava and maize, and reproductive work, men often assisted. Furthermore, unlike many traditional

societies where male activities were more valued and respected than female ones (Howell, 1983:47 citing Rosaldo, 1974:19), there was little such differentiation in the community studied, a phenomenon also observed by Howell among the Chewong (1983:57).

Although these patterns were beginning to change even from the forties, as villagers were increasingly exposed to external influences, these were not pronounced till the seventies onwards when dramatic changes began to take place. These latter changes would be explored in depth below.

In agriculture, we have seen how paddy cultivation was progressively discontinued due to encroachment and government policies. Therefore, villagers could only plant what were once supplementary crops, the main of which were cassava and maize. Although both males and females were currently involved in this activity where females traditionally dominated, it was nevertheless women who played more significant roles. Ultimately, women became more responsible for subsistence cultivation where there was much more male involvement in the past when paddy was still cultivated.

Furthermore, in some major subsistence activities where men and women once shared work equitably, women increasingly bore more of the burden. These activities included gathering edible plants, medicinal plants and roots and firewood. This movement was due to men being more involved in the cash economy and subsequently spending much time in it. Meanwhile, certain subsistence activities, which were sexually integrated in the past, were largely taken over by males, as they were transformed into exchange-

[55] Gomes observed that among the Semai, "For most mixed activities, a married couple is the production unit" (1991:188). Thambiah (1997a:6) observed the same among the Jakun.

value production. This included hunting, *petai* production and to a significant degree, the production of *durian* and other wild fruits.

As men opted for exchange-value production, women were left with the tasks of reproduction which have grown more burdensome as families bought more consumer items such as clothes and kitchen utensils and other knick-knacks, which had to be washed and/or kept away. In addition, resettlement has introduced larger home compounds that had to be constantly kept clean. This was in contrast to their traditional homes that had little compound. Thus, as women took over reproductive tasks and had to spend much time on them, their ability to take part in the cash economy was restricted to a large extent. Not only that, their predominance with domestic work weakened their bargaining power in the labour market resulting in their low wages which further pushed them into the subsistence and domestic spheres (Mackintosh, 1981:5, 13 & 15, see also Amarjit, 1994:6).

We could therefore conclude that women were increasingly involved in subsistence production and more engaged in the domestic domain whilst men were increasingly involved in exchange-value production, such as commodity production and wage labor and delved more in the public sphere. A strong dichotomy therefore existed where there was little before. As we have seen above, this was largely brought about by the development process in general, and specifically by certain government policies, encroachment by external parties, the consumerist culture and capitalist forces. Finally, we could concur that since flexible sexual division of labor denotes gender egalitarianism (Karen Endicott, 1981, Nowak, 1986, Gomes, 1991, and Thambiah, 1997), a strong dichotomy in gender division meant gender inequality.

Where a descriptive analysis based on in-depth interviews with older villagers was used to look at gender division in earlier times, surveys have been done to analyze gender division in present times. These surveys reflected the present trend discussed above to a large extent.

Findings from a survey done on twenty-seven respondents[56] with regards to gender division for use-value production (refer to Table 13) indicated that collecting *bertam*, wood, bamboo and rattan (male: 66.7%) and petai (male: 74.1%) were currently predominantly male tasks. Meanwhile, gathering (female: 66.7%) was mainly women's responsibility. Collecting *mengkuang* (female: 70.4%) was wholly women's work, and trapping was totally a man's domain. This showed that there was a more prominent gender division in subsistence activities in present times, with men monopolizing certain productive activities and women others.

[56] These formed Sample 2 mentioned in Chapter 1, Section 1.6.2.2. Please refer to this section for more details.

