

Community Based Ecotourism and Preservation of Indigenous People's Culture: A Case Study of the Orang Asli Jakun Kg Peta, Endau Rompin, Johore, Malaysia

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Abstract: The engagement of the Orang Asli Jakun in tourism development within the Endau Rompin National Park not only creates new economic opportunities for the local community but also plays a crucial role in preserving their unique customs and culture. This qualitative study aimed to capture the perspectives of the local community regarding the contribution of eco-tourism development to preserving the distinct customs and culture of the Orang Asli Jakun community. A total of 10 key informants, consists of Tok Batin (head of village), Jakun Asli Cooperative Directors and individuals with direct involvement and experience in tourism development, were selected for this study. The study's findings indicate that, on average, participants believed that their involvement in tourism significantly contributes to the preservation of customs and culture that face the risk of fading away. Cultural performances, including dances, traditional songs like abangpelanduk, attire made from the bark of the Terap tree, traditional games like sumpit, indigenous cuisine, rituals, and more, are brought to life to showcase to tourists. The annual event such as Johor Sumpit Challenge and Aboriginal Festival serves as a platform to showcase the Jakun Orang Asli culture, not only to tourists but also to the younger generations within the Orang Asli community. It allows the youth to connect with their ancestral culture, which might otherwise be lost with the passage of time. In conclusion, village management and government agencies involved must prioritize the involvement of youth in cultural performance groups within the Jakun Indigenous community. This step is essential to ensure the longevity of the Indigenous community's culture and to promote sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: Community-Based Ecotourism, Culture Preservation, Orang Asli Jakun

1. Introduction

Orang Asli is the only indigenous people found in Peninsular Malaysia. Although most of the villages they established are far from the outside world, the socioeconomics of the Orang Asli community have now been found to have undergone changes compared to 20 years ago, where their economic level is now more modern and no longer primitive. In general, most of them are no longer dependent on the traditional economy, which is to look for forest products only, but now they have started to enter the industrial economy and have improved their standard of living (Omar, 2008). However, these changes are often used as an issue of debate in an effort to improve their standard of living while maintaining their traditional customs and culture, which are increasingly eroded as a result of the development.

The term "culture" is commonly used in English, derived from the Latin word "cultura." In Mandarin, it is pronounced as 'Wen Hua,' and in Arabic, it is referred to as 'Thaqafah' (Asmad, 1990). Cultural identity is a defining characteristic of a society. Similarly, the Orang Asli have their own distinct cultures, rich in diversity and ancient traditions that continue to be practiced to this day. The Orang Asli community actively cherishes their multicultural heritage across generations, ensuring that the younger generation recognizes and embraces their customs and cultural heritage (Denaizal, 2009).

The communities of Orang Asli Jakun in Kampung Peta have actively participated in the development of Johor Endau Rompin National Park. This involvement is due to the close proximity of Kampung Peta to the national park, which is situated in the heart of the world's oldest tropical wilderness. Kampung Peta has emerged as a focal point for Orang Asli cultural tourism, attracting visitors who seek a unique and exotic experience (Mohamad Luthfi Abdul Rahman, 2016).

The customs and culture of the Orang Asli Jakun in Kampung Peta, are very rich and unique, reflecting the cultural heritage and ancient traditions that have been preserved and practiced by this community for centuries. As the indigenous people in the region, they have a special system of values, norms, and procedures that form their cultural identity (Hanapi and AbSamad, 2013). Some of the special characteristics of the customs and culture of the Orang Asli community in Kampung Peta, Pahang, are language and sign language. The Orang Asli community in Kampung Peta has a unique and diverse language. They communicate using different tribal languages, and some tribes even have their own sign language. In addition, the customs and culture of the Orang Asli community in Kampung Peta also include the sustainable use of natural resources. They have ancient knowledge of forest management, traditional agriculture, and hunting and foraging techniques from the environment.

