

A study on the acceptance of visitors by the Lojing community and the understanding of their cultural values in support of the process.

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ABSTRACT

The Assessment conducted on the Lojing highland community of Senoi from the Temiar tribe can serve as a reference for further research in the field of social science that will be of immense benefit to management of the highland. This research seeks to answer questions on their acceptance toward visitors and to identify forms of traditional values and culture that can contribute to the mutual acceptance between both parties.

The Temiar community possesses a distinctive attitude toward their sense of hospitality, respect and services. They also perceive visitors as a potential source of income. In a similar way, it applies to their willingness to coexist with the outsiders, modernization, cultural sentiments and sensitivity, religious practices, hedonism, education and brotherhood. They do not easily become the object of ridicule despite their inbred introversion and commendable affability.

Their welfare should be prioritized so that others do not take advantage of their innocence and naivety. Values, culture and norms embraced by people of Lojing are indeed unique to explore. However this does not impede their openness in accepting influx of visitor to their place. Moreover, this process takes place in wake of national integrity as well as the optimization of man power and natural resources to the benefit of society and the nation as a whole.

INTRODUCTION

The majority people who live in Lojing Highland comprise the the indigenious people of Senoi from Temiar tribe. There also a small number of local Kelantanese, Chinese people, immigrants such as Bengalis who have settled in the area through intermarriage, logging activities etc. Most of them are Muslim yet they are still practicing animism, a belief that has been passed down from generation to another and some of them are also Christian converts. The local community earn a living by doing different types of small-scale jobs such as animal breeding, farming and collecting resources from the forest¹.

¹ The number of population at Pos Balar is 564. Hence, the researcher estimates that the population at Pos Lojing is not more than 3000 taking into account the number of students at SK Pos Brooke in Lojing which is only around 300. (Based on a pamphlet circulated in conjunction with Kelantan Chief Secretary Welcoming Ceremony, May 2005 and 2007 SK Brooke's Annual Report)

They are also people who reside in this study area come from other indigenous villages in the peninsula. Some of them originate from Sabah and Sarawak who would later marry and work with the people here. Usually the marriage to foreign immigrant does not last long because the former will return to their respective countries when their working contracts end. This is also due to the fact that most of the indigenous people who live here are still strongly connected to their traditions.

This survey aims to measure the acceptance of Lojing people towards the visitors and also to identify cultural values that support the process along the way. In addition to exploring and making assessment of this special community, this study is starting point for data collection that serves as a guideline for further research on social sciences to the benefit of Lojing Highlands management.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Background

Lojing Highlands is strategically located in the southern part of Kelantan and bordered by Cameron Highland in the north at an attitude of 1400 meters above sea level with an area of approximately 23.435 hectares. Logging Highlands makes up a vast spread of lush green area that covers Gunung Warpu (the peak), Gunung Tangga, Gunung Chall, Bukit Senjort, Bukit Pangas and Gunung Tajam. It is gifted with a few rivers that serve as the main source of water to the local residents of Sungai Belatop and Sungai Nenggiri. Lojing Highlands is moderately cold with the temperatures between 18 to 27°C.

The area has enormous potential for development not only limited to forest and wildlife conservation but also an apposite location for education, recreation, and tourism. Furthermore, the moderately cold weather it offers is suitable for agricultural activities, businesses and tourism which best resembles its counterpart, Cameron Highland with regard to its potential prospect in the future. Besides, it is regarded a centre for scientific research and data collection in ecology and forest diversity. Hence, in light of that importance, opportunities that can lead to economic, social and political welfare services should be formulated and explored at its best. Prior to this, there has been no research on Lojing except for several studies on commercialized woods and wildlife.

Data collection

This study location covered several villages located in Lojing Highland. Those villages were Kg. Jelgek, Kg. Mendrod, Kg. INSEP, Kg. Jekjok, Kg. Grab, Kg. Kingkong, Kg. Jedip, Kg. Sengsang, Kg. Sangwai, Kg. Brook Lama, Kg. Sigar, Kg. Lojing, Kg. Bahong, Kg. Sendrod, Kg. Liat and Kg. Kuala Tahu.