TABLE 13

GENDER DIVISION FOR USE-VALUE PRODUCTION IN PRESENT TIMES

Types of use-value production	Male	Female	Both	Not applicable
Collecting *bertam*, wood, bamboo and rattan	18 (66.7%)	-	8 (29.6%)	1 (3.7%)
Collecting *mengkuang*	-	19 (70.4%)	-	8 (29.6%)
Gathering	-	18 (66.7%)	8 (29.6%)	1 (3.7%)
Catching fish	5 (18.5%)	3 (11.1%)	19 (70.4%)	-
Trapping	18 (66.7%)	-	-	9 (33.3%)
Hunting	22 (81.5%)	-	-	5 (18.5%)
Agriculture	2 (7.4%)	3 (11.1%)	6 (22.2%)	16 (59.3%)
Weaving	-	3 (11.1%)	16 (59.3%)	8 (29.6%)
Collecting *petai*	20 (74.1%)	-	5 (18.5%)	2 (7.4%)
Collecting *durian*	11 (40.7%)	-	15 (55.6%)	1 (3.7%)
Collecting other fruits	6 (22.2%)	-	16 (59.3%)	5 (18.5%)

Another survey[57] studying present utilisation of labour for subsistence/use-value production, exchange-value production in terms of workdays,[58] and homestays[59] also

[57] This survey involved Sample 1, details of which could be found in Chapter 1, Section 1.6.2.1.

[58] Workdays reflected days where half or more than half of the day was spent in use-value and exchange value production.

[59] Homestays referred to days where half or more than half the day was spent without being involved in either use-value or exchange value production although reproductive tasks were exceptions. This concept was adopted from Nicholas (1985:148).

reflected the current trends mentioned above. This detailed survey involved twelve families and took into account the month of October 1997 exclusively. The results were summarised in Table 14.

From this table, one could see that out of the 131 work days that the male and female heads[60] of these twelve families spent on use-value production in October 1997, only 33.6% (44 work days) of these were utilized by males while 66.4% (87 work days) were utilized by females.[61] This clearly reflected that women were more involved in subsistence production than men.

Furthermore, out of the 197 homestays that were spent by the male and female heads of families surveyed, females spent 75.6% of that while males spent only 24.4% of it. This showed that women were more involved in the domestic domain than men were. It was also safe to assume that these women were actively involved in reproductive work during these homestays. This was verified by personal observations during fieldwork and the accounts of female villagers. The findings reflected that men were more involved in activities that took them away from village and home. These were mainly exchange-value production, whether it was commodity production or wage labor or both. On the other hand, women remained in activities that kept them close to the home and village.

[60] Here, please take note that two families did not have male heads, which would balance out the two families that did not have female heads.
[61] However, 15 of these 131 work days were utilized by couples working together.

TABLE 14

UTILIZATION OF LABOR FOR USE-VALUE PRODUCTION AND HOMESTAY BY THE HEADS OF 12 FAMILIES FOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER 1997 IN WORKDAYS

Heads of house-Holds	Fishing		Hunting/ Trapping		Gathering		Agricul-ture		Weaving		Gather Firewood		Total workdays		Grand Total of workdays	% of workdays		Total Home-stay		Grand total of Homestay	% of Homestay	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		M	F	M	F		M	F
Bah/Ken Merja	1	3	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	5	6	16.7	83.3	5	12	17	29.4	70.6
Bah/Ken Pri	-	2	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	3	-	1	0	8	8	0	100	7	12	19	36.8	63.2
Bah Lira Wak Din	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	2	-	-	-	2	13	4	17	76.5	23.5	6	12	18	33.3	66.7
Ijah	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	100	-	13	13	-	100
Atuk/ Wak Yam	-	6	-	-	-	22	1	22	-	-	-	2	1	52	53	1.9	98.1	5	2	7	71.4	28.6
Bek/Wak Misah	1	-	2	-	1	4	4	3	-	-	-	-	8	7	15	53.3	46.7	4	13	17	23.5	76.5
Bek/Ken Tun	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0	0	4	28	32	12.5	87.5
Bah/Wak Seli	2	1	-	-	2	2	1	-	-	-	4	6	9	9	18	50	50	2	19	21	9.5	90.5
Bah Rintang	9	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	10	-	10	100	-	7	-	7	100	-
Bah Juit	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	0	0	-	4	-	4	100	-
Nyek-nyek	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	-	0	-	10	10	-	100
Bek/Ken Leap	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	0	2	100	0	4	28	32	12.5	87.5
Total	13	13	4	0	3	31	20	28	0	4	4	11	44	87	131	33.6	66.4	48	149	197	24.4	75.6

Where reproductive tasks were concerned, Table 15[62] looked at gender division for reproductive tasks in present times. It showed that women were the primary actors in cleaning and tidying the home (100%), childcare (92.6%), preparing meals (96.3%), washing clothes, eating utensils and collecting water (96.3%) and collecting firewood (81.5%).

