

**LIVING UNDER ONE ROOF:
A CASE STUDY OF KADZANDUSUN
HOUSEHOLDS IN SABAH**

SURIANI SURATMAN

No. 32

©Suriani Suratman
email: mlsss@nus.edu.sg

Academic Session 2000/2001

ISBN 981-04-2912-6

**Department of Malay Studies
National University of Singapore**

Living under one roof: A case study of Kadzandusun households in Sabah

by

Suriani Suratman

Introduction

A commonly found assumption regarding peasant households is that they are co-residential units of production and consumption. In the anthropological discourse on rural households, this notion has been put forward in Chayanow's (1966) concept of "family labour farms" and in Sahlins (1974) idea of the "domestic mode of production". This perspective is still dominant among state development agents (King 1999). However, empirical evidence from a number of societies contradicts the notion of a family-based system of production (cf. Wong 1987). There are societies where men and women have their own sources of income, which they control separately. Furthermore, as Harris (1981) observed, the children and their labour cannot be assumed to be under the control of the household head. The same goes, of course, for the income of working children. These societies are characterised by individualistic patterns of household operation. Malay and other Southeast Asian societies are of this type (Li 1989).

The "pooling of resources" of household members and the "obligation to share ... income" (Household Research Working Group 1982:22) aimed at the reproduction of labour in a household cannot be assumed but has to be accomplished in an on-going process of 'householding'. Rather than viewing the internal structure of a household as corporate (led by a household head) or co-operative (pooling of resources based on a congruence of interests), we propose to conceptualise a household as an arena of actors which "have conflicting interests deriving from their relations to production and distribution which are usually structured on an age and gender basis" (Li 1989:5). The actual internal relationships as well as the boundaries of a household reflect a creative response towards external structural changes. Its outcomes are diverse and indeterminate (Li 1996:260).

As for the state development agents, it is necessary for them to understand the actual dynamics of rural households in order to devise effective intervention

programmes. Prevailing views about the cultural, social, and economic organisation of the rural population needs to be revised. In the words of Eviota (cit. in King 1999:167):

The state must revise its categories of family, household, reproduction and production and take account of the complexities of activities, decision-making, access and control within and across units of intervention. It needs to see society in detail and not in aggregates.

This article attempts to provide some evidence of the complexities of rural life by analysing the process of 'householding' among the rural Kadazandusun, the largest ethnic group of Sabah, Malaysia. Fieldwork was carried out in April 1998 in Kampung (Kg.) Poring, Ranau District.

The village economy: An overview

Kg. Poring¹ is located in a valley at the southern edge of the Kinabalu National Park in Ranau District. In the 1950s, the village consisted of only a few houses. At this time both wet-rice (*padi sawah*) and hill-rice (*padi bukit*) was cultivated. In the early 1970s, some villagers moved further east to the area of *Sungai Mamut* where the Department of Agriculture (DOA) had initiated an irrigation project to facilitate the cultivation of wet-rice. The fields were located in the vicinity of the place now know as 'Poring Hot Springs'. Only a few years later, in 1978, farmers had to cease planting wet-rice; the water of *Sungai Mamut* became too contaminated due to the operations of a nearby copper mine. This had also negative effects on fishing in the river. Furthermore, a parallel stream, the *Sungai Kipongit*, was dammed in order to provide water for the operation of a branch of Sabah Parks inside the Kinabalu National Park including research and tourist facilities. Left without water for irrigating their fields, farmers turned again to the rain-fed cultivation of hill-rice.

Employment opportunities for the rural population emerged in the Mamut Copper Mine and in the Sabah Parks station in Kinabalu National Park (Poring Hot Springs) in the mid-1970s. Job vacancies have mainly been taken up by villagers from Kg. Poring and other nearby villages.

¹ The name Poring derives from a type of bamboo growing in the area and locally known as *pering*.

A further change of the local economy was facilitated with the improvement of the dirt road from the village to Ranau in the 1980s. The new road led to a better access to markets for local surplus products, which could now be sold in stalls along the more often used road by visitors to Poring Hot Springs, or at the weekly market (*tamu*) in Ranau. More importantly, it also stimulated the cultivation of cash crops, in particular fruit trees (with support from DOA). By tarring the road, a further improvement of the accessibility to and from the village took place more recently.

Tourist and visitor arrivals in Poring Hot Springs, Kinabalu National Park, are by now an important aspect of the local economy. According to the Branch Office of Sabah Parks at Poring Hot Springs the arrival of tourists and visitors has been constantly increasing from 463 in 1966 to 166,835 in 1997. The tourist sector not only offers employment to a number of villagers from Kg. Poring but also created opportunities for income-generation. Sabah Parks, which operates a branch at Poring Hot Springs including research and tourist facilities², is the largest employer. Altogether 34 villagers are employed at Poring Hot Springs. The majority of the employees are male villagers (62 %).

