

Relationships Between the Traditional Beliefs and Practices on the Agricultural Land, Forest Resources, River Resources and Conservation by the Dusun People in Tambunan District, Sabah, Malaysia.

By

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# INTRODUCTION

- ▶ **Environment** is an invaluable creation of God and it is our responsibility to manage the natural resources with a good-care.
- ▶ Over centuries, human being is facing substantial **challenges** to perpetuate and nurture the environment which results from the increase of consumerism.
- ▶ The challenge to conserve sustainable ecosystem and protected environment has lead to some debates concerning conservation and biodiversity issues.
- ▶ Scientists are now looking at the Indigenous people on how they managed their resources sustainably in traditional manners.

# Previous Studies in Sabah

- ▶ Halim et. al. (2012) and Halim et. al. (2013) studied the traditional knowledge and environmental conservation among indigenous people in Ranau, Sabah and Indigenous Knowledge and Biodiversity Conservation in Sabah, Malaysia. His studies mostly on the uses of plants.
- ▶ Low and Lee (2012) investigated the relationship between Kadazandusun beliefs about paddy spirits, riddling in harvest-time and paddy-related Sundait or riddle.
- ▶ Low and Pugh-Kitingan (2015) studied on the impact of Christianity on traditional Agricultural practices and beliefs among the Kimaragang of Sabah. The found out that the traditional practices became reduced.

# INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY OF SABAH, MALAYSIA.

- ▶ The indigenous communities in Sabah:
  - ▶ 35 ethnic groups
  - ▶ Population 550,000.
  - ▶ Major ethnics : Dusun/Kadazan 300,000, Muruts 200,000 and Bajau 100,000.
- ▶ Have for centuries developed a unique system encompassing social, economic, political, spiritual, and customs aspects among their community.
- ▶ This system has been safeguarded by the indigenous people to create peace, a stable way of life and also to preserve resources and their environment.



# FLORA AND FAUNA OF SABAH

- ▶ The flora and fauna of Sabah is one of the notable natural features and the number of wild plant species is likely to be approximately of 10,000 species.
- ▶ The natural ecosystem of Sabah supports a diversity of animal life including orang-utans, elephants and diverse of jungle animals, bird species and diverse marine which can be found off Sabah's coast .



# OBJECTIVES

- ▶ 1. To list down **traditional beliefs and practices** of the Dusun people in Tambunan regarding the opening of land for agricultural, harvesting forest resources and water resources.
- ▶ 2. To examine the **relationship** between traditional beliefs and practices of the Dusun people in Tambunan on the opening of land for agricultural, harvesting forest resources, water resources and conservation of the resources.

# MATERIAL AND METHOD

## Locality of study.

- ▶ The study was conducted in Tambunan District which is located in the interior of Sabah, East Malaysia in Northern Borneo Island.
- ▶ 80 kilometres by road to the south-east of the State capital, Kota Kinabalu.



# Tambunan Valley

- ▶ Tambunan is a valley district covering an area of 1,347 km. square. At an average altitude of 750 meters, this valley, which is part of the Crocker Range and Trus Madi Range, experiences a mild tropical climate all year long. The valley is peppered with terraced paddy fields and bamboo forests.
- ▶ The vegetations are from Lowland mix dipterocarps forest to Upper Montane forest.



