

Life Histories of Migrants: *Bejalai* Experiences of the Iban in Sabah, Malaysia

Ryoji SODA* and Logie SEMAN**

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I . Introduction

The Iban people of Borneo island has been recognized as major shifting cultivators in Southeast Asia. Their homeland is in the upper areas of Kapuas River in West Kalimantan, Indonesia, but they have been well known for their aggressiveness and high mobility and they have never stopped to migrating into and expanding around the whole Sarawak in the last 400 years. Today, as a result, Iban groups can be found in the whole Borneo Island, including Brunei and the state of Sabah, Malaysia.

The spatial expansion process of the Iban population has attracted scholarly attention, and abundant researches have been accumulated in the fields of anthropology and other disciplines (Sutlive and Sutlive, 2001), but most researches were conducted in Sarawak, Malaysia. Although it is a well-known fact that the state of Sabah has a considerable number of the Iban people, the accurate population data has never been extracted¹⁾.

In October, 2004 the authors visited several Iban villages in Tawau District, Sabah to conduct hearing investigation on the Iban migration into Sabah²⁾. Our intensive interviews with the Iban in Tawau indicated that the first Iban migrants arrived in Tawau around 1920, and the number of the Iban settlers increased significantly since the 1960s. The data we obtained in Tawau are still insufficient to

construct the migration history of the Iban in Sabah, but we believe the record of life histories of our interviewees could contribute to further research on the Iban in Sabah, which has been so rare.

An advantage of this study is to focus on 'ordinary' people. Previous studies on the Iban migration in Sarawak and Kalimantan have mainly illustrated migration processes and the situations of village headmen, political key persons, historical heroes, and influential households (*bilik*-families). There is nothing wrong with it, but those stories are not necessarily providing us with an accurate village history. Simply put, not many investigators have shed a spotlight on migratory behavior of 'ordinary' people before.

In Tawau, Sabah, Iban people has not moved in this area from Sarawak or Kalimantan, as a whole. Truth is, Iban villages were formed when Iban migrants, individuals or small groups began to get together in Tawau. This village formation process is something different from those Iban villages in Sarawak. This indicates that within the same village, each member has different life history of migration in terms of route, period, background and motivation. In this sense, interviewing with the Iban in Tawau about their individual migration history will lead us to know the migratory patterns of 'ordinary' Iban in the past.

*Osaka City University, Japan

**Ex-Assistant Forest Officer, Forest Department Sarawak, Malaysia

The mobility of the Iban has been explained by many researchers from various aspects (Soda, 2007, 2008). The institutionalized custom of male's journey, in particular, has been thought to be a symbolic of Iban's mobility. In Iban society, adult males often leave their villages for a considerably long period — from a few months to a few years — which is called '*bejalai*' in Iban language. Through this journey, Iban men accumulate rich experience in the outside of their Iban society, so *bejalai* has played an important role for adult males to enhance their social prestige. While the purposes of the *bejalai* journey in the past were diversified from spouse-seeking, searching for preferable land for swidden agriculture, collecting non-timber forest products, barter trading, to headhunting expedition, since the 1960s it has become almost synonymous with engaging in wage labor outside the village.

Some Iban people never returned from their *bejalai* journey and settled in somewhere else. Our interviewees in this paper are those who settled down in Tawau as a result of their *bejalai* journeys.

We conducted interviews with the 10 Iban migrants in Tawau area on their life histories mainly focusing on the moving process after leaving their home villages until settling down in Tawau. The villages that we visited are

shown in Fig. 1.

First, we visited Kampung Iban Merotai Besar village (hereafter, KIMB), which is located along a major road about 25 kilometers northwest from the Tawau Town. The village is probably the largest Iban settlement in Sabah, having a population of 925 with 130 households as of October, 2004. Although the majority of the population is Iban, the specific percentage is unclear as inter-ethnic marriages have become a common thing. The headman of the village guessed, the Iban occupies approximately 70% of the total population, while the group of Kadazan-Dusun and Murut consists 25% and the Chinese 5%.

There is a longhouse called Rumah Lutut located north-northeast about 20 kilometers in airline distance from KIMB (Fig. 2)³, which is probably the only Iban longhouse in Sabah being comprised of 20 households (*bilik*-families). This longhouse is the center of the Kampung Iban Ulu Merotai village (hereafter, KIUM), and the total population of KIUM is 491 people with 113 households (mostly Iban). The road condition to this village from a major road is terrible; people have to drive a rough dirt road constructed by an oil palm plantation company about 30 kilometers. When it rains hard, often the road is unable to drive. For this reason, many villagers have extra houses on the major roadside, and

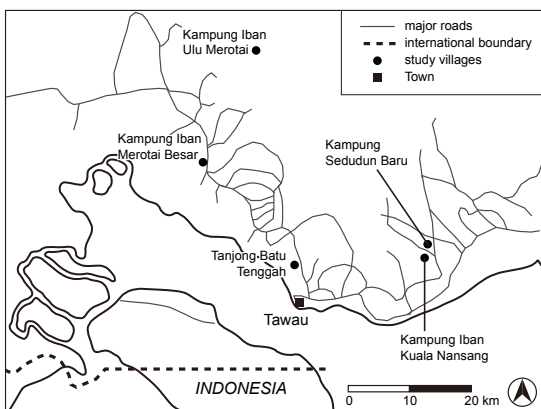


Fig. 1. Map showing Tawau and its vicinities.



Fig. 2. Longhouse in Kampung Iban Ulu Merotai (Rumah Lutut).

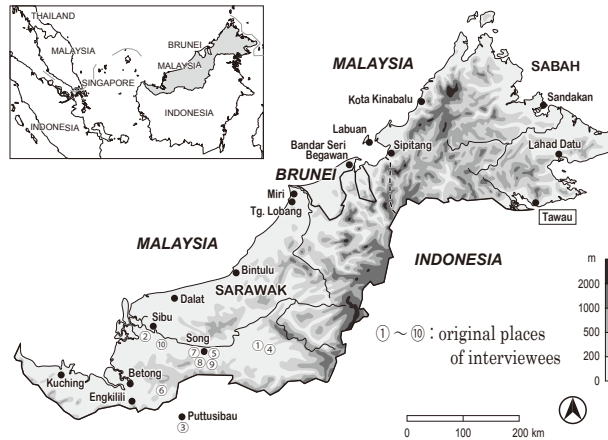


Fig. 3. Major place-names in Northern Borneo.

Table 1. List of informants.

Informant No.	Name	Sex	Age	Address	Home village	Year of departure	Year of arrival in Tawau	Years of <i>bejalai</i> until the arrival in Tawau	Year of settling down in Tawau	Years of <i>bejalai</i> until settling down in Tawau	Notes
1	Paung anak Buja	Male	85	Kampung Iban Merotai Besar	Sungai Sepaku, Baleh, Sarawak	1930	1950	20	1951	21	
2	Ngalit anak Bali	Male	74	Kampung Sedudun Baru	Rh.Pg.Jawa, Madur, Binatan g. Sarawak	1948	1962	14	1967	19	Wakil Ketua Anak Negeri (Iban)
3	Linggong anak Jawi	Male	75	Kampung Sedudun Baru	Puttusibau, West Kalimantan	1948	1950	2	1963	15	
4	Banyau anak Nanjah	Male	76	Kampung Iban Merotai Besar	Sungai Sebaku (Sepaku), Baleh, Sarawak	1949	1958	9	1958	9	Headman of the Kampung Iban Merotai Besar
5	Undi anak Bugap	Male	76	Kampung Iban Merotai Besar	Sungai Tekalit, Katibas, Song, Sarawak	1952	1954	2	1961	9	
6	Bantir anak Tang	Male	86	Kampung Iban Merotai Besar	Sungai Jela, Langkau Bala, Engkari, Sarawak	1959	1960?	1	1960s	1	
7	John anak Sulutan	Male	55	Kampung Kuala Nansang	Sungai Lajang, Song, Sarawak	1968	1968	0	1968	0	Headman of the Kampung Kuala Nansang
8	Lulut anak Junggai	Male	46	Kg. Iban Ulu Merotai	NgEntuat, Katibas, Sarawak	1969	1969	0	1978	9	Headman of the Kampung Iban Ulu Merotai
9	Manngai anak Mayau	Male	57	Kampung Iban Merotai Besar	Sungai Tekalit, Katibas, Song, Sarawak	1971	1971	0	1971	0	
10	James anak	Male	5	Tanjong Batu Tenggara	Bawan, Sarawak	1972	1972	0	1972	0	

occasionally go back to the longhouse of their village to harvest cash crops such as cocoa and oil palm.

