

*A Study on Traditional Javanese-Malay Kampung Structure, Culture and Community  
Activities in Kampung Sungai Haji Dorani, Selangor, Malaysia*

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## **Introduction**

After Malacca Sultanate era, since 1511, Malaysia was ruled under Portuguese, Dutch and British colonial government. It was during British era, when three major races in Malaysia; Malay, Chinese and Indian, were being separated in three different settlement areas; rural, town and plantation. Since then, Malay has been mainly involved in agriculture, Chinese in commercial and trading, while Indian in plantation works, usually rubber and oil palm. Malaysia gained independence in 1957, and Sabah and Sarawak in Borneo Island integrated in 1963. Today, it consists of 12 states and 2 federal districts; Kuala Lumpur and Labuan, where each state contains districts and villages. The population of Malaysia reached 28.9 million in 2012. Today, it consists of Malay (which includes the minorities of Javanese, Minangkabau and Bugis), Chinese, Indian and aborigine ethnics in the Peninsula; Orang Asli, and in the Borneo Island; Iban, Kadazan, Melanau etc.

Being the major race in the country, Malays are also the major race in the rural areas, where a village is called Malay Kampung (kampung means village in Malay Language). A traditional Malay Kampung is usually a paddy village or a farm village, which is mostly located in the coastal areas, where the earliest settlements were built. A Malay Kampung is lead by a 'penghulu' (headman), helped by the religious leaders from the Mosque Committee; imam, bilal, siak, and the Youth Committee. After 1957, Ministry of Rural and Regional Development established a new committee in each village called Village Safety and Development Committee. It is lead by the headman and participated by the villagers themselves.

An example of traditional Malay Kampung (paddy village) described in this paper is Kampung Sungai Haji Dorani, located in the state of Selangor. This project was selected as a case study of this paper due to the traditional Malay Kampung structure, culture and community activities, and the unique characteristics of Javanese; as the main population in the village, along with the culture and custom that are still being practiced in the villagers' daily lifestyle. This village is also participating the new rural tourism program called Malaysia Homestay Program held by the Ministry of Tourism, which aims to help the rural Malays financially, to promote Malay Kampung as a new tourism capitol and to help preserving Malaysian traditional culture.

## **Malay and Javanese**

Malay is defined as someone who speaks Malay Language, lives in Malay culture, or one of the parents was born in Malaysia before the independence year of 1957. A Malay may also be any Indian Muslim or Indonesian; Javanese, Minangkabau or Bugis, who has been living in Malaysia before the independence year. An Indonesian person, who is mentioned here, was resulted by the migration from the archipelago to the peninsula, happened during the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial period. Javanese and Bugis people from Java formed majority of this flow but Minangkabau people from Sumatera were much earlier established their kingdom in the peninsula. These three major ethnics migrated to each separated area in the peninsula, where Javanese were mostly migrated to Malacca and Selangor areas; Bugis migrated to Johor area, and Minangkabau migrated to Negeri Sembilan area (Figure 1).



Figure 1. The human migration from Indonesia to the peninsula before 1957.

Being a part of people who migrated to Malaysia before 1957 and before the Republic of Indonesia was born; Javanese prefer to be considered they came from Java, not Indonesia. Therefore, they refer themselves as ‘Orang Jawa’ (Javanese people); differentiate today’s Indonesian, especially the migrant workers, by calling them ‘Orang Indonesia’ (Indonesian people), and other Malay as ‘Orang Melayu’ (Malay people). The term of Javanese-Malay has not been established nor analyzed in local and academic discourse, but is used by Miyazaki in his research to denote their legal status as ‘Malaysian Malay’ (Miyazaki, 2000).

Migration of people from Java to the peninsula began as early as the fifteenth century when they settled in Malacca where they established their own quarters and were administered by an appointed chief. Here, they were reported to have specialized in trading rice and other food, as well as in sailing. Then, in 1890s, the migration flow spread into the state of Selangor, when Kuala Lumpur inhabitants were found mostly traders from Sumatra and Java (Gullick, 1993). Javanese in Selangor were involved mainly in agriculture; opening paddy field, coconut farm and coffee plantation, and a small number on tin mining at the Kelang River. Areas of Selangor that were settled mostly by Javanese during this time, and remained until today, were Tanjung Karang, Sabak Bernam, Kuala Selangor, Kelang, Banting and Sepang (Noriah, 2001).

