

# The Concept of Land Management in the Temiar Tribe in Kelantan

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## Abstract

The Orang Asli community of the Temiar tribe is an indigenous ethnic group whose majority practice a traditional way of life, namely farming and village communities. The majority of the Orang Asli people of the Temiar tribe live in areas near the forest and practice a traditional way of life that is heavily influenced by the old practices of their ancestors and the influence of the natural environment. In general, the Temiar tribal community highly depends on land used especially for settlement and agriculture. The Temiar tribe has some concepts related to *tek saka* and types of land that are not yet known by most of the outside community. Accordingly, a study using qualitative methods was carried out by taking an ethnographic approach to obtain information related to the concept of land and types of land use in the lives of the Temiar tribe. Interview techniques, participant observation, and FGD were used to obtain data from thirty informants from Orang Asli leaders, village residents, the Office of the Director of Lands and Mines State Officer, and the JAKOA Officer. The data were then analyzed using NVivo PLUS 12 software to obtain more accurate data. Findings show that land is the most important element in the life of the Temiar tribe that has been inherited from generation to generation to be used as a place to live and for agricultural activities. When it comes to land type, the Temiar tribe categorizes land use into *tek saka* (residence), *tek selai* (agricultural land), and *tek tengos* (forest area). For them, owned land only involves *tek saka* and *tek selai*. While *tek tengos* (forest area) is land that is not owned but is used jointly with the community.

**Keywords:** Temiar, *tanah saka*, land

## 1. Introduction

The largest tribe in the Orang Asli community is the Senoi. It is also the most numerous tribe in the three Orang Asli ethnics. The term Senoi is a word taken from the language of the Temiar tribe and it means human. Senoi describes a group of Aboriginal people (Carey, 1976). The Temiar tribe is one of the Senoi tribes. Most of them live in the remote area of Hulu Kelantan and the state of Perak. But a small number of Temiar live in the states of Pahang, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan. According to Carey (1976), Temiar is also known as *Senoi Serok*, *Tummear*, *Timeor*, *Tembe* and *Teme*. The Temiar also call themselves hilly inland people or Orang Hutan (Benjamin, 1966). According to Carey (1976), the Temiar tribe mostly lives in hilly and mountainous areas. Therefore they are often known as hill and mountain dwellers.

In the past, this race was known as *Sakai*. However, the term *Sakai* is not appropriate to use because the term *Sakai* is to describe the Orang Asli as a whole and for others, it only refers to the Senoi people. The next reason is that the term *Sakai* has an undesirable connotation because it also carries the meaning of slave. For this reason, the term *Sakai* is no longer used officially while the word Senoi continues to be used in writing and so on (Carey, 1976). Carey (1976) also stated that the Temiar tribe called themselves *Senoi Serok*, the first word meaning People and the second word meaning "Interior". It can be said that *Senoi Serok* is the actual name of this tribe, but the term Temiar has been used for a long time until the *Senoi Serok* tribe used the term Temiar when communicating with the outside world.

There are four Orang Asli tribes in Kelantan. Among the tribes are the Temiar, Mendriq, Batek and Jahai tribes. The Orang Asli community in Kelantan is in two districts. First in Gua Musang and second in Jeli. In Gua Musang, they settled in 17 settlement locations, while in Jeli only one settlement location. The entire village of the Orang Asli community in Kelantan is 122 villages. While the total number of the Orang Asli community in Kelantan is 15,323 people. Orang Asli Temiar is the largest tribe with a total of 13,635 people. The second largest tribe is Batek with a total of 673 people and following is the Jahai tribe with a total of 628 people. While the Mendriq tribe is the least with a total of 387 people. The overall distribution of Orang Asli by the tribe is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Orang Asli Kelantan