# The Dusun People in Tambunan.

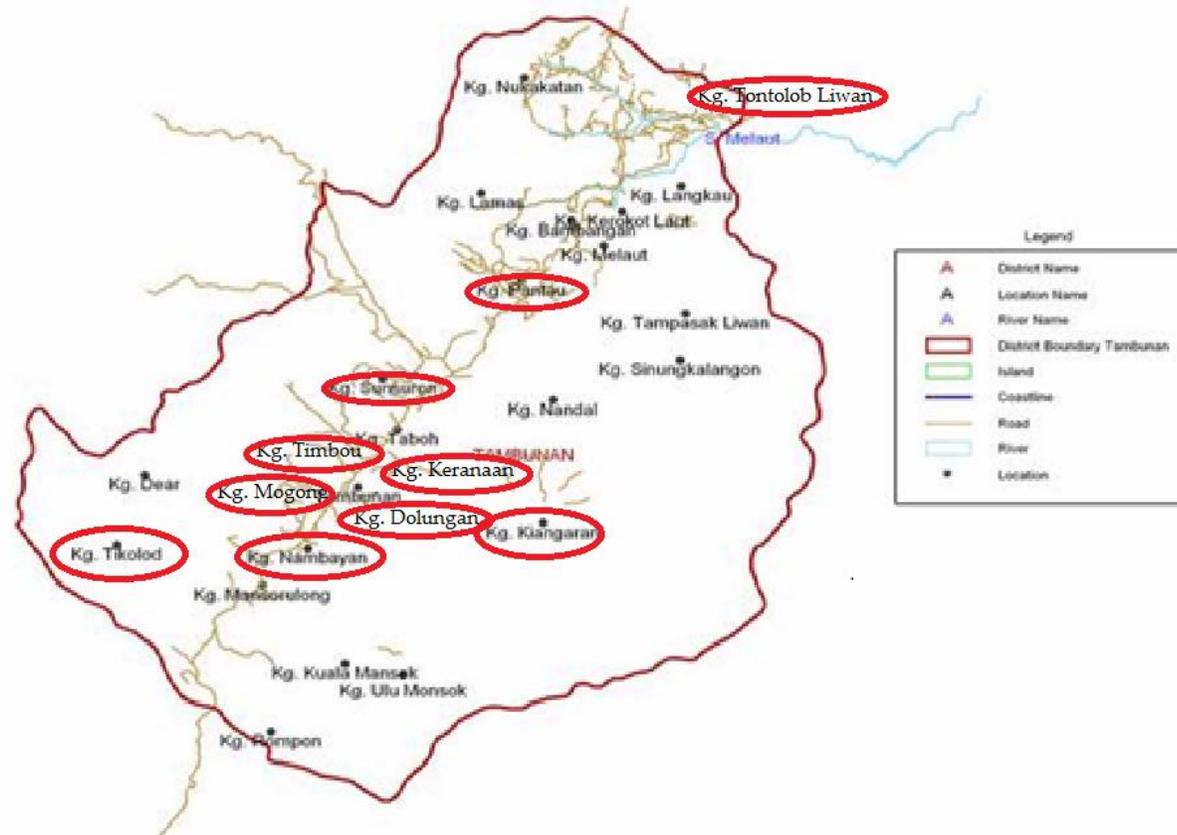
- ▶ The majority of the native peoples residing here are known as Tambunan Dusun. With estimated population of around 60,000.
- ▶ In the early 20th century, the social structure of the Tambunan Dusun was based on six sub-tribes, namely Tuhawon, Tagas, Tobilung, Tibabar, Gana, and Kohub (Gibon, 1986).
- ▶ They are traditionally paddy cultivators and forest products gatherers. They cultivated two varieties of paddy namely Hill Paddy and Wet Paddy.



# Data Collections

- ▶ This study employs two methods of data collection, i.e. library/internet research and survey by interviews.
- ▶ The respondents for the survey are groups of Dusun people located in 10 Villages in Tambunan District, namely Kg, Timbou, Kg. Sunsuron, Kg. Karanaan, Kg, Tontolob-Liwan, Kg. Nambayan, Kg, Kaingaran, Kg. Dolungan, Kg. Mogong and Kg. Tikolod.
- ▶ Furthermore, in-depth interview sessions are held with six key-informants and representative from present and previous District Chief and Native Chiefs of Tambunan District.

# LOCALITIES OF STUDY IN TAMBUNAN DISTRICT.



**RESULT**

# Table 1.0: SUMMARY OF 13 BELIEFS

NO.	BELIEF	NOTE
1.	MOGINUPUS	Respect to dead person.
2.	MONORUANG	Joy to welcome a new born baby
3.	PAUS	Sacred mammal (Barking Deer).
4.	BAMBARAYON	Sacred paddy spirit.
5.	LINTUGI	Sacred insect (Milipede). Harvesting resources.
6.	HOKIU BIRD	Sacred bird. Hunting in the forest.
7.	GONSURI RAT	Sacred mammal (Rat). Hunting in the forest/harvest.
8.	TONDUK	Sharp end pole. Protect trees/paddy.
9.	TOUD	Natural Spring Water.
10.	MISARAWANG	Full Moon phase. Harvesting resources.
11.	RUSOD TALUN	Spirits of the forest
12.	MOSUBAK	Prayer to protect resources.
13.	TIASOK	Second harvest of paddy.

**BELIEF 1: MOGINUPUS**  
(Respect to the dead person)

# Belief 1: Moginupus.

- ▶ If a villager die in that village during ‘Mongumoh’ season, all villagers must stop working for a week (7 days from his/her dead). They are supposed to stay at home. No activities are allowed. Mourning period for the whole village.
- ▶ If someone did not respect the new dead person in the village, his/her paddy will be died or no rice grains found inside the matured paddy husks.
- ▶ After 7 days, “Adat Monumpoli” is performed.
- ▶ Then normal live activities are restored again.
- ▶ People can continue ‘Mongumoh’ or do any activities.