The third Iban settlement that we visited was located about 20 kilometers east-northeast from Tawau. The village, called Kampung Iban Kuala Nansang (hereafter KIKN), is the third largest Iban settlement in Tawau area with 470 people and 60 households. The estimation of the demographic of the village is 358 Iban people, and the rest are comprised of 76 Tidong, 10 Murut, and others.

Nearby KIKN is the village of Kampung Serudun Baru (hereafter KSB) which has

a population of 827 with 205 households⁴. Although the majority of this village is Murut (about 70 percent), the Iban also consist about 15 percent of the village population⁵. In spite of its relatively small proportion in KSB, the Iban seem to be somewhat potent in the village as a regional Iban Native Chief Representative (locally called WNC) lives in this community.

There are other Iban communities in the state of Sabah, such as Sipitang, Kunak, Lahat Datu, and Sandakan, but it is safe to assume that Tawau District has the largest Iban population in the state.

Compared to their counterpart in

Sarawak, a significant difference can be found among the Iban in Tawau in the aspect of their way of living. Iban culture has often been referred to as 'paddy cult,' because of their tenacity to swidden rice cropping. Inside of the plantation sites or around suburban residential areas, they would make the most of idle land and grow rice. This is not the case, however, with the Iban in Tawau. Iban people in this area concentrate on oil palm and cocoa cultivation and very few people are still engaged in paddy cultivation. As far as their oil palm business concerned, almost all of Iban households in Tawau own 10 to 30 acres of oil palm farm and employ Bugis people from Indonesia for harvests. In this sense, their land use seems to be more commercialized than that in inland Sarawak, and as a result, their way of living look more stable in terms of agricultural economy.

We interviewed five persons in KIMB, one in Rumah Lutut (KIUM), one in KIKN, and two in KSB⁶). We took one case of sample of Iban in a Malay village called Tanjong Batu Tenggara in which many Iban people have converted to Muslim after moving into Tawau. The social backgrounds of the interviewees are briefly illustrated in Table 1.

In the following section, we classify their migration patterns into three categories according to the periods of departures from their home villages: prewar period (-1941), from the time of the war and following years until independence (1941-1963), and post-independence/Malaysian period (1963-). This categorization is made simply for convenient purpose, but as it is explained in the following section, we can see clearly, at least to some extent, the changes in migration patterns according to the changes of the times.

Major place-names picked up in the interviews are shown in Fig. 3. Personal data such as age and present address is as of October, 2004 when we conducted research in

Tawau.

II . Life histories of Iban migrants

1. *Bejalai* journey before the World War II (before 1941)

[Narrative 1]

Paung anak Buja (approximately 85 years old, Kampung Iban Merotai Besar)

My home village is along the Sepaku River, a tributary of the Balleh River. I believe it was 1930 or 1931 when I left. My father named Buja, took the lead of our travel group of 31 people from Sg. Sepaku to Miri. I was only 13 years old at that time. In Miri we were engaged in road construction. The wage of my father was 60 cents per day, while I was given only 35 cents because I was still too young. We worked in Miri for one year and nine months.

Then we all moved to Dalat by sea. Mostly we worked as construction workers on roads and bridges, but we experienced various jobs as well during two years and a half time span in Dalat. For about two and a half year, we worked for the same person in Dalat who managed us in Miri. After finishing the job in Dalat all of us moved back to Miri and made money in Tanjong Lobang by breaking a path in the forest. In those days we wandered back and forth between Miri and Ulu Baram area to take various kinds of jobs.

After that eight of us split away from the group and went to Sandakan with a ship called 'Double.' In Sandakan we worked for BBT Sandakan Logging Company. The company paid us at the rate of 18 cents per cubic feet to the trees we cut down, and 5 cents per sleeper with which we laid for the railway. We worked in Sandakan for nine years in total, and I guess it was our fourth year there, when Japanese military came to Sabah.

After spending nine years in Sandakan,

our group (eight of us) came to Tawau by steamship. I guess it was in around 1950. Shortly after arriving in Tawau, we went to Sungai Burut to clear the forest and to establish a rubber plantation for a Japanese man named Komura. Although the WWII had already been ended, this man remained in Sabah. He paid us 20 dollars per planting rubber seedlings for one acre. We worked there for a year. During this work, we lost one of our group members because of an accident while logging trees. After this unfortunate incident we moved to Balong, in the suburbs of the Tawau Town. We worked as log-carriers at the wage of 18 cents per cubic feet of trees we carried, which equals to nine dollars per hoppus ton. We stayed in Balong for three months.

In 1951 we finally came to Merotai (present KIMB). Four of us came to Merotai while the others went back to Sarawak. Here, we mainly collected dammar⁷⁾ in the forest to sell it in Tawau at 19 dollars per *pikul*⁸⁾.

When we came to Merotai, there were many Laut (Malay) people here. We also met some Iban people who married to Laut. In my early days, I did swidden agriculture and grew vegetables and fruit here and never returned to timber-related work.

It was the mid-1960s when I was granted the land. I remember that 12 Iban people including the present head man, Bunyau, were granted land around the same time. I think each household were granted 13 to 14 acres of land.

First I planted rubber trees in that land about two acres, but I gave it up when I got a request from Tuan (British administrative officer) not to plant rubber any more. I planted oil palm in 1968, and cocoa in the mid-1980s. The earnings from oil palm and cocoa cropping was good enough for us, so we stopped paddy cultivation more than 10 years

ago.

My wife, Banang is a daughter of Bonsu, who was one of the Iban pioneers in Merotai. Bonsu was originally came from Assan, Sibu and married with a Murut girl from Melinau. My wife was born in Melinau.

I myself have never returned to Sarawak ever since settling down in Merotai, but one of my sons went to Sarawak once. He found a spouse there and brought her back to Sabah.

[Commentary 1]

Paung anak Buja left his home village when he was only 13 years old, as a member of a group led by his father, and engaged in various kinds of paid jobs such as commercial lumbering, infrastructure construction, and forest products gathering. They frequently moved around and changed jobs in relatively short terms of contract from a few months to a few years. This was a typical moving pattern of Iban migrant workers in those days. His group was split into several parts after years but this was nothing particular to Iban's travel groups. Some of his group never went back to Sarawak, settling down in Tawau in the process of *bejalai* journey, we found in this behavior a good sample of Iban's migratory pattern and their ethnic expansion process. The main reason of Paung's settling down in Tawau can be attributed to the legal acquisition of a parcel of land. The acquisition of land triggered him to convert to settled agriculture in Tawau.