TABLE 15

GENDER DIVISION FOR REPRODUCTIVE TASKS IN PRESENT TIMES

Types of housework	Male	Female	Both	Not applicable
Cleaning and tidying home	-	27 (100%)	-	-
Childcare	-	25 (92.6%)	2 (7.4%)	0 (0.0%)
Preparing meals	-	26 (96.3%)	1 (3.7%)	-
Washing clothes, eating utensils and collecting water	-	26 (96.3%)	1 (3.7%)	-
Collecting firewood	-	22 (81.5%)	4 (14.8%)	1 (3.7%)

[62] This survey involved Sample 2.

Meanwhile, it could be observed from Table 16[63] that out of the total of 222 workdays that male and female heads of twelve families spent on exchange-value production in October 1997, males utilized 179 workdays (80.6%) whilst females utilized only 43 (19.4%). One could thereby conclude that as women were getting more involved in subsistence production and reproductive tasks, men were getting more involved in exchange-value production.

Meanwhile, Table 17[64] showed the percentage of residents of the study village involved in exchange-value production as of 22 March 1998, which could be categorised into commodity production and wage labor. Of the seventy-seven residents[65] involved in commodity production, 77.9% of them were males and 22.1% of them females. Again, this showed that men were predominantly involved in commodity production compared to the women. The table also showed that out of the forty-two residents[66] involved in wage labor, 66.7% of them were males and 33.3% of them were females. Thus, men were more involved in wage labor than women. We could thus conclude that men had progressively been participating in exchange-value production while women were involved to a much lesser extent.

[63] This table was based on a survey done with Sample 1.
[64] This table was based on a general survey involving all residents in the study village.
[65] This amounted to 20.9% of the total population.
[66] This amounted to 11.4% of the total population.

TABLE 16

UTILIZATION OF LABOR FOR EXCHANGE-VALUE BY THE HEADS OF 12 FAMILIES FOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER 1997 IN WORKDAYS

Heads of house-Holds	Petai		Durian		Bamboo		Wood		Rubber		Vegetable farms		Hunting		Others		Total workdays (A)		Grand Total of Work Days (B)	A/B (%)	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		M	F
Bah/Ken Merja	-	-	-	-	-	-	22	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22	-	22	100	0
Bah/Ken Pri	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	13	3	-	-	-	-	18	3	21	85.7	14.3
Bah Lira Wak Din	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	5	5	-	1	-	7	6	13	53.8	46.2
Wak Nami	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	-	14	14	0	100
Atuk/ Wak Yam	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18	-	1	-	19	-	19	100	0
Bek/Wak Misah	4	-	14	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	-	-	-	-	20	11	31	64.5	35.5
Bek/Ken Tun	20	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24	-	24	100	0
Bah/Wak Seli	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	-	15	100	0
Bah Rintang	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	4	-	4	100	0
Bah Juit	-	-	25	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	28	-	28	100	0
Nyek-nyek	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	9	9	0	100
Bek/Ken Leap	18	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22	-	22	100	0
Total	43	-	39	-	18	-	37	-	-	1	13	28	23	-	6	14	179	43	222	80.6	19.4

TABLE 17

VILLAGERS INVOLVED IN EXCHANGE-VALUE PRODUCTION AS AT 22 MARCH 1998

Age cohort	Male		Female	
	Commodity production	Wage labor	Commodity production	Wage labor
10-19	1	3	0	3
20-29	11	15	8	5
30-39	28	6	3	3
40-49	11	4	3	3
50-59	7	0	2	0
60-69	1	0	1	0
70+	1	0	0	0
Total	60	28	17	14
Grand total	88		31	
% of Grand total	73.9		26.1	

5.4.2 Economic dependency

This section attempted to probe if the women of Kampung Chang had become increasingly economically dependent on their men. Nowak (1986) asserted that women's economic autonomy would be little affected by the penetration of capitalism when husbands and wives frequently worked together. Meanwhile, Gomes (1991:187,189) and Thambiah (1997a:14) mentioned that the same would be true when women were actively and effectively involved in subsistence production or cash earning work, for this enabled women to adequately sustain themselves and be economically autonomous. This same criterion would be used in this analysis.

