

**A Study of Cultural Identity, Cultural Heritage and Tourism
Development in Mah Meri Community Cultural Village, Carey Island,
Selangor, Malaysia**

By

Firmansyah Shidiq Wardhana
CEB110723

Xiao Yuhan
CEB120704

Chen Qian
CEB120705

SEMESTER 1
SESSION 2014/2015

Full research report submitted to the
Department of Southeast Asian Studies
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
University of Malaya

for partial fulfillment of
ATEA3321 (Cultural Tourism of South East Asian)

On week 14, 14th December 2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Abstract	3
1.2 Background of Study	4
1.3 Aim and Objectives	5
1.4 Research Methodology	6
1.5 Significance of Study	7
1.6 Research Timeline	7
1.7 Conclusion	8
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.1 Literature Review	9
CHAPTER 3 MAH MERI COMMUNITY IDENTITY AND HISTORY	
3.1 Introduction	11
3.2 Background of Orang Asli in Malaysia	13
3.3 Distribution of Orang Asli in Malaysia	14
3.4 Background of Mah Meri Community	14
3.5 Conclusion	16
CHAPTER 4 TANGIBLE HERITAGE OF MAH MERI CULTURAL VILLAGE	
4.1 Introduction	17
4.2 Cultural Architectures in Mah Meri Cultural Village	18
4.3 Handicrafts in Mah Meri Cultural Village	20
4.4 Mask and Statue Carvings in Mah Meri Cultural Village	22
4.5 Wood Carvings	24
4.6 Relation between Tangible Heritage and Tourism	25
4.7 Conclusion	25
CHAPTER 5 INTANGIBLE HERITAGE OF MAH MERI CULTURAL VILLAGE	
5.1 Introduction	26
5.2 Ritual of Mah Meri Community	27
5.3 Ceremony of Mah Meri Community	33
5.4 Influential People Mah Meri Community	36
5.5 Relation between Intangible Heritage and Tourism	37
CHAPTER 6 TOURISM EXPLORATION OF MAH MERI CULTURAL VILLAGE	
6.1 Introduction	38
6.2 Features in Mah Meri Cultural Village	39
6.3 Tourism Aspect in Mah Meri Cultural Village	41
6.4 Governments' Efforts for Mah Meri Cultural Village	45
6.5 Conclusion	46
CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION	
7.1 Conclusion and Recommendation	47
REFERENCES	
APPENDICES	

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Abstract

This research is considered as an exploration study to investigate the tourism aspects which encompass cultural tangible and intangible heritage development of cultural tourism in Mah Meri Community to support sustainable tourism practice in Malaysian tourism context. Our focus is on the identity of Mah Meri Community, cultural heritage, cultural products of local community of Orang Asli called Mah Meri located in Carey Island, Selangor, Malaysia. The general objective of this research is to explore the factors of cultural features and cultural resources of Mah Meri Community in a form of cultural intangible and tangible products to support cultural tourism in this site. This study will be based on non-contrived setting (field study) with minimal interference by researchers as it is conducted by observing the real field of local community of Mah Meri in Carey Island. The researchers will use qualitative method by conducting in depth interview to understand holistically about the cultural identity, attributes and resources which are possessed by this community in a form of cultural tourism product such as wood carvings, performing arts, mask and local festivities celebrations. Unfortunately, the local community feels that their identity is one of potential tourism attraction which gradually facing great threat because of the scarcity of natural resources and lack of governmental attention [Puvaneswaran Kunasekaran, Sarjit S. Gill, 2013]. It is expected the findings of this study will contribute to the significance of Malaysian government to improve Mah Meri local community as one of the preserved cultural based tourism destination and also contribute to the horizons of cultural knowledge in existing literature specifically in cultural tourism ground.

Keyword: Cultural Tourism, Mah Meri Community, Sustainable Tourism

1.2 Background

This research focuses on an exploration study to investigate the cultural identity and cultural heritage as well as development of cultural tourism in Mah Meri Community to support sustainable tourism practice in Malaysian tourism context.

First and foremost, Carey Island is located in Klang Port, Selangor, Malaysia. This site is well-known for its two special things. The first one is great seafood culinary industry and the second is indigenous community called Mah Meri people who have a reputation for some of the world's finest wooden masks in term of cultural context (Affandi,2001). Nowadays, they have assimilated into modern life and at the same time they also have jobs in the nearby plantations and farms. However they retain their unique culture and way of life. Refers to the Mah Meri people, They are originally known as the Besis, which means, "people with fish scales". (Parasuraman, 2007) They like living in a small wooden house set in harmony with the surrounding forces of nature, and compare to modern life, This kind of life style become more precious because it can keep their life style until now. They are considered as a special race and at the same time,they have many different and interesting celebration festivals. Their special way of life and also the way of celebration become a famous cultural in Malaysia even in the world.

Secondly, as time goes by, Mah Meri people become a kind of tourism attraction for others. More and more visitors go there to feel their life and to know more culture about Carey island. Actually, Mah Meri is a very important race in Malaysia, we can say that they represent a kind of Malaysian culture especially in term of Orang Asli (indigeneous people).There are many researchers and writers go to Carey island and live with them to feel and observe their life style. Most of them feel like that they go into totally natural life,and it is a very good chance to make you feel relaxing. Even though Carey island is not the most popular tropical island such as Redang and Tioman island, Mah Meri's culture really push forward the development of cultural tourism in Carey island.

1.3 Research Aims and Objectives

General Aim

to investigate the tourism aspects which encompass cultural tangible and intangible heritage development of cultural tourism in Mah Meri Community to support sustainable tourism practice in Malaysian tourism context.

Specific Objectives

- (1) To observe the cultural attributes, cultural identity and cultural resources which form the cultural products in Mah Meri cultural tourism sites.
- (2) To investigate the tangible cultural heritage influencing development of cultural tourism in Mah Meri Community to support sustainable tourism practice in Malaysian tourism context.
- (3) To investigate the intangible cultural heritage influencing development of cultural tourism in Mah Meri Community to support sustainable tourism practice in Malaysian tourism context.
- (4) To observe the tourism impacts in Mah Meri Community and how the cultural tourism of Mah Meri community can be one the essential tourism sector in order to support the sustainable tourism practice Mah Meri Cultural Village.

1.4 Research Methodology

Purpose of the Study

Most previous studies conducted were only focusing on to find the culture as original tourism product without knowing the essential factors behind that. Thus, we conduct an exploration study to investigate the cultural identity, attributes, product, heritage and also exploration of tourism aspects influencing development of cultural tourism in Mah Meri Community to support sustainable tourism practice in Malaysian tourism context.

Extent of Researcher Interference

This depends on whether the study is causal or correlational type of investigation. Since we were using correlation type, extend of researcher interference is minimal interference.

Study Setting

We conduct research non-contrived in natural environment due to correlation study. Not required to create an artificial setting. Since our unit analysis is human, there is no needs to held lab experiments. Instead, we held field studies to gather the data needed from the local community of Mah Meri people in Carey Island, Malaysia.

Unit of analysis

To complete our research, we focus on the group of people who are known as Mah Meri Community who reside in Carey Island, Selangor, Malaysia

Time horizon

Our research is conducted in natural environment and artificial setting is not required. Because of this, we will conduct cross-sectional studies so that all the data can be gathered once in a particular time in order to answer our research interview to the Mah Meri Community. The interview questions will be used in the mind of interviewer in planned format without letting know the interviewee.