Paung's father-in-law, named Bonsu is considered the first Iban who settled down in Merotai, Tawau. Among the group of Iban in Tawau, Bonsu was esteemed as a pioneer in this area and his story has been passed from generation to generation. It is estimated that Bonsu and his countrymen came to Tawau in the early 1930s. He was not only the organizer of Iban's first expedition group to Tawau, but also was respected as a sound leader by the Iban who moved into Tawau after the World War

II. The emergence of these key players surely added stability to the community and helped the expansion of Iban migrants who settled down in Tawau.

2. *Bejalai* journey between World War II and the independence (1941-1963)

[Narrative 2]

Ngalit anak Bali (74 years old, Kampung Serudun Baru)

I was born in Rumah Penghulu Jawa in Madur, Binatang (today's Bintangor). In 1948 I left the village and went down to Sibuh by a boat called 'Double' bound for Sandakan, Sabah. At Sandakan I transferred to another ship called 'Serudun' to go to Lahat Datu. I was a member of a group of 65 Iban men. The group came to Lahat Datu all together from Sibuh port.

At Lahat Datu I experienced so many kinds of jobs. First, about one year, I got a job of forest clearing with the contract of 20 dollars per acre. Then I found a job of a security guard which paid me 75 dollars monthly. I continued this job for a little more than a year, and then I found a position in tobacco plantation. During the first five years in the plantation I was in charge of quality control of the products with the salary of 120 dollars a month. Later, I got promoted to a supervisor of tobacco planting section. I spent another five years for the plantation as a supervisor and took 6 cents of margin per 1 dollar commission.

In 1962, I quit the job at the plantation and moved to Tawau with my wife and four children. My wife was born in Lahat Datu, and her father was Jawa Pandan, native of Cocos Island, Australia.

In Tawau, I supervised the planting of cocoa trees. In spite of a relatively good salary of 120 dollar per month, I worked there for only one year, because I found a position in

Hap Seng, a major timber company in Tawau. I worked with Hap Seng on commission, 60 cents per one cubic feet. I continued to work with Hap Seng for about two years.

I moved in here, Apas Balong in 1967. I planted oil palm trees and some kinds of fruit trees to 18 acres of land, which I was given by the state government. I planted cocoa trees much later.

Now, I own 18 acres of granted land and another 10 acres of PT (Pemohon Tanah: waiting for a registration approval) land, which I will obtain legal title next year by paying premium.

I visited Sarawak three times since settling down in Sabah. One of my sons-in-law (born in 1972) is also from Betong, Sarawak. He had been working as a construction worker in Brunei for several years before he came to Sabah. His group, 17 Iban men, came to Sabah as they heard that there were much well-paid jobs here than Sarawak and Brunei. Since then he settled down here to marry one of my daughters. He now works for Mapang Company as a tree-feller.

I came to Sabah as a response to the persuasion by an Iban who had worked in Sabah. I was so curious to see the other world. The boat 'Double' was chartered by the company and a total of 65 workers were on board. Most of them have already returned to Sarawak except 15 persons who settled down in Lahat Datu and Tawau.

I have more or less 60 grandchildren and grand-grandchildren altogether, many of whom were already married to other ethnic groups such as Bajau, Murut, and Tiggong.

[Commentary 2]

Ngalit anak Bali holds the title of WNC (Wakil Ketua Anak Negeri). The title loosely implies 'Native Chief Representative.' He takes charge of the safety and development of the Iban community in the area. During this interview

his brightness and intelligence were clearly shown through our conversation. His job history revealed his managerial skills as a supervisor in several worksites, all of which confirm his leadership.

He decided to leave his home village on *bejalai* journey with 65 people, when an Iban recruiter from Sabah came to his village. We could not confirm the ethnic composition of his travel group, but it is assumable that most of them were Iban. This large size of the group was something rare in those days.

His words indicated that one of the major reasons why he went on the journey was that he wanted to see the 'outer world.' Traditionally Iban society values a wealth of experience outside their communities. For Iban men, the knowledge and experience outside their communities, and the narrative skill to tell their hands-on experience to others, is something they long for. In this sense, it may be safe to say that his decision was partly based on Iban's cultural values.

As he lives in a predominantly Murut village, he frankly talked about the course of intermarriages of younger generation, their grandchildren and grand-grandchildren in this village. Through our interviews and observations in Tawau, we noticed that the intermarriage rate is remarkably high among Iban people in the community in which they are in the minority.

[Narrative 3]

Linggong anak Jawi (75 years old, Kampung Serudun Baru) (Figs. 4 and 5)

It was Chinese New Year in 1950 when I came to Tawau for the first time. I believe that I was about 17 years old at that time. My home village is near Puttusibau, West Kalimantan, Indonesia, where lived a great number of Maloh and Iban.

I left my home village in February, 1948



Fig. 4. Linggong anak Jawi (second from left) and the second author (left).



Fig. 5. Tattoos on the back of Linggong anak Jawi. Tattoos reflect the rich experiences of his *bejalai* journey.

to go to Enkilili, Sarawak. I engaged in rubber tapping job at a wage of 33 cents per *kati*⁹, but a month later I quit the job and moved to a longhouse in Nanga Kumpang. I lived in the longhouse for two months while working as a rubber tapper. When I boarded a motor launch to go and sell rubber sheets, I came across an Iban from Seria, Brunei. He gave me good job information and I followed his advice and left that longhouse.

In Miri I went through many jobs by the agency of Chinese man named Chukan. In those

days I earned 3.5 dollars a day and had nothing to complain about it. The first job I took in Miri was to build channel, but it was completed just in 12 days. Then I went to Sungai Keduru, near the cave of Niah, with two other guys. It took a day on foot to go there. We engaged in road-construction job for one year with a daily wage of 3.5 dollars and additional travel allowance.

I went back to Miri from Sungai Keduru, but instead of looking for another workplace in Miri, I decided to go to Tawau. I traveled to Tawau by the ship named 'Kemanis.' In Tawau I began to work for a Chinese company named 'BALS Estate,' clearing forests and leveling the land to establish a new rubber plantation. My wage was commission-based and earned 30 cents per *gawang*¹⁰. I continued this job for three months and then began to work for a textile mill engaged in the banana hemp making for three years.

I moved to Apas, which is not far from here, and got a job of land clearing and leveling. We opened a very old forest called 'Kampung Gun' for a plantation, but we never knew what kinds of cash crop were planted there. Five months later, I quit the job and stayed in an empty house called 'Kohara.' Allegedly the house was built by Japanese army during the time of WWII. I stayed there for around 10 days with other four Iban guys with different backgrounds.

During our stay in 'Kohara' we did not find any jobs. Soon, however, found a job for tobacco plantation in Lahat Datu. Our job was to clear the forest at first, then to set fire in the woods to clear underbrush. We worked for this plantation for six months then moved to another company's coconut plantation run by Chinese to do grass cutting job with other two Iban. We earned 35 cents per 12 square feet. I remember that a *kati* of rice were sold for only 23 cents at that time.

I returned to Tawau, by myself to find a better job while other two Iban guys remained

in Lahat Datu. In Tawau I worked for a Chinese merchant, along with six Iban guys I met there to collect dammar in the forest. In those days dammar was sold as much as 12 dollars per *pikul*. That job was quite handy for us because we could do hunting and fishing during the search.

After seven months work of dammar gathering, I went to Serudung Laut for the job of collecting Engkabang fruits. It was around this time when I got married to a Murut girl. I suppose it was in 1959 or 60. We now have eight children, 13 grandchildren and two grand-grandchildren.

