



From NTFPs to R,D & C Management

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In the Beginning

In 1994 I was into my second year of my Ph.D. program which was partially supported by FAO and ODA – U.K. As both agencies did not provide funding for local field work and funding resources from FRIM and the Forestry Department were limited, I had to seek additional research funding from other sources. I was alerted by Prof. Jeffrey Vincent that EEPSEA might be the answer to my predicament. That started my association with EEPSEA and Dr. David Glover. I travelled to Singapore to present my proposal to a panel of resource persons and other fellow applicants. The EEPSEA research grant enabled me to successfully complete the field work and my Ph.D. program in July 1995.



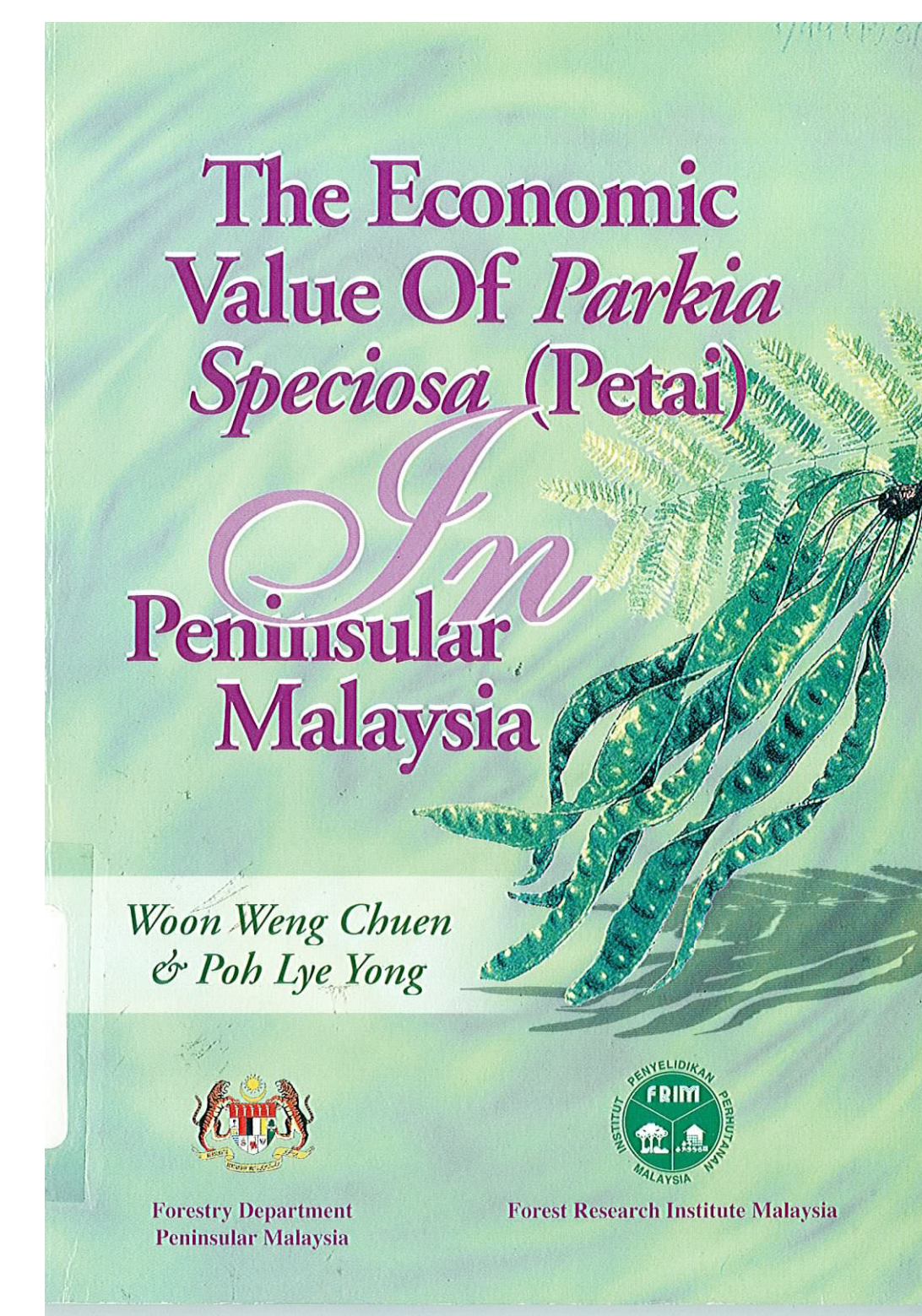
Figure 1. *Parkia speciosa* (petai) tree (R). Prof. Colin Price with local middleman on petai distribution (L).