One of the income-generating activities in the local tourist sector is handicraft. As in many villages of Sabah traditional handicraft had become somewhat obsolete. However, due to some peculiar geophysical conditions and the increasing number of tourists a new local handicraft product has emerged: mineral stones. These stones can be found in the beds of Mamut River and other nearby streams. Processed into nice shapes and glued to a piece of smoothed wood, the stones are sold to visitors and tourists in Poring Hot Spring.

An increasing number of village women had embarked on this form of self-employment in recent years. Initially a promising business, the increasing number of women and a recently imposed fee by Sabah Parks has negatively affected the trade.³ All women complained about the difficulties in making any profit at all. This has led to a substantial decrease of women selling mineral stones. In addition to mineral stones, women from Kg. Poring sell fruits to tourists and visitors. Fruits

² The tourist facilities (chalets and restaurant) have been privatised recently.

³ In early 1998, Sabah Parks formalised the sale of stones (and local fruits) by providing stalls and charging a monthly fee of RM 30.

are either collected from their own trees (e.g. durian, langsat, banana) or purchased from neighbouring villages (e.g. coconuts).

Other forms of self-employed include providing transport to and from Ranau or running a shop. Young male villagers do the provision of transport whereas the running of a shop and the selling of souvenirs are done by female villagers from all age groups.

Despite the substantial number of employed villagers, agriculture remains an important economic activity for many households. However, significant changes have taken place regarding the agricultural production. One of these changes is the decrease of land available to the individual households due to the gazetting of Kinabalu National Park, the purchase of land by outsiders, and the increasing land-population ratio. This makes it difficult for family farms to maintain upland agriculture based on shifting cultivation. Furthermore, the employment of mainly male villagers has led to a shortage of manpower for agricultural activities, in particular for the labour intensive cultivation of hill-rice.⁴ The consequences on the agricultural practices as well as on gender-specific activities will be discussed in more detail below.

Agricultural activities

Hill-rice

In terms of labour input, the cultivation of hill-rice is the main agricultural activity in the village. It has been estimated by informants that in 1998 about 30 families (one third of all families in the village) still cultivated rice either on their own or on borrowed land. Except for the households of a few older couples the majority of the male adults of these rice-farming households are employed or self-employed. Several reasons were given for the continued rice cultivation such as the need to reduce household expenses, the need to provide a safety-net in case of unemployment, the preference for the taste of self-grown rice, and the inclination to continue rice cultivation as a traditional way of life of Kadazandusun.

In response to the shortage of manpower due to the employed or self-employed of male household members, rice-cultivating households have decreased the size of

⁴ Except for the households of a few older couples the majority of the male adults of rice-farming households are employed or self-employed.

the swiddens (*ladang*) and women now carry out most of the agricultural work. In his study on rural women in Sabah Abdul Samad Hadi also observed that "(s)ubsistence production became increasingly the preserve of women (1986:208).⁵ Many husbands (but not all) assist after work and may also take leave in the peak seasons. If, however, a women is not able to work in the field (especially in the case of women with young children) the family will temporarily discontinue rice-cultivation. In consequence, the relative contribution of labour to the cultivation of rice has increased significantly for women. Concurrently, women have become the knowledge keepers concerning hill-rice cultivation. In fact, young female informants claim that young men – with the exception of cultivating fruit trees – "don't know anything about agriculture".

Farming in the upland areas of the village is based on the constant rotation of the field site, a land management system known as shifting cultivation, swidden cultivation or slash and burn cultivation. A swidden can be used at the most for up to three consecutive years and then has to be left fallow for at least six years. The minimum size of a swidden for subsistence production of an average household is 2 to 3 acres. Villagers usually plant two to three different types of hill-rice from the large variety of rice types known to them. A significant difference between these types is the time lengths of maturing (from 3 to 5 months). Due to the availability of different types villagers can choose either of the two strategies: (1) all different types are planted at the same time and thereby stretching the harvesting over a longer period of time or (2) the types of rice are planted in such a sequence that they can be harvested together.

The cultivation of hill-rice comprises a series of subsequent activities starting in June/July with selecting the field, followed by choosing the rice types/cultivation strategy, clearing the undergrowth, slashing/cutting branches into small pieces, burning/clearing, digging/sowing, weeding, harvesting, stamping/threshing, winnowing, drying/pounding, husking, and finally storing the rice in the storage hut in May of the following year. Both male and female villagers can carry out most of the activities involved in the growing of rice. There are only a few activities, which are only done by one sex such as burning the field (done by men)

⁵ This trend clearly rectifies an earlier and sometimes still prevailing view that men are the agricultural producers. In this view, the contributions of women have often been ignored, rendering them 'invisible farmers' (Sachs 1983).

and winnowing and husking the rice (done by women). Although this indicates the type of work considered male or female, it does not reveal much about the actual workload of both sexes (See below).

