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for the peoples of the rainforest

Mép Tana' Suket Asen Lu'

Penan Community Maps

The most accurate and detailed indigenous
community maps of Sarawak, Malaysia



The Bruno Manser Fund and the eastern Penan of Sarawak are honoured to present the Penan Community Maps after more than 15 years of common efforts. A total of 23 map sheets display the land and traditional knowledge of 63 Eastern Penan communities in the districts of Miri and Limbang of Sarawak (Malaysia). Each of these maps offers detailed information on the traditional Penan knowledge, the environment and the Penan history.

The Eastern Penan Peoples

With less than 16'000 members, the community of the Eastern Penan form a small ethnic group. They inhabit the north part of Sarawak, along the headwaters of the rivers Baram, Tutoh and Limbang. Initially, the Eastern Penan used to lead a nomadic hunter-gatherer way of life. As part of the cycle of natural resource availability, they would periodically migrate within a well-defined and – to them – well-known area.

Today, most of the Penan have settled down in villages they built within their traditional area of migration. Although some of their habits and customs changed due to the transition from being a hunter-gatherer to a settling down, the Penan's subsistence and well-being continue to largely depend on a healthy forest ecosystem. Thus, the Eastern Penan still maintain a strong relationship with their traditional territories.

Project Background

When industrial rainforest clearance began in the 1980s, it brought massive changes to the Penan's way of life. By destroying the forest, the logging companies damaged the foundation of the Penan's livelihood and endangered their unique rainforest culture.

The Penan struggled for decades. They set up blockades on logging roads and tried to claim their land rights repeatedly at court. Despite all these efforts, the actions undertaken failed to match the initial expectations.

To a large extent, these upheavals and injustices happened because the authorities and the Sarawak law – by misunderstanding the Penan culture – overlooked the evidence of Eastern Penan land tenure and hence failed to recognise the native customary rights (NCR) of nomadic, semi-settled or settled Eastern Penan communities.

The Bruno Manser Fund

The Bruno Manser Fund is committed to campaigning for the conservation of the tropical rainforests with their biodiversity and for the rights of the rainforest dwellers.

In consideration of the fact that the founder and long-standing chair Bruno Manser spent many years living with the Penan in the Malaysian federal state of Sarawak on Borneo, we are primarily committed to the protection of their forests in Sarawak. Due to the massive and corrupt deforestation on Borneo, facilitated by members of the government, the Bruno Manser Fund is now also fighting corruption on a global scale.

The Bruno Manser Fund's objectives are:

1. Respecting the human rights, especially those of the indigenous peoples
2. Conservation of the forests, including their biodiversity
3. Support for alternative development options and alternative income
4. Support for the Penan in the fields of health, education and infrastructure
5. Combatting corruption and commitment for transparent governance
6. Documenting indigenous cultures of Malaysia, especially of the Penan
7. Raising awareness regarding tropical forests destruction and indigenous peoples' rights



Project Objectives

At first glance, the traditional territories of the Eastern Penan appear to be undisturbed virgin rainforest. The absence of conspicuous signs of cultivation easily leads to the misleading interpretation that nobody uses or ever used these forested areas. In this situation, a comprehensible indigenous perspective on the land is needed to correct these misunderstandings and to refocus on the role that Eastern Penan have played throughout generations of extensive management of wild resources within their TANA' PENGURIP (living forest).

The publication of the Penan Community Maps pursues following objectives:

1. Recognition of the Penan's Native Customary Rights to Land: to present historical evidences of land use and land tenure within the Tana' Pengurip of each village.
2. Documentation of the Penan knowledge: to counter the cultural erosion and the process of acculturation by creating a written archive of the Penan topography-related oral knowledge.
3. Empowerment: to strengthen the collective identity of the Penan through the publication of state-of-the-art maps for the whole Penan area.
4. Monitoring: to lay the foundation work for sustainable and long-term development within the Penan area.