Meanwhile, this analysis would be based on data retrieved from a detailed survey[67] of twelve families of their income received in the month of October 1997 and their sources. This would give a fairly good representation of incomes of villagers. If we referred to Table 18, we found that income from *petai* production was highest, being RM1853 or 36.8% of total income received. Second came income received from wood production, RM921 or 18.3% of total income. Thirdly was income from the "others" category bringing in RM670 or 13.3% of total income. However, 67.2% of the total income under this category originated from one person. Then there was income from *durian* production bringing in RM649 or 12.9% of total income, followed by income from wage work in vegetable farms bringing in RM565 or 11.22% of total income. Females earned more than half of the latter income. Then there was income from bamboo production which brought in only RM358 or 7.1% of total income, followed by rubber production, involved only by females, bringing in only RM19 or 3.8% of total income.

[67] This survey was based on Sample 1.

Lastly, there was no income from wild game production in October 1997. Note here that only men were involved in *petai*, wood, *durian*, bamboo and wild game production.

From the above data, one could conclude that the major part of commodity production, which involved commodities that brought in the major earnings, were monopolised by men. These included *petai* (largest earnings), wood (second largest earnings) and *durian* production (fourth largest earnings). Women were mostly involved only in rubber production and wage labor in vegetable farms. However, rubber trees had become older and produced very little latex, which was reflected in earnings from it. Nonetheless, women could rely on wage labor in vegetable farms for some cash income, though to a limited extent for such work was often inconsistent. Contract labor in these farms lasted from four to ten days at most, with an average of five to six days each time. Furthermore, such work was not available throughout the year, for labor was only needed for certain processes in the agricultural cycle. On the average, women only worked around ten days a month, and were considered lucky if they got fifteen. In addition, wages that women got from vegetable farms were much less than those received by men. This works towards more economic dependency on men.

From the table, we could see that men earned 84.0% of the total income whilst women earned only 16.0%. Thereby, we could conclude that men had much larger earning capacities than women. This was significant in a community where much of its food was bought from town. A survey[68] exploring average expenditure of the heads of 12 families for the month of October 1997 (please refer to Table 19) reflected this point. It showed that 70.5% of the total expenditure of these heads of families were spent on buying food

[68] This survey was based on Sample 1.

items. Such would not be the case if they were producing much of their food supply.

Although some villagers were now involved in subsistence farming to produce their own food, and here women were the ones who play the active role, these were only eight out of the sixty-five households in the village. Even then their farms were small, mostly half an acre to an acre large. In addition, due to depleting resources such as edible plants and fishes, as was discussed earlier, women could not effectively produce their own subsistence and thereby became increasingly dependent on men economically. Other activities which were formerly subsistence activities such as hunting and collecting *petai* and other wild fruits had increasingly become monopolized by men who preferred to sell their produce rather than consume it. Therefore, villagers became progressively dependent on food bought from town and women generally became dependent on men for the cash to buy these foods. And as the consumerist culture spread to the village, villagers began to desire consumer items which only money could buy. Again, women would generally depend on their men to satisfy this need.

In addition, one could gauge from Table 16 that there was a rigid dichotomy in gender division of exchange-value production. Here, the only activity where both men and women were involved was working at vegetable farms. Even then, men and women often worked in separate farms at separate times, and not as conjugal couples. From Table 13, one could see that the same was true of many of the activities in use-value production as well. Collecting bertam, wood, bamboo, rattan and petai, trapping and hunting were seen to be men's work whilst collecting mengkuang and gathering were deemed women's work.

Thus, we could concur from the analyses above, that due to rigid gender division in work activities, and women being unable to sustain themselves adequately through subsistence production and/or exchange-value production, they thus had little economic autonomy.

It is important to note here that although female villagers were becoming economically dependent on their men, nonetheless the men who were largely involved in exchange value production were also economically marginalised in many ways.