# ACTIVITY 1: WET PADDY CULTIVATION

The whole activities is called Mongumoh. There are three stages involved, namely:

**2.1 Stage 1: Mangasok Tatakan or Raising Paddy Seedlings at Nursery.**

It involves eight steps namely, Mogihum Tatakan, Mogimporing, Buaton, Mongukup, Mangasok, Monumpos dan Mamahabu.

**2.2 Stage 2: Morobuat or preparing paddy field.**

There are seven stages involved, namely Mangasar, Meminatang, Papahagob, Maradu, Maragus, Mananom and Magamas.

**2.3 Stage 3: Mongomot or harvesting new paddy grains.**

It involves eight stages, namely Popoilo, Mokotu, Popouhi do Bambarayon, Mongomot, Mongogik, Monoud, Mamarangkat, Kaamatan and Koliwasan.

# CONSERVATION: Belief and Practice 1.

- ▶ The seven days resting period will:
  - ▶ Restore people's energy.
  - ▶ The animal can save their live.
  - ▶ Agriculture land:
    - ▶ Give time for the land to rest.
    - ▶ Give time to animal in the water ie fishes, frogs, crabs etc... to 'escape', reproductions, etc...
    - ▶ Give time to and animals ie rats, snake etc... to 'escape', reproductions, etc...
  - ▶ Forest resources:
    - ▶ Give time for forest's resources to grow, reproductions

# BELIEF 2: MONORUANG/MOGUMPAU (New born baby)

## PRACTICE:

- ▶ After one month from the date of new baby born, a Adat Monoruang or Mongumpau is practiced.
- ▶ All villagers must visit the new born baby by bringing a gift. Gift usually a chicken, rice, 'tapai' or rice wine and cakes.
- ▶ Villagers will celebrate one day welcoming the new born baby in the village (It is like a Birthday Party). But only one birthday party for a life time!

## CONSERVATION:

- ▶ Human energy is respected. The new born baby is their future workforce in the field.
- ▶ Villagers rest for a day (Officially!).
- ▶ Land, plants, animals have a day of rest.

# BELIEF 3: PAUS (Sacred animal).

## BELIEF

- ▶ Paus is a Dusun Tambunan word for barking Deer (*Muntiacus atherodes*)
- ▶ ‘Mangaus’ in Dusun word means sad.
- ▶ It is believed that the new paddy seedlings sad and will die.

## PRACTICE

- ▶ Whenever someone caught a Barking Deer (Paus) from a jungle and brought to the paddy field and villagers are planting paddy, the villagers will immediately stop working/planting paddy.

## CONSERVATION

- ▶ The population of Barking Deer in the forest will be protected.

# BELIEF 4: BAMBARAYON (Paddy spirit).

## BELIEF

- ▶ ‘Bambarayon’ is a paddy spirit.
- ▶ It is believed that the Bambarayon spirit looks after the paddy plant. Without the Bambarayon spirit, the paddy will not producing fruits or died.

## PRACTICE

- ▶ Seven staks of fruiting paddy will be harvested in the paddy field in the morning of the harvesting season.
- ▶ The seven stalks represented seven Bambarayon’s spirits and brought to the paddy barn and kept.
- ▶ A short prayers were recited in the morning of the harvesting season.

# THE SEVEN BAMBARAYON PADDY SPIRITS

- ▶ Evans (1953) listed down all the seven types of paddy spirit ... in the beliefs of the Tempasuk Dusun. The seven spirits referred to are:
- ▶ 1. Ohinopot - helps guard the supply of paddy in the store.
- ▶ 2. Sambilod - looks after the damaged rice and sees that the amount does not increase.
- ▶ 3. Gontolobon - gives rice piled up in “boulders”.
- ▶ 4. Momiaud - gives paddy as abundant as spring water.
- ▶ 5. Moniudan - gives paddy as abundant as spring water.
- ▶ 6. Sompidot - gives opidot (full grain in the ear).
- ▶ 7. Kabang - makes the rice kembang (swell) in the cooking pot

# BELIEF 5: LINTUGI ( Sacred insect).

## Belief

- ▶ If a 'Lintugi' Millipede crossing over your road/trail to the forest/agriculture land, it is a sign of bad luck/omen.
- ▶ The body of the Milipede resemble a big log. The feet are people. It is like a big fallen log hit people!

