

**The Sarawak Museum Journal****Vol. XLI No. 62****December 1990****ISSN: 0375-3050****E-ISSN: 3036-0188**

Citation: Jennifer Alexander. (1990). Lahanan Social Structure: Some Preliminary Considerations. The Sarawak Museum Journal, XLI (62): 189-212

LAHANAN SOCIAL STRUCTURE: SOME PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS**Jennifer Alexander****INTRODUCTION**

The Kajang peoples of Belaga District currently form ten communities, totalling some 3,500 people. The core group includes the Lahanan, the Kejaman and the Sekapan who are commonly regarded as the original settlers of the region. Although these three groups speak distinct languages, they appear to have a common origin (Cense and Uhlenbeck 1958: 35-36). Other groups commonly linked with the Kajang include the Punan Bah, Sihan and Bah Mali, but these links appear to have a political rather than a cultural basis¹ (Rousseau 1974:18).

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by

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The precise origins of the peoples grouped together as Kajang remains obscure. Rousseau (1975: 38) sees the Kajang as an artificial category based on the loose political alliance between people who are not Kenyah, Kayan or Penan, and assumes that the name derives from their common geographical origin in the Kajang River, a claim made by the Sekapan. This point has been disputed by Ida Nicolaisen (1976) who suggests that the term 'Kajang' is in fact a corruption of 'Lajang' a Punan Bah term for the Rejang River and the Kajang *lan* or real Kajang are the original settlers of the Rejang River. Kajang solidarity arose in the context of Kayan migrations to the region over 200 years ago and has re-emerged recently with the establishment of a Kajang association "to solve joint problems and raise the standard of living, education and culture" (Nicolaisen 1977/78: 188-92; Nicolaisen 1986: 77). They are also eager to see one of their leaders promoted to the status of *Penghulu*.

The Kajang together with the Kayan and Kenyah form a complex termed the Kenyah-Kayan-Kajang (K.K.K.) by Leach (1950). In contrast to the better known and 'democratic' Iban, the K.K.K. are stratified societies formerly consisting of four ranks: two ranks of 'aristocrats', one of 'commoners' and one of 'slaves'. The three ethnic groups have much in common in addition to their social structure. There is a great deal of intermarriage, particularly between the Kayan and Kajang, not only among the ruling elite, but also among the commoners. Adoption is also frequent, and among the ruling elite often cuts across ethnic boundaries (Rousseau 1975: 40-1). But although there are social ties between the three ethnic groups and similarities in social structure, the Kajang stress their cultural differentiation from the Kenyah and Kayan. The differences noted by de Martinoir (1974: 268) included "the exchange of work

prestations between domestic groups, food taboos, details of the architecture of the longhouse, funerary customs, the cult of the sacred stones, calendrical and shamanistic rituals, mythical themes, and even women's tattoo patterns." Many of these cultural differences have become obscured through the passage of time: the widespread conversions of the Balui ethnic groups to the Bungan cult, and more recently to Christianity, as well as rapid economic and social changes in the post colonial period, have suppressed the cultural traits which differentiated ethnic groups in the past (Alexander In Press).

LEVU LAHANAN, LONG PANGGAI

Belaga District, the largest of the three districts of Sarawak's Seventh Division, encompasses the upper region of the Rejang River right through to the Indonesian border. The four main rivers merge into the Balui, the local name of the Rejang River. The terrain, which is mainly rugged mountain ranges and primary jungle, covers an area of 19,403 square kilometres (Belaga District Report 1983).

The rugged terrain restricts transport mainly to the rivers, which themselves are by no means easy access routes. The Pelagus and Bakun rapids are particularly hazardous and rapids in the Linau and Murum Rivers impassable. Beyond Bakun in the middle and upper reaches of the Balui, numerous rapids limit communications and most settlements, apart from the Penan are confined to the banks of the Balui River (Rousseau 1974: 17).

The region is sparsely populated with 15,000 inhabitants from fourteen distinct ethnic groups: the Kayan; the Kenyah; six groups including the Lahanan which are commonly glossed as Kajang; the Chinese, Malays, Iban and some other small groups including the formerly nomadic Penan. The Kayan who comprise a quarter of the population are the culturally dominant group and their language has been adopted as the *lingua franca* of the district. This dominance is also indicated by their prominence in local politics and their greater prosperity. The Kayan are in fact outnumbered by the Kenyah Badang, but the influence of these more recent immigrants mainly located in remote large settlements, has not been as marked. Most of the Chinese live in the market town of Belaga or work in the timber camps, while the other groups including the Malays are mainly agriculturalists.

Levu² Lahanan, Long Panggai is located upriver from the Bakun rapids in the middle Balui, some two and a half hours by motorized longboat from Belaga. The community consists of two longhouses plus associated detached houses on the right bank of the Balui, and a school, female and male boarding quarters and housing for teachers and other staff on the left bank.

Levu Lahanan is the only Kajang longhouse in the middle Balui, a predominantly Kayan area, but there is another Lahanan longhouse at Long Semuang in the Lower Balui. Adjoining longhouses in the middle Balui include Uma Kelap Long Sah B (Kenyah); Uma Belor Long Sah A (Kayan); Uma Nyavieng Long Linau (Kayan) all downstream and Uma Penan Talun, Long Belangan (Penan) and Uma Balui, Long Liko (Kayan) both upstream. These