The Fading EEPSEA Effect

Post 1995 my association with EEPSEA gradually faded. There were a few reasons why that happened. Firstly, during that period EEPSEA was placing more emphasis on environmental economics and I was in the more main stream forestry economics. Secondly, unlike today where the internet and e-mail services are easily available and reaching out to EEPSEA and fellow researchers are almost instantaneous, it was a slow process and we have to depend on the traditional snail mail service.

Thirdly, I was involved in a number of externally funded projects (DANIDA on peat swamp, ITTO on sustainable forest management, JICA on plantation forests) and in 2000 when I was promoted as the Director of the Techno-Economics Division, I never got around to renew my association with EEPSEA. It was not until December 2008 that I met up with Prof. Jeffrey Bennett (ANU) who was the international expert commissioned by UNDP to evaluate the GEF-ITTO funded project which I managed as Project Manager that I found out that we have a common link to EEPSEA. It was a pleasant surprise when I received a flyer from EEPSEA through the e-mail regarding the Impact Conference. That was the cue for me that it is time to renew my association with EEPSEA again.

Figure 2. Petai book published jointly by the Forestry Department of Peninsular Malaysia & FRIM.



Policy and Action

The EEPSEA research grant enabled the study on the economic importance of *Parkia speciosa* (petai) in Peninsular Malaysia to be completed. A practical methodology was developed to measure the monetary value of petai. The results assisted the Forestry Department in developing more appropriate forest management systems that took account of both timber and non-timber benefits. The data on the economic value of petai could also be used for the development of natural resource accounts.

Acknowledgments

My sincere thanks to EEPSEA, ODA-UK, Prof. Jeffrey Vincent, Prof. Colin Price, Forestry Department Pen. Malaysia & FRIM for their guidance & support.

I was enlisted by the Ministry of Primary Industries (now Ministry of Commodities and Plantation Industries) to draft a policy paper to set up the Forest Plantation Development Sdn. Bhd. (FPDSB) in 2006 to establish 375,000 ha (25,000 annually) of forest plantation on a 15 years rotation. The Malaysian government has set aside RM1.065 billion for this forest plantation loan scheme. To date, a total of 14 loan agreements worth RM232.5 million, has been signed to establish a total of 52,435 ha of forest plantation (Bernama – 16 Oct 2009).



Figure 3. C-BIOD Project Team (economics component) & left representing country at US-Malaysia FTA negotiation in Washington DC.

Career and Opportunities

The EEPSEA exposure has opened up a vast network for me and I was involved with a number of internationally funded project. I worked with DANCED on the peat swamp forests, JICA on forest plantation, ITTO on sustainable forest management, UNODC on safrole oils, GTZ on Sabah forest revenue systems and UNDP-ITTO-GEF funded C-BIOD Project as Project Manager. As the Director of Techno-Economics Division in FRIM I built up a team of economists to assist researchers in environmental economics and related areas. In the international arena, I represented Malaysia at the UNFF6 meeting in New York City in 2006, as a negotiator during the US-Malaysia FTA Negotiations and also to ITTO where I managed to secure USD1.5 million worth of projects for FRIM. Currently I am assisting researchers to protect their intellectual property and to help them commercialize their R&D.