## Practice

- ▶ Someone must return home.
- ▶ Something misfortune will happened to someone.

LINTUGI/Milipede/  
*Archispirostreptus gigas*.



## BELIEF 6: HOKIU

( A type of Sacred Bird- *Dinopium javanese* )

### BELIEF

- ▶ It is belief that a person in his/her village will be die in a week.

### PRACTICE

- ▶ Upon hearing the 'Hokiu' (Woodpecker) bird call, a person who is on his way to the forest must immedietly go back home. This is to make sure the person did not missed the funeral.

### CONSERVATION

- ▶ The bird will be saved.



# BELIEF 7: GONSURI (A sacred rat).

## BELIEF:

- ▶ It is a sign of bad luck/omen to the party.

## PRACTICE:

- ▶ Must return back home whenever encountered a group of 'Gonsuri' rat crossing over your road/trail to the forest or agriculture land.
- ▶ Mt. Kinabalu tremor 2015. Guides and tourists witnessed many rats came down from the mountain on the early morning they climb.

## CONSERVATION:

- ▶ Protect rats. The Dusun people will not kill this rat.



# Mt. Kinabalu tremor 2015 - 13 killed.



# BELIEF 8: TONDUK (Sharp end pole).

## BELIEF:

- ▶ A 'Tonduk' is a sign that a tree or paddy field is forbidden for harvesting by the owner.

## PRACTICE:

- ▶ A 'Tonduk' or a sharp end pole is erected nearby a fruiting tree or fruiting paddy field.
- ▶ This is to tell people that those fruit tree or paddy are forbidden.
- ▶ Prayers will be performed by the traditional Dusun priest or Bobolian during the erecting of the sharp pole.

## CONSERVATION:

- ▶ Fruit trees and paddy are saved and protected.
- ▶ If a young man in the village does not know whether the tree is useful/edible or not, the sharp pole will be the warning. Thus the plants will be saved!

# BELIEF 9: TOUD (Natural Spring Water)

## BELIEF

- ▶ Toud is a natural spring water and source of drinking/cooking water.
- ▶ It is belief that a spirit is living in the 'Toud' and protecting it.

## PRACTICE

- ▶ If someone dirt the spring water, he/she will be fine or 'Sogit'. The kind of 'Sogit' is a table spoon of salt.
- ▶ Someone cannot built house of make pond at the 'Toud' area or he/she would be sick.

## DISCUSSION

- ▶ The natural Spring Water will be save.

# BELIEF 10: MISARAWANG (Full Moon)

## BELIEF

- ▶ Misarawang means Full Moon Phase.
- ▶ It is believed that when harvesting of bamboos or / and trees for making house or/and fences during this period, the water buffalo in the village will hit and destroy them.
- ▶ No fruits will be produced of planting agricultural plants.

## PRACTICE

- ▶ Harvesting of bamboos for making house/constructions **during not full month** phase is not recommended.
- ▶ Planting agricultural plants are also not recommended.

## DISCUSSION

Scientific studies: Moths are highly attracted to light trap at night. Catches are high during a new Moon ( Reissing et. al., 1986).

Dhawan and Mishra (2005) reported that season has the great influence on the durability of bamboo species.

- ▶ The bamboos harvested during winter months were more resistant to termite attack than harvested during summer.
- ▶ Effect of the Moon phase is found significant on termite resistance. The bamboos felled during dark phase were comparatively more resistant than felled in moon phase.

# Traditional and Current Practices Relating to the Moon

- ▶ Gaius Plinius Secundus, or Pliny the Elder (23-79 CE), recommended that lumber trees be cut at the new moon.
- ▶ Following this practice, King Louis XIV passed a royal order during his reign that felling of wood should only occur during a waning moon (the period of time after the full moon) between the falling of leaves and the new growing season (Cole and Balick, 2010).

# BELIEF 11: RUSOD TALUN/NULU

## (Spirit of the Forests/Mountains)

### BELIEF

- ▶ Every plant/mountain in the forest has spirit. Must respect.
- ▶ Must have good intention person will find the herbs.
- ▶ Cannot tell/answer people that you are going to the forest to take herbs, and when you have found it, you cannot look back/behind you.
- ▶ If snake or 'Lintugi' milliped or 'Gonsuri' rat or hear 'Hokiu' bird calls, the person must return home. It is a sign of bad omen.

### PRACTICE

- ▶ Collecting/harvesting of wild herbs in the forest is limited to 7 kinds/species only.
- ▶ Do not say bad words about the forest/mountain or misbehave (Mt. Kinabalu tremor 2015).