The respondents involved in this study consisted of 91 local residents and 65 outsiders who had established a close acquaintance and were familiar with the community. Meanwhile the informants

involved were 23 local people and 18 people from the local authority. Most of them were teachers from SK pos Broke.

The study conducted in Lojing lasted for more than two weeks meanwhile it took a period of one week for another study conducted at Pos Balar and Pos. the research instrument used were questionnaire, interview and observation.

Questionnaires distributed to respondents who had been in long close contact with the local population. Sampling method used for the study was proportional stratified random sampling; the sample size selected for each layer was according to the rate of population size based on the formula recommended by the Isaac and Michael (1979) and Sekeran (1992)².

To collect data, researchers were to read questionnaire to the respondents who could not read. On the other hand, the interview was conducted with the informants of among the influential local individuals along with the local authority, which included teacher at SK Pos Brooke.

In addition to participatory observations(permerhatian ikut serta),the researcher also took into account the observation conducted at Pos Balar and Pos Hau, Gua Musang for the purpose of comparing the result with the Lojing population.

Data Analysis

The statistical package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software of the version 13 was used to conduct data analysis collected from the questionnaires described in the form of frequency (F), percentages (%) and average (min). All quantitative data is processed and analyzed using synthesis method in an effort to organize the data that would meet the research needs.

Results and Discussion

The result will be divided into two main scopes; seeking prior answers on the degrees of Lojing residents' acceptance of visitors and identifying forms of traditional values and culture that can contribute to the mutual acceptance of both parties. The result is presented in a sequential manner based on the questionnaires distributed.

Introduction to respondents and informats

Based on the statistics, the respondents consisted of 91 people from Lojing itself, 48 local kelantanese and 17 people were non locals. Meanwhile the number of informants selected for the interview was 23 people of Temiar tribe and 18 non-locals who were familiar with the community.

² ² Seperti berikut: $\frac{X^2NP(1-P)}{d^2(N-1)+X^2P(1-P)}$

$$S = \frac{X^2NP(1-P)}{d^2(N-1)+X^2P(1-P)}$$

S: Saiz sample yang diperlukan, N: Jumlah populasi yang kecil, P: Nisbah populasi dilihat pada 0.50, D: Darjah ketepatan dalam populasi pada 0.05, X²: 3.841 pada paras keyakinan 0.05.

Out of 156 respondents, 88 (56%) were the indigenous people, 64 (41%) came from the Malay community and 4 (3%) were non-locals from Indonesia and Bangladesh. Most of respondents were youth (87%) in that 82 of them aged between 15-30 years old and another 47 aged between 31-45 years old with a small number of the elderly involved as well (17%). 22 of them aged between 46-56 years old and 5 were above 57 years old. 93 or 60% of the respondents were male while the remaining 63 that makes up 40% of the population were women. 87 or 56% of the respondents were Muslim, 51 or 33% were pagans, while 15 people or 10% of the respondents were Christians and 2 people with unidentified religious propensity.

Concerning experience/ time spent between visitors and the Lojing community. 78 respondents spent a period of 1 month and 48 % of them were together between 1 week to 1 month.

The level of acceptance of visitors among Lojing Highland's residents

The findings of the questions posed on Lojing population's acceptance of visitors are presented in the following numerical order.

1. On the question whether the local residents were happy with and welcome the visitors. The finding showed that most of them do feel that way (65%) with a small number of them (5%) showed the opposite, while a huge number of them were hesitate to accept the visitors (30%).

An interview with them also indicated that the local residents could accept the presence the outsiders. However, there was a need for them to see who the visitors were and what they would like to get from the local people. This was due to the local residents' prejudice against the people's intention to exploit them as several previous cases had shown.

2. On The question of sense of respect for the visitors of cultural and racial difference. A number of respondents (32%) did not view the variety as a condition to show respect for the visitors. In fact, a small group of them (10%) regarded the outsiders as equal regardless of the their race and culture. However, a large percentage of them (49%) expressed the need to see the types of races the visitors belong to before making a decision weather to accept them or not.