History of the Penan Community Maps

Very early after the Swiss environmentalist Bruno Manser started living with the Penan, they expressed the wish to have maps that illustrate and explain their own tradition and knowledge. After a few mapping trials in the 1990s, the project at hand started in 2002 with the collaboration of the Penan organisation KERUAN and the Bruno Manser Fund (BMF). While BMF helped to train a local mapping team of four Penan cartographers and managed the geodatabase, KERUAN took on all the work with the Penan communities: organisation of community meetings, logistic aspects and all mapping activities on the ground.

After a start-up and learning phase that lasted from 2002 to 2006, most of the data was subsequently collected between 2007 and 2016. During this period, the Penan mapping team visited each village at least 5 times to gather, complete, check and crosscheck all required information in a participative way. In 2016, several regional meetings throughout the Penan area were organised to validate the content of the maps and to gather the endorsement of the headmen. The drone flights over each village took place in 2015 and 2016.



Mapping Methodology

All mapping activities were carried out by the Penan communities themselves and with their full approval. In order to ensure the quality of the gathered data, all mapping activities strictly followed the same methodology:

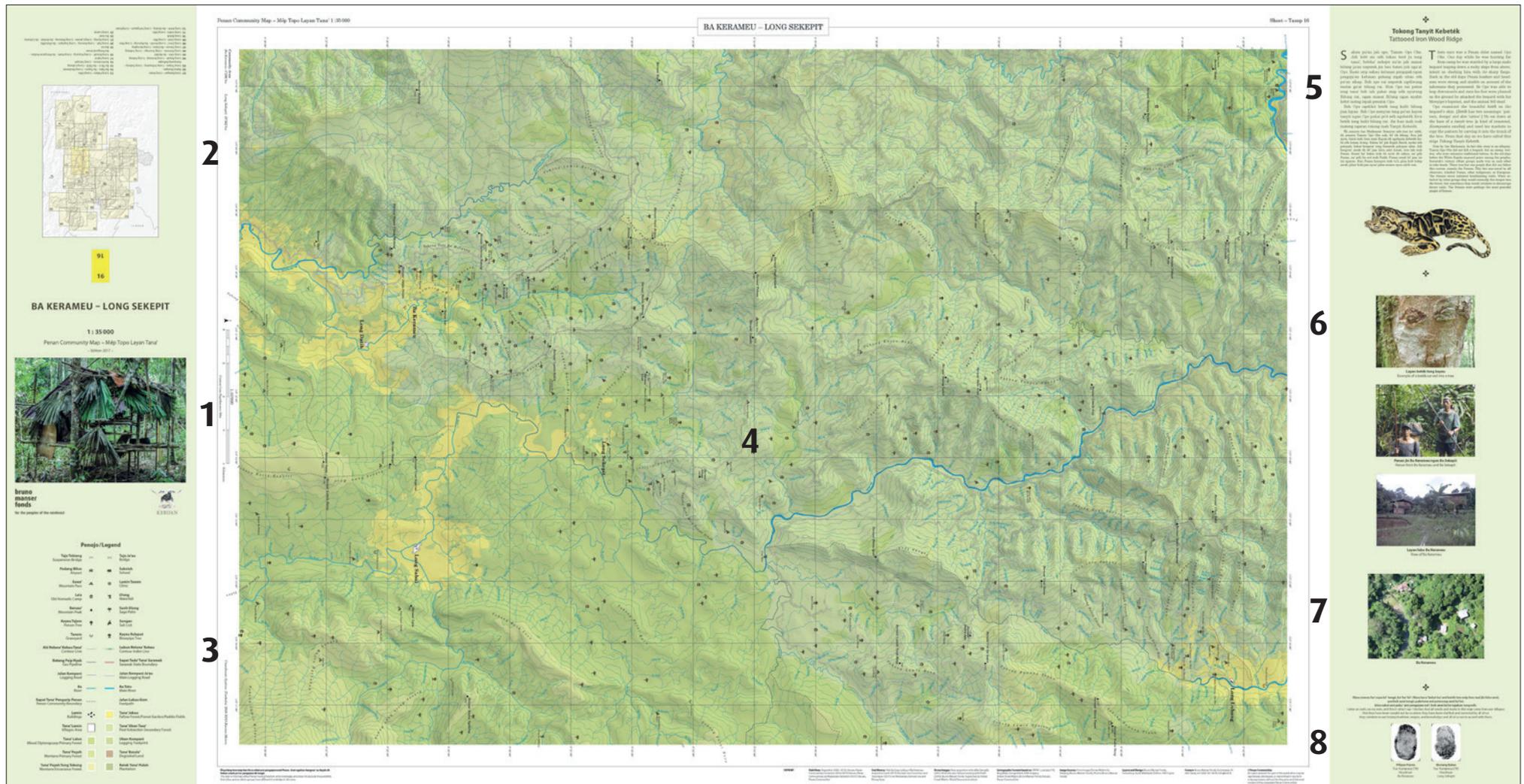
1. First Community Meeting: presentation of the mapping team and transparent explanation of the nature of the mapping project including goals and implications. In order to continue to the next step, the approval of the community was required.
2. First Fieldwork: gathering first information about the village, draft mapping of the survey area and gathering of oral history.
3. Second Community Meeting: presentation of the first results and correction.
4. Second Fieldwork: sketch mapping and gathering of missing data.
5. Third Community Meeting: presentation of the results and correction.
6. Third Fieldwork: collection of GPS points.
7. Fourth Community Meeting: presentation of the results and correction.
8. Fourth Fieldwork: drone flight and gathering of missing data.
9. Regional Meeting: crosscheck of the map content with neighboured communities.
10. Regional Meeting: validation of the maps by the headmen and endorsement of content.