It is important to remember that the customs and culture of the Orang Asli community in Kampung Peta are valuable cultural assets that need to be preserved. Through efforts to preserve and acknowledge their cultural wealth, we can help ensure that this cultural heritage remains alive and is passed on to future generations. This paper aims to explore aspects of material culture, such as weaving and handicrafts, as well as non-material culture, including

medicine and beliefs. Additionally, the study aims to propose mechanisms and suggestions for preserving the cultural practices of the Jakun community. The preservation of their cultural heritage is crucial to raising awareness about the beauty and uniqueness of their way of life. It is essential to safeguard traditional knowledge for the benefit of future generations, ensuring that it is cherished and protected (Kamarudin M. Said, 2018).

Culture among the Orang AsliJakun

Beautiful tropical travel destinations are often a tourist attraction in Malaysia and for visitors who are interested in this natural and environmental scene, hence the existence of ecotourism. Ecotourism and Orang Asli culture are not mutually exclusive because more Orang Asli communities continue to reside in the area, where forests are deepening. These communities have expertise in forest ecosystems and incorporate forest areas into their ritual performances according to their customs. Therefore, this Orang Asli culture is able to attract the attention of visitors who like eco-tourism and even academics, and the government and tourism agencies also pay attention to this matter (JabatanKemajuan Orang Asli, 2020).

In addition, the benefits obtained by the Orang Asli community generate income for them (Hinch and Butler, 2007). According to Badaruddin's (2008), village tourism activities that are monopolized by local residents can reduce the migration of villagers to the city, thus attracting the interest of citizens in urban communities to travel to rural settlements. Usually, the tourists who attend expect the cultural aspects of the area. The settlement becomes a tourism activity to be made into a cultural experience that they want to explore. Therefore, the culture of a community is the main asset for attracting tourists. Cultural factors are considered to play an important role in generating income if they are used as a tourism activity. This is because the tourists can enjoy not only the natural scenery but can also taste a culture that is different from theirs.

The emergence of KampungPeta as a focal point for Orang Asli cultural tourism can be attributed to its unique cultural offerings that attract visitors seeking an authentic and immersive experience. This concept aligns with the principles of cultural tourism, which focuses on promoting and preserving the cultural heritage of a community while offering visitors an opportunity to engage with and learn from the local culture. The Jakun communities living in KampungPeta, being near the Johor Endau Rompin National Park, likely have a unique relationship with the park authorities and stakeholders. Their traditional knowledge of the local flora, fauna, and ecosystems may be valued in conservation efforts. They could be actively involved in park management, serving as guides for eco-tourists, or collaborating with researchers and environmentalists to protect the biodiversity of the area.

Overall, this passage underscores the significance of cultural preservation in promoting ecotourism and generating income for the Orang Asli community. The unique cultural practices and customs of the Orang Asli are assets that attract visitors seeking an authentic cultural experience, contributing to the popularity of eco-tourism in the region. Moreover, the involvement of the Orang Asli in cultural tourism highlights the importance of valuing and

preserving indigenous knowledge and practices, both for the benefit of the community and the conservation of the natural environment.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative data collection method, which involves interviews with 10 key informants from the Jakun Indigenous community. These key informants include the TokBatin (head of the village), members of the Board of Cooperative Directors (KoperasiJakunAsliPetaMersingBerhad), and local individuals who have been involved in tourism development. Through these interviews, the researcher gathered perspectives and experiences from the Orang Asli community regarding the role of Community-Based Ecotourism in preserving Orang AsliJakun culture. This particular community was chosen because it falls under the governance of JAKOA (The Department of Orang Asli Development).