They also mentioned in the interview that they lacked trust in the immigrant visitors (either legal or not) as compared to those of Malay Muslim or Chinese. This resulted from the cases of the immigrants taking advantage of the vulnerability of the local residents. Marriage to obtain citizenship is a case in point.

3. The question was on whether or not there was a good treatment from the local residents if they did not get any benefit or advantage. The local community's sincerity was tested through this evaluation when not even half of them (46%) agreed to treatment without strings attached. Whereas 26% of the respondents stated that a better treatment would be provided only when there were rewards in return.

When this question was raised to the local people informants, most of them were shy and refused to respond. The same question was given to the outside people and they clearly told the good relationship between the local and outside community comes with strings attached.

4. When the local people were asked about whether or not the visitors could stay with them for one week or so, most of the respondents (60%) were hesitation and showed lack of approval. In fact there were those who totally disagreed (1%). Nevertheless, quite a number of them (38%) thought otherwise. The reasons that caused them to behave that way were due to their poverty and privacy rights.

5. Does the local community offer a lot of services to the visitors?

As the previous response, many of the respondents (42%) showed hesitation to offer services to the visitors. In fact, 21% of the respondents displayed less interest in offering services to the visitors. However, there was undeniably quite a big number of them (37%) who were willing to do so if asked for.

This is due to their perception that, it was common to repay for each service offered, even as small as a cigarette for an adult or some candies for the children.

Forms of Traditional and Culture Values supporting the process of Acceptance of Relationship between Both Parties.

6. The question on the fondness of knowledge and modernity brought along by the visitors. The respondent mentioned that the residents were fond of the knowledge and modern features the visitor took along with them (72%). However, there were also residents who were quite hesitant and showed less or no agreement with the nature of knowledge imparted by the visitors.

When the residents and other informants were asked in detail, they explained that they were possibly complacent with their existing lifestyle.

7. The residents were less sensitive when they were told about their underdevelopment and poverty problems which 66% of the respondents concurred with the statement. They seemed to resign themselves to such deprivation as the way it was. Nevertheless, the community showed discomfort if they were labeled as such with the intention of degrading them (34%).

8. Part of the local residents were warm when they were asked to have a conversation and work something together although a large proportion of the respondents agreed that the affability the corporation did exist (60%), however but they was a large number of residents who appeared difficult and least accommodating towards to the visitors (40%). Their reasons being that they were reserved and thought of themselves as lowly and not of equal status to the outsiders.

9. The local residents were more receptive of the advice and guild from their leaders and elders as compared to the outsiders. The obedience toward their leaders and elders was obvious. However, there were those living in isolation (21%), in fact a small section denied the existing leadership (7%).

10. Not all residents were found to be respecting those who provide help/assistance for them. Most respondent agreed that the local people showed more respect to those who gave them help and benefits to them (55%). Only 26% of respondent stated that help and benefits were not the

only way of showing respect to the visitors. A denial of this statement by the respondents existed as well (20%).

11. Visitors who criticized the religious practices/belief and cultures were found to be not likable (73%). Worse reactions would be take place if the criticisms were blatant.

12. The male visitors were allowed to warmly greet girls and women in the community. There was no such a condition were the male visitors were prohibited from greeting or mingling around in a friendly manner with any of them. The reason was that, this action was not seen as a wrongdoing.

However as a reminder, 19% of the respondents perceived the matter otherwise. The informants stated that it was owing to the fact that there were several unacceptable cases involving their girls before.

13. The visitors were not allowed to move freely in the house of the local people. Even if the residents allowed them to visit and enter their house (48%), being in the house freely was not a likeable behavior for the residents (52%).

14. The “bumiputera” and Kelantan visitors were not welcome more than foreigners were. The local residents according to respondents did not see that the “bumiputeras” other than them and the kelantanese gain more acceptance in comparison to foreign people (69%).

According to the interview report, the respond behind respondents’ opinions in this survey resulted from the fact that they did not only deal with the “bumiputera” and kelantanese. The location of Lojing near Cameron Highland explained that the local residents were also visited by people of difference ethnics and races.

15. Practice of covering “aurat” and being courteous was not priority in the way of the residents’ appearance (77%). However, a small section of them (23%) chose to discipline themselves by dressing properly for security’s sake.