Among the ‘push’ factors that caused the migration of Indonesian to the peninsula were poverty, dense population, heavy taxation and over-fragmentation of cultivated land in their hometown. Khazin described their migration into two categories, ‘merantau’ (traveling) and ‘minggat’ (sneaking off) (Khazin, 1978). The first group was the people who migrated to improve their standard of living by working with foreign traders or to spread their own business or to seek new knowledge. The second



group was the people who ran away from politic crisis, crime or family issues. Some of them were who settled permanently at the peninsula during their journey to perform their Haj at Mecca, or brought by the British government to develop new agricultural land in Selangor.

Today's Javanese in Malaysia define themselves with the use of the Javanese Language during their daily conversation among each other. Their origin is mostly revealed by their names, where the fathers often retained Javanese names, which end with -man or -min. However, younger Javanese; the second and third generations, rarely speak and understand Javanese Language, and usually have Malay-Arabic names similar to other Malays.

The migration of Javanese into Malaysia has brought a few adaptations into Malay culture, which recognized today as the official Malaysian culture, mainly in the art and entertainment world, such as introducing a traditional dance of 'kuda kepang', traditional self-defensed art of 'silat', traditional puppetry of 'wayang kulit' and traditional music of 'gamelan' (Figure 2).



Wayang Kulit



Silat



Kuda Kepang



Gamelan

Figure 2. Adaptations of Javanese art into Malay culture.

Kuda kepang is a dance performance using wooden-horses, where the horses will be moved like a real horse, according to the rhythm of the music played. Silat is an ancient self-defensed art, created from mixed animal's movements that threaten by enemy. It can be a strong self-protection even if someone is being attacked with a weapon. Wayang kulit is puppetry performance of shadow, which is played by the idols, made by animal skin. Dances and movements of the idols are played based on the ancient Mahabrata's holly book. Meanwhile, gamelan is a musical performance using instruments made by silvers and coppers, which usually accompany the performance of kuda kepang, silat and wayang kulit.

### **Kampung Sungai Haji Dorani**

Kampung Sungai Haji Dorani is located in Sabak Bernam district, in the state of Selangor, where the earliest Javanese people settled mostly in early 1900s. The earliest settlement was built around 1910 mainly by Javanese who came from Java and a few Malays from surrounding villages. The earliest development was concentrated in the coastal area, where the villagers were connected with other places mainly by water transportation. Encouraged to be involved in agriculture by the British government, Javanese started to plant paddy and build their houses on the paddy field, while Malays prefer to work in coconut farms and settle in the coastal area.

In Javanese community, a leader (formerly known as 'lurah') is selected among the first founder of the village and by his knowledge in Islam. In this village, a Javanese man called Haji Dorani was selected as a leader, due to his effort in uniting the communities of Javanese, Malay and Chinese during the time, and his title of 'Haji', which means he has performed his Haj at Mecca. He also encouraged the village people to enlarge the existing river to enable fishermen to keep their boats at the riverbank, including Chinese fishermen. Later, the villagers named the river and the village with the leader's name, in order to pay their respect and appreciation.

A good quality of cultivated land has attracted more people from surrounding to move into the village, to develop the paddy field, followed by the construction of irrigation canal by the British government. Then they established paddy farming as the main economic activity. During 1941, migration of Chinese people increased, especially during the Japanese occupation in Malaysia, created a small town in the middle of the village, which is known today as 'Pekan Sungai Haji Dorani' (Sungai Haji Dorani Town). Today, Kampung Sungai Haji Dorani consists of 1,660.84 acres, with population of 2,042; 1972 Malays, 67 Chinese and 3 Indians, where 79% of the villagers work as farmers; paddy, coconut or oil palm, and the rest as fishermen, small and medium entrepreneurs, and government workers.

### **Structure and Layout**

Kampung Sungai Haji Dorani today consists of coconut farm, paddy field and oil palm plantation. Houses are built between coconut trees, or in the middle of the paddy field, where the owner of the house usually own the paddy lot around his house. Paddy farmers' houses are located along the road, which was built along the irrigation canal. Here in each road, there is a mosque or 'surau' (a smaller prayer hall than mosque), where a Mosque Committee will represent the road in the village's

administration. The leaders of all the Mosque Committees will then be members in the Village Development and Safety Committee, lead by the village's 'penghulu' (headman). This traditional administration system; called 'kariah system', is only used in larger village, especially in Selangor, to help villagers connected with the headman through the Mosque Committee. Moreover, in a Muslim society, religious men, namely the members in the Mosque Committee, are highly respected and prioritized in every communal and personal event.