Findings and Discussion

This study was conducted in an indigenous village in Peta Village, Endau Rompin, Johore. This research looks at customs and culture among the indigenous people to raise awareness of their importance in maintaining the cultural uniqueness passed down from their ancestors. They understand the Culture of Orang AsliJakun is one of the attractions for tourist. Most of the respondents emphasized the significance of Jakun indigenous culture as a key attraction for tourism, alongside the natural attractions found in the Endau Rompin National Park area. They also acknowledged that tourism activities have contributed to the revival of their customs and culture, which they believe will be passed down to the younger generation. Furthermore, they expressed the concern that without the involvement of the Jakun indigenous community in tourism activities, their traditional culture, including cultural performances, traditional songs, handicrafts, toys, clothing, and food, may gradually fade away over time. The results of the interviews also revealed that they continue to preserve their customs and culture because they firmly believe that these traditions reflect their traditional wealth and identity as an indigenous community in Peninsular Malaysia. Here are some of their views on the importance of maintaining the customs and culture of the indigenous people of KampungPeta.

"We think that if we don't do it, we already have a culture that is not taken care of; it will disappear like that. Because we are the old generation that doesn't exist..that's why if it's like this we encourage young people to follow... what kind of example is this aaa his wedding ceremony has his customs... we want the young people to be involved so that he knows.. Okay we aaa what are our wedding customs, how do we want the young people to know that..well we can't To the parents.. this old man is like we have a pillar aaa.. a pillar.." (R1)

The statement reflects the concerns of the indigenous people in KampungPeta about the preservation and continuity of their customs and culture. The older generation recognizes the importance of safeguarding their cultural heritage, as they fear that if they do not actively preserve it, their traditions might disappear over time.

Along with the study conducted by Regoniel (2013), which states that the older generation in KampungPeta perceives themselves as the last keepers of the customs and cultural practices that define their identity, They acknowledge that their cultural knowledge and traditions are invaluable and need to be passed down to the younger generation. By doing so, they believe that their culture can endure and thrive, ensuring that their unique way of life remains intact. The use of the term "pillar" suggests that the older generation sees themselves as foundational figures, holding up the structure of their community's customs and traditions. They recognize the significance of their role in maintaining cultural continuity and emphasize the need to involve young people in learning and participating in these customs.

Through active involvement in events such as wedding ceremonies, the older generation aims to set an example for the younger generation, encouraging them to embrace and uphold their cultural practices. They express the desire for the young people to be aware of and value their customs, appreciating the importance of passing down this knowledge to future generations (Adela, 2020). Overall, this statement highlights the community's strong sense of cultural identity and the urgency they feel in preserving their customs. It underscores the intergenerational responsibility of safeguarding their heritage, ensuring that it remains a living and cherished part of their community's life. By actively involving the younger generation, the older generation seeks to ensure that their customs and culture will continue to thrive and be celebrated for years to come.

Apart from that, there are also views that support the above statement by stating that the preservation of customs and culture must be maintained until the end of life to ensure that it does not disappear from the era of modernity, as stated by the second participant (R2) as below:

"I met Mat Jalan; he is a traditional singer near here. He also has the ability to make traditional orang asli clothes, traditional clothes." (R2)

"necessary.. if we look at them now they are more towards gadgets... If we don't have a plan from today then our culture will disappear" (R2)

The statement sheds light on the significance of individuals like Mat Jalan(65years old) in preserving the customs and culture of the indigenous people in KampungPeta, and the mention of Mat Jalan as a traditional singer and skilled maker of traditional Orang Asli clothes underscores the importance of cultural practitioners in maintaining the customs and arts of the community. Traditional singers play a vital role in preserving oral traditions and passing down stories, myths, and historical knowledge through their songs. Their artistry contributes to the continuity of cultural identity and heritage. Additionally, individuals like Mat Jalan who possess the ability to make traditional clothes(are essential for preserving craftsmanship, weaving techniques, and design aesthetics that are unique to the Orang AsliJakun culture of KampungPeta.

A study conducted by Ahmad ShamsulAbd Aziz and Nor AzlinaMohd Noor (2017) also states that, without proactive measures, this cultural erosion poses a threat to the preservation

of the Orang AsliJakun identity in KampungPeta. The concern expressed in the statement reflects the urgency of addressing these challenges to prevent the disappearance of the community's cultural heritage. Based on the results of the study, it also shows that the indigenous community there acknowledges the immediate need to take action to safeguard the indigenous culture from fading away. A cultural preservation plan could involve various strategies, such as documenting oral traditions, promoting traditional arts and crafts, reviving cultural events and ceremonies, and integrating cultural education into the community's daily life and school curriculum.