The most important source of labour is the household. In most of the farming households in the village this is supplemented by labour inputs from relatives and fellow villagers either in the form of exchanging labour (*mitatabang*) or by hiring labour.

Fruit trees

With the increasing integration of the village into the market economy (not least due to the improved road to Ranau) and the decreasing size of land available to households a shift in the use of upland fields has taken place. The trend has been to move away from hill-rice to perennial cash crops, in particular fruit trees⁶. Starting in the 1970s, villagers plant slow-growing fruit trees, in particular *langsat* and *durian* either next to their fields or in orchards⁷. These two types of fruit are considered to be the most profitable ones⁸. Villagers also plant other fruit trees such as jackfruit, *rambutan*, and *mata kuching*. This is a major change in land use, which excludes the continuation of hill-rice cultivation.⁹

In the planting and management (e.g. cutting undergrowth, watering trees, control pests) of trees both men and female family members are involved. The sale of the fruits is exclusively done by women. Most commonly, they sell the fruits to tourists and visitors at Poring Hot Springs. Some women also take their produce to Ranau or even Penampang. They keep the income from the sale.

Vegetables

Most of the households grow vegetable for their own consumption as well as for sale (in the village and/or in Ranau). The cultivation and selling of vegetables is mainly the task of women although some men may help. Women grow a wide variety of vegetables including chilli, long beans, French beans, aubergines, spring

⁶ A similar trend has been observed in the upland areas of Java (Suryanata 1994) and Sulawesi (Li 1996).

⁷ *Langsat* and *durian* take 9 years and 8 years respectively until fruiting.

⁸ One informant recalls that she received as much as RM 2,000 from sale of fruits from two *durian* trees.

⁹ Where rice cultivation continues, fast-growing fruit trees such as banana and papaya are often inter-cropped with hill-rice.

onions, ginger, and different types of green vegetables (*kangkung, brinjal, sayur bunga, sayur putih, sayur putih taiwan*). Other crops grown for own consumption include maize and sugar cane.

Decision making

With regards to rice cultivation a distinction has evolved between older and younger couples. Young men are not interested in cultivation anymore. Consequently, women are left to decide on the field site and on the rice types to be planted. In the case of older couples, it is usually the man who decides on the field site. However, women often select the rice species.

The cultivation of fruit trees tends to be the domain of men. This is clearly indicated in the regular meetings taking place on the initiative of the DOA. 10 to 30 villagers attend the monthly talks on agricultural issues; the majority of them are usually women. Men only attend when the talks are on issues related to fruit trees. Furthermore, attending men would not pass on the received information to their wives whereas attending women would inform their husbands about the facts on fruit tree cultivation, which they received in the talk. Women would not pass on information, which they received on the cultivation of rice or vegetables, indicating that this is perceived as their domain.

Types of households

Presently, the village comprises a total of 89 families with more than 400 people. The families are either nuclear living in one house or, two to three families co-reside in a house.

Table 1: Co-residence of nuclear families

No. of families in a house	One	Two	Three
No. of cases	46	11	7

Table 1 shows that of the total number of families, more than half of them (46 = 51.7 %) are nuclear families living in one house (conjugal households). The other families (43 = 48.3 %) share a house with one or two other families (households of co-residing nuclear families).

Conjugal households

In structural terms conjugal households are composed of an intact nuclear family or a single-headed family (divorced or widowed adult with children). It may include unmarried siblings of the husband or wife, or the parents respectively a widowed parent.

The social organisation of the nuclear families in Kg. Poring after marriage is ideally patrilocal¹⁰. However, matrilocality, that is the husbands move to the house of the wife's family, also occurs. The new couple set up their own house when the husband has land (or employment) and can afford to build one (neolocality). Co-residence of nuclear families is therefore a transitory arrangement. Older parents can at some stage choose to be incorporated in the household of one of their married children.

Ideally, conjugal households are units of consumption, resource sharing (income and/or labour) and production (subsistence and cash crops). However, the actual arrangements vary among the households. This is clearly shown in the later discussion on the control of financial resources in the households.

Households of co-residing nuclear families

A substantial number of families co-reside with one or two families. Usually they are comprised of parents with unmarried children and one or two married children with their spouse and children. Whether or not co-residing families can be considered a household is an empirical question. The actual arrangements of co-residing nuclear families in Kg. Poring vary considerably. Ideally and still most commonly found is the sharing of the kitchen. The obligation to provide food is rotated among the households on a weekly or monthly basis. The cooking is done together by women. However, problems with this arrangement do arise when co-residing households fail to fulfil their obligations. A discontent with this sharing arrangement can occur on the part of the young and still small families because they are required to provide the same amount of food as the larger ones. Therefore, they feel that they are in a disadvantaged position. Discontent has also occurred in cases where co-residing families have different level of income and,

¹⁰ According to Pugh-Kitingan the residence pattern for Kadazandusun in Tambunan following marriage is also virilocal [= patrilocal] (1989:362).

consequently, different levels of purchasing power. This is reflected in the differences in the quality of food provided by the co-residing families. As such, emerging inequalities in the level of income constitute an important factor in the occurrence of internal problems between co-residing families.

