

THE LEGEND OF MOUNTAIN SALT

A local legend has it that the mountain salt was ‘discovered’ by a hunter. After he shot a bird with his blowpipe, the game fell into a marshy area of the forest. The hunter picked it up, plucked the feathers, washed the game in the marshy water and went back home. At home, he cooked the bird over fire and was pleasantly surprised by the flavorful taste of the meat. It was unlike anything he had ever tasted before.

He went back to the place where he hunted and looked around to find out why the bird tasted so savory. He tasted the water of the marsh and realized that it was the water that was different. After the event people started using that water to cook food until they figured out the way to evaporate the water and extract the salt crystals.



Salt spring in Long Layu
© WWF-Indonesia / Cristina Eghenter

We do not need to be part of a traditional community in a physical sense to become actors of change for healthier lifestyles and the protection of bio-cultural traditions. Simply through our food choices we can help protect key biodiversity and maintain the value and cultural identity of food crops.



FORMATAT

The island of Borneo is a treasure trove for biodiversity and culture. The Highlands are the homeland of several Dayak Indigenous Peoples: Lundayeh/Lun Bawang, Sa’ban, Kelabit, and Penan. Although they are now separated by the international border between Indonesia and Malaysia, the groups are linguistically and culturally closely related and share the same origin and homeland in the Highlands. Living in a relatively remote area, even today close social and economic interactions and interdependence are essential part of the life and resilience of these communities.

Learning from unsustainable development experiences in surrounding areas, the local communities were concerned that by intensifying the economic development of the area they would risk the degradation of the quality of the social and natural environment.

In October 2004, the Lundayeh/Lun Bawang, Kelabit and Sa’ban people of the Highlands of Borneo established a transboundary organisation. The Forum of the Indigenous People of the Highlands of Borneo -FORMATAT- aims at increasing awareness and understanding about the Highland communities, maintain cultural traditions and encourage sustainable development in the Heart of Borneo. The event was supported by WWF-Indonesia.



The printing of this brochure is made possible by a grant from The Audemars Piguet Foundation



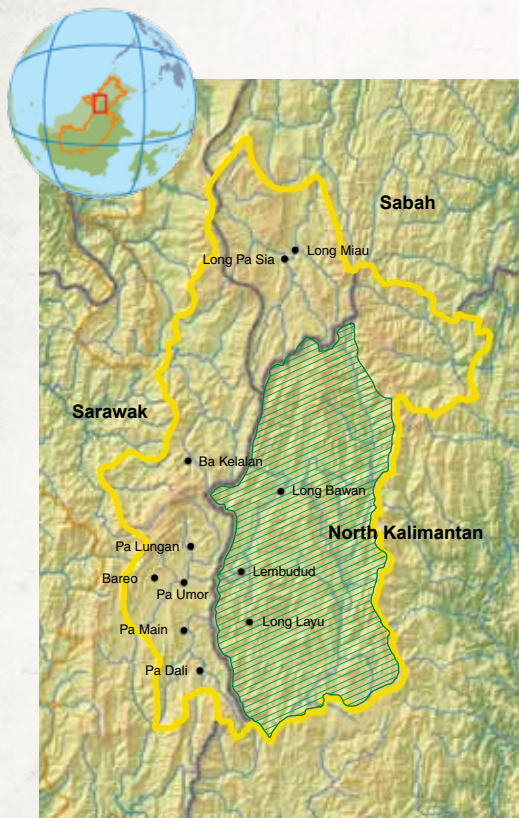
© WWF-Indonesia / Cristina Eghenter

MOUNTAIN SALT

FROM THE KRAYAN HIGHLANDS IN THE HEART OF BORNEO



TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE & NATURAL RESOURCES IN THE KRAYAN HIGHLANDS



The Highlands in The Heart of Borneo

Legend:

- Villages
 - Heart of Borneo
 - ~ Rivers
 - Boundaries
 - National
 - Provincial
 - Highlands
 - ▨ Krayan Highlands
- | Elevation (m) | |
|---------------|---------------|
| 1 - 500 | 501 - 1,000 |
| 1,001 - 1,500 | 1,501 - 2,000 |
| 2,001 - 2,500 | |

The Highlands of the Heart of Borneo offer some enchanting views. The typical landscape is one of wide valleys interlaced with traditional paddy fields, bamboo stands and fruit trees embraced by gentle slopes covered with dense forest. Rivers meander through or at times rush into rapids. The natural scenery is also conditioned by the multiple uses of the land and its natural resources. This time, it looks like people and nature have worked well together to shape the landscape in beautiful and sustainable ways.



© Edwin Meru / FORMADAT

One of the unique features of the Highlands is the high concentration of salt springs in the relatively flat alluvial valleys. Most of them are situated in low swampy areas, others flow from the foothills in the forest and mix with the water of the streams. There are currently 33 known salt springs in the Krayan Highlands, but not all of them are used to produce mountain salt, locally known as *tucu'* (Jayl Langub, 2012).

Jayl Langub, 2012. Krayan Highland Salt in Central Borneo: Its uses and significance. Borneo Research Bulletin, vol 43, 2012: 186-204.

THE PRODUCTION OF MOUNTAIN SALT (*TUCU'*)

Mountain salt originates from high salinity water that flows from deep underground. It was trapped there millions of years ago when the landscape of the Highlands was covered by sea.

Over time, local people have come to know those brine springs which were good for producing salt (*main*) and those which were salt licks (*rupan*) visited by wildlife. Through ingenuity and skill, local people have turned the high salinity water into salt and traded the product throughout the interior. Although we don't exactly know when local people started to extract salt from the



© WWF-Indonesia / Tom Maddox



© WWF-Indonesia / Cristina Eghenter

many salt springs in the area, we do know from ethno-historical records that salt was one of the most valuable commodities traded out of the Krayan Highlands. The salt was a highly priced commodity in the very isolated interior, and -in the old days- one bar of salt could be traded for a traditional metal sword (*parang*) in the Apo Kayan region to the south.

Salt production occurs throughout the year, but is more frequent during the less intensive spells of the rice agricultural cycle. Family groups take turns processing the salt, spending two to three weeks at the production site at a time if far away from the village. Women play a key role in the production process. Salt is used for both home consumption and commercial sale. The processing method is wholly traditional and locally developed, with the only technological addition of metal drums to cook larger quantities of brine and extract salt in a shorter period of time.



© WWF-Indonesia / Tom Maddox



Mountain Salt of Krayan

The traditional way of storing salt is to smoke it in bamboo stems over the fire and then wrap the salt bars with leaves. The salt is typically stored in firewood stacks over the fireplace in the kitchen. This way the salt bars would keep hard and dry and could be used for many years.

The production of mountain salt is an important part of the historical and cultural heritage of the communities living in the Highlands of Borneo. Salt is often given as gift to visitors or brought along when visiting family members in the lowlands.

People from other ethnic groups also seek the mountain salt because they believe it has medicinal properties. To this day, salt remains a trade commodity and a powerful symbol of identity for the people living in the Krayan Highlands.

Recently, the mountain salt of Krayan was included in the Slow Food Ark of Taste products. This is in recognition of the unique characteristics and local importance, but also rarity of the product. (<http://www.slowfoodfoundation.com/ark/details/1979/mountain-salt-from-the-krayan-highlands#.U5axVaWpM7E>)



© Bibong