Firstly, most adult male villagers participated in simple commodity production and usually sold their produces to traders who acted as middlemen. These middlemen determined the prices to a large extent and these were often minimal so they could appropriate larger surpluses for themselves as profit. This could be done for most villagers did not have the business contacts needed to trade directly with sellers in town. These contacts were often jealously guarded due to fear of competition. Furthermore, the state government often gave trading licenses to only one or two traders for a certain territory so villagers within that territory had to accept their prices (Nicholas, 1990:77). In addition, villagers often felt obliged to sell their goods to these middlemen who often assisted villagers in times of trouble, gave them loans without interest and accompanied them during funeral wakes. Secondly, where there were taxes to be paid to the Forestry Department, middlemen often transferred the cost of these taxes onto villagers by giving them even lower prices for their goods. Lastly, the market prices of these goods fluctuated wildly depending on the market forces of supply and demand, which were beyond the control of villagers; thus traders' prices would also fluctuate accordingly. Nicholas (1985:33-34) mentioned that such minimal returns received by villagers for

their produce was due to the expectation that villagers sustained themselves from their subsistence base, i.e. the forest and farms. This also acted as a justification for traders to accumulate more capital for themselves.

Moreover, the few men involved in wage labour, especially contract labour in vegetable farms[69] were also given very low wages, usually lesser than that received by non-OA. OA women were doubly exploited as they received even less than their men did.[70] In addition, farm work was inconsistent and seasonal, depending on the agricultural cycle. Thereby, villagers involved often acted as a 'reserve army of labour' which was "a flexible supply of workers who (could) be absorbed in a phase of expansion and thrown out ... when a crisis (set) in" (Mackintosh, 1981:7). Thus, villagers were hired during certain agricultural processes when their labour was needed and thrown out at other times. Meanwhile, Bennholdt-Thomsen (1981:43) explained that peasants working in the agricultural sector were paid rates that could not sustain them because their employers expected them to support themselves with the means of subsistence available in the farms or forest. This could also apply to the OA who were also involved in subsistence production. Finally, OA women were paid less than their men (just as non-OA women received lower wages than non-OA men) for similar work because their income was seen to supplement the income of their husbands or fathers who were considered the main breadwinners in the families, whilst their main responsibilities were deemed to be tied to the domestic sphere (Elson and Pearson, 1981:28). This practice only further encouraged women to move to and remain in this domain.

[69] Most of the male villagers involved in wage labour worked in vegetable farms (28.6%).

TABLE 18

INCOME OF THE HEADS OF 12 FAMILIES FOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER 1997 IN RM

Heads of house-Holds	Petai		Durian		Bamboo		Wood		Rubber		Vegetable farms		Hunting		Others		Total (RM) (A)		Grand Total (B)	A/B (%)	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		M	F
Bah/Ken Merja	-	-	-	-	-	-	535	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	535	-	535	100	0
Bah/Ken Pri	-	-	-	-	63	-	-	-	-	-	229	36	-	-	-	-	292	36	328	89.0	11.0
Bah Lira Wak Din	18	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	60	0	-	120	-	138	66	204	67.6	32.4
Wak Nami	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	450	-	450	450	0	100
Atuk/ Wak Yam	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	52	-	52	-	52	100	0
Bek/Wak Misah	131	-	47	-	60	-	-	-	-	-	-	132	-	-	-	-	238	132	370	64.3	35.7
Bek/Ken Tun	902	-	-	-	80	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	982	-	982	100	0
Bah/Wak Seli	-	-	-	-	-	-	386	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	386	-	386	100	0
Bah Rintang	-	-	200	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	48	-	248	-	248	100	0
Bah Juit	-	-	402	-	75	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	477	-	477	100	0
Nyek-nyek	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	-	108	-	-	-	-	-	121	121	0	100
Bek/Ken Leap	802	-	-	-	80	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	882	-	882	100	0
Total	1853	-	649	-	358	-	921	-	-	19	229	336	0	-	220	450	4230	805	5035	84.0	16.0
Grand total	1853		649		358		921		19		565		0		670						

