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A PARADIGM SHIFT: LUN BAWANG MUSICAL STYLES: A CASE STUDY IN LAWAS DISTRICT, LIMBANG DIVISION, MALAYSIA

Connie Lim Keh Nie and Anna Durin

INTRODUCTION

Lun Bawang literally means “people of the land” or “people of this place” by which the Lun Bawang of Sarawak preferred to be called. They are found in four political entities in the island of Borneo with an approximate total population around 42,000. They are distributed as follows: in East Kalimantan (Kabupaten Bulongan) - 25,000, Brunei (Temburong District) - 300, Sabah (Sipitang District) - 2,000 (Crain: 1978) and approximately 15,154 in Sarawak (Department of Statistics, Malaysia, 2000). In the state of Sarawak, ninety per cent of the total population of the Lun Bawang lived in the Lawas District of Limbang Division. Presently, most of them can be found in Trusan Valley, the Lawas Damit Valley and the Merapok area in Lawas District. The rest are found in mid Limbang and Medamit areas in Limbang District, located at the north-west of the island of Borneo. (Fig.1: Map of Sarawak).

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Lun Bawang or Lun Dayeh are also known as Murut by outsiders in referring to a varied assortment of mountain people in northern Sarawak. Most of the Lun Bawang community in Sarawak are originally from the Highlands of Kalimantan, Indonesia, but it is believed that a few groups of Lun Bawang had settled in Hulu Trusan area of Lawas District since a few centuries ago (Tuie, 1995). Lun Bawang is one of the earliest occupants of the Borneo Island (Runciman, 1960) and the first to settle in the interior highlands (Harrisson, 1959a). The heartland of these people is the Kerayan-Kelabit highlands (Schneeberger, 1945) which is the setting for their oral tradition. Though the early history

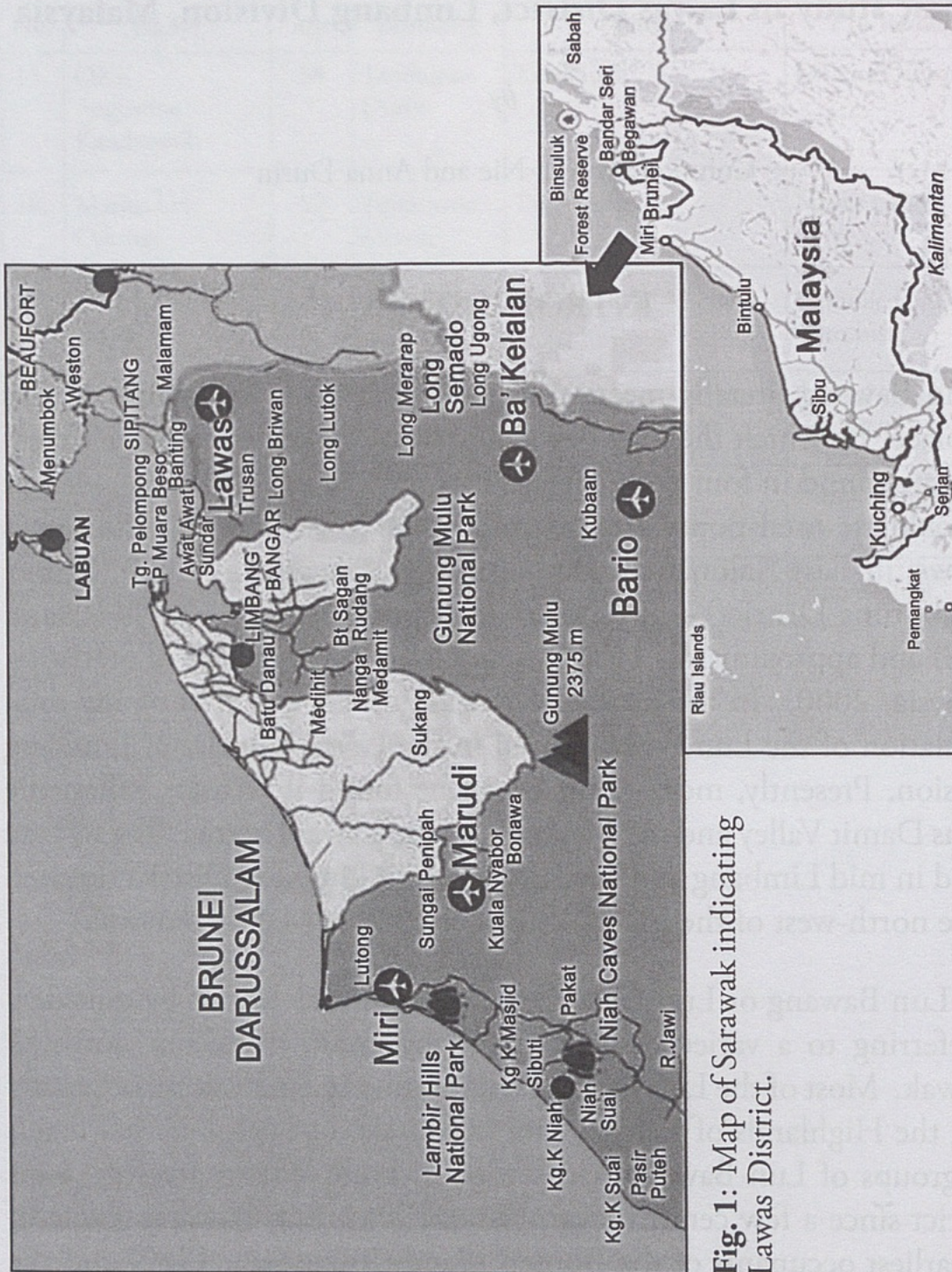


Fig. 1: Map of Sarawak indicating Lawas District.

(Source: Land and Survey Department, Sarawak)