Data collection method

This research uses qualitative data method by conducting interview to the target research of Mah Meri local community which resided in Carey Island through site visit and fieldwork observation conducted in Mah Meri Residential Community, Carey Island, Selangor, Malaysia

1.5 Significance of Study

Based on our research, we concentrate more on cultural attributes and cultural products which usually called as their cultural heritage of local community of Orang Asli called Mah Meri located in Carey Island, Selangor, Malaysia. And there are some points of view of why our research is so important

It is important to know the attributes of the culture, because the cultural attributes can help we know that what should to be improved in Carey Island. For example, we can have more knowledge about what kind of problems they have and then give some suggestions or some good implications to help the development of the local's tourism.

Refers to the cultural products, it has a positive economic and social impact. And at the same time, it establishes and reinforces identity and helps build image of Carey Island through its development of cultural tourism through Mah Meri Community.

Thirdly, our research also helps preserve the cultural and historical heritage. For example, when you read our research, you can get more knowledge about the life of Mah Meri people and what's more that can make tourists interested to visit Carey Island.

Fourthly, culture as an instrument, it help facilitates harmony and at the same time, this research help understanding among different kind of people and it supports culture and helps renew tourism under the framework of sustainable tourism practice in Malaysia.

1.6 Research Schedule and Timetable (Listing Chart)

1. Week 6: Research Proposal Submission (Draft) handed to supervisor by Week 6
2. Week 7: Field Visit and Research Data Collection to Mah Meri Community in Carey Island:
3. Week 8: Research Data Transcription and Data Analysis
4. Week 9: Research Chapter 2 until Final Chapter Accomplishment
5. Week 10: Partial Draft of Research Paper Consultation to supervisor
6. Week 14: Final Research Submission to supervisor
7. Week 12: Final Research Presentation to the classroom

1.7 Conclusion

The research is focusing on cultural identity, attributes, background, products and heritage influencing development of cultural tourism in Mah Meri Community Cultural Village to support sustainable tourism practice in Malaysian tourism context, Author introduced reflections of cultural tourism in Carey Island. Such as life and cottage with Mah Meri style, agriculture production place attracting people to know how agriculture product grows and what the farmers life look like.

Cultural tourism, involves a lesson with a journal, through the space and the cultural orientation. These plenty of factors have impacts on the developments of cultural tourism in Carey Island. As a rural area, its quite challenging and provides lots of opportunities as well. We could figure out the unique value of Carey Island, and our perception on this Island, and the collaboration from the government support to build a strong transportation facilities in order to create ease to visit the cultural site. Even though Malaysia has not joined the cultural tourism as long as its neighbor, it still has its own value, and attraction for developing this industry.

Cultural tourism encourages travelers to be mindful of the impact tourism has on local cultures and environments. It provides us an opportunity to experience a new way life. And the most important one is teaching us how to live environmentally friendly and sustain it for the betterments of human being.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW IN CULTURAL TOURISM STUDIES

2.1 Literature Review

Culture is defined widely to a person's personalities. And it is contribute to see how the way they are living of a group of people which differ from other community, it pass from one generation to the next, each group of people have their values, belief, etc. That stands for their own symbol, it could be a certain language, art and so on. The special social function will immediately indicate the community from their characteristic.

As tourism has become a significant part of today's economy, it contribute over 40% of country's balance of payment in Malaysia by 2005, although Malaysia is a new joint to tourism industry as it compares to ASEAN neighbors. The industry has grown rapidly over years. And it becomes Malaysia main income resources, as well as the employment opportunity. However, it encourages to develop tourism industry both environmentally and economically sustainable [Malaysian Tourism Ministry, 2006].

Thus, the cultural tourism combined culture of the group and tourism activities, it more focus on the culture, especially the lifestyle of the people, and history of the places, also the art of the people, their architecture and other factors that represent the way of their lives. Statistically said, culture tourists do more environmentally benefits than the normal tourists do as in comparable basis. With the development of the economy, people are more willing on their spiritual enjoyment compare to the past time. As a goal all over the world, cultural tourism is one of the most important fields to attracting people. Having a cultural tourism can not only relax yourselves in the beautiful landscape but also learn a lot of knowledge from the cultural area. But in Miller(2003)'s research found that environmental consideration is one of the element by customers in choosing tourism. "Consumer are already making decision based on environmental, social, economic quality for day-to-day products and are keen to transfer these habits to the purchase of the tourism products" (Miller, 2003).

In the view of this, the Minister of Culture, Art, and Tourism has formed The Malaysian National Ecotourism Plan to keep and protect the natural and cultural heritage. As well as supported by ICOMOS Charter and also since 1972 UNESCO convention is being absorbed in protection of world natural and cultural heritage. Initially focus on the art of work, built environment, later, included other intangible sources of cultural heritage.(UNESCO 2001,2003) For a touristic perspective, it is easy to see the value of a historical building, after the act that UNESCO did, As inscribed in 2005, there are about 812 cultural, natural and mixed world heritage sites. Of these, 611 are cultural sites, 154 are natural sites and there are also 23 mixed sites in some 137 countries.]¹The fact is that such sites are recognized into its significance, countries are trying their best to seek out the cultural heritage due to it can capture lots of economy benefits. Indeed, this is why people explore inscription at first.

According to *Success Factors in Cultural Heritage Tourism Management* (2007), Jack Carlsen, Michael Hughes, Warwick Frost, Celmara Pocock and Vicki Peel, we know that it indicates a deep link between tourism and future product development opportunities in relation to cultural and heritage assets, sites and localities. At the same time, this research enhance about the economic value of tourism to places of cultural and heritage significance. We have to say this is times that we should concentrate more on economy value, because economy can bring more profits and support the development of the economy. However, as time goes by, more and more special and memorable traditional cultures disappeared and diluted because they have important reason that can support the development of the tourism. Especially in developing nation, cultural tourism has been prioritized as one important driven factor of the economy. Refers to Carey island, the most attraction point is the traditional and unique culture, and most of people go there, they think highly of the Mah Meri people 's life style because they want to feel a totally different life style from them. Therefore, cultural features is also a very important for tourism or can support the development of the Mah Meri community in Carey island. Cultural tourism can both benefit environmentally and economically.

CHAPTER 3

MAH MERI COMMUNITY IDENTITY AND HISTORY

3.1 Introduction

Orang Asli are the aboriginal communities that dwell along the outskirts of villagers, small towns, coastal and rural areas in the peninsular of Malaysia. Their lifestyle is inherited from their forefathers. With reference to a Malaysia's population census in the year of 2007, the Orang Asli population was only 141,230 or 0.6 percent of Malaysia inhabitants.

Orang Asli are divided into 3 main groups i.e. the Negrito, the Senoi and the Proto Malay diversified by language, lifestyle, dwellings, facial features and skin color. Thus each group consist of 6 tribes, The Negrito tribes are Kensu, Kintak, Jahai, Mendriq, Bateq and Lanah. The Senoi tribes are Temlar, Semai, Semoq Beri, Che Wong, Jah Hut, and Mah Meri. The Proto Malay tribes are Temuan, Semelai, Jakun, Orang Kanaq, Orang Kuala and Orang Seletar.



Picture 3.1.1 (Mah Meri Community)

The Orang Asli is famous for their handicrafts, mainly figure and mask carvings by the Jah Hut and Mah Meri tribes. These sculptures exhibit the creativity and unique imagination of highly skilled Orang Asli communities. These ancestral handicrafts are

handed down from one generation to another. Closely linked to the physical environment, the objects they make are not only utilitarian, but are also expression of aspects of their lives. Thus, the continuous production of these functional yet aesthetic featured handicrafts helps to maintain and at the same time safeguard the cultural heritage of Orang Asli in Malaysia.