Out of 493 houses in this village, 357 are traditional houses, built with timber, raised floor, minimal use of furniture, and a large number of windows, which allows natural ventilation into the house. The raised floor usually reached 2 meters in height, to be said influenced by Javanese architecture from Java, Indonesia, and use for storing paddy farming tools and rice after harvesting activities. Some farmers even use this space for family relaxation space during day. These houses are not surrounded by any fence or boundaries, which allows trespassing among neighbors and kin relationship among villagers. The large house compound is where the owner builds tents as shading to be used during 'kenduri' (communal feast) to celebrate religious festivals and events such as wedding ceremony.

The shade and windy atmosphere, with the sound of chickens from the chicken hoot coming from behind the house, the beautiful landscape of paddy field, have created Kampung Sungai Haji Dorani as an example of a typical environment of a Malaysian village (Figure 3). The Ministry of Rural and Regional Development has recognized this village as the Best Village in Selangor in 1990, due to its high evaluation on traditional and historical environment and landscape.



Figure 3. A traditional Malay house surrounded by coconut trees and paddy field in Kampung Sungai Haji Dorani.



## **Culture, Lifestyle and Community Activities**

Daily lifestyle of paddy farmers in Kampung Sungai Haji Dorani started from the paddy field, followed by a visit to their vegetable or fruit's farm during afternoon. After having lunch at home with family, male villagers usually spend time at the coffee shop and female at their house compound, share stories with their friends and neighbors. Some villagers go to the mangrove to catch crabs and cockles, for their dinner and sometimes to sale at the evening market located at the small town in the center of the village. Before having dinner with family at home, villagers; mainly male attend communal prayers at the mosque (or surau) to perform their 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> requested prayers of the day.

The mosque has been the most important communal space in a Malay village, where not only the daily prayers in the evening, but also weekly prayer on Friday and annual prayers during the fasting month of Ramadan, eid al fit and eid al adh. It is during Ramadan, where both male and female will attend to perform their 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and tarawih prayers (a special prayer performed daily during Ramadan) and sometimes have their iftar dinner (a meal to break the fast) at the mosque. During eid al fitr (feast of breaking the fast), villagers will attend a special prayer at the mosque in the morning as the most important event to begin the month of celebration, after the fasting month. After the prayer, villagers will visit relatives, friends and neighbors, where all houses opened for the whole day and guests will be welcomed with special food and beverages. Here in Kampung Sungai Haji Dorani, Javanese have their own style of tradition called 'baraan', where all males in the village will visit all houses in a group on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day, while females will be doing the same thing on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day. This custom has been practiced since ancient time in Java, Indonesia, for the purpose of strengthening the community and relationship among villagers.

Meanwhile, eid al adh (feast of sacrifice) is celebrated by Muslims worldwide to honor the willingness of Prophet Ibrahim to sacrifice his son to a command from God. It also marks the end of annual Muslims' Hajj to Mecca. During this day, villagers will attend special prayer in the morning at the mosque, followed by animal slaughtering event, which usually held on the mosque's compound. This event is a sacrifice done by villagers who can afford their domestic animal such as cow and goat, to be distributed to neighbors and poorly in and surrounding village.

Mosque provides function not only as a place to perform prayers, but also used as school for kindergarten and Quran classes, and a meeting hall for the village committees. A part of Malay wedding ceremony called 'nikah' is also held in the mosque followed by a reception at the bride and the groom's house. Occasionally, some villagers will bring food the mosque to held a kenduri here as a gratitude to God after fortunate and unfortunate events happened by providing food to the people who comes to pray the mosque. Again, it shows how religious people in a village are highly respected by the villagers as a part of their life events.

Kin relationship and cooperation among the community in the village can also be seen in a wedding ceremony, which is also accounted as a community activity, and usually held in the bride or groom's house. It will involve the whole community during preparation week, the day of the ceremony and days after. One week before the ceremony, a meeting will be held to divide task among villagers to prepare food,

decoration and performance. Females will be preparing materials for the meals in the house, and males will be cooking on the house compound under a tent. Meanwhile, young males, usually members from the youth committee, will be practicing for the cultural dances and performances to be shown in front of the bride and groom during the ceremony day. All these activities are organized by gotong-royong, in order to show their volunteer to help the family, where no villager will be requesting payment for their tasks. This custom is one of Malay's characteristics since ancient time until today, both in Malaysia or Indonesia.

### **Malaysia Homestay Program**

Realizing the potential of Malay Kampung as a new tourism type due to the trend of tourists visiting rural areas for a short and long term vacation, Malaysian government; Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Rural and Regional Development and Ministry of Agriculture, have established a new program called Malaysia Homestay Program in 1995. Inspired by the concept of 'bed and breakfast', this program is a combination of English Education Homestay Program in United Kingdom, Farm Stay in New Zealand and Farm Inn in Japan. It is defined as a program where tourists stay with the villagers (as their host families) for one day, two days or three days, and experience Malay Kampung lifestyle, culture and existing economic and community activities in the village.