TABLE 19

AVERAGE EXPENDITURE OF THE HEADS OF 12 FAMILIES FOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER 1997 IN RM

Heads of households	Expenditure			
	Food items (A)	Non-food items (B)	Total (C)	A/C (%)
Bah Merja Ken Merja	165.60	68.60	234.20	70.7
Bah Pri Ken Pri	149.70	108.00	257.70	58.1
Wak Nami	199.45	153.70	353.15	56.5
Bah Lira Wak Din	183.90	53.00	236.90	77.6
Atok Yam Wak Yam	102.10	7.10	109.20	93.5
Bek Misah Wak Misah	240.00	61.00	301.00	79.7
Bek Tun Ken Tun	480.00	150.00	630.00	76.2
Bah Seli Wak Seli	260.80	30.44	291.24	89.5
Bah Rintang	97.10	11.50	108.60	89.4
Bah Juit	135.20	37.50	172.70	78.3
Nyek-nyek	109.00	34.05	143.05	76.2
Bek Leap Ken Leap	450.00	362.00	812.00	55.4
Total	2572.85	1076.89	3649.74	70.5
Average	214.40	89.74	304.15	70.5

5.4.3 Male control of major productive resources

In the previous chapter, we have already seen how land as a productive means had progressively been appropriated by male villagers. We would now look into other productive resources apart from land, such as rubber and oil palm smallholdings and tree crops. Meanwhile, the present ownership pattern of these resources by the sexes is reflected in the table given below:

TABLE 20

OWNERSHIP OF PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES OF THE SEXES IN PRESENT TIMES

Productive resources	Husband	Wife	Both as owners	Both as non-owners	Communal	Others /Irrelevant	*Cak samak* manner		
							Male side	Female side	Both sides
Petai trees	8 (29.6%)	1 (3.7%)	2 (7.4%)	3 (11.1%)	9 (33.3%)	1 (3.7%)	-	3 (11.1%)	-
Durian trees	10 (37.0%)	2 (7.4%)	5 (18.5%)	5 (18.5%)	-	1 (3.7%)	1 (3.7%)	2 (7.4%)	1 (3.7%)
Other fruit trees	5 (18.5%)	1 (3.7%)	4 (14.8%)	14 (51.9%)	-	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.7%)	2 (7.4%)	-
Rubber holdings	6 (22.2%)	3 (11.1%)	-	16 (59.3%)	-	0 (0.0%)	-	2 (7.4%)	-
Palm oil holdings	8 (29.6%)	6 (22.2%)	1 (3.7%)	12 (44.4%)	-	0 (0.0%)	-	-	-

Rubber

Village elders mentioned that conjugal couples owning rubber smallholdings were the norm in the early period when rubber was first introduced. This practice continued until the late fifties or early sixties when the JHEOA officially put these rubber holdings[71] under male ownership.

Nonetheless, when seedlings were given by JHEOA to form new holdings in 1969, which matured in the late seventies, ownership of these newer holdings were eventually distributed seemingly equally between males and female, reflecting the more traditional practice. This could happen because the government did not intervene in determining the ownership of the holdings this time. This was reflected in the figures portrayed in Table 20[72] which showed that five out of eleven respondents (45.5%) who had rights and access to present rubber holdings[73] were women.

It was also interesting to observe that although males predominated in the ownership of the older holdings from the late fifties or early sixties onwards, conjugal couples or families were the main unit of production in old and new holdings from 1969 right till 1980. However, the men stopped tapping rubber in 1980, initially in favor of *petai* production and later, in favor of wage labour and the production of other commodities.

In conclusion, women had significant and equal control over rubber production and ownership of the first set of holdings from 1910's till the late fifties or early sixties when the government intervened. From then till 1969, rubber as a productive resource

[71] These were the holdings which villagers started from the 1910's and which were now being cleared for their oil palm mini estate.
[72] This table summarised the results of a survey done with Sample 2.

was controlled by men. However, women regained significant control when the second set of holdings were created in 1969 right till today. This group of women owners have since grown older and younger women were not much involved as no new rubber holdings were created after that.

Although women have significant ownership of rubber holdings since 1969 and have taken over the production of rubber since 1980, this activity was not able to offer any economic autonomy or independence to these women since the early nineties as the aging trees were producing very little. Thus, rubber has not been a significant productive resource since then.