First and foremost, Carey Island is located in Klang Port, Selangor, Malaysia. This site is well-known for its two special things. The first one is great seafood culinary industry and the second is indigenous community called Mah Meri people who have a reputation for some of the world's finest wooden masks in term of cultural context (Affandi,2001). Nowadays, they have assimilated into modern life and at the same time they also have jobs in the nearby plantations and farms.



Picture 3.1.2 (Mah Meri Community)

However they retain their unique culture and way of life. Refers to the Mah Meri people, They are originally known as the Besis, which means, "people with fish scales". (Parasuraman, 2007) They like living in a small wooden house set in harmony with the surrounding forces of nature, and compare to modern life, This kind of life style become more precious because it can keep their life style until now. They are considered as a special race and at the same time,they have many different and interesting celebration festivals. Their special way of life and also the way of celebration become a famous cultural in Malaysia even in the world.

3.2 Background of Orang Asli in Malaysia

Aboriginal encompasses three major ethnic group known as the Negrito, Senoi and Proto-Malay (Hasan Mat Nor, 1998; Sunaidin, 1997). Researcher later as Nicholas (2000) defines call 'Orang Asli' means 'tulen' or 'first peoples' in the Peninsular Malaysia According to the Malaysia Aboriginal Peoples Act 1954 (Act 134) 1974 revision, the definition or meaning of the Orang Asli are as follows:



Picture 3.2 (Orang Asli Mah Meri Community with researcher)

- Any father was a member of the Orang Asli groups and often a way of life Aboriginal and Aboriginal customs and beliefs, and includes a descent through the male person
- Any person of any race were adopted during the slave by Aboriginal and who was brought up as an Aboriginal, Aboriginal languages commonly spoken, often a way of life for Aboriginal and Aboriginal customs and beliefs and are of a Orang Asli or
- Children of any union between an Aboriginal woman with a man of another race, provided that the child habitually speak Aboriginal languages, often a lifestyle of Aboriginal and Aboriginal customs and beliefs and still be a member of the community indigenous peoples;
- Any Aboriginal no longer hold on to the belief Aboriginal because he had converted to any religion or because of any other reason, but he still follow the way of life of indigenous peoples and indigenous peoples or speak Aboriginal languages can not be deemed no longer to be Aboriginal solely by reason of his religious practice.

3.3 Distribution of Orang Asli in Malaysia

According to the Orang Asli population data for the year of 2007, these primitive can be found scattered all over Peninsular Malaysia. Based on the statistical census by Department of Statistics in Malaysia, the total of Orang Asli population is 141,230 people comprising 3,671 Negrito tribes, 79,158 Senoi tribes and 58,403 Proto Malay tribes. This figures shows that the Orang Asli Population is about 0.60 percent from the whole population in Malaysia.



Picture 3.3 Map of Orang Asli Distribution on Malaysia

3.4 Background of Mah Meri Community

Tribe Mah Meri people, is one of the 18 original tribes in West Malaysia. Mah Meri people often called "the jungle", while another term "flaky". They are also known as the Sea People living habits because they live on the coast facing the sea and making a living as a fisherman. Tribe Mah Meri people believed to have originated from the islands of the southern coast of Johor to Selangor country, probably because of pressure from other tribes increasingly crowded entering their home territory.

Tribe Mah Meri people are part of the clump Senoi, Asliani, MonKhmer, part of the clump Austroasiatic family. They are scattered along the South coast of Sungei Selangor rim to Carey Island, there are also tribal communities Mah Meri people on the other side of

the Klang River. On the island they Carey has five separate villages. Language Mah Meri people, also known as Besisi language, which includes a group of Mon-Khmer language family, but much influenced by Malay (reuters.com).



Picture 3.4 (Mah Meri Lady in Pulay Carey)

One of the tribal traditions Mah Meri people are "genggulang", which is a kind of ritual treat the sick, which for them is very important tradition. Mah Meri people very rich tribal culture, including creative carving art sculpture made of wood. Carving sculptures they are usually very diverse forms such as gods, humans, nature, flora and fauna. Tribe Mah Meri people who are in Carey Island, normal being shy towards strangers, but very friendly towards strangers

According to the stories from the edlers, the mah Meri tribe was said to originate from Johor Lomo, otherwise known as Kota Linggi. Upon the late Sultan Mahmud;s demise, all his subjects dispersed in many different directions to protect themselves from being killed by robbers and pirates. Some of them ran away following the land route and coastal routes of the Straits of Malacca. During the course of their escape, they made several stop overs, namely on the beaches of Batu Pahat, Muar, Melaka, Kuala Linggi, Kuala Sungai Lukut, Sungai Sepang Besar/kecil and Sungai Rawang. A Samall number of them meanwhile went towards Ulu Chuchuh, Bukit Bangkong and subsequently to Tanjung Sepat, Pulay Carey and Port Klang.

3.5 Conclusion

Researchers opine that Mah Meris are not the original inhabitants of this country. They belong to the Senoi tribe who are believed to originate from Cambodia and Vietnam. According to some genetic research carried out by researchers, it was found that the Mah Meri community is classified as descendants of the Mongoloid people. Physically, they have slightly dark complexion, with curly wavy hair, dark eyes, are around 156 cm to 168 cm in the height, and are somewhat chubby in stature and with a body weight of around 50kg to 65kg.

The word “Mah Meri” means “forest people” or people who live in the forest. ‘Mah’ is the word for people and ‘Meri’ refers to the forest. Just like most of the other indigenous tribes. This is the reason why there are tribes who refer to this group as people who live in the forest or Mah Meri. Terminologically meanwhile, Mah Meri means sea people because they live near the sea and are mostly fishermen. However, there is yet any accurate historical evidence that can shed a light as to their origins prior to coming to this country. Their culture and social structure are similar to that of the Proto-Malay while their speech is Mon Khmer.

In terms of their beliefs, the Mah Meris practise animism. They turn to the forest and sea for their source of livelihood and spiritual life. These would be realised in the form of figurines, which would be connected to their ancestors and natural environment. There would often be two forms – the good or the bad. This is the reason why they conduct various ceremonies as a sign of respect and to appease the spirits or even unseen beings who they believe are responsible for structuring as well as meeting out Poyang or shaman is regarded as an important person in their social structure as he is among the conduits to the unseen beings.

CHAPTER 4.

TANGIBLE HERITAGE OF MAH MERI CULTURAL VILLAGE

4.1 Introduction

Cultural heritage is the legacy of physical artefacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations.

Tangible heritage includes buildings and historic places, monuments, artifacts, etc., which are considered worthy of preservation for the future. These include objects significant to the archaeology, architecture, science or technology of a specific culture.

The world of “Mah Meri” means forest people or people who live in the forest. “Mah” is the word for people and “Meri” refers to the forest. Just like most of the other indigenous tribes, they originally lived in the forest. This is the reason why there are tribes to this group as people who live in the forest or Mah Meri. Terminologically meanwhile, Mah Meri means “sea people” because they live near the sea and the mostly fisherman. However, there is yet any accurate historical evidence that can shed a light as to their origins prior to coming to this country. Their culture and social structure are similar to that of the Proto-Malay while their speech is Mon Khmer.