Having a well-defined cultural preservation plan can help ensure that the rich customs, language, knowledge, and practices of the Orang AsliJakun in KampungPeta are passed down to future generations. It empowers the community to actively protect their cultural heritage and fosters a sense of cultural pride and continuity (MohdYuszaidy, 2018).TokBatin also acknowledged that tourism plays a vital role in revitalizing the culture. For example, we organize the Johor Chopsticks Challenge & Aboriginal Festival every year on August 8th. During this festival, all aspects of the aboriginal community's culture are showcased to tourists and visitors who come to Kg Map, including *sumpitchallenges*, *Kerchang* challenges, traditional food festivals, rituals, wedding ceremonies, and more. Festivals like this not only provide knowledge to tourists but also instill a deeper appreciation for their culture among the younger generation within the indigenous community. The chairman of the KoperasiJakunAsliPetaBerhad (JakunAsli Cooperative Berhad), who is also a youth, expressed a similar sentiment. He emphasized the need for continuous programs to cultivate the youth's interest in indigenous culture. This includes organizing cultural performance classes, dances, and other activities to ensure that the younger generation can actively preserve their culture.

Conclusion

Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of preserving the customs and culture of the Orang AsliJakun in KampungPeta. The Orang Asli community in the region has undergone socio-economic changes, transitioning from a traditional economy to being more involved in the industrial economy, leading to an improvement in their standard of living. However, this progress also raises concerns about the erosion of their cultural heritage as a result of modern development. The study highlights the crucial role played by cultural practitioners like Mat Jalan, who are traditional singers and skilled makers of traditional Orang Asli clothes. These individuals serve as carriers and guardians of indigenous knowledge and arts, ensuring the continuity of cultural identity and heritage. The preservation of traditional arts, crafts, and customs is seen as vital for attracting tourists, promoting eco-tourism, and generating income for the Orang Asli community.

However, the study also acknowledges the challenges posed by modernization, as the younger generation is becoming more reliant on gadgets and technology. This shift in focus might lead to a disconnection from traditional customs and practices. To prevent the disappearance of their cultural heritage, the Orang AsliJakuninKampungPeta acknowledges

the necessity of having a cultural preservation plan. The cultural preservation plan proposed in the study could involve documenting oral traditions, promoting traditional arts and crafts, reviving cultural events and ceremonies, and integrating cultural education into the community's daily life and school curriculum. Such efforts are crucial for safeguarding the cultural uniqueness passed down from their ancestors and ensuring that the cultural identity of the Orang Asli community remains intact and cherished for future generations.

In conclusion, the study emphasizes the need for a balanced approach to development and cultural preservation, where modernization and economic progress can coexist with the preservation of traditional customs and cultural heritage. By actively involving the younger generation in their cultural practices, the older generation seeks to ensure that their customs and culture will continue to thrive and be celebrated. Through the implementation of a cultural preservation plan, the community can actively protect and promote their cultural identity, ensuring that it remains an integral part of their lives and an asset for attracting visitors and promoting eco-tourism.

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Tesis master kg peta

Twenty years later, there are no stalls where craft makers can sell their products, but tourists can buy them at home, according to the goodwill of the tourist guides. Ahmad, for example, is taking advantage of his inclusion in the village's tourist offer³⁹ to sell traditional puzzle games that he makes from bamboo, using machines for which JAKOA has granted him a subsidy. Hatiah and her husband make the same puzzles, but out of wood, as well as baskets (bakul) and mats (tikar) (see photo 15 on previous page). She estimates that she sells RM 300 worth of handicrafts a year, which seems small in relation to the time she spends on them. Syazwani, who shares with Hatiah the characteristic of having a husband employed in the national park (Taman Negara), earns up to RM 300 per month with a more diversified production. She also makes pandan pouches (*Pandanus* sp.) and miniature versions of traditional objects (a rice winnowing basket) for tourists. She learned the craft from her grandmother but now invents her own designs. Both use the raw material they find in the forest or village, pandan and various kinds of rattan. Hatiah earns a better living from rubber trees, but "prefers handicrafts, which she finds more enjoyable⁴⁰" (interview with Hatiah). However, this activity is not well valued. The other villagers do not constitute a market since

