

**Transformation and endurance of Indigenous hunting: Kadazandusun-Murut
bearded pig hunting practices amidst oil palm expansion and urbanization in
Sabah, Malaysia**

ABSTRACT

1. Land-use change and political–economic shifts have shaped hunting patterns globally, even as traditional hunting practices endure across many local socio-cultural contexts. The widespread expansion of oil palm cultivation, and associated urbanization, alters land-use patterns, ecological processes, economic relationships, access to land and social practices. 2. In particular, we focus on the socio-ecological dynamics between KadazandusunMurut (KDM) hunters in Sabah, Malaysian Borneo, and bearded pigs (*Sus barbatus*; Malay: 'babi hutan'), the favoured game animal for non-Muslim communities throughout much of Borneo. We conducted 38 semi-structured interviews spanning over 50 hr with bearded pig hunters, asking them about contemporary hunting practices and motivations, changes in hunting practices, changes in pig behaviour, and patterns of animal protein consumption in village and urban contexts. 3. Amidst widespread land-use change, primarily driven by oil palm expansion, respondents reported substantially different characteristics of hunting in oil palm plantations as compared to hunting in forests. Additionally, 17 of 38 hunters— including 71% (10/14) of hunters who started hunting before 1985, compared to 26% (6/23) of hunters who started hunting in 1985 or later—mentioned that bearded pigs are behaving in a more skittish or fearful way as compared to the past. Our respondents also reported reductions in hunting frequency and wild meat consumption in urban contexts as compared to rural contexts. 4. However, despite these substantial changes in hunting and dietary practices, numerous KDM hunting motivations, hunting techniques and socio-cultural traditions have endured over the last several decades. For some, bearded pig meat remains deeply tied to food provision, gifting and sharing customs, and cultural components of celebrations and feasts.