Refer to Carey Island, Mah Meri cultural village is a famous and important heritage in Malaysia, because it remains the original life style, culture and building of Mah Meri community. At the same time, it is a wonderful place for tourists to feel and understand Mah Meri’s real life and culture. Observing a culture from the outside is insufficient to appreciate a full flavor of all its beauty and complexity. It is essential to experience a culture completely with all of our senses to truly appreciate it. This kind of experiential approach to culture is what made Mah Meri. Unmasked a distinctive exhibition, as a post digital, intermedia, poly sensory exhibition, guests were able to explore various aspects of the Mah Meri culture in new ways.

4.2 Cultural Architectures in Mah Meri Cultural Village.

Mah Meri is one of a subgroup from Senoi ethnic of indigenous people in Malaysia. The name of Mah Meri give a Malay translation of 'Orang Hutan' or jungle people. But that is not entirely true when we understand their history background - once a majestic seafarers travelling around the Southeast Ocean as a daily life living on their unique 'sampan' before permanently reside on the mainland rescuing from the uneven wild weather of the ocean and pirates mainly.

One of Mah Meri's tangible cultural heritages are their architectures and building. The architectures in Carey island of Mah Meri cultural village is special and unique, their architectures is based on their own culture and region characteristics. When we arrived the area of Carey Island, there are many special and regional architectures attract us because of its naturally and unique. They are different from the architectures that we can see in our city, once you arrive there, you will feel like you go into a new world and a totally natural world. This is the West Estate, which is a long drive down the road from the guard house. Inside, it is a little like stepping back in time, with some beautiful colonial mansions left over from British times in the early 1900's. The curiously named Hattler's Castle, the former plantation manager's house is one outstanding example of the colonial plantation architecture from pre-war times.



Picture 4.2 Hattler's Castle of Mah Meri

After the West Estate, we went into the Mah Meri cultural village. For visiting Mah Meri cultural village, you can book advanced for the special performance, but if you just want walk in and view gallery inside, it only takes RM5 for each person.

The wooden work is the most important features in Mah Meri cultural village's architectures, because wood is the most important material in build house and even for make furniture, such as table, chair, bed and decorations. As we can see from our pictures which was taken when we visit Mah Meri cultural village.



Picture 4.2.2 Mah Meri Wooden House and Work

The design of the architectures is simple and at the same time, the house there usually only have one or two floor which is nor high compare to the house or the building located in city. Even though, the main material of the architectures is wood, these architectures looks very beautiful and special, because there are many different design and pattern on the wood. They always design the pattern for the house based on the usage of the house. For example, for the living room, the pattern always simple and for the store which is doing business of souvenirs, the pattern will be little completed and beautiful.

Considering the reason that Mah Meri cultural village still use the original ways to build houses and use the wood in most of their architectures, as we all know that, they are the one who still keep the original life style so live in the house made by wood is also a habit for them. Most of them live in the forest or near the forest, therefore, it is easy for them get wood to build house by themselves. Even though this is a modern time, they still have habit to do most of things by themselves instead of buy from others

4.3 The Handicrafts in Mah Meri Cultural Village

Handicrafts are an integral part of the tourism experience for international tourists. A good quality handcraft taken home from an enjoyable holiday has continuing power to evoke wonderful memories, and indeed to arouse the interest of others who see it and to encourage them to visit the destination. But the linkage between tourism and handicrafts has not yet been fully explored, understood or developed, with a resultant loss of valuable revenue and job creation opportunities. Researchers opine that Mah Meri community is very proficient and good at handicrafts, once people go into the Mah Meri cultural village, people can see there are many things and decorations made by hands, especially for souvenirs.



Picture 4.3 Mah Meri Handicrafts and Mah Meri Lady

We interviewed a Mah Meri lady who was sitting on the ground and doing handicrafts by herself, the most surprising things was that after the interview, the lady give every of us a handicrafts which were made by herself during our interview. We have to say thanks again and again because we are shocked and moved by this kind of wonderful hand skill. It is rare and specially in this fast and automated world which is worthy for us to keep and be proud for that. The Mah Meri community has tried their best to protect a tradition of spiritual woodcarving that is truly world class in terms of quality of its craft and artistry.

Refers to the art, which has rich mythological meanings behind the images and symbols, is handed down from father to son.

As we all know that handicrafts are more than souvenirs as sources of livelihood at the same time, they are dynamic expressions of local and regional cultures, serving as sensitive indicators of relationships conveying important cultural messages between host and guests. Moreover, traditional handicrafts have specially resonance for today's tourists, and, because it was intended, so the partnership between tourism and handicrafts has emerged important strengthened from this conference. However, the challenge now is to work together to build on this success.



Picture 4.3.1 Yuhan and Chen Qian with Mah Meri Handicrafts

Handicraft producers really can gain important benefits and obtain advantages for Mah Meri culturally village, because there are many tourists want to buy the hand made gifts for their family and friends which can stand for real Mah Meri cultural village. At the same time, if there are many suppliers of goods produced by others, some kind of association among them will improve their chances of success.

Furthermore, for introducing a little degree of formality in the market, should keep the informal character to this type of business will result in substantial gains to all those participate in it, at least instilling confidence among the potential clients, by providing a more reliable and safer market place to the foreign tourist. A licensing system for sellers can also be established by the local authority to give some assurances to the tourists, even if the sellers remain in the informal economy.

4.4 Mask and Statue Carvings in Mah Meri Cultural Village

Mask carvings which are made by the Mah Meri tribe display their artistic and abstract imagination inspired by their spiritual and mystical beliefs. The carvings are expressions of the expressions of aspects of their lives based on myth and legends. Normally the pulai wood is used to carve masks because it is soft and lightweight.

The Mah Meri tribe use mask in ritual dancing when worshipping their ancestors' spirits. Masks are worn to represent their ancestors' spirits whom they call "Moyang". These carved masks have various names such as "Moyang Bojos", "Moyang Hapok", "Moyang Belangkas" and "Woyang Pelang". These are the names of the ancestors believed to have extraordinary powers and who were outstanding public figure during their lifetime.

Moreover, masked dances are popular among the Orang Asli. This art form tells the history of society. In the masked dances of the Mah Meri, performances mimic everyday rituals, including fishing, full moon celebrations and so on. The masks represent spirits of birds and animals of the land, swamp and sea, and portray the characteristics of good, bad and joker spirits.



Picture 4.4.1 Mask Carvings by Mah Meri

In the cultural village itself are the exhibition hall in the first floor, cafeteria, souvenir shop, cultural show podium and leaf-origami section. Upon entering the Mah Meri village, visitors will be greeted with a lot of beautiful leaf origami. The leaf origami are usually of animals such as bird and fish. Some of the masks looks kinda creepy to the people.

One of the carvers told that the sculptures are normally designed and carved based on their ancestor's belief. The sculptures tend to have a great demand from foreigners. And at the same time, there are a lot of mask sculpture made of wood in the exhibit hall. Behind each of it, there is a story of how a person or an animal became a symbol to be worshipped by the Mah Meri tribe. Expecting some myths and also stories of devotion, love, loyalty and even curse that comes with the wood sculpture. Some of them are available for sell with the price range from RM100 onward.



Picture 4.4.2 The Carvings of Mah Meri

There are many ancestral spirits in the tribe's tradition, which the Mah Meri people use to solve different problems and ward off evil spirits. For example, fishermen will take along the wood carvings of Moyang Sauh (anchor spirit) when they venture out to sea to ensure their safety. The carvings, acknowledged by Unesco as part of the world's heritage, are sought after by collectors from abroad and can fetch up to thousands of ringgit. Two of the designs have been awarded the Asean Handicraft Promotion and Development Association's seal of excellence for two consecutive years.