A more loose arrangement is that the parents' household is responsible for cooking. Co-residing families of married children are expected to assist in the food preparation and to contribute to the expenditures. This arrangement appears to be the most conflictive one as households of married children frequently fail to provide food or contribute to household expenditures. However, some parents also expressed the view that expected contributions are in accordance with affordability of the co-residing family.

Frequent problems with sharing arrangements have in some cases led to the establishment of two or more independent cooking places in the house. As such, the households have disintegrated into smaller units. New boundaries have been drawn. Such an outcome is clearly seen as less than ideal. One informant, for example, related that the break-up of the sharing arrangement and the subsequent establishment of a second cooking place in the house caused great distress to her. Several villagers also frequently referred to an extreme case whereby a nuclear family and two related already employed bachelors live together in one house. Due to internal problems, the three parties have set up three separate cooking places.

Ideally, co-residing families form households based on a sharing arrangement for the consumption of food. However, as shown above, these households are not 'quasi-natural' units and do not follow a pre-determined structural (e.g. residence) or functional (pooling, sharing) pattern, but are highly conflictive and dynamic. To illustrate this more clearly, we give a brief account of the experience of Kelumbai with fluctuating household compositions.

Excursus: The experience of Kelumbai with fluctuating household compositions

Kelumbai was born in the early 1970s and is the third eldest daughter of her parents. With her two parents, her two elder sisters, two elder and two younger brothers the household comprised nine persons. As employment opportunities emerged her eldest brother was the first to leave the house at the age of 18 to stay

near his work place (Mamut Copper Mine). Later the eldest sister left the house for Ranau to work in a shop. Both contributed money to the household and occasionally bought food. Kelumbai and the other siblings helped their parents on their farm especially in the cultivation of hill-rice.

When the eldest sister married, she came back with the husband (initial stayed with husband's family) to stay in her parents' house in one of the five rooms for the next four years. At that time, Kelumbai's parents cultivated land far away from home and choosed to stay in the hut next to their swidden. They came back only once a week. By that time, the second eldest brother and second eldest sister had left the house because of work. Kelumbai was therefore considered the eldest and had to look after her two younger brothers.¹¹ The eldest sister received rice and food from their parents for her family as well as for the three younger siblings (incl. Kelumbai). She also received some money from the eldest brother to buy milk for her children (The eldest brother gave money to the three youngest siblings via their mother). The parents had the tacit assumption that the eldest sister would cook for them. No formal arrangements were made. However, according to Kelumbai, the elder sister did neither divide the rice equally and shared other dishes with them nor did she cook rice for them. Kelumbai had to cook for herself and her two younger brothers. Sometimes they had only salted rice to eat. Nevertheless, Kelumbai looked after the two young children of her sister. Despite Kelumbai's complaints, the parents did not intervene. They asked her instead to look for her own food. Therefore, she started to look for odd jobs in the village. At that time, Kelumbai was about ten years old and could be hired as a day labourer to weed the fields for RM 4-5.

After the eldest sister and her family left, the eldest brother returned to the house. He had left the work at Mamut Copper Mine to work in Sabah Parks in Poring Hot Springs. The parents continued to live next to their field. The money formerly given to his sister's family was now given to the three youngest siblings. The financial situation of Kelumbai and her younger brothers improved but work-wise she was still doing all the domestic chores (collecting firewood, cooking, etc.) – apart from going to secondary school.

¹¹ The youngest brother died later in an accident when he was seven years old.

The financial situation worsened again when the eldest brother became married and made only occasional contributions. The marriage also brought other changes. The sister-in-law started complaining about Kelumbai's lesser contributions to keep the house clean (the younger brothers did not do any domestic work at all). The conflict peaked in the announcement of Kelumbai's eldest brother to establish an own kitchen for his family. Kelumbai's reaction:

"I cried when my mother told me. She [the sister-in-law] is the one who is fussy. She cannot give and take."

Not long after this, Kelumbai completed secondary school education and soon afterwards, she got married. One month after their marriage Kelumbai and her husband moved to his village close to Mamut Copper Mine where he was working. They stayed with the family of her husband's elder sister, one unmarried sister and two younger unmarried brothers. Like Kelumbai's parents the parents of her husband also stayed in a hut next to their swidden. Kelumbai recalls that she suffered a lot during her stay. Like her sister-in-law she was pregnant. But unlike her, Kelumbai did not receive any help from her in-laws. Especially burdensome for her was that she had to collect a large amount of firewood all by herself in preparation for the confinement period (to boil water for baths and medicine).