Later in 1963 we moved to Apas Balong and I found a job of timber cutter in North Borneo Timber Company (NBT), but it did not last even for a year. The wage in NBT was commission-based, that is, three ringgit per six to seven round of timber, and five ringgit per eight to nine round. In those days we had nothing but an ax to cut trees.

When Sabah became part of Malaysia, the new government gave us 15 acres of land. I stopped looking for any kind of wage labor ever since. I raise only oil palm in my field. Even now my land is covered with oil palm.

Bonsu, the first Iban who came to Tawau, was not a beefy guy. But we knew that he was a natural leader; his words and actions were widely supported by other Iban. In those days, the Iban in Tawau needed someone who we could trust, or someone we could follow. That was because we were afraid of other ethnic groups surrounding us.

[Commentary 3]

Linggong anak Jawi was the only Iban among our informants who originally came from Indonesian Borneo. His work history covers a wide variety of jobs such as tree felling, banana hemp weaving, tobacco plantation, canal digging, road construction, rubber and coconut plantations, and forest products gathering. We

could feel his pride of his career in the way he told us his story. For us, he seemed a good example of a typical Iban *bejalai* traveler.

During our interview with him, Linggong mentioned Bonsu many times, which strengthened Bonsu as an eminent leader among the Iban in Tawau. The Iban was considered an aggressive ethnic group and feared by other groups in Sarawak. But his story revealed that in those days in Tawau, before the independence of Sabah, they were nothing but a small fragment in this area. As Iban was outnumbered by other ethnic groups, Iban people needed to pay close attention to the world around them. Eventually, they had to, willingly or not, cooperate with each other in every aspects of their lives.

[Narrative 4]

Bunyau anak Nanjah (76 years old, Kampung Iban Merotai Besar)

My home village is Sungai Sebaku, a tributary of the Balleh River. I left Sungai Sebaku to go to Miri in 1949 with 11 other Iban. Our leader, Belayong led us to Miri where we worked for the Shell Oil Company at a wage of 90 cents to 1.2 dollar per day. Actually, it was a subsidiary of Shell, but I do not remember the exact name of the company. I worked there for nine months, and then, moved to Seria, Brunei and worked as a security guard in an oil company for one year. I earned 70 dollars each month with this job. Back then, the price of rubber was rising¹¹⁾, so I moved to Tutong, Brunei and engaged in rubber tapping in a rubber plantation for eight months.

After that job, I moved to Limbang and worked as a tree feller with Limbang Trading Timber Company. I stayed there for about a year and got married at Tanah Merah, Mandit during my days in there, but this marriage lasted only two years. After this, I moved again to Lubai, Limbang and got married

there.

In 1957, I led eight other Iban from Limbang to Sungai Pedas, Sabah by speedboat via Sipitang. Each member of the group had different backgrounds: two from Mujong, three from Batang Ai, and three from Sungai Sebaku. During nine month in Sungai Pedas I experienced various kinds of work, and in 1958 some of us moved to Tawau by ship called 'Keningau,' under the guidance of my uncle, Paung anak Buja (Informant 1). Only four of us moved from Sungai Sebaku to Tawau. The others might go back to Sarawak, I guess. In Tawau we did various odd jobs such as farming and collecting rattan, dammar and illipe nuts for around two years.

Since around in 1963 I started work for a company called Teck Guan Timber Company with a commission-based wage of six cents per cubic feet. I felt the wage was very low but the company built houses for us, so I guess the construction cost might be taken off from our wage.

Later in 1963 we applied for land and the government of Sabah granted us about 15 acres of legal land to each household in Merotai (Fig. 6). At that time, in Merotai there were 48 households—mostly Iban except a few of Murut—, all of which applied for land. The land granted to us was cleared by Teck Guan Timber Company and we were employed by the company as wage laborers.

We started to plant oil palm in 1965. All households in Merotai planted the seedlings of oil palm supplied by the Agriculture Department. As I mentioned before, the company built our houses. Unlike longhouse, each household has own housing in the land of our farmland. The fruit trees of our estate were planted by ourselves.

In 1959, just after a year I came to Tawau, I got married to a lady who was from an interethnic family of Iban and Murut. I live

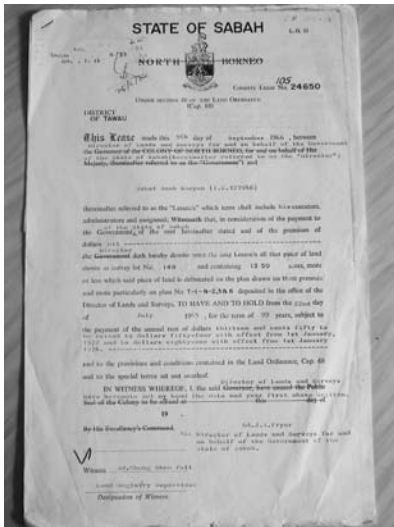


Fig. 6. Land registration document.

According to Bunyau, he applied for land in 1963, but the document is issued in 1966. We can see that the state government of Sabah used the certificate of colonial government even after independence.

here ever since. I had my first child in 1961. When I first came to Tawau in 1958 there had already been seven Iban households here and Bonsu was one of them.

[Commentary 4]

As was with the case of Paung, before settling down in Tawau, Bunyau also experienced a wide variety of jobs in which Iban played a crucial role. Petroleum industry, timber industry, and forest products gathering, those were typical lines of work for Iban in those days. In his story he came to Tawau in 1958, following Paung. In some parts, his story was inconsistent with Paung's narrative. Nevertheless it is safe to say that his mobility was boosted considerably by interacting with Paung, who had richer job and travel experiences.

[Narrative 5]

Undi anak Bugap (76 years old, Kampung Iban Merotai Besar)

I do not remember well when we left our home place, but I do remember that we arrived in Merotai in April 1954. We were

led by my elder brother, Buda anak Bugap, together with Badak anak Jampong and Embol anak Ipa from Sungai Tekalit, Katibas, Song. We got on board a schooner ship¹² called "Double" from Sibu to Miri. We worked there for 11 months for oil-well drilling job in an oil field.

From Miri, we went to Brunei by bus which ran through seashore at low tide. From Brunei, we got on a very slow-moving ship called "Kapal Rajah Brunei" to Labuan. From Labuan we went to Jesselton (today's Kota Kinabalu), by the ship "Double" which came from Singapore via Kuching. We went further to Kudat, Sandakan, Lahad Datu and finally arrived at Tawau. It was a long trip for us, taking almost two months to reach Tawau.

At Tawau we slept over at an abandoned Japanese lodging house called "Kohara" for 4 nights. There we met an Iban named Achop anak Intu from Kumpang, Engkilili, Sarawak who introduced us to the job in the forest. We began to clear the forest with axes at daily wage of 3.5 dollars and we continued it for three years. Then we spent one year to repair and maintain the road which was built by the Japanese military during wartime. In this job, we earned 5 dollars a day.

After finishing road repairing in 1955, we began to work for a timber company called Hap Seng as log sledger (*kuda-kuda*) men. The contract for this job was based on 13 dollars per hoppus ton (50 cubic feet). *Kuda-kuda* literally means 'horses,' but we never used any horse or elephant at that time. It was us who pulled the sledges.

Then we changed our job to virgin forest clearing for cocoa plantation at North Borneo Timber Company (NBT), located in 17 miles. More or less after six months, we quit the job and earned money by hunting rhinoceros to get the 'horn' for sale. For one

and half a year, we sold horns to Chinese merchants at a price of 400 dollars per *tahil*¹³⁾. We caught one rhinoceros per month on average, with a shotgun. We had no idea what the Chinese did with the rhinoceros' horns. All they had interested in was horns, so we consumed the meat for ourselves.