4.5 Wood for Construction

Boat building

The fishing communities are renowned for their boat building skills. Simple dug-out canoes, with or without stabilisers, are carved from large trunks of *Avicennia marina*. In Mah Meri community, there are still possess the technical skills to make these boats. They learnt the skill from who were the master dhow builders and they are now teaching their sons the craftsmanship. The design has not changed over the years and the wind is still the power of choice. Planks are usually treated with shark oil to soften them and prevent splitting during bending. Sometimes, heating over a fire may be necessary.

Boat builder can make one or two boats a year when working alone, and even three when he has assistance. It takes several months of hard work to build a boat, which has a lifespan of 40–50 years, if properly maintained. The launch of the boat is often celebrated with some festivity. Most of the dhows built are used to transport mangrove poles. The boat builders also make smaller vessels for fishing and more luxurious crafts for the tourism industry.

House construction

The most significant use of mangroves wood takes the form of poles for house construction, Each of these species occupies a particular place within the framework of a house. They are also used to construct structures such like shrines, cooking sheds and animal sheds. It is evident that the use of mangrove species in building the various components of the house is dependent on their size classes are thick poles that are piled into the ground and serve as main supports for the walls. The roof is then thatched with dried woven coconut leaves. This material insulates the house from the hot sun. About 90% of the village houses are of the traditional design, with a bare instead of a cement floor. A house can last over 30 years, with an average lifespan of eight years, depending on the quality of poles and fillings used in the framework, and whether or not the house has a cement floor and plastered walls.

4.6 The Relation Between Mah Meri Tangible Cultural Heritage and Tourism

The Mah Meri believe that humans, plants, animals, and even inanimate objects possess spirits, which interact with the daily lives of the Mah Meri. They say that ancestral spirits cursed plants and animals to become food for humans. Yet, paradoxically they also believe illness or injury is caused by offended spirits of plants or animals which have been killed. Natural disasters are the result of transgression of their moral code.

Furthermore, A lot of knowledge and information which we can learn from Mah Meri cultural village. It is not only a trip for us, but also a useful class for us, we really feel about their life, their food, their traditions and their life environment. People there are very kind for us and although their English is not good enough to communicate with foreigners, they always keep smiling to others which make the tourist to be moved

In this matter, we can say that the tangible cultural heritage of Mah Meri as tourism product really matters to its development of Mah Meri Cultural Village as cultural tourism.

4.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, The Mah Meri Unmasked exhibition was created as a form of “event-structure” with a curatorial design and techniques of visual display to foster relationships of material to immaterial, experience to information, and the fixed to the variable. It comprised synthetic image spaces, illusionistic imagery, a “mise-en-scene” environment, and atmospherics, to unfold the visitor experience.

CHAPTER 5

INTANGIBLE HERITAGE OF MAH MERI CULTURAL VILLAGE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage is the legacy of physical artefacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations.

Intangible heritage includes ceremony, social system, celebrations, performing arts, rituals, dances and etc, which are considered worthy of preservation for the future. These include objects significant intangible stuff of cultural heritage to the subject matter of culture which needs to be experienced and felt in the human sensory method.

The world of “Mah Meri” means forest people or people who live in the forest. “Mah” is the word for people and “Meri” refers to the forest. Just like most of the other indigenous tribes, they originally lived in the forest. This is the reason why there are tribes to this group as people who live in the forest or Mah Meri. Terminologically meanwhile, Mah Meri means “sea people” because they live near the sea and the mostly fisherman. However, there is yet any accurate historical evidence that can shed a light as to their origins prior to coming to this country. Their culture and social structure are similar to that of the Proto-Malay while their speech is Mon Khmer.

Refer to Carey Island, Mah Meri cultural village is a famous and important heritage in Malaysia, because it remains the original life style, culture and building of Mah Meri community. At the same time, it is a wonderful place for tourists to feel and understand Mah Meri’s real life and culture. Observing a culture from the outside is insufficient to appreciate a full flavor of all its beauty and complexity. It is essential to experience a culture completely with all of our senses to truly appreciate it. This kind of experiential approach to culture is what made Mah Meri. Unmasked a distinctive exhibition, as a post digital, intermedia, poly sensory exhibition, guests were able to explore various aspects of the Mah Meri culture in new ways.

5.2 RITUALS OF MAH MERI COMMUNITY

5.2.1 The Mask Dance of Mah Meri

Masked Dances are popular among Orang Asli especially Mah Meri Community. The art form tells the history of the society. In the masked dances of the Mah Meri, performers mimic everyday rituals including fishing, full moon celebration, and so on. The masks represent spirit of birds and animal of the land , swamp and sea, and also portray the characteristics of good, bad and jokers.



Picture5.2.1 of Mask Dance Ritual

5.2.2 Sembuang Ritual

According to the Mah Meri tribe, the shaman will prepare a bamboo tray and place it near the foot of the patient who is lying down or sitting. The contents of the tray comprise some daily provisions such as candle, rice, turmeric, coal, egg, betel leaf, areca nut, sugar and salt. The shaman will burn the incense while chanting incantations and smearing repetitively some “pengebas” onto the patient’s whole body to extract the ills from inside the body and transfer it into the sembuang. Once this is done, it would be placed at the location where the patient is believed to have contracted the illness.

Among to the Mah Meri community, this ritual is carried out if the Sembuang method proves to be unsuccessful in hearing the patient, the shaman’s assistant will be asked to build the Ancak from bamboo measuring 15cm in diameter. This Ancak would be filled with daily necessities similar to those in the Sembuang. Added in would be three

figurines made of pulai wood, which they call Moyang Subay, Moyang Jegus, and Moyang Langkay, who act as the “Guardian of illness” and serve to further increase the spiritual power of the Ancak, the shaman’s assistant will carry out a similar ritual to the Sembuang to transfer the patient’s illness to the Ancak. Once done, the ancak will be hung onto the tree where the patient is believed to have contracted the illness.



Picture of 5.2.2 Sembuang Ritual

5.2.3 Puja Pantai Festival and Ceremony

The Mah Meri community living near the sea would reserve one day in the year to hold a special day of worship, called Puja Pantai, for their Monyang Laut(sea ancestor). This ceremony, headed by the Poyang/Tok Pawang, is carried out on a large scale by the villagers. They would walk in a procession from the village to the beach accompanied by the pounding of traditional music. Food would be offered to their ancestor in this ritual, which is conducted to gain their ancestor's blessing for a bountiful catch and protection. This ceremony is also carried out as a sign of respect for Moyang Metah or Getah, who is believed to have some special inner and outer powers. Moyang Getah is said to possess the spirit of the sea that can protect and provide for the community's wellbeing.

The ceremony begins at dusk a day before the Puja Pantai ritual, which is held the next day. Once preparations for a beautiful decorated "palace" and a humble "shelter" are in place, a ritual to summon their dead ancestors are carried out along with offering of food. At night, the ceremony continues with the "menurun" ceremony by the Tok Pawang, who acts as the go-between, between the spiritual that has been summoned or he would use himself as conduit for the ancestors who are present while being accompanied by the sounds of traditional music. The next day, the climax of the ceremony would begin with the presentation of items by Moyang Getah to Moyang Laut. On a perahu, these items would be cast into the river along several places until the boat reaches the location where the "Palace" has been constructed on the beach.



Picture 5.2.3.1 Puja Pantai of Mah Meri Community

Moyang Bojos would ascend onto the “palace” and dance while summoning and complimenting the other ancestors and giving her blessings as well as promise to shower their with good fortune from the sea and provide the village with protection. Then, Moyang Bojos would sing along to the music and alight to ance with the dancers comprising the young Mah Meri girls in the dance known as Jo’oh. Once the ceremony on the beach is over, the village would hold a big dance event at home to celebrate their success in conducting this ritual.



