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KAYAN PEOPLE OF SARAWAK

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is one Kayan's view of the Kayan people of Sarawak. A number of articles have already been published on the Kayan people but there has been none by the Kayan themselves. This paper is an attempt to redress that imbalance. The views presented are personal but are partly based on previous works like the one done by Hose and McDougall (1912) and more recently by Rousseau (1974, 1977, 1979, and 1987) and then compared with the personal experience of the author. The work by Rousseau is the most recent and the most detailed but his findings also appears to differ in some details with that done by Hose and McDougall (op. cit) and the personal experience of the author. These are discussed in the paper. It is hoped that this paper will lead to additional insights into the Kayan people and thereby perhaps stimulate further study about them.

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by

Lah Jau Uyo

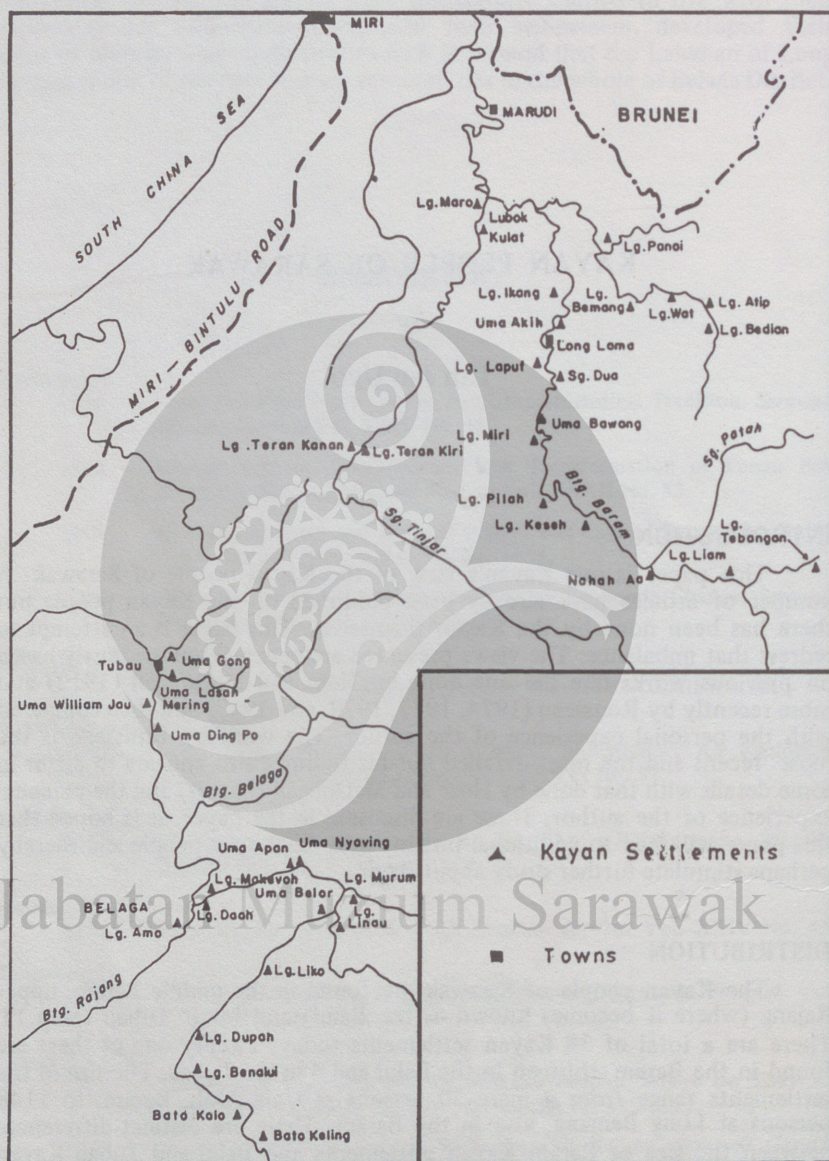
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DISTRIBUTION

The Kayan people of Sarawak are found in the middle Baram, upper Rajang (where it becomes known as the Balui) and lower Tubau (Map 1). There are a total of 38 Kayan settlements today. Twenty one of these are found in the Baram, thirteen in the Balui and 4 in the Tubau. The size of the settlements range from a mere 30 persons at Uma Akih, Baram, to 1148 persons at Long Bemang, also in the Baram. There are distinct differences between the size of Baram Kayan settlements and Balui and Tubau Kayan settlements. The Baram Kayans usually have larger settlements averaging almost 500 persons per settlement while Balui and Tubau Kayans have smaller settlements averaging less than 300 persons per settlement. The range is also different with the Baram Kayan settlements ranging from 30 to 1148 persons per settlement while the Balui and Tubau Kayans settlements range from 112 persons to 489 persons per settlement (Table 2).

Kayan settlements are generally restricted to Kayans. In most cases, a settlement is comprised of a single subgroup. Only in the Baram are mixed settlements found. At Long Wat, Long Ikang and Long Teran, Kayans are



Map 1: Kayan settlements in Sarawak.

found living together with Kenyahs or Berawans. At Long Laput, different Kayan subgroups live in the same settlement. In the Balui and Tubau however, the settlements are restricted to a single subgroup only.

The present settlements will probably be the final place at which each subgroup can move to as a cohesive unit as the government no longer allows uncontrolled movement of settlements.