In 1957 we returned to work for NBT as tree fellers but didn't last more than six months. The job and the working conditions were so tough, we ran off from the company. Since then we went back to our hunting business but for almost one year long, we barely could hunt any rhinoceros.

I went to Jesselton to work as rubber-tapper for a Chinese company named Madahan Estate for half a year then returned to Tawau again, I used airplane for the first time. On this trip to return to Tawau, I was with 28 Iban males together. In Tawau we worked with NBT again for two years.

I finally came to Merotai in about 1961, just before the Confrontation¹⁴⁾. Together with four Iban guys who settled down in Merotai, I went to see District Officer (DO) to make a request to provide us with the land to farm. When we first came to Merotai, there still remained a vast tract of virgin forest, and the DO generously granted us the titles to the land which we cleared with our own hands.

Back then, the land in my home village, Katibas was not very fertile. Tawau was much better than Katibas in terms of wild lives and fishes to feed ourselves. So I brought my wife and children from Katibas to Tawau when I acquired a parcel of land here from the state government of Sabah. At that time, for the price of a ticket it cost about 100 Ringgit Malaysia per adult to buy an airplane ticket from Kuching to Tawau. For the Iban families which settled down in Tawau, it is a common way of living that husbands worked for NBT while wives were engaged in swidden

agriculture. I, myself also worked for NBT after settling down here.

After the independence of Sabah was established, we were given a parcel of land each by the then Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Abdul Razak and the then Chief Minister of Sabah, Datuk Harris Salleh. More than 30 households of Iban in Tawau acquired their lands almost all at once. Much of our estates were adjacent to the forest reserve, and occasionally the police caught the residents when they trespassed into the protected forest and cut down trees without any permission.

The process of my journey and migration was purely the consequence of '*bejalai*.' I made my home in here, Merotai, Tawau as a result of *bejalai* journey. I have four sons and one daughter, all of whom have married to Iban. Unlike many of other Iban in Tawau, my family never experienced ethnic intermarriage. Even today, we still respect our cultural values and perform annual *Gawai Dayak* (a kind of harvest festival) on June 1st, and other rituals like *Gawai Antu*, *Gawai Burong*, *Gawai Kenyalang*, and so on.

As for the land acquisition that I mentioned earlier, we applied for land to the Federal Deputy Prime Minister and Sabah State Chief Minister in 1963, however, it wasn't until 1966 that we were granted the land titles. The authority provided each household with 15 to 30 acres of land. We have applied again in 1982 to 83, but the title has not been authorized yet. We call such land PT (Pemohon Tanah: land under application). In order to apply for land title, the land has to be covered with agricultural crops, and therefore, we can actually use the land as our own, though the title has not been authorized yet.

[Commentary 5]

Undi anak Bugap is not sure about the date when he left his homeland but his memory is clear about when he came to Merotai. Although he moved place to place before he came to Tawau, it can be calculated based on his story that he departed his homeland, Katibas in 1952 or 53.

He arrived in Merotai in 1954, but Undi kept on moving around, not settling down for years. Just like Bunyau and Paung, Undi moved one place to another, getting various kinds of jobs or lived on wild animal hunting. During the course of his move, he took advantage of the network of Iban community. He was very proud of his rich experience in jobs and journeys, claiming that he practiced truly '*bejalai*' journey. He emphasized that all of his family members are only married to Iban and still conduct various kinds of *gawais* (Iban rituals). This clearly shows his strong ethnic identification as an Iban.

When he started his *bejalai* journey, he left his family in Katibas. It is not unusual for Iban man to go for *bejalai* alone even after having own family but when he decided to settle down in Tawau for good, he called his family to live together.

His story made it clear that the Iban in Merotai opened virgin forest and applied for land title by working together. As Iban are often said to be very skilled tree fellers, we felt his great self-pride as an Iban in the tone of his voice.

[Narrative 6]

Bantir anak Tang (86 years old, Kampung Iban Merotai Besar)

In 1959 I left Rumah Imba, Sungai Jela, Langkau Bala, Engkari together with seven other Iban males including my younger brother. I was the leader of the group. Things didn't work well and couldn't find job in sawmill in Sibu so we headed to Lawas. As a result, Sibu was just a transit point for us. In

Lawas we cut trees for main road construction with axes and knives. The wage was at the rate of 100 dollars per chain (66 feet) at a width of 60 feet. Many of the trees we cut in the forest were about 30 feet. We worked in Lawas about four months. Next, we worked for an English man doing forest clearing at the rate of four dollars a day for about 2 months.

After we finished the jobs in Lawas, our entire group moved to Tawau by using a ship named 'Kemanis.' At Tawau, we found a job with Teck Guan Company. At the company we collected dammar but the rate was as little as 20 dollars per *pikul*. We continued this job for about six months. Then we started to work for a timber company for about 5 years as tree fellers at the rate of 30 cents per cubic feet.

In the early 1960s, all of 48 Iban households in Merotai applied for land acquisition to the government of Sabah. I guess it was probably in 1963, just before the independence. Each household was granted with 12 to 15 acres of land, and I built a humble house in my place.

By the time we were granted a parcel of land by the government, there still remained a few families which kept doing small-sized rice farming. I am not one of them. When I obtained my own land, I planted oil palm trees and cocoa trees right away along with a few dozens of durian trees.

We still celebrate *Gawai Dayak* on the first of June every year to keep our identity as Iban, the spiritual nature of the ceremony is getting less legitimate if you compare the event with the one in Sarawak. During the ritual festival all we do is having meals together, sing songs, and enjoy dancing. We produce *tuak* (Iban traditional rice wine) in accordance with our tradition.

When I arrived in Merotai, there were eight Iban families, including Bonsu, Undi, and

Paung.

[Commentary 6]

The year (1959) when Bantir anak Tang left home for *bejalai* was a little later than other four informants in this section, and the period of *bejalai* is also relatively shorter. Nevertheless he experienced a series of jobs which were convenient for many Iban travelers including forest clearing and forest products gathering before establishing a stable living in Merotai.

Around 1960, when Bantir came to Tawau for the first time, there were only 8 Iban families that had settled in Tawau. As Bunyau told before, in the early 1960s the Iban in this region was nothing but a minority ethnic group. As Linggong emphasized it, in the early 1960s, the Iban had no particular influence to the community and had to work closely together to compete against other ethnic groups.

In his story, Bantir told that 48 households applied for land in 1963, and after getting land titles, they began to build their houses on their lands. By Undi's account, 30 Iban households applied for land acquisition right after the independence (1963), while Paung pointed out that 12 families made application to acquire land in the middle 1960s. Those episodes might be illustrating the same event from different viewpoints through the filters of memory of different persons. In any case, it seemed sure that the Iban in Tawau applied for land on several occasions. The land acquisition process by the Iban needs to be explored further, but it seems safe to say that many Iban in Tawau obtained their land legally in the middle of 1960s which sped up the pace of their settlements in Tawau.

3. *Bejalai* journey after the independence (1963-)

[Narrative 7]

John anak Sulutan (55 years old, Kampung Iban



Fig. 7. John anak Sulutan (left) with his family and the second author (right).

Kuala Nansang) (Fig. 7)

I was born in 1949 in Sungai Lajan, a little bit west from Song. I left there and went to Tawau together with 6 persons in 1968. First we went down to Sibu by boat, and from there we boarded a ship named 'Rajang' to go to Kuching. Then, we transferred another ship 'Kemanis' and headed to Tawau.