District	Location	Total of Village	Number Head of Household	Total of Residents	Tribe
Gua Musang	Pos Brooke	18	523	2320	Temiar
Gua Musang	Pos Hendrop	13	336	1659	Temiar
Gua Musang	Pos Hau	9	173	934	Temiar
Gua Musang	Pos Balar	8	154	854	Temiar
Gua Musang	Pos Belatim	5	99	431	Temiar
Gua Musang	Pos Bihai	9	207	1118	Temiar
Gua Musang	Pos Simpor	7	137	766	Temiar
Gua Musang	Pos Tohoi	2	141	692	Temiar
Gua Musang	RPS Pasik	7	210	1025	Temiar
Gua Musang	Pos Blau	6	72	371	Temiar
Gua Musang	Pos Gob	5	153	684	Temiar
Gua Musang	RPS Kuala Betis	21	410	2160	Temiar
Gua Musang	Kampung Kuala Wok	1	52	336	Temiar
Gua Musang	Kampung Pulat	1	58	285	Temiar
Gua Musang	Kampung Kuala Lah	1	71	360	Mendriq
Gua Musang	Kampung Sungai Tako	1	6	27	Mendriq
Gua Musang	Pos Lebir	4	155	673	Batek
Jeli	RKB Sungai Rual	4	162	628	Jahai
<b>Jumlah</b>		<b>122</b>	<b>3119</b>	<b>15323</b>	

Source: JAKOA Kelantan/Terengganu (2015)

The life of the Temiar tribe is still dependent on the forest environment, although they have been involved in various modern economic activities (Ramle Abdullah et al., 2020). Traditionally, they are known for subsistence farming activities involving the cultivation of cassava, sweet potatoes, bananas, upland rice, sugar cane, corn and so on (Carey, 1976). In addition, they also have extensive traditional knowledge in collecting forest products such as resin, honey, *permin* rubber, *jelutong* rubber, bamboo, rattan, herbs, petai and agarwood (Ramle Abdullah et al., 2018). The life of the Temiar tribe initially depended heavily on the

forest environment, although now they have been heavily involved in a variety of subsistence and modern agricultural economic activities (Ramle Abdullah et al., 2020).

Among the traditional knowledge that the Temiar tribe has is the knowledge of gathering forest resources and subsistence farming (Carey 1976; Benjamin 1966). The uniqueness of this tribe is that traditional knowledge and skills are always passed down to new generations during the farming process and the collection of forest products such as during the activities of collecting bamboo, petai, agarwood, paddy hill, bananas and so on (Ramle Abdullah et al., 2018). The knowledge is inherited from a young age from the previous generation while helping their father or brother collect bamboo and descend entirely, starting from the initial process of entering the forest until selling it (Ramle Abdullah et al., 2018).

## **2. Method**

This study uses a qualitative method for collecting data, while an ethnographic approach is a fieldwork effort. Generally, fieldwork will be considered a failure if the researcher cannot build relationships and communicate well within a certain period. Thus, participatory observation techniques, interviews, and FGDs were used for the data collection process that took twelve months in the Temiar tribe village in Kelantan. This interview technique was carried out individually involving the leaders of the Temiar tribe and agency officials, while the FGD was conducted as a group involving only community residents consisting of family heads of the Temiar tribe. Participant observation techniques are used to see and explore how the population's daily activities manage land and natural resources around settlements and forests. Throughout the field study, the researcher successfully found thirty informants to obtain complete information about the land management concept. In participatory observation, informants are selected according to the background of the family head's activities, the activities of community members, and the community's relationship with the outside community. While interview and FGD techniques are used to obtain accurate information which includes informants with a background of leaders, shamans and heads of families regarding certain activities and challenges experienced by them. Then, after the data collection process had been completed, this information was analyzed through several processes using Nvivo PLUS software to obtain accurate data analysis of the problem being discussed.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 The Concept of Owned Land

For the Temiar tribe, traditionally owned land is the most important element in life. The concept of owned land in the Temiar community has traditionally existed for generations (Ramle Abdullah et al., 2018). Due to the lack of involvement in politics and knowledge regarding legal ownership of land according to current legislation, the concept of owned land that is practiced cannot be legally owned by every individual (Hasan Mat Nor, 1996). But traditionally, they still believe and practice it. Owned land refers to land used for settlement to build houses, agricultural activities, and other uses (Azima, et al., 2016). Therefore, the Temiar tribe explains the concept of the owned land as an area inherited from ancestors which are then used as a place of residence, economic activities and religious life. For them, this land is important in life, especially to continue survival (Zainal Abidin, 2015).