Picture 5.2.3.2 Puja Pantai of Mah Meri Community

5.2.4 Hari Moyang or Ancestor Day

One of the most popular Mah Meri Festival is the Hari Moyang or Spirit's Day. It starts after the Chinese New Year for a period of 1 month. All the 10 different villages in and around Carey Island celebrate this day but separately. It is not exactly known how the date is chosen but it is commonly accepted that the date comes from the spirits through the dreams of the elders. The Spirit's day may be cancelled or postponed due to events like death or other calamities.

The Mah Meri do not celebrate their festivals in their homes with their families and friends but in a common place known as the house of the spirits by all members of the village. All food and drinks are shared while the shaman will conduct the ceremony beginning with the blessing. A day before spirits of their ancestors are honored at the Sanggar bearing food and drinks for their immediate relative who have passed on.



Picture 5.2.4.1 Hari Moyang

Ancestor Day or Hari Moyang is one of the biggest festivals for the Mah Meri Orang Asli in Carey Island, Klang. This festival is celebrated in three different locations, namely the house of Moyang Gadeng(who looks after the central part of the village). Moyang Amai(who looks after the areas on the fringers of the village, and Moyang keleng the northernmost parametres of the village). For those living near the coast meanwhile, this ritual is carried out on the beach and is known as Puja Pantai. Among the ancestors present at this event would be Moyang Getah, Moyang Melur, Moyang Tok Naning. Moyang Bojos, and Moyang Tok Pekong Cina. Moyang in the context of the Mah Meri life phenomenas such as lighting, rain, thunder, or unusual event.

The statuettes, which are carved in the form of figurines and masks, are connected to their ancestors and also their surrounding environment. Their names meanwhile are derived from the names of their more famous and illustrious ancestors. The Mah Meri believe in revering and appeasing these ancestors as they are said to protect the community's happiness and are also capable of punishment. As a result, these ancestors would always be "worshipped" through the figurines and masks that are carved to closely resemble them. The Mah Meri's creations are generally inspired by their dreams. These dreams are believed to have originated from the ancestors themselves who desire to be revered.



Picture 5.2.4.2 Hari Moyang Ritual

The carved mask must be well kept and cannot be given to anybody else as it can protect the owner and his family. The carved mask needs to be hung on the wall of the main room in the house by the headman. It must be positioned opposite the entrance to the home. The headman is also instructed to decorate the mask with a piece of yellow cloth as well as arrange it in an alternating manner.

5.3 CEREMONY OF MAH MERI COMMUNITY

5.3.1 Introduction to The Mah Meri Cultural Marriage

The community considers the bond of marriage as something that is sacred and has to be taken seriously. Marriage can take place among those in the cluster and from other tribes. The couple who wishes to wed will generally seek the consent of both sides. Polygamy is seldom practiced among Mah Meri community. Just like the Malay wedding custom, the Mah Meri wedding also involves several stages, beginning with merisik (getting acquainted with and researching the background of the prospective brides), engagement and right up to the wedding ceremony itself. A match is not determined by a specific criteria; instead, the only pre-requisite is to obtain the consent of the bride's side. The appointed guardian would often be the brother or the younger brother from the father's side who is responsible for the "merisik" process and confirm the date of engagement and wedding



Picture 5.3.1 Mah Meri Illustration of Marriage.

As the wedding days approaches, members of community are sought to help with preparations. A day before the ceremony, the male party would come and transit in the neighbour's house located near the brides' house. This is the time when various ceremonies have to be carried out, namely the custom of "menepung tawar" (sprinkling the rose water on the couples' palms) to ward off evil spirits, teeth sharpening, surrendering tools to cast away bad luck, hanging the mosquito net and henna ceremony.

5.3.2 Details and Mechanism of Mah Meri Marriage

Suku Mahmeri also practices ritual merisik, engagement and wedding such as the Malay community. They merely maintain the customary differences dispel evil spirits culture in its own way, other than worship ceremony held to inform the ancestors that their grandchildren will hold their wedding ceremony. The event is deemed essential to ensure the wedding ceremony is safe, secure and happy so blessed to children and grandchildren.

At the proposal, Tokbatin will see the inventory groom to be brought to the council a proposal such as gold rings, makeup, waist bowl and utilities such as mortar and other stone. Groom and bride undergo dental hone culture. Sharpening the teeth is considered an important custom made. Use a black cloth as a marker placed on the teeth spaced teeth that need to be sharpened. The ring will be used to hone uneven teeth and then smoked. It aims to make the bride will always shine and prevent tetanus during the wedding ceremony.

Suku Mahmeri play traditional musical instruments Orang Asli to celebrate the bride at the marriage . Yet, the desire of the men wanted to have the girl of his choice will be void even making a proposal and the wedding ceremony is set, if the expenditure for the purposes of the council do not fulfill. If within three months, the men failed to provide shopping, with its own agreement null and groom considered to have committed fraud against the inner figure in Mah Meri Community.

Like any other type of wedding people, they are also making preparations to provide the dais. They will be joined together to decorate the dais by placing a variety of patterns woven palm leaves and flowers are brightly colored in all corners of the stage. Touch use palm leaves used by indigenous peoples of Suku Mahmeri is between uniqueness and disorders displayed with other Aboriginal tribes in this country. When weddings take place, some customs held in conjunction with the towering wedding ceremony; fight martial arts; surrounding the mound; washing the feet; rice in or betel designers and flower bath champignons. At the ceremony, the wedding ceremony began with Tok shaman leads a group circled around to groom bride girl covered with a mosquito net and smoked with incense. The ceremony was to banish demons and bad luck things. Circulating of seven times and on the last lap, the groom needs to get the bride and exchanging flowers.

When the wedding ceremony as a symbolic toss conducted to determine the direction of the bride freedom to live in a civilized world . Dining house, observers will ensure the bride eat and ended with simultaneously so that they live a happy and lasting household coped. If one of the spouses to eat early, among them, reliable treatment that would invite accidents in the home in the future. After the wedding, the newlyweds are forbidden to leave the house for a period of three days to avoid being disturbed ghosts or demons.



Picture of 5.3.2 Mah Meri Couple

Fixing a date for the wedding ceremony and the proposal should be referred to TokBatin (influential people) to see the inventory of the man before entering the household. TokMan mind becomes the most important because he will take power from the trustee appointed to monitor the application until the end of the marriage reception ceremony. Among uniqueness of Aboriginal people's weddings, once the agreement and consensus in the council is making a proposal, the ritual of eating betel and areca nut by TokBatin and representatives of both sides do as a sign of an end to the ceremony. Deliveries charged is RM44.40 for brides and grooms who are still virgins, while RM25.20 so-called widow.

5.4 THE INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE IN MAH MERI SOCIETY

5.4.1 Tok Batin dan Tok Halak

Batin and Halak are the most influential and most respected individuals in the Mah Meri Orang Asli community. Tok Batin or village headman is the person who is always consulted and he is responsible for the safety, welfare as well as the affairs of members of his community. He would also ensure that his people are kept away from negative influences from the outside that could potentially damage their sense of self. Obedience towards Tok Batin has been the significant factor behind the successful control of the organization of the community and the continued preservation of the community's value system and life norms.