Technical Data

- 23 folded sheets (19 x 1:35'000, 3 x 1:40'000, 1 x 1:50'000)
- 63 Penan communities
- Mapped area: 10'000 km²
- First language Penan, second language English
- Information displayed on the topographic maps:
 - Relief: mountains peaks, mountain ridges, mountain passes and valleys
 - Environment: mixed dipterocarp primary forest, montane primary forest, montane ericaceous forest, fallow forest/forest garden/paddie fields, post-extraction secondary forest, logging footprint, degraded land and plantation.
 - Hydrography: main rivers, rivers and waterfalls
 - Penan culture: village areas, old nomadic camps, poison trees, grave yards, sago palms, blowpipe trees and salt licks.
 - Transportation and infrastructure: main logging roads, logging roads, gas pipeline, bridges, airports, schools, buildings
 - Boundaries: Sarawak state boundary and penan community boundaries
 - Toponyms: over 7000 river names, 1800 mountain names and 1500 Poison trees.



Structure of Each Map Sheet



1. Front Page, 2. Overview, 3. Legend, 4. Topographic map, 5. Oral History, 6. Pictures, 7. Drone imagery, 8. Signatures of Headmen

The Penan Community Maps aim at reflecting the diversity of the Penan culture. Each map sheet consists of eight parts. While the front page (1) displays a picture of the Penan tradition, the overview (2) allows a simple localisation of each map sheet. All symbols and elements used on the topographic map (4) are listed within the caption (3). For each map, an

area-specific oral history (5) and various pictures (6) were selected. A drone-based aerial imagery (7) reveals the Penan villages from the top. The villages' endorsement of the maps is given through the signature (fingerprint) of the responsible headmen (8).

Order your boxed set now!



The Penan Community Maps are sold as boxed set only and cost 460,00 CHF/EUR/US\$ (plus p&p).

They are available at:
www.bmf.ch/shop
www.isdistribution.com
www.shop.schwabeverlag.ch
& any bookstore in Switzerland