After about one year, Kelumbai's husband was retrenched. Kelumbai persuaded him to move back to her parent's house in her village and start cultivating rice (a new house with four rooms had been added to the original house). Initially, Kelumbai and her husband helped her parents in the field. They also received some financial assistance from Kelumbai's still unmarried second eldest brother. At that time, he was the only one with a permanent employment. After a year, the father gave Kelumbai about one acre of land.

Finally, Kelumbai's husband got a job at Poring Hot Springs. He and the second eldest brother took turns in buying rice (as mentioned before, the family of Kelumbai's eldest brother maintained their own household). After the second eldest got married, he stayed with Kelumbai's family. Kelumbai vividly recalls that time:

"This house was crowded – just full of people and children, really. It is difficult to relate. Ahh, really difficult. There were just so many people. It was noisy. There were quarrels."

This situation lasted for about three years until the second eldest brother and his family moved to an empty house of his wife's father. Kelumbai felt relieved:

"I was happy. It was no longer that noisy. And we didn't have to worry if we had contributed enough or not."

While the second eldest brother was still staying in the house, the younger brother – already working at Poring Hot Springs – did not contribute to household expenses or help in any way. It was only since the moving out of the second eldest brother and his family that he help a little and sometimes buys vegetables or makes financial contributions occasionally. In the early 1990s, Kelumbai's father passed away and her mother chose to join her household. Currently, the house is occupied with two functionally independent households.

Division of labour in conjugal households

Division of labour in hill-rice cultivation

Productive tasks of the household members cover a variety of activities as already outlined above. Our following detailed discussion of the gender division of labour and workload in the productive activities of the conjugal households will focus on one albeit significant activity of farming households: the cultivation of hill-rice. The significance of this traditional agricultural activity is indicated in (1) its continued practice despite major economic changes and (2) the changing gender composition of labour inputs.

The cultivation of hill-rice comprises a series of subsequent activities. Both male and female members of the household are involved in these activities although there is a clear gender-specific allocation of responsibilities for some tasks. Despite the employment of mainly male household members, this division of labour in rice cultivation is still maintained. Tasks considered 'male' (e.g. burning debris in the field, constructing a storage hut) are performed by men and tasks perceived 'female' (e.g. processing of rice) are carried out by women. Interestingly, however, women now dominate gender-neutral tasks such as sowing, weeding, and harvesting.

This leads to the question whether the workload for women has increased? Earlier accounts of Dusun hill-rice cultivation (Williams 1965, Boenisch Burrough/Alik Jamin 1972) do not give a clear documentation of gender-specific tasks and

workloads. However, the already mentioned strategy of rice-cultivating households to decrease the size of swiddens indicates not an increase in the actual workload of women but an increase in her relative contribution to the cultivation activities (see Table 2).

Table 2: Workload in hill-rice cultivation in 1996 (in days of labour input per person)*

Households	A (husband employed)	B (husb. occa- sionally empl.)	C (not available)	D (old couple)	E (widow, no employ.)	F (widower, unempl.)
Cultivated area (acres)	1	3	2	7	3.75	3
Input of men (days)	71	63	113	311	48	149
Input of women (days)	75	129	139	305	136	146
Total labour input (days)	146	192	252	616	184	295

* Data include household and extra-household labour

The average input of workdays of men for the hill-rice cultivation season in 1996 in the sample households amounted to about 126 days. Women spent on average 155 days on rice cultivation. Not included is information on supplementary work of female family members such as preparing food for feasts and, in the case of young couples, looking after children by grandmothers or other (paid) female villagers. Even without the substantial supplementary female work, it is clear that women's contribution to hill-rice cultivation is significantly higher than that of men.

Gender division of reproductive tasks

Reproductive tasks are carried out in the household ('domestic' sphere) as well as in the village community ('public' sphere). To illustrate the gender division of these tasks we provide an example of a young married couple staying with the wife's mother and younger unmarried brother and the family of the wife's elder brother (Table 3). The household has two separate kitchens; the former sharing one kitchen and the latter having a kitchen of their own.