Picture 5.4.1 Batin and Halak

Meanwhile, Halak has an important role in preserving the health and wellbeing of the whole village and ensuring that members of the community are averted from any danger, calamity, illnesses and others. The person chosen to be the Halak is considered somewhat special because of the traits he possesses. There are certain specific criterios, which are required in the selection of these influential figures. In the Orang Asli Act 134 subject 16(1). It is stated that he “ketua turun temurun” of an Orang Asli community is obliged to be the head of that community. In general, the two would be chosen from among the menfolk who are over 30 years of age. This is considered the right age for many reasons, They would already be family men, are able to hold responsibilities, possess leadership qualities, are ablt to think as well as take the right and mature action

5.5 THE RELATION BETWEEN MAH MERI INTANGIBLE HERITAGE AND TOURISM

The value of intangible heritage has been increasing due to the increasing number of cultural tourism. The global wealth of traditions has become one of the principal motivation for travel, with tourists who are seeking to involve with new cultures, experiences of the cuisines, handcrafts, and performances and so on.

First, let us looked at the term ‘heritage’. Davison (2008) defined heritage as “property (“heirlooms”) which parents handed on to the children”. By referring to “property”, Davison seems to relate to something precious that need extra care for the next generation. Davison also cited Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996) who suggested a way of distinguishing heritage is to define: 1) the past as “what has happened”, 2) the history as “selective attempts to describe this and how things came to be as they are,” and, 3) the heritage as “a contemporary product shaped from history.

The mask dances, ceremony, and the influential people in Mah Meri community are all the intangible cultural heritage of this village, the culture from their inner are the core for their life and values. With the development of both communicating with the aborigines and tourism industry, there is a huge potential for people get into the community.

As a tourism product nowadays, Mah Meri has its unique value to satisfy customer’s needs and wants. Pull and push theory motivate people to travel for relaxing themselves, these intangible values from Mah Meri community provides the services for those people who are interested in the arts, ceremony, lifestyles, and others of Mah Meri people. There are big potential to make sustainable tourism in Mah Meri community.

CHAPTER 6

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT OF MAH MERI CULTURAL VILLAGE

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter 6, we are going to explore the efforts for Mah Meri Cultural Village. From the humanity cultural and the natural, Mah Meri as a cultural village, is certainly closely connected with unique humanistic natural environment in Malaysia.

Tourism industry is a very complicated and one of the largest developing industry. And it started to contribute huge amount of the total income for a country. Not only from the economic sites but also the social and cultural sites did contribute to Malaysia as a whole. The effort which government did is one of the action to support and develop Mah Meri Cultural Village. The development of Mah Meri Cultural Village brings a lots of benefits from the tourists.

The local attitudes toward the tourism impacts on their community have been broadly analyzed by many researches and managers of the tourism sector, politicians, academicians and so forth. The attitudes of the local aboriginal people have direct impacts in the developing of the tourism industry in that area. This is because the aboriginal people there are the core elements of all and also tourism is highly depending on the reaction of that community. The support and cooperation from the local people is the fundamental to the sustainable long-term tourism of the region.

More tourists become more willing for cultural tour rather than just relaxing or luxury sightseeing. It is indicated that the needs and wants from a vacation has slightly changed, and the knowledge tourists gain from the cultural visiting are incalculable compare the normal vacation. With this trend in tourism industry, the value of Mah Meri Cultural Village are growing from time to time.

As we had discussed earlier, the history and cultural sites of the Mah Meri Cultural Village, and now in this chapter we are going to discuss more of the external impacts of this community.

6.2 FEATURES IN MAH MERI CULTURAL VILLAGE AS TOURISM SECTOR

There are 18 groups of people that the Malaysia government named “Orang Asli”, and Mah Meri community is one of them, and they are living in west Malaysia, and along the coast of South Selangor from Sungei Pelek up to Pulau Carey. It takes only about an hour away from the capital city of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. There is something you cant imagine, its just one-hour way from Kuala lumpur, but their lifestyle is totally different from the modern lifestyle.

Researchers opinions that the Mah Meris are not the original inhabitants of this country, they belong to the Senai tribe who are believed to originate from Cambodia and Vietnam. According to same genetic research carried out by researchers, it was found that the Mah Meri community is classified as descendants of the Mongoloid people. Physically, they have slightly dark complexion, with curly wavy hair, dark eyes, are around 156cm to 168cm in height, and are somewhat chubby in stature and with a body weight of around 50kg to 65kg.

The word “Mah Meri” means “forest people” or people who live in the forest. “Mah” is the word for people and “Meri” refers to the forest. Just like most of the other indigenous tribes. The Mah Meris originally lived in the forest. This is the reason why there are tribes who refer to this group as people who live in the forest and are mostly fisherman. However, there is yet any accurate historical evidence that can show a light as to their origins prior to coming to this country. Their culture and social structure are similar to that of the Proto-Malay while their speech is Mon Khmer.

In terms of their beliefs, the Mah Meris practice animism. They turn to the forest and sea for their source of livelihood and spiritual life. These would be realized in the form of figurines, which would be connected to their ancestors and natural environment. There would often be two forms- the good or the bad. This is the reason why conduct various ceremonies as a sign of respect and to appease the spirits or even useen beings who believe are responsible for structuring as well as meting out punishment on their life.

Mah Meri is whole year hot, as it is near the equator. Compare to some other places which have winter, all the plants and trees are drooped, but in Mah Meri community, they are rich in the natural resources, as it has lots of mangrove around the community, the people can use its leaves to make some beautiful products.

Most of them are living in a small village(kampung), and same with other Orang Asli villages, each of their village will select their own headman(Batin) to represent the people living there. Malaysia government pay the headman an annually salary to the headman. The Mah Meri community has its own language called besisi, some of the words or sentences comes from Malay.

Orang Asil are the aboriginal communities that dwell along the outskirts of villages, small towns, coastal and rural areas, in the are Peninsular Malaysia. Their lifestyle is inherited from their forefathers. With reference to Malaysia's population census in the year 2007, the Orang Asli population was only 141,230 or 0.6 percent of Malaysia inhabitants.

The Orang Asli is famous for their handicrafts, mainly figure and mask carvings by the Jah Hut and Mah Meri tribes. These sculptures exhibit the creativity and unique imagination of the highly skilled Orang Asli communities. These ancestral handicrafts are handed down from one generation to another. Closely linked to the physical environment, the objects they make are not only utilitarian, but are also expression of aspects of their lives. Thus the continuous production of these functional yet aesthetic featured handicrafts helps to maintain and at the same time safeguard the cultural heritage of Orang Asli in Malaysia.

Three thousand years ago, they lived as very small groups of flotillas as the sea nomads. Although now they have settled on land, but the way they are living is still in their traditional ways, as we interviewed a little girl about her father's work, surprisingly, he had told us that her father goes out for fishing in the morning, and comes back in the evening.

6.3 TOURISM ASPECT IN MAH MERI CULTURAL VILLAGE

As Malaysia is well-known with its natural resources, it attract lots of visitors to Malaysia. The tourism officer is Malaysia is aiming to promote Malaysia as an outstanding tourist destination, and show Malaysia's unique wonders, cultures, attractions and develop the domestic tourism. Tourism plays a very important role for Malaysia.



Picture 6.3.0 Mah Meri Museum

Tourism industry can play a positive role in the development in economic, socio, cultural, environment, and politic of the tourism destination if managed well. Such development indicates a great development opportunity for the country and communities. Contrary, unfavorable tourism development can cause negative impacts which may be damageable to the country. We are going to discuss three impacts of tourism aspects in Mah Meri Cultural Village, which are economy, social, environment.