This program aims to help involving rural Malays in a new sector other than agriculture; tourism and business, promoting Malay Kampung as a new tourism product and preserving Malaysian culture and tradition. Villagers can be participated as the homestay association members; managing activities for the program, host families or guides during tourists' visit to the farms and factories. By 2012, the number of participating villages and rural Malays as the host families, tourist received and income increased, showing that this program has attracted more interest among rural Malays as the host and tourists; both domestic and foreign.

### **Dorani Homestay**

Kampung Sungai Haji Dorani joined this program and created 'Kampung Sungai Haji Dorani Homestay' (Dorani Homestay) in 1996, after realizing their potential as a unique Javanese village; which has different lifestyle and culture from other Malay Kampung, and plenty of existing empty rooms in each house after the youth migration to the city. Lead by the former chairman of Farmer Committee in the village, Dorani Homestay started with 8 host families in 1996 and increased into 31 host families in 2012. Homestay program has been helping the villagers as their additional income during weekends besides farming during weekdays, and opportunity to involve the national tourism sector. They also participate actively during cultural performance, which is a part of the program activities, where they can proudly introduce their Javanese traditional dances, instruments and arts to the domestic and foreign tourists.

Activities in the homestay program are created by the homestay association members (Figure 4). The number of participating villagers, directly and indirectly, is unknown, however, almost all villagers gather at the Homestay Activity Center to welcome the tourists during the first day, usually on Saturday. During the welcome ceremony, tourists will be welcomed with coconut drinks, accompanying by a traditional musical performance by the homestay association members, followed by the introduction of



each host family selected for each tourist. During their stay, they will also be given opportunity to experience traditional sports and games that usually played by the villagers during evening, and experience the villagers' economic activities of paddy farming and fishing. Tourists, especially foreign tourists may also experience a mock-up Malay-Javanese traditional wedding ceremony, which will be organized and attended by the association members, with the help from the whole villagers. During Saturday night, the members of Youth Committee in the village perform a cultural performance of kuda kepong, wayang kulit, silat and gamelan.



Welcome Ceremony



Eating nasi ambeng



Fishing at the paddy field



Watching kuda kepong performance

Figure 4. Activities in Dorani Homestay's program.

Participating in Malaysia Homestay Program also allows Javanese community in the village to introduce their Javanese cuisine and long-lost traditional dance of 'barongan' to the other Malaysians and foreign tourists. Among the well-known Javanese cuisine is 'nasi ambeng' (a set of rice, vegetable, noodle and chicken) which is provided for 3 to 4 people. The concept of eating together in one big plate encourages kin relationship among them, which is a custom brought from Java, Indonesia since the ancient times. Nasi ambeng has been the main meal for the tourists in Dorani Homestay since its establishment. Meanwhile, 'barongan' is a dance of animal movements, which was failed to be adapted into Malaysian culture during their earliest migration like other arts and dances such as kuda kepong, wayang kulit, silat and gamelan. Barongan is sometimes performed during the cultural performance on Saturday's night in the homestay program's activities.

## Conclusion

Kampung Sungai Haji Dorani was founded during Javanese migration from Indonesia to the peninsula, mainly areas in Selangor, when Malaysia was ruled under British colonial government. Javanese migration has brought several adaptations into Malay

culture, including creating a unique community in this village.

The kin relationship among villagers and the concept of gotong-royong; in every community activities and festivals, from daily to annual events in Kampung Sungai Haji Dorani, has been the successful factor of Dorani Homestay. Meanwhile, the openness layout of Malay Kampung and Malay traditional house show the villagers' friendly attitude in welcoming tourists to their village and house, since private areas and trespassing other's territory rarely exist. Moreover, in this village, custom and culture of Javanese community has created the characteristic of Dorani Homestay. It does not only attract foreign tourists, but also domestic tourists among non-Javanese Malay, Chinese and Indian from other districts and states.

Along with the establishment of Dorani Homestay, Kampung Sungai Haji Dorani has faced many development and growth on the communal facilities, infrastructures and villager's income. Ministry of Tourism has built a few new communal facilities such as the activity center for communal events of homestay program's purpose. Ministry of Rural and Regional Development helps by providing training and courses for the villagers participated in the program, helping them on tourism and hospitality management. Ministry of Agriculture also helps by giving priority in agricultural development to villages that participating in the homestay program. Malaysia Homestay Program is not only benefited to the rural Malays but also to the rural development, besides playing a role as a new effort to preserve the multicultural identity of Malays and Malaysia.

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