Table 3: Division of reproductive tasks in a household

Task	Husband	Wife	Others
<u>Household:</u>			
Collecting firewood	xxxxx	xxx	x (younger brother)
Chopping of wood	xxxxx	x	x (mother)
Fetching water	x	xxxxx	x (younger brother)
Buying food/supplies	xx	xxxxx	xx (mother, young bro)
Cooking meals	x	xxxxx	xxx (mother)
Washing dishes	x	xxxxx	x (younger brother)
Washing clothes	x	xxxxx	-
Mending clothes	-	xxxxx	-
Cleaning compound	xxx	xxx	xxx (sister-in-law)
Looking after children	xx	xxxxx	xx (mother)
Caring for the sick	x	xxxxx	x
<u>Community/Royong:</u>			
Church	-	xxxxx	-
School	xxx	xxx	-
Funerals	xxx <i>(digging grave)</i>	xxxxx <i>(cooking)</i>	xxxx (mother) <i>(praying)</i>
Weddings	xxx <i>(making of hut)</i>	xxx <i>(cooking)</i>	xxx (mother; brother) <i>(cow, hut)</i>
Christmas	-	xxxxx <i>(cooking)</i>	-
Housing	xxxxx <i>(collecting wood)</i>	x <i>(collecting wood)</i>	-
<u>Public meetings:</u>			
Village	xxxxx	x	xxxxx (elder brother)
Church	-	xxx	xxx (mother)
School	x	xxxxx	-
DOA talks	x	xxxxx	-

x - xxxxxx = very low to very high involvement

From this example, it is evident that the bulk of the workload for carrying out reproductive tasks in the household ('domestic' sphere) and the community ('public' sphere) is accomplished by women. However, there is no clear-cut distinction between male and female reproductive tasks. In principle, most of these tasks appear to be interchangeable.

Control of the financial resources

The control of the financial resources varies among the households. Table 4 shows the different arrangements for a sample of 13 households (A-M), whereby some households (J-M) are depicted in two different stages of their income structure (1, 2). In households where husband and wife have independent sources of income (e.g. husband is employed and wife generates income from the sale of agricultural produce) both keep control over their own income (A, B, C, E, J1, K2, L2). If the wife has no or only very little income of her own, the husband allocates money to her for household expenditures (J1, K1, L2). He does this either by giving a fixed amount of his monthly income to the wife or upon her request. The last arrangement is especially prone to conflicts. This is illustrated in a case of K1 and K2 where an employed husband became unemployed for health reasons and the wife had to generate income by trading vegetables in Ranau. Despite the fact that the income of the household had decreased the women found it much easier to manage the household expenditures because she had control over the money.

In cases where a wife managed to secure an own source of income (in addition to the husband's income from employment) after having relied on the husband's allocations (J1/J2, L1/L2) the husband usually discontinued the allocation of money to his wife for the management of the household expenditures and the wife is supposed to use her income.

There are, however, also cases (G, H, I, M) where the husband gives all his income to the wife to manage the household budget and the wife would allocate a small amount of pocket money for the husband's own needs (e.g. cigarettes). Asked why, one female respondent answered:

“Men don't know how to budget. They would just spend all the money on eating in food stalls and on cigarettes.”

In the view of this woman, men are seen as squandering resources for unnecessary consumer items. Other women shared this view. Interestingly, some men also accepted this view. It is striking that most of the households where women manage all the household's money are comprised of young landless couples. At least one of these households is considered very poor by fellow villagers. It appears that these resource-poor households require a more prudent budgeting and therefore husbands entrust the budgeting to the perceived more competent manager, the wife.

In the case of separate incomes of wife and husband, a clear spending pattern is discernible. Women use most of their money for basic household expenditures including food, clothes for children, etc. Furthermore, despite the often-limited availability of money women also try to save some money for 'rainy days'. This money is not touched for routine spending. In case of financial difficulties, they rather take a 'credit' from the village provision shop and repay it by requesting money from the husband after his monthly salary has come in.

As for men, their income is used to supplement household expenditures and to see through the education of the children. If luxury items are purchased (such as a television, stereo set, or video recorder) it is most likely done from the income of the husband or the income of employed but still unmarried children (although in some cases husband and wife may pool resources to buy such items).

Table 4: Control of financial resources

Households	Income				Control		
	Men		Women		Men ²	Women	Separate
	Employed	Self-employed ¹	Employed	Self-employed ¹			
A	x			x			x
B		x		x			x
C	x	x	x	x			x
D							
E	x			x			x
F		x		x		x	
G	x			no land		x	
H	x			no land		x	
I	x			x		x	
J1 ³	x				x		
J2 ³	x		x				x
K1	x			x	x		
K2		x (repairs)	x				x
L1		x (bus)			x		
L2		x (bus)		x (shop)			x
M1	x		x	no land		x	
M2	x			"		x	

¹ If not stated otherwise, self-employment refers to agricultural activities.

² Men control the money but allocate a certain amount to the wife for the management of the domestic chores.

³ 1 and 2 shows the same household in two different stages (before and after a recent change)

Unmarried children are supposed to contribute to the household either in the form of labour or – if employed – in the form of money. Regular monthly financial contributions are mainly given to the mother whereas a contribution for particular purposes such as buying a chain saw or building a new house is given to the father. However, according to several informants the parental control over

contributions from their children has considerably weakened. As one woman put it:

"Before children had to listen to their parents; now they just do what they feel like doing."