### DISCUSSION

- ▶ Shamans determine the number of animals to be hunted and the species that need to be protected, based on field observations (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1976).
- ▶ By limiting the number of species of herbs to be collected, the population of herbs in the forest is controlled and sustained.
- ▶ Animals are protected.

# Mt. Kinabalu



# Mt. Kinabalu Spirits.

- ▶ Prior to the Mt. Kinabalu tremor, 19 European foreigners had stripped and posed naked, and allegedly urinated near the summit of the mountain.
- ▶ The calamity which befell the mountain was a backlash of angered spirits of the mountain which is revered by the native communities as the resting place of their ancestors.

# THREE BRITONS FINE & JAILED



JAILED



# TYING KNOTS ON A TREE

## BELIEF

When a particular illness couldn't be healed, it is because a spirit has been offended by the sick person.

## PRACTICE

The sick person must go and tie knot on a particular tree in the forest, usually large old fruit tree, and say sorry/offer apology to the spirit which live on the tree.

## DISCUSSION

The fruit tree is saved.

# BELIEF 12: MOSUBAK

## (Prayer to protect resources)

### BELIEF

- ▶ Mosubak belief - Animals are protected.

### PRACTICE

- ▶ Prayer “Momurinait” by a Bobolian (Priest) is performed to an area of forest or river so that any hunters/poachers will not success in finding any animals/fish in the forest/river concerned.

### CONSERVATION

- ▶ Forest/River resources are saved.

# BELIEF 13: TIASOK

## (Second harvesting of paddy)

### TIASOK BELIEF

- ▶ Villagers cannot harvest if a group of bees or 'Potiukan' passing by the paddy field.
- ▶ It is believed that the paddy will be burnt.

### PRACTICE

- ▶ The second harvest of paddy is conducted after the first harvest.
- ▶ The seeds of the paddy are kept for next season's planting materials.

### Discussion

- ▶ Bees are respected by the Dusun in Tambunan. They can save their paddy from being burnt.
- ▶ Eventually the bees are protected.

# CONCLUSION

- ▶ The Dusun people in Tambunan believed and practiced several traditional during working in agricultural land, harvesting forest products and activities related to water.
- ▶ There are 10 beliefs and still being practiced in Tambunan, namely Moginupus, Monoruang, Bambarayon, Paus, Lintugi, Hokuu, Gonsuri, Tonduk, Misarawang, Rusap Talun, Mosubak and Tiasok.
- ▶ Each of these belief is meant to conserve and protect the resources in order to use agriculture, forest and water resources sustainably.
- ▶ Scientific researches have proven some of these traditional beliefs which practiced by the Dusun People in Tambunan.
- ▶ Modernisation have taken a toll on the traditional lifestyle of the Dusun People in Tambunan, but many still hold on to their values and cultural practices.

# FURTHER READINGS

- ▶ Low, K.O. and Pugh-Kitingan, J. (2015). The Impact of Christianity on Traditional Agricultural Practices and Beliefs among the Kimaragang of Sabah. *Asian Ethnology* . 2015, Vol. 74 Issue 2, p401-424. 24p.
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# APPENDIX 1: LIST OF RESPONDENT

NO.	NAME	AGE/GENDER	VILLAGE	MUKIM	JOB
1.*	Kulip Gidam	80/Male	Timbou	Toboh	Pensioner, Ex-Native Chief.
2.*	Justin Gambun	65/Male	Timbou	Toboh	Farmer, Ex- Village Head.
3.*	Jamain Agang	52/Male	Sunsuron	Sunsuron	Farmer
4.*	Raider Gutang	55/Male	Sunsuron	Sunsuron	Native Chief
5.	Liza Mool	55/Female	Dolongan	Pomotodon	Govt. Staff
6.	Michael Jipin	63/Male	Mogong	Pomotodon	Pensioner
7.*	Thadeus Yungot	73/ Male	Tikolod	Monsorulung	Farmer
8.	Boni Jaumin	35/Male	Lubong	Nambayan	Govt. Staff
9.	Johnny Gisil	43/ Male	Tontolob Liwan	Kirokot	Govt. Staff
10.	Motogor Gulung	76/male	Kaingaran	Pomotodon	Farmer

# LIST OF RESPONDENT (CONT...)

NO.	NAME	AGE/GENDER	VILLAGE	MUKIM	JOB
11.*	Philip Datuk Kitingan	60/Male	Keranaan	Pomotodon	District Chief
12.	Alpedro Alosius	35/Male	Patau	Kirokot	Farmer

\* Key Informants

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