they now buy plastic objects (tikar and tudungmakanan or dish covers) at a lower cost (interview with Syazwani). A small tikar costs RM 75. Before my visit to Syazwani, its last customer was a teacher from the village school who had bought three of them, perhaps to resell them or give them away outside the village. Munirah, a 20-year-old woman, sister of Asma and Iman, studied handicrafts for three years in Kuala Lumpur with other Malay and indigenous students. She is specialized in making rattan furniture. Her family would like to see her stay in KampungPeta, but she dreams instead of moving to the city and is not looking to start her own business or to find opportunities. Is it laziness (in her family it is suggested that she is lazy, malas), the refusal to settle in the village or a certain realism? Tourists are more interested in pandan pouches than rattan armchairs. Colin Nicholas, the anthropologist who runs the Centre for Orang Asli Concerns, and Reita Rahim, a Malaysian who is in charge of the NGO Gerai OA (Orang Asli), buy some of the local production to market it in the rest of the country. Gerai OA accompanies indigenous women to help them prize their knowledge and regain economic independence in a context where, as we shall see, their work is less remunerated than that of men. In 2018, this NGO enabled the women of KampungPeta to discover the TompoqTopohMahMeri Women's Initiative in Selangor, to visit the National Craft Expo in Kuala Lumpur or to learn how to dye the pandan leaf during a workshop in their village. But this commitment is limited: "[KampungPeta is] part of our network but as they already have a reliable tourism network, we only give them support services" (interview with Reita Rahim). External support is limited and Syamsul village has plans to set up a craft shop for tourists, but this was already being discussed twenty years ago (Nicholas 1999: 24) and nothing has been done. We will return to this in the next chapter, about how the tourist windfall is captured.

Another handicraft activity is aimed (at least in part) at the inhabitants of the village, that of Fatin and a daughter of Ahmad and Zarina. They both have a sewing machine and do small sewing jobs for a fee. Fatin sews gaiters for the leeches that Saifuddin, whose child is selfemployed in tourism, orders from her in exchange for fabric for RM 3 per pair. These gaiters are sold between RM 15 and 20 depending on the nationality of the tourists, who are the most solvent (and in this case captive) market in the village. However, even in this case, this market is not exploited as it could be, and tourists sometimes go into the forest poorly equipped without having been offered such a purchase. We will try to understand why this manna is not as well exploited as it could be in terms of tourist employment, but we can already see that the villagers do not benefit as much as they could from the presence of tourists on the spot to sell the local production. All these activities have the disadvantage for the villagers of being makal, fluctuating and not bringing a stable income. For many respondents, the prospect of having a permanent job that pays consistently is a more valuable prospect than their current situation. The poster for the KampungPeta Indigenous Festival on August 8, 2019, features a villager in traditional clothing made from the beaten bark of a terap tree (*Artocarpusodoratissimus*). Rujuk page 98 kajiantesis

"It is difficult to obtain a tourist guide's licence⁵⁰" (Qalesya), "we are too stupid⁵¹" (Ismail). Zubaidah would like to work in tourism as a guide: "I can do it, I want to, but I don't know how to communicate, when [Aude] speaks I understand but I don't know how to speak well.⁵²" "Places are expensive," she says, "especially since there are not enough tourists in the park.⁵³" In March 2019, KampungPeta is coming out of a dead period in terms of tourism: two rainy seasons and, in between, a closure of the park for renovation work. Perhaps tourism support activities have not yet recovered, but during my stay the tourist employment is almost reduced to that of guide.