This is especially the case for labour contributions of male children who hardly help anymore in farming activities. Their interest is the constitution of households based on wage labour rather than agriculture. Consequently, land becomes less significant for them.

Status of women

Writing about Kadazandusun women in Sabah Pugh-Kitingan states: "Women generally enjoy equal status with men" (1989:363). The findings of this study in Kg. Poring do not support such a generalised statement. More often than not women appear to be in a disadvantaged position in the household. Abdul Samad Hadi also notes "women do not fare as well compared to men" (1986:200).¹²

The unequal position of women in rural Kadazandusun households can, among others, be seen in the practice of inheritance of land. It is a common practice of the Kadazandusun is that the land is divided among the male children upon the discretion of the husband. The eldest son may not only receive the largest proportion but also the part of the land for which a grant has already been obtained. Only recently has the application of these socio-cultural practices become less rigid. A reason already mentioned above is that young men do not built their future on (increasingly less available) land anymore but on employment. They are far more mobile and might even leave the village permanently, thereby abandoning the land. Women, although they are supposed to follow the husband to his village (patrilocality), might not only decide to stay in the village even after marriage but show, in general, also a greater interest in farming. This is clearly expressed by a female informant about why her elder sister inherited land from her father:

"Because she never moved and moved. Not like us. Even after marriage she just stayed here and helped my father to open a field. She was the hope – to work on the land."

¹² This point has also been made in a publication of the Sabah Women Action Group (1992).

As a result, she received one acre of land. The largest portion of the land still went to the eldest son.

Inequality also prevails in the access to and control over financial resources. Where only the husband has a regular income, the wife receives a monthly allocation for household expenditures at his discretion. In some cases, the wife even has to request money for each purchase of food and other items. Where the wife also has an own source of income, her money is devoted to the maintenance of the household and savings for 'rainy days'. Although the husband also supplements money for household expenditures and takes care of the children's education, he has in general more money at his disposal for his individual consumption. Nevertheless, the wife's own income increases her autonomy in fulfilling her reproductive tasks. In this context, it is important to note that women themselves appear to see their role in the family as complementary and not, in a 'feminist' fashion, as antagonistic to those of men (cf. Nagata and Salaff 1996).

There are also a few cases where the wife controls the household budget, including the income of the husband. These are, however, exceptions and include mainly young landless couples with little money at their disposal. This arrangement reflects an increased status of women in the household's decision making processes and appears to be an adaptation to the household's economic situation. Consequently, the status of women in the household is also a reflection of the class position of households rather than solely pre-determined by the socio-cultural context of Kadazandusun as implied by Pugh-Kitingan (1989).

Discussion

Since the last two decades, significant changes are taking place in Kg. Poring. Foremost is the increasing integration of the village into the market economy due to the improved infrastructure, market opportunities for agricultural produce (vegetables, fruits), and emerging local employment (e.g. at Poring Hot Springs) and self-employment (handicraft, petty trading) opportunities especially in the tourist sector. Parallel to these changes the land available to the individual households has been decreasing (gazetting of Kinabalu National Park, purchase of land by outsiders, increasing land-population ratio), making it difficult to maintain upland agriculture based on shifting cultivation. Furthermore, the employment of

mainly male villagers has led to a shortage of manpower for agricultural activities, in particular hill-rice cultivation.

Farming households have been responding to these changes by shifting their land use from annual subsistence crops to perennial cash crops (fruits). However, the cultivation of subsistence crops such as hill-rice and vegetables is still an important economic activity for a significant number of households. Homegrown rice and vegetables reduce household expenditures and surplus vegetables provide an additional income. Notably, mainly women are the ones who secure the continuity of these agricultural activities. Although women now dominate the agricultural production of households, these activities have been relegated to a supplementary role in the overall household economy. The same is true for income-generating activities of women, be it from the sale of agricultural produce or other activities. In general, these changes have led to a clearer dichotomization of male and female roles in the household. Men clearly strengthened their role as "bread-winner" (regular income-earners) and occasional supporters of selected agricultural activities and women took over the management of subsistence production and marketing of surplus as well as cash crops in addition to their reproductive tasks.

These changes have consequences for the process of 'householding'. Householding is seen here as a process of defining boundaries and negotiating internal relationships. As such, households are not "natural units" of co-residing family members with supposedly harmonious relationships but are conflict-ridden social units.

Two types of household can be found in the village, that is conjugal households and households composed of two to three co-residing nuclear families. The latter type is characterised as a unit of food consumption. A variety of food consumption arrangements and sharing of resources has emerged. Problems with food sharing arrangements have led to conflicts between co-residing nuclear families. This is most likely related to increasing inter-household inequalities with regards to the economic situation of the co-residing households and the resulting differences in purchase power of food items. In several cases these conflicts have led to a break-up of the household arrangement and to the establishment of two independent albeit co-residing units.