6.3.1 Economic Impacts of Mah Meri Tourism

Tourism industry generates the economic benefits to the country as a whole, especially developing country like Malaysia with rich natural and cultural resources. Its the basic motivation to market itself as a tourism destination for the purpose of developing of the industry. The tourism contribute economic development by employment opportunities, and tourists general expenses, and as well we the donations to Mah Meh community.

Tourism interactive activities with the local people had provide a great amount of job for the local people in Mah Meri. For example, if there is a group of people going to Mah Meri Cultural Village, they will ask more local people to come and give some performances as well as the food, and service operators needs a lot of man power to carry out the daily operations. We have heard from the local people that there are a lot of foreigners as well either for vacation or for research purposes. The local people can earn some money from the entry fee and activities fee, and many more. After that, if the visitor do like those performances and enjoyed a lot, they will give the people some money.



Picture 6.3.1 Researchers and Tourists in Mah Meri Cultural Village

With the increasing numbers of tourists, it helps to improve the investment, infrastructure spending of Mah Meri Cultural Village and also improve the living standard of the local people, as we see their kitchen, it is already the same as the modern kitchen which we see in our canteen. The local people take advantages of the coming tourists, they provide special services as well. Such as, homestay. This allow the tourists to stay with the aboriginal people in their house to know more about their lifestyle and custom. And they are selling the handicrafts and souvenirs and etc.

Yet there is always a disadvantages from the tourism in Mah Meri Cultural Village, there is increasing potential numbers for the imported labor as some are cheaper than the local labor force. In addition, the exported profit could be one of the drawbacks. These profit are coming from the non-local owner.

6.3.2 Social Impacts in Mah Meri Cultural Village

Social factor also known as one of the tourism aspect in tourism industry. The range of social is widely defined. Apparently its difficult to measure the value of social improvements, and it can differ from one to another. In this case, we are discussing on the interacting between visitors and the aborigines. The visitors promote culture exchange with the local people, this will lead to greater tolerance as the visitors are from all over the world, and they might need to make an understanding effort towards the cultural differences.

Its not only the culture, but also the value of considering something items. It could changes throughout the times.



Picture 6.2.2 Mah Meri People 's Performance

Moreover, to unable to communicate with tourists, especially tourists from overseas, the Mah Meris should able to speak at least English which is the first worldwide language otherwise they could not talk with each other. Even though they have their own language, they still need to understand the language which outsides use.

For social impacts in Mah Meri community, it provides lots of opportunities to learn and know more about the culture, language custom and so on of other people from other places, but they have to maintain their own cultures, otherwise it may lose and disappear one day.

6.3.3 Environmental Impacts in Mah Meri Cultural Village

When the coming of people, there is no doubt that the environmental issue will occur. Some other might protect and keep from further exploitation while some of places have been changed, and it is no long its origins for the purpose of developing tourism industry in this area. The Mah Meri Cultural Village for visitor is newly built place which design like modern building with some decoration of the ancient symbol.



Picture 6.3.3 Natural Landscape and Mah Meri's House

When you get closer to the entrance of Mah Meri Culture Village, there is a newly constructed road in front of you. Meanwhile, tourism can degrade the environment when the visitors generate waste and pollution especially noise and visual pollution.

In the future, some of the natural landscape and agriculture lands will be destroyed by the new building or something else as it will use for providing more services for the tourists.

6.4 GOVERNMENTS' EFFORTS FOR PROMOTION OF MAH MERI CULTURAL VILLAGE

Mah Meri Cultural Village as one of the tourist destinations have a wide selection of tourist destinations that can be visited. The tourism industry is one of the most important sectors in the development in Mah Meri. It is also the fastest growing industry in Mah Meri community. The continuous promotion and improvement of the infrastructure and transport facilities contributed to the increasing popularity of Mah Meri as one of the cultural tourist destinations in Malaysia.

Government makes some important decision of promoting the Mah Meri Cultural Village, as it said by tourism minister Datuk Seri Dr Ng Yen that she wants to create a cultural village based on the Mah Meri cultural village and promote it as an artisan village. She had said that this could help to showcase the tribe's skill in traditional wood carvings.



Picture 6.4 Government's Dialogue with Mah Meri Community

The most valuable attraction of Mah Meri Cultural Village would be the exhibition of 11 internationally-recognized spiritual and animistic wooden sculptures which also have earned the UNESCO seal of excellence. This could be a huge potential to gain the economic benefits for tourists who is thinking highly of those intangible culture and are willing to fork out thousands of ringgit for the unique pieces.

The Malaysia government has put massive effort into long-term and short-term planning in tourism industry to achieve its aim economically and politically.

There are also some government organizations provide the tour to Mah Meri Cultural Village for the research purposes, and as well as there are agency which provide tour to the village for vacation or research, lots of services provided by them, and the visitors are able to book the tour online in advanced, so that the local people could prepare for welcoming them well. A listing of packages tourists could choose from the website the organizations provide.

The government did put a lot efforts in developing the Mah Meri Cultural Village, for the transportation, they offer school bus, tour bus, and as well as the van which suitable for the small groups of people.

There is a golf club nearby the Mah Meri Cultural Village, the purpose of setting the golf club nearby is to attract more tourists and give them better activities to achieve more value of their expectations. And it also provide some budget hotel in the town of Teluk Panglima Garang, in the future government is considering more and more facilities to achieve tourists' needs and wants.

Last but not least, the government did build school for the Mah Meri community near its village, it shows the government is caring of the community.

6.5 CONCLUSION

With the development of tourism industry, a increasing numbers of tourists lead to a competitive market of this industry as more and more places are discovered over the time and the accessibility into a new attraction is getting easier and easier. And it is good when the people from outside especially the foreigners can intercommunicate with the aborigines that make a good sense of understanding each other.

Besides that the local people could learn a lot from the tourists. It is hard to believe just an-hour driving distance from the city center of KL, there are some people still live in the ancient way and keep their own culture and languages.

As a tourist attraction, there is a necessity of well-developed of the services and infrastructure of the village, in order to satisfy all the people's needs and desires, it still need to keep improving and upgrading without exploiting the natural and cultural sites of this community.

CHAPTER 7

FINAL CONCLUSION

7.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, through this research, as people can observe and know more in-depth information about Mah Meri communal identity, cultural attributes and also cultural heritage. Furthermore, Mah Meri community is a worthy culture for us to preserve, keep and develop in the future. However, it is not an easy thing to develop and keep each kind of culture, because the world become more digitized and modernized as the advancement of technology and Mah Meri community cannot just depend on agriculture for living, and they also need to learn some modern skills to blend in this sophisticated society.

To develop and keep Mah Meri's culture need efforts from every layers of generation and as we can see that Mah Meri Community and some part of stakeholders have done a good job already in this aspect especially in tourism development even though there is still a room for improvement in the future to make this sector becomes evergreen and sustainable.

It is recommended that with development of cultural tourism in Mah Meri Community Cultural Village from cultural identity, attributes, background, products and heritage sites, people are getting to know more about the Mah Meri Community, the tourists could bring plenty of benefits to the community most importantly is the economic contributes. Yet it also brings some drawbacks both environmentally or culturally.

Even tough the government of Malaysia had put some effort for the development of this community, but as a cultural heritage, Mah Meri community should keep its own culture and nature as it has highly intangible values. To not let it lose, government could put some protection act even.

Mah Meri village is still need to improve better services and infrastructure as they are needed for satisfying tourist's needs and desires, but the upgrading process have to be done without exploiting the origins. As tourists, you have to be mindful wherever you go to support sustainable cultural tourism industry.

REFERENCES

Davidson T.L (1994) What are travel and