#### 3.2 Type of Land Use Owned

For the Temiar community, several categories of land are often used to distinguish the types of land owned and not owned. The land categories are as follows:

##### 3.2.1 Tek Saka/Tanah Saka

*Tanah saka* or inheritance for the Temiar tribe traditionally involves land inherited from the remains of previous ancestors including residences, short-term agricultural and long-term agricultural areas. This *tanah saka* cannot be encroached on or transferred at will unless the party who wants to explore or work on it asks permission from the original owner or a family member if the original owner dies.

*Tanah saka* in the context of the traditional life of the Temiar tribe, is an area created by a group or band of the Temiar tribe for generations by building settlements and activities in that space. They will build houses and cultivate several types of agriculture on *tanah saka* such as paddy hill, bananas, yams, corn and permanent fruit trees such as durian and petai. In agricultural activities on *tanah saka*, for example paddy hill, the fertility of the soil is considered important and if the fertility of the paddy has been lost, they will open another new area before returning to the original area when the land is fertile again. Therefore, when paddy hill activities involve moving from one place to another in the *tanah saka* area, permanent plants such as fruits, durian, petai, and old graves signify that the area has been explored and owned by the individual or band. The land is also considered property or *tanah saka* and a legacy from generation to generation. This is because every year, when the fruit season arrives, their grandchildren will go to places where there are fruit trees that were once planted to collect the fruits. This is one of the methods of the Temiar tribe to make the new generation aware of the *tanah saka* they own.

Therefore, based on the issues that are happening today related to *tanah saka*, the majority of people give their opinion if an area of *tanah saka* wants to be gazetted, they request that the entire *tanah saka* can be considered as an Orang Asli area because they have been exploring it for a long time. Ownership of *tanah saka* can be inherited by heirs such as children or

grandchildren.

In addition, the Temiar tribe never considered their *tanah saka* to include the area that became a nomadic area (*tet tengos*) hunting and gathering forest products as claimed by the indigenous people in Sabah and Sarawak. According to them, the terms customary land, original land and wandering land are believed to have been introduced by outside communities from Sabah and Sarawak by using land issues to bring the Orang Asli closer to spreading religion (Ramle Abdullah et al., 2019). According to the Temiar tribe, they admit that they have a heritage from the point of view of customs, but the term Tanah Adat or Tanah Asal did not exist in their lives before (Ramle Abdullah et al., 2020). In the context of the Temiar tribe, the only terms that exist are Tanah Rizab Orang Asli (land gazetted by the state government) and *tanah saka* traditionally inherited from generation to generation, which covers residential land and agricultural areas.

### 3.2.2 Tek Selai/Farmland

For the Temiar tribe, in the context of use for agriculture or farms, the land is named *selai*, which means land for gardens or farms that are used for short-term and long-term crops such as vegetables, cassava, bananas, paddy hill, fruit orchards and rubber estate. It is estimated that the area of *selai* is approximately two until six acres for each family. Because the Temiar tribe cultivates various crops, they have divided the *selai* into several types and have their names according to the tradition of the Temiar people as follows:

#### a. *Selai Hamis/Small Farm*

*Selai hamis* or *selai hamis* is a plant area located near residential houses. These crops are grown on a small scale for daily use and not for sale. *Selai hamis* that is cultivated involves various short-term vegetable crops such as chili, cucumber, spinach, mustard, sweet potato, lemongrass, okra and eggplant. *Hamis* usually involves an area of no more than a quarter or half an acre. The *selai hamis* is categorized in the *tanah saka* category, which is owned by an individual and can be inherited.

#### b. *Selai Kayu/Cassava Farm*

*Selai kayu* means an area of cassava crops. This *selai* usually involves outside the residential area. On average, a *selai* plantation involves half an acre to two acres of land for each family. Because this plant has less demand from outside, the *selai kayu* is mainly used for subsistence purposes only. *Selai kayu* will usually be planted by every family of the Temiar tribe. Yam was the leading staple food of the Orang Asli before being introduced to rice in their lives. Although rice has become the leading staple food, if rice runs out, especially in the monsoon season, sweet potatoes are chosen by the Temiar tribe to meet the carbohydrate source.

In this *selai*, the people of the Temiar tribe will usually plant not only sweet potatoes or bananas in one area but also planted together with fruit orchards such as durian, cempedak, sugar cane, rambutan, papaya, pineapple and many more. Permanent fruit crops such as durian, cempedak, rambutan and petai will usually be planted together with *selai kayu* to prove that the land has been owned and make it easier for owners to identify their land. In

addition, there are also a few residents who cultivate a crop in rotation with other crops on the same land such as corn crops that will be planted in the early stages of the *selai* because it is believed that the quality of the soil afterward will be better for planting sweet potatoes. For the Temiar tribe, *selai kayu* is categorized in the *tanah saka* category, which is owned by an individual and can be inherited.

#### *c. Selai Telui/Banana Farm*

*Selai telui* means banana plantation area. This *selai* usually involves a large area of land outside the residential area. The area of this plant on average for each family, is one to two acres, according to the ability and craft of the individual and related family members. *Selai telui* is a part-time income source for most villages and the primary income for only a few villages in the interior. This *selai telui* is also planted like *selai kayu*, which in this *selai* usually the people of the Temiar tribe will plant not only banana plants or yams in one area but also planted together with orchards of fruits such as durian, cempedak, sugar cane, rambutan, papaya, pineapples and more. A few residents also grow yams and bananas in the same area. As well as *selai kayu*, permanent fruit crops such as durian, cempedak, rambutan and petai are also planted together with *selai telui* to mark areas and provide proof of ownership. Cultivating crops in the rotation is also carried out on top of *selai telui*, which is meant to maintain the quality of the soil. For the Temiar tribe, *selai telui* is categorized in the *tanah saka* category, which is owned by an individual and can be inherited.

#### *d. Selai Ba/Paddy Hill*

*Selai ba* means paddy hill plantation. This crop usually involves a particular area of one to three acres for each family. According to the Temiar tribe, the area of land used for *selai getah* was the largest compared to other crops before the existence of *selai getah*. Usually, this *selai ba* will be managed jointly among family members (children or siblings) or band members (relatives). This *selai ba* plant is not mixed with other plants such as *selai kayu* and *selai telui*. This plant is only planted in the area of land that has been reserved for *selai ba* only. In addition, some of the Temiar tribe residents stated that this jam activity involves a lot of traditional beliefs, taboos and ritual ceremonies practiced by the ancestors from the land selection phase until the harvesting phase. For them, the *selai ba* plant is a complicated agricultural activity because it requires meticulous care and compliance with taboos that a charmer will monitor. But now, this *ba jam* is no longer cultivated by most of the Temiar tribe. In the past, *selai ba* was an agricultural activity that could generate the primary source of income for several villages. Only a few villages in Pos Pasik still carry out jam activities for their use. The Temiar tribe considers *selai ba* to be a *tanah saka* owned by an individual and can be inherited.

#### *e. Selai Getah/Rubber Farm*

*Selai getah* refers to areas where rubber plants are cultivated for commercial purposes. Until now, *selai getah* has been the primary source of income for all residents in the Temiar tribe village. Usually, the owners of this *selai getah* are many elderly. But there is no denying that there are also young people involved in *selai getah* activities but in a small area of land.

Although the *selai getah* plant is carried out for commercial purposes, the cultivation method is still traditional. The traditional planting method does not follow the guidelines because the Temiar tribe is not exposed to the correct method. On average, *selai getah* involves two to six acres of land per family. Usually, they work together with family members, especially involving large areas of land. The area for each family depends on the strength and craft of the Temiar tribe to cut down and plant the cultivated rubber. The average income for this economic activity is uncertain and can be estimated at RM300 to RM700 depending on the area and the owner's skill to collect the revenue. According to them, rubber seeds are usually obtained from JAKOA, RISDA, NGOs and own capital. For them, *selai getah* helps them generate the primary income for villages living in the forest edge areas such as Pos Hendrop, Pos Tuel, Pos Tohoi and Pos Pulat. For the Temiar tribe, *selai getah* is categorized as *tanah saka* owned by an individual and can be inherited by children or grandchildren.

### 3.3 Tet Tengos

*Tet tengos* means hill land for the Temiar tribe and is an area for hunting and gathering forest products. The *tet tengos* area is vast compared to the *selai*. The *tet tengos* are outside the residential area and the *selai* area. They stated that each village has its *tet tengos* area and can only hunt and collect forest produce in their village's *tet tengos* area. If they want to enter another village's *tet tengos* area, they must get permission from the village head. So far, no residents have been able to estimate the area of *tet tengos* precisely, but from the point of view of time estimation, some say that usually, the distance from the residence to the border of the *tet tengos* area takes approximately thirty minutes or two hours by walking. Usually, the area of *tet tengos* in a village varies depending on the position of the area and the decision set by the leader. The area of *tet tengos* is wide and both villages agree upon the area. Usually, they will set the boundaries of *tet tengos* with forest areas or other *tet tengos* by placing boundary markers based on rivers, hills, large trees, caves and large rocks. In this *tet tengos* area, the residents will usually hunt and gather forest resources that can be used as food, tools, sources of income and medicine. In the past, activities in the *tet tengos* area were very active, especially with income generation activities such as bamboo, rattan, wood, honey and agarwood. But now, the *tet tengos* area is decreasing in use due to the threat factor from illegal invaders hunting and gathering forest products. In addition, some villages no longer have *tet tengos* because most of the wilderness areas near their settlements have been explored for plantation and development purposes. For the people of the Temiar tribe, this *tet tengos* area is not categorized as *tanah saka* because according to them, *tanah saka* is land that can be owned and inherited. But according to them, although *tet tengos*, is not categorized as *tanah saka*, they think that this *tet tengos* land is also part of the heritage assets left by the ancestors and needs to be taken care of for new generations. According to them, these *tet tengos* used to be land jointly owned with all the villagers to obtain various resources. Therefore, they hope that the sustainability of this *tet tengos* area can be preserved so that future generations can use it together for survival.

## 4. Discussion

As explained before, land has a close relationship with the life of the Temiar tribe. They



believe that land is a heritage resource that needs to be preserved from generation to generation (Ramle Abdullah et al., 2019). The most important function of land for the Temiar tribe is as a place of settlement and a place to carry out agricultural activities for self-sufficiency to obtain a source of income (Ramle Abdullah et al., 2018). Therefore, these activities need to be strengthened with help and training from various parties so that the generation of inherited land-based income sources can be worked on and developed properly. For them, the *tanah saka* which consists of settlement areas and *selai* is the land they need to continue their lives and the continuation of the lives of the new generation. *Tanah saka* is land owned by individuals as a result of exploration activities in forest areas or inherited from previous generations either parents or grandparents for residential and agricultural purposes. This land is significant to the villagers because it is where they live and cultivate to continue their survival.

Meanwhile, *tet tengos* is not categorized as *tanah saka* because this land cannot be inherited and is determined by the owner individually because it is too large. According to the Temiar tribe, *tet tengos* is a forest resource search area conducted by their ancestors once upon a time. They stated that these *tet tengos* cannot be owned individually and inherited because the use of resources in the area must be used jointly with the community. Although *tet tengos* is land that is not owned or inherited individually, the Temiar tribe believes that the land is also a heritage that needs to be protected and preserved so that future generations can benefit from the resources in *tet tengos*. For them, granting ownership rights for *tanah saka* is important, but concerns are voiced if many residents take the easy way to sell owned land if approved. Therefore, they believe that JAKOA and the State Government's monitoring under the gazette of the Tanah Rizab Orang Asli is safer by determining the ownership of the residential area and *selai* for each family. To encourage the land to be cultivated, it is suggested that the villagers choose to develop the land under an agricultural agency appointed by the government such as FELCRA, Ladang Rakyat, and RISDA or cultivate it themselves by being given time and assistance to develop the land. If they are not working during that period, the State Government and JAKOA have the right to withdraw the grant of ownership from the residents. The Temiar residents' leadership is aware that there are many more villages that have not yet been gazetted Hafis Simin, Ramle Abdullah, Asmawi Ibrahim, Sahar Sa'di & Abdullah Ibrahim (2020). Therefore, they hope that the parties involved in land management can resolve this issue as best as possible.

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