The conjugal households are also far from conflict-free. These households are units of consumption, resource sharing and production. However, the form and extent of consumption, sharing, and production among household members depends on cultural notions as well as on the economic situation of the households. With the increased opportunities of earning an income for both husband (employment) and wife (mainly self-employment) new household arrangements have emerged and the underlying principle of household production and resource allocation becomes visible: each partner is entitled to the fruits of his/her own efforts. Li (1989:30), referring to Malays, argues that this principle is also applied in the traditional rice economy:

If the underlying principle is 'to each the product of his own labour', then the property relationship between husband and wife in a rice economy is egalitarian only because of the culturally established division of labour and production requirements pertaining to that particular crop, and not because of any conception of the husband and wife themselves as an integrated unit of production and ownership.

This principle 'to each the product of his own labour' is clearly applied in situations where both, husband and wife, have their own source of income. They do not pool resources but rather divide responsibilities of the different aspects of householding (wife buys the basic items such as food and clothes, husbands sees through the education of the children and may purchase luxury items).

An income-generating woman does not exclusively depend on allocations of money from her husband to manage the household. She enjoys therefore a greater degree of autonomy. In less favourable economic situations (the husband has a very low income and the wife has no own source of income, e.g., due to lack of land) the wife – perceived as more prudent - may control the household budget and thereby decrease her status vis-à-vis the husband.

A further change with consequences for the status of women is the trend of young male villagers to look for employment outside of the village. This has affected the inheritance pattern of households. Realising that - unlike in the past – sons might permanently leave the village and daughters are the ones who stay even after their marriage, the father might decide to pass on at least a small part of the land to the daughters. How exactly this changing inheritance pattern is related to out-

migration, the unavailability of new land, the decline of shifting cultivation in conjunction with the increasing production of perennial cash crop production and/or the possible strategy to bind the daughters to the village context by providing them with property (cf. Wong 1987, Li 1996), is a question for further research.

References

- Abdul Samad Hadi, 1986. "The Forgotten Contribution: Women and Rural Development in Sabah". In *Sojourn*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Special Focus on Women's Studies in Malaysia).
- Boenisch Burrough, J. and Alik Jamin, 1972. Traditional Methods of Dusun Rice Cultivation. In *Sabah Society Journal*, 4(4): 352-364.
- Chayanow, A.V., 1966. On the Theory of Peasant Economy. Translated by D. Thorner, B. Kerblay, and R.E.F. Smith. Homewood, Illinois: American Economic Association.
- Eviota, E.U., 1992. The Political Economy of Gender: Women and the Sexual Division of Labour in the Phillipines. London: Zed Books.
- Harris, O., 1981. "Households as Natural Units". In K. Young, C. Wolkowitz, and R. McCullagh (eds.), *Of Marriage and the Market: Women's Subordination in International Perspective*. London: CSE Books.
- Household Research Working Group, 1982. "Household Structures and the World Economy". Paper presented at a joint seminar "*Households and the World Economy*", Ferdinand Braudel Centre, State University of New York, Binghamton, and Sociology of Development Research Centre, University of Bielefeld, Bielefeld.
- King, V.T., 1999. Anthropology and Development in South-East Asia. Theory and Practice. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.
- Li, Tania, 1989. Malays in Singapore. Culture, Economy, and Ideology. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Li, Tania, 1996. "Household Formation, Private Property, and State". In *Sojourn*, 11 (2): 259-287.
- Nagata, J and J.W. Salaff, 1996. "Introduction" and "Conclusion" to *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science*, 24 (1): 131-146 (Special Issues on Strategies for Survival: Lives of Southeast Asian Women).
- Pugh-Kitingan, J., 1989. Cultural Development in Sabah 1963 – 1988. In Kitingan, J.G. and M.J. Ongkili (eds.), *Sabah 25 Years Later (1963 – 1988)*. Kota Kinabalu: Institute for Development Studies (Sabah).
- Sabah Women Action Resource Group, 1992. Women in Sabah. Needs, Concerns, Aspirations. Kota Kinabalu: Sabah Women Action Resource Group (SAWO).
- Sachs, C.E., 1983. The Invisible Farmers: Women in Agricultural Production. Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allenheld.
- Sahlins, M., 1974. Stone Age Economics. London: Tavistock.
- Suryanata, K., 1994. "Fruit Trees Under Contract: Tenure and Land Use Change in Upland Java, Indonesia". In *World Development*, 22 (10): 1567-1578.
- Williams, T.R., 1965. The Dusun: A North Borneo Society. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Wong, D., 1987. Peasants in the Making: Malaysia's Green Revolution.
Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.