Oil palm

The older rubber holdings mentioned above were currently being cleared to be replanted with oil palm. The land has been redistributed and males owned a major part of these holdings (63.6%), while females owned 36.4%. Although this crop would need several years before they could produce an income and there was no allowance provided in the meantime, it was nonetheless an important productive resource as it had the potential to bring in major cash returns for the owners in the future. However, we could note that in spite of it all, women managed to have some, though unequal control of this new productive resource in spite of government intervention with JHEOA and RISDA coordinating this project.

However women owners have realized that a big part of the production process would be too physically demanding for them. They would then have to hire male labor and

[73] These were the holdings formed from the seedlings given by the JHEOA in 1969. The older holdings were currently being cleared to make way for oil palm holdings.

thus share their income in the future. Thereby, although women had some control and access to oil palm holding, they would have to rely heavily on paid male labor in the future, which would increase production costs.

Tree crops

In the past, *petai* trees were totally owned by the community or *mai pasak* and there was no individual ownership. Referring to Table 20, we could note that communal ownership of *petai* trees was still significant in present times (33.3% of respondents mentioned that their access to *petai* was based on their rights to communal trees), though as we would later see, males and females did not have equal access to these trees.

However, communal ownership of *petai* trees was only a minor portion of present ownership patterns, whilst individual ownership took precedence (40.7%[74] of respondents mentioned that their access to *petai* was based on their individual rights to their own trees). This showed that *petai* trees were increasingly becoming private property as the demand for *petai* increased in the market.

The same table also showed that men had more individual rights to *petai* trees than women[75]. This showed that males owned a major part of the trees in an individual manner, which was the dominant type of ownership pattern in current times.

[74]This is based on data in Table 20 where 29.6% of respondents mentioned that husbands were the owners of the *petai* trees, 3.7% said that wives were the owners and 7.4% said that both owned their respective trees.

[75] Please refer to the previous footnote.

Petai production was also increasingly monopolised by men, especially after many of these men received motorbikes from the middlemen. Men preferred to go by themselves with their motorbikes to collect *petai*. Thus there was no need to share the produce with anyone else. Furthermore, with no one else on their bikes, they could carry back more *petai,* which could be exchanged for money. Even if some women were to own *petai* trees (a minority) through inheritance or planting their own trees, they had to rely on paid male labor to harvest the *petai* for males now seldom harvested with women or for women without payment. Nonetheless, these few women still had more economic autonomy than their treeless sisters. With regard to communal trees, since men who were the traditional harvesters, no longer went with women as they preferred to keep and sell the produce themselves, these trees were not available to women. Therefore, as mentioned by Gomes, "...greater gender differentiation is likely if male villagers concentrate on ...work that excludes women's labor or denies women's access to income" (1991:189).

With regard to *durian* trees, one could see from Table 20 that female and male respondents in present times had specific rights (individual or *cak samak* rights) to trees in a 10:17 ratio (female:37.0%, male:63.0%). These findings reflected that males were presently dominant. It was also interesting to note that where once, all trees were communally owned by the *mai pasak*, nearly all were now owned individually or co-owned with siblings and were therefore highly privatised. With durian production, where men and women were equally involved together before, now men dominated in the activity and women only gathered the fruits closer to the village. Since there was more male ownership and participation in the production process, males received a bigger portion of the income. However, female owners could still get a relatively

substantial income from their fruits during the durian season, especially when self-collected. Furthermore, they could easily plant more durian trees and collect the fruits themselves.

Finally, when it came to other fruit trees, female and male respondents in present times have specific rights (individual or *cak samak* rights) to trees in a 7:10 ratio (female:41.2%, male:58.8%). Ownership of fruit trees was seen to be dominated by males in present times. One should note that where traditionally, there was no private ownership of such trees (all were used communally by the *mai pasak*), it now existed.

One could then conclude that in the ownership of the more important and productive resources such as *petai*, *durian* and other fruit trees and oil palm holdings, there was now a trend towards male control with production and ownership being transferred to mainly males. This was in contrast to ownership patterns in the past, which were more egalitarian. This further pointed towards female economic dependency on males. This trend seemed to correspond with parts of Engels' theory which stated that males began to take control over private property – in this case, land and cash crops – as the mode of production changed from that which was based on subsistence to one based on capital, i.e. capitalism. He said that this was in contrast to the gender egalitarianism found in economic production in traditional societies. Furthermore, Engels asserted that as men held more private property, they would dominate in the public domain and in economic production whilst women would be pushed into the reproductive and domestic spheres. This pattern was generally observed in village dynamics as shown in Section 5.4.1.