When I left Song I heard about job opening in Tawau from my father-in-law at the time. I brought my wife here. We were blessed with four sons and two daughters, but I divorced with her and remarried the present wife in 1984. Another daughter was born a few years ago.

At Tawau harbor, an Englishman called Sotie was waiting for us. He was the director of Lembaga Kemajuan Tanah Negeri Sabah (LKTNS: Sabah Land Development Board), which provided us with 14 acres of land and a single-family house to each of us. We were engaged in planting oil palm for LKTNS at the wage of 12 Ringgit Malaysia for two years. After that, I worked as a harvester of oil palm for 12 years on contract basis of 40 to 50 Ringgit Malaysia per ton. Since 1999, I started smallholding farming of oil palm on my own. I have 11 acres of oil palm field and 10 acres of cocoa field.

In the early 1970s, there still remained wild forest behind our village. We worked together and turned it into an arable land. We divided the land among us and I planted cocoa trees in my share of the land. In 1974, LKTNS approved us to use the land as our own. I got seven acres of land and planted cocoa trees there. The land we opened at that time was about 250 acres, which is now all registered, and most areas have cocoa trees. All of my land is already registered.

I have never tried to cultivate rice in Tawau, because we have too many sparrows here. I usually buy rice in town at a rate of 2 Ringgit per kilogram. Cheaper one are sold for 1.5 Ringgit per kilogram, but it is not tasty.

Even now, I go back to Sarawak from time to time.

[Commentary 7]

John anak Sulutan is the headman of KIKN. He came straight from Sarawak to Tawau, upon the advice of his then father-in-law. This migration pattern with distinct destination is something we couldn't find among the group of Iban people who came to Tawau before the independence. His manner of speaking of his job experience was also different from other interviewees; he was not particularly enthusiastic and told his story in very matter-of-fact tone.

Aside from his brief explanation on his *bejalai* process, the way of land acquisition was not very different from that of early settlers. Right after coming into Tawau, he started to clear forest nearby the village with other Iban to apply for land title. He proudly showed us a register book of his own making, in which the stated 250 acres of land were described in detail.

[Narrative 8]

Lulut anak Junggai (46 years old, Kampung Iban Ulu Merotai)

My home village is Nanga Entawau,

Katibas, Song. I came to Sabah in October, 1969, in response to my friend's call. Our group was comprised of six Iban men. First we went down to Sibu and boarded a ship to go to Kuching through Pulau Kijang. We did not seek any job in Kuching just transferred to another ship and went straight to Tawau.

In Tawau, we started to work for NBT Company as tree fellers using chainsaws. By 1970 only two of us stayed to work for the company, and other four guys had returned to Sarawak. At NBT, I earned 13.5 cents per cubic, which is equal to one Ringgit and 20 cents per one *batang* (18 *kaki* round). I continued to work with NBT until 1977. From 1975, acacia planting was added to my line of work other than cutting down the trees. My assignment was cutting down the trees, putting them on fire, and burning out the embers to clear the land. The wage was 110 Ringgit per one acre of cleared land. Then we planted acacia seedlings after clearing the land, and the company paid us with the rate of 25 cents per one seedling.

In 1978 we began to fell trees inside of the Forest Reserve Land, and the lands we opened and cleared then were legally ceded to us by the government in 1983. The size of the lands given to us was not the same but I guess each household obtained the land more or less 20 acres.

I got married in 1978. I remember that I began to plant cocoa trees in my estate after my marriage. Then I started small-scale agriculture, while most Iban males in those days were still engaged in contract work. Ever since 1985 I have been a full-time farmer. I began to plant oil palm in 2000.

People who came to Merotai in the 1980s and opened forest also obtained their land to farm. But they were in trouble with the authority from time to time. In 1982, five Iban guys including myself were caught and

detained for a night by the police and we were brought before the court. We hired a Chinese lawyer with the legal fee of 18,000 Ringgit. For this trial, we received financial support from Datuk Harris¹⁵. Consequently, we could win the case. Through the hearing at the court, we clearly expressed our wishes to settle down in Sabah. We decided to pretend to know nothing about the borderline of Forest Reserve Land.

We still conduct various sorts of Iban rituals. The largest scale ritual we ever held was *Gawai Kenyalan*¹⁶ in 1984 with James Masing¹⁷ as a guest.

We try to preserve Iban culture on the other hand we have experienced intermarriages with other ethnic groups such as Kadazan and Chinese. In the late 1970s when we started our lives here, there were many ethnic groups including Iban, Chinese, Kadazan, and Filipinos. The population of our village at that time was 348, among which Iban was the majority with about 160 people. Many of them, however, have left this area, feeling tired of constant friction with the authorities. The village now has 103 Iban people, all of whom have obtained farming land here.

As we are relatively new-comers in Merotai, there was not enough land left for us along the major roads. That was why we came to live in Ulu Merotai, where unused forest was extended. But an official survey of this area has not yet been completed, so the official title has not been issued to us. All we have now is our PT documents. Behind our village, there is still a vast area of primary forest remained.

The Iban of our village has come from far and wide. The majority of them are from Katibas, Song, and the second largest group is from Batang Ai. Some are from Sungai Kanayau, Indonesia.

My wife came from Sarawak in 1974, she already had three children at that time. In Sabah we had two more children. We obtained the Identity Card of Sabah in 1983. The procedures for obtaining ID were quite simple and no charge was required.

Here, we have a total area of 5,220 acres of land in this village, 800 acres of them are covered with oil palm and 4,000 to 5,000 acres are cocoa trees. The around of this longhouse is mostly cocoa garden. About 30 % of our village area is fallow farmland.

[Commentary 8]

Lulut anak Janggai is the headman of KIUM. He settled in KIUM in 1978, when nine years had passed since his arrival in Tawau (1969). Unlike many of other Iban men, his job experience is concentrated in Tawau and its vicinities. This suggests this is a sample of Iban who migrated from home land to Tawau without many twists and turns.

As is the case with John anak Sulutan, his story was focused on the process of land acquisition in Ulu Merotai, not talking much about his job history. His story is intriguing as he, just like John did, emphasized on the difference between old-comers in KIMB and new comers in KIUM. We found his story was quite fascinating especially the parts which tell us about various kinds of conflicts or tactics over land acquisition in KIUM in those days.

[Narrative 9]

Manggai anak Mayau (57 years old, Kampung Iban Merotai Besar)

My home village is in the upper basin of Katibas, Song, which is a bit lower than Undi's village. I came straight to Tawau in 1971 by airplane. I came alone to look for logging-related job. I began to search for a job, and found a tractor driver position in Teck Guan Company. Through this time I got a lot of assistance from Undi. When I came to Tawau,

there had already been many Iban here, so I could count on their support. I worked for Teck Guan for two years.

In 1983, I was given eight acres of land by the government of Sabah, and built a house in the land next year. Although I had my own land, I continued to work for timber companies; four years for Hap Seng Company and two years for Yong Pok Company.

It was around 1985 when I was with Hap Seng Company, I began to plant cocoa trees when I had time. I quitted my job in about 1988, and since then I have never worked as a wage-worker. At present, I have five acres of oil palm farm in this village, and another 10 acres of cocoa garden in the upriver area. Along with those farmlands, I have about 20 acres of PT land, which is also covered with oil palm and cocoa. I use Bugis workers to take care of oil palm business.