It was only according to the informants that the Lojing residents took an emphasis on safety when talking about “aurat” and manners.

16. Most of the youth in the local community did not receive education higher than the Malaysian Education Certificated (SPM) level. There were youth who were uneducated and illiterate.

This problem had been highlighted by many groups of people in an effort to inculcate love for knowledge for the local people. The informant attributed the problem to the attitude of the parent who did not motivate their children to study as high as possible

17. The damaging hedonistic culture from the west had influenced the group of the teenagers in the community (63%). It was admitted by the informant from the local residents themselves when

many of them had learnt to take alcoholic drinks and take delight in excessive entertainment besides the existence of some Temiar girls who were involved in immoral behavior.

18. Residents (51%) hated visitors who urged them to change from their current culture. Even though changes and development were considered necessary by the local people, but they did not see the change to be necessary at the expense of their own identity and ancestral cultures inherited to them previously. Therefore, almost half of the respondents (49%) expressed their animosity towards to the visitors who had the intention to make them change from their current lifestyle.

19. Residents (67%) were found to be only uncomfortable with the community, without interference from the outside community. In line with the current global development, the local residents believed that there was a need to have the interference and two way communication between theirs and the outside community. However, it needs to be noted that 33% of the respondents had achieve so far.

Values, culture and norms supporting the process of acceptance obtained from an additional observation.

.Based on the observation researchers has discovered that these indigenous people are well known with their long-standing practice of their own of 3Ms which are *makan*(eat), *main*(play) and *menyanyi*(sing) in their life. Thus, the basic 3Ms *membaca* (read), *menulis*(write) and *mengira*(arithmetic))to be instilled in the new generation of these people should also include the abovementioned concept to that they will not lose focus and give their full cooperation in any activities in any activities done with them.

They are also very fit in characters and in favour of visitors who are willing to participate with them in any activities done such as bersewang (a type of dance). Interestingly, Visitors with military characteristics are very much favoured by them. Thus, visitor who come to visit these people are advise to able-bodied, fit and less trendy in order to be accepted in the community.

The level of religious practice among the indigenous people is relatively low and less attention is given to shariah-related matters. They are still strongly attached to their animistic belief and distinctive customs that the dog keeping by Muslims for instance, is widely practiced and not deemed an offence.

In addition, interaction with visitor is preferably done in Bahasa Melayu with the visitor have to first initiate the conversation thanks to their continental introversion.

The study also indicates that most of local residents are in ignorance of the Malaysia legal system on account of their persistent disinclination to know about the outside world as well as being in the long-running state of complacency without any external interferences. This will consequently give ways to those who have vested interest to take advantage of their bliss ignorance thus an abuse as in the case of intermarriage and employment offers with disproportionate salary, taking these innocent people to clear up farms and grow crops only to be

replaced later by foreign labours for harvest on the pretext of their being indolent and demand for a high pay in a case in point.

There is also a small number of youth who have become the dregs of humanity, this is evidenced by the widespread of impropriety of western influences and hedonism among the young generation which will usually result in intoxication, fighting's and prostitution among them.

Thus, the visitors should take account of the results obtained from the interviews. The additional information of the understanding of the sample's values, traditions, culture, etc which serve as contributing factors towards mutual acceptance between both sides are as follow:

- a. Attending to their welfare
- b. Developing the economy of the people in tandem with humanity
- c. Instilling a sense of courtesy and ethics
- d. Providing tokens and meals in activities done with them
- e. Feeding them empty promises
- f. Developing a educational and religious infrastructure
- g. Increasing the number of social and cultural programs
- h. Enhancing community spirit and unity
- i. Putting deployment and effective information delivery system in practice in any educational and awareness talks held.
- j. Curbing the increasing influence of western culture among the young generation
- k. Establishing a strong sense of camaraderie and integration

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, despite the distinctively unique display of culture and norms of Lojing Highlands community, the process of acceptance of visitors takes place at full throttle without any obstruction. This process is indeed a must for national integration in order to optimize manpower and natural resources if offers in an effort deemed a noble move to help both the local community and the nation.

CREDIT

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