However, the fact that bilateral inheritance still existed for the above productive means, meant that women still had some form of access, control and autonomy, however limited it might be, though sons were being more favored these days than daughters. Nonetheless, daughters could plant their own tree crops especially *petai* and durian in the communal land which was not privately owned. This could improve their economic situation.

5.4.4 Decline in female access to sharing of food and labour

Sharing had traditionally been a way of life among the villagers, especially in the areas of food and labor. As mentioned by Gomes (1991:184), there were two types of food sharing, *ok* and *seer*[76]. Both involved the sharing of food produced either in a subsistence manner or food bought. When a person has harvested some cassava or maize from the swidden, got some game or bought some food from the market, the person would normally give a small portion of it to either relatives or friends or both. When tree crop ownership were initially individualised, villagers still commonly shared their fruit harvest with those who did not have fruitful trees. Here, they would do the harvesting together and individuals usually kept the proceeds from the fruits that they transported down from the forest or orchards. Thus, this practice of "(p)roviding the less fortunate with access to fruit for sale reduces hard feelings between the haves and have-nots and also reduces the chances of incurring *pehunan* ...." (Carole Robarchek, 1980:99).

[76]According to Gomes, *ok* "denotes small-scale sharing of food, both domestically produced and market purchased, involving only a few households, usually kin-related and/or neighbouring". Meanwhile, *seer* is a "more formalised (form of food sharing, and) is performed on a much larger scale, involving many households within a hamlet or village" (1991:184-5).

This practice of food sharing was also sanctioned by the ideological concepts known as *puhunan* and *ngenhaa'*. The former was described as Clayton Robarchek to be the "state of being unfulfilled, unsatisfied, or frustrated in regard to some specific and strongly felt want..." (1977:105). A person in the state of *puhunan* would attract untoward happenings in the form of accidents, illnesses, natural disasters and attacks by wild animals. With reference to the concept of *ngenhaa'*, Gomes explained that "A person is said to commit *genhaa'* if he ceases, without any obvious reason, to share with a person with whom he has an on-going reciprocal relationship" (1991:184).[77] A person committing *ngenhaa'* would face the same consequences as those in the state of *puhunan*.

Currently, however, this practice has declined significantly, though still existing, and the amount of goods shared has also decreased. Sharing now only occurred among close relatives, often only those that stayed close by, and very close friends. Where most goods produced were shared generously before, now we have the situation where produces which had become commodities sold at the market were no longer shared or were shared in a very limited manner. Since these commodities were controlled mainly by the males, females would lack access to such produce. Although goods that were produced in a subsistence manner were still frequently shared, the frequency, amount and recipients of food shared have also decreased. Furthermore, villagers were increasingly giving in the hope of a balanced reciprocation.

Labor too had been traditionally shared, often in the *gotong-royong* manner. In former times, whole households would be involved in communal activities. However, currently

[77] Three of my respondents said that *ngenhaa'* can also be committed when a person who has a close relationship with another suddenly retracts the friendship, which may be expressed by stopping with the

this sharing of labor has diminished much. Harvesting fruits, especially those that were sold in the market were often now done individually or in a pair, often by males. Commercial cultivation was usually done by immediate family members. Building homes, cultivating subsistence crops and catching fish were now activities often performed by members of the households with close relatives and friends. We have also already seen how households without able-bodied males now found it difficult to harvest their *petai* trees or those that were communally owned and used. These households would have to pay other men to harvest from their trees. Male relatives now also often refused to help their female relatives to clear plots to cultivate crops as they said they did not have the time to for they were too busy doing work that would earn them an income. We therefore, found a new stratification emerging. Households with more able-bodied males could collect more *petai*, hunt more game, cultivate more crops and have more job opportunities than households without these. Formerly, these activities were done communally so this problem was never an issue. However, now households with predominantly female members found it more difficult to be economically stable, whilst male dominated households were more economically secure. The latter then, need not rely so much on forest resources to build homes, for fuel or food, as they could buy alternative material and food, whilst the latter would have to rely more on diminishing natural resources.

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sharing of food.