I also grow some vegetables and fruit trees, but I have never sold them in the market. As for these vegetables and fruit, I sell them on the street in front of my house occasionally but it doesn't pay much. I tried to plant rubber trees about 8 years ago, but have never collected the sap. I tried to do swidden agriculture for two years when I came here but I stopped trying as I had become so busy with business other than rice farming.

My wife came from Sarawak. We married in about 1981. We have a daughter and two sons. Our daughter is working as a civil servant, and two sons are engaged in agriculture with me. My parents have already passed away, but some of my brothers are still live in my home village. I believe that I can have a better life here in Tawau so I guess I won't go back to Sarawak.

[Commentary 9]

Manggai anak Mayau also came straight from his home village to Tawau. He came by airplane, which clearly indicates the arrival of

new era. In his case, he managed to find his first job with help from Undi who came from same homeland. He started working in logging-related company as a wage-worker. Through the years, he managed to obtain his own land while continued working for the companies. When he knew that he could make a steady income from oil palm and cocoa, he quitted the job at the company and became a full-time farmer.

[Narrative 10]

James anak Banyan (59 years old, Tanjong Batu Tenggah)

My home village is in Bawan. In 1972 I came to Tawau when I was 22 years old and I was single at that time. I began to work for a timber company called Hap Seng. My job at the company was timekeeping of the laborers. I worked with Hap Seng for six years and I earned 450 Ringgit per month.

Before coming to Sabah, I was working as a teacher in Sungai Tekalit Primary School in Song. In those days the salary of a school teacher was only 250 Ringgit a month, so it was much better to work here.

In Tawau I got married to a Malay girl, and settled down in this village. Since I came here, I have never worked for other than timber-related companies. I have never tried to grow rice in Sabah. I grow some vegetables here but only to eat ourselves, not for sale.

I guess the total number of households in Tanjong Batu Tenggah is about 500, and about 40 % of which have household members who are descended from Iban origin¹⁸⁾. I think that there is only one household that is comprised of 'pure Iban' members. In this village, we have experienced intermarriages of vast variety. People get married to each other with ethnic groups such as Bugis, Malay, Sulok (Muslim from the Philippine), Kadazan, and Bajau. Iban people in this village come from various places like Batani Ai, Betong,

and Katibas. Younger generations often work out of village, and many of them go to Kuala Lumpur. Some young Iban find positions to work in Sarawak, but in many cases, those job openings are limited in military service or police section.

I go back to Bawan, Sarawak occasionally, to attend rituals such as *Gawai Dayak*.

[Commentary 10]

Although Tanjong Batu is recognized as a 'Malay' or 'Muslim' village, we found that many Iban migrants living there, most of whom have intermarried to Malay and converted into Muslim. The headman of this village is also half-blooded between Iban father from Sarawak and local Malay mother. According to his story, his father came to Tanjong Batu in the 1920s, and his grandfather had come in 1910s.

Before he began his life in Tawau, James anak Banyan was a schoolteacher in Sarawak. He came to Tawau to seek better life. In Iban community, there's nothing wrong that a schoolteacher change his career to search for a better job and ends in physical work. His motive to decide to go to Tawau is not crystal-clear, but the stories of John and Manggai imply that there was a common view among the Iban in Sarawak in the 1970s that there were a lot of better job opportunities in Tawau than Sarawak.

III . Summary

In the previous section, we showed 10 cases of migrants' narratives and offered brief interpretation. These cases are insufficient to make a clear statement on the process of formation of Iban settlements in Tawau. We believe, however, those stories provide us with some clues to understand Iban migration to Sabah.

Through our research we found; 1) Iban migration to Tawau appeared to be started in the 1920s or 1930s, 2) the number of Iban who

came to Tawau as a part of *bejalai* journey increased through the 1930s, but only a few households had settled down in Tawau by the early 1960s, 3) after the independence (1963), many Iban were granted legal land titles in Tawau, which accelerated their settlements in this region, 4) Iban migration into Tawau continued after the independence, 5) the number of Iban who set Tawau as their destination increased after the independence.

Before the independence, many Iban who left home for *bejalai*, frequently moving from one place to another to find a job, and eventually got to Tawau. Through the process of their *bejalai*, they built and scrapped Iban communities in various locations at their convenience, which represented well Iban's instability and flexibility as a migratory population. If we see it from different angle, their volatile nature in choosing what to do or where to go, while they were on their *bejalai*, made them to put much value on the human network in Iban societies. Through our series of interviews, the name of an Iban man, Bonsu, came up more than once. We believe this person, as many old Iban mentioned, probably played a crucial role to bind Iban migrants together and helped them to settle down in Tawau.

On the contrary to old-comers, those who left Sarawak after independence came to Tawau almost right away. This indicates that the Iban society in Tawau at that time was enough matured to convey more reliable information through Iban social network and the community had the basic infrastructure to absorb new-comers.

At this point, we pose a question: why the Iban were concentrated in Tawau? This question can be answered by focusing on the land development. Regardless the period of their migration, almost all of the interviewees mentioned that there were still vast tract of unused primary forest in the area. It is well

known that Tawau was considered one of most less-populated and an undeveloped area in the state of Sabah. It is safe to say that the Iban had been strategically highly valued as a labor force to open primitive forests. The same was true with the cases of Linbang and Lawas in Sarawak.

In its early days, Tawau must have been recognized as a 'distant place' by Kadazan-Dusun, Bisaya, Murut and other Sabah-origin ethnic groups. It seemed that there were not many things to offer in the area of Tawau to draw people. In other words, the Iban went into the depth of 'unexplored' forest where no other groups were willing to go. Even before the independence, the capacity of Iban people as labor force in deep forests was well-known. So it is quite natural for logging or forest products-related companies to have an eye to Iban people when they needed working force to develop forests. The Iban in Tawau were the people who answered the calls of those companies. Many of them started to work for the companies as wage laborers and eventually succeeded to obtain their own lands, which they cleared and opened by themselves. When more and more Iban persons were given legal approvals to own their lands, the number of the Iban who decided to settle down in Tawau increased steadily.

Other agendas and tips for further research are as follows.

The samples we collected in the last research were limited to the narratives of Iban immigrants in Tawau. What is needed here is to find supporting evidences and documents such as government gazette, annual reports of District Officers, and land registration records.

From the viewpoint of the 'Iban studies' there also remained various things to be considered. Here, we would like to mention the features of the Iban in Tawau in terms of their subsistence, culture, and social networks. Concerning their subsistence and culture, what

impressed us was that many of the interviewees mentioned proudly that they still conduct various kinds of Iban rituals (*gawai*). We found it quite amusing that originally *gawai* rituals are closely-related to the calendar of swidden paddy cultivation while today, very few Iban in Tawau have been engaged in paddy planting. As Iban culture has been often referred to as 'paddy cult,' previous studies conducted in Sarawak have accumulated discussion on the premise of Iban's adherence or obsession to rice cropping. However, as we illustrated here with our study, many of Iban who own their estates have abandoned swidden agriculture at relatively early stage of their life in Tawau. Looking closely at Iban's way of living in both Sarawak and Tawau, it is possible to guess that the prevalence of paddy cultivation in Sarawak is due to its comparative backwardness in socio-economic sense. The investigation focusing on the relations between subsistence and socio-economic status should be the key point to observe the ongoing changes of Iban society in Sarawak, where oil palm plantation and smallholding are penetrating into the inland Iban settlements.

Another subject for future investigation is to understand the social networks among the Iban society, which has not been investigated enough yet. How did Iban people in the distance exchange information? What triggered them to go for *bejalai*, how did they choose their destinations, and what made them to settle down in a certain place? What role did their networks and social capital play to their mobility and migration patterns? To make clear these issues, we believe a careful study on the Iban in Tawau is suitable as they have experienced perpetual dissolution and reorganization of travel groups based on their ethnicity during their *bejalai* journeys, and in the course of establishing their community as a minority group in Tawau.

Finally, we would like to point out the

significance of the research on the Iban in Sabah from the viewpoint of migration studies.

There remain several challenges for the recent migration studies. The first point is how to articulate internal and external migration studies (Skeldon, 2005). In the course of globalization, the concept of national boundary is now becoming more and more ambiguous. As a result, the international or transborder migration is also changing its meaning. The structure of separately developed studies of migration is now fundamentally questioned.

Another important point of issue raised in migration studies is the criticism against so-called 'sedentarism,' which tries to theoretically establish a methodology of 'mover-oriented approach' (Iyotani 2007, Soda 2008). Previous studies have considered the sedentary society as normal state, but this viewpoint is obviously a kind of newly constructed modern system which has regarded migrants and movers as 'estrangers,' 'heretics,' and 'products of disequilibrium' to oversee or exclude them. It is a challenge for current migration studies to deny conventional sedentarism and redefine the meaning of 'placeness' from the standpoint of movers.

Looking at the Iban in Tawau from these points of view, the subjects of future investigation are as follows. Sabah and Sarawak were private colonies in the late 19th century to the first half of 20th century, and after the World War II they became British Crown Colonies until their independence in 1963, while Brunei were British protectorate from 1888 to 1984. This means that Sabah, Sarawak, and Brunei had been totally different polity at least by 1963. In this sense, the *bejalai* journeys of the Iban in Tawau could be depicted as international migrations. Besides, there were more than a few people migrated from Indonesian Borneo. What were their views of national boundaries in those days? What did colonial governments and

emerging nation-states do to the Iban's *bejalai*? They were supposed to conduct immigration control, seize the trend of international migration and manage human traffic across the borders. What happened to the meaning of their migration in a socio-political sense before and after the independence of Sarawak and Sabah? These issues need further research.

Even if the directions and patterns of their migration were relatively unchanged, their moves were sometimes considered as transnational or sometimes domestic depending on the historical context. In recent years, the mobility of Iban people has become more diversified and long-ranged. Today, we can find many Iban settlements in the Malay Peninsula. Now they reach further to work in timber-related companies in Africa, South America, and the South Pacific, or in oil-related companies in Northern European countries. Scholars are also becoming to pay attention to their casual forms of transboundary movement—legal and illegal—between Indonesia and Malaysia. In order to get a whole picture of the Iban mobility, their migration from Sarawak to Sabah could be a valuable sample in the historical process of their mobility transformations.

Another question concerning their mobility is the reconsideration of the concept of 'indigeneity.' The Iban have been represented as typical of 'native' or 'indigenous' people in Sarawak. Apart from the conventional description of 'sedentary inhabitants' and 'migratory movers' in a dichotomous way, the word 'indigenous' generates the impression that the Iban have long settled in certain places in Sarawak and hold a priori vested rights. However, the history of the Iban in Borneo in the last few hundred years was the ceaseless exodus from the present-day Indonesia to Sarawak, and also the acts of invasion that eliminated or absorbed many other smaller ethnic groups. Questioning the migration history

of the Iban, and contemplating the meaning of their features that combine 'indigeneity' and 'mobility' are now needed to re-describe their migration-based living strategies as a whole. Once a new monograph of such migratory people is complete, it may offer a theoretical ground that includes new viewpoints to rethink the conventional migration studies that have been bound by the bias of 'sedentarism.'

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Notes

- 1) "The encyclopedia of Iban studies" (Sutlive and Sutlive 2001) estimates the Iban population in Sabah to be 1,000 - 2,000. The authors, however, feel certain that there are at least a few thousands of the Iban in Tawau area alone.
- 2) The first purpose of our research was to compare the methods of shifting agriculture by the Iban in Sarawak, Kalimantan and Sabah. Found very few Iban in Tawau who engaged in paddy planting, however, so we shifted our focus to their migration history.
- 3) The village is located about 35km in a straight line from the Tawau Town.
- 4) Several adjacent villages including KIKN and KSB are collectively called Apas Balong because these villages are located near the junction of Apas and Balong rivers.
- 5) The percentage is based on the estimation of the headman. This village also includes about 10 percent of Malay and five percent of Bugis.
- 6) We looked for informants who remembered well of their own migration histories. We conducted interviews with other Iban more than the informants listed in Table 1, but unfortunately we could not reconstruct their migration histories due to their memory loss and incoherent stories. We also collected information on the deceased Iban from their offspring. In this paper, however, we will include the samples which were directly narrated by migrants themselves and showed certain amount of consistency.

- 7) Dammar is a kind of resin used for detergent and paint.
- 8) One *pikul* is equal to 60 kilograms.
- 9) One *kati* is 600 grams, being equal to 1/100 *pikul*.
- 10) One *gawan* = two *dupa* = 12 *kaki* = 12 feet.
- 11) In 1950 'rubber boom' had come due to the special procurement boom caused by the Korean War.
- 12) A schooner is a type of sailing vessel usually has fore-and-aft sails on two or more masts.
- 13) One *tahil* is approximately 37.8 grams.
- 14) Military tension on the Indonesia-Malaysia border in the 1960s.
- 15) Datuk Amar Harris bin Mohd Salleh was elected as the sixth Chief Minister of Sabah (1976-1985). We could not make clear how he supported the Iban in Merotai concerning their land acquisition, but he was known as a politician who was very keen to accept immigrants from other states.
- 16) Gawai Kenyalan, a kind of funeral rite, is one of the greatest rituals among Iban society, which is now rarely performed even in Sarawak.
- 17) James Masing is a member of Sarawak State Assembly with doctorate in Anthropology.
- 18) According to the village headman, this village is comprised of 820 households with the population of 3,134.

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移動者のショート・ライフヒストリー

——マレーシア・サバ州に住むイバンのブジャライ経験——

祖田 亮次*・ロギー スマン**

要旨

ボルネオ島のイバンは、東南アジアを代表する焼畑民として知られるだけでなく、その移動性の高さにも関心が寄せられている。しかし、豊富な研究蓄積があるイバン研究の多くは、マレーシア・サラワク州で行われた調査に基づくものであり、サバ州におけるイバンの研究は皆無に等しい。サバ州に住むイバンの多くは、1920年代以降、サラワク州やインドネシア・西カリマンタン州から移住した者とその子孫である。筆者らは、サバ州に住むイバンの古老を対象に、彼らの移住プロセスを中心にライフヒストリーの聞き取り調査を行った。その結果、初期のイバン移住者は1920～30年代にサバ州のタワオ地区に入植したこと、1960年代以降にイバンのタワオ入植が急増したことなどが分かった。特に、1960年代以前にタワオに入植したイバンの多くは、豊富な移動歴と職歴を有しており、イバンの出稼ぎ移動のダイナミズムを理解する貴重な語りを得ることができた。本稿では、こうした語りを記録したものである。サバ州のイバン研究がほとんどない状況で、彼らの移動のプロセスを語りとして記録しておくことは、今後のイバン研究の進展にとって一定の価値を有すると考える。また、これらのイバンの移動を、人口移動研究の視点からいかに考察すべきかについて、若干の予備的考察も行った。

キーワード：イバン、サバ州、マレーシア、人口移動、ライフヒストリー

*大阪市立大学

**元・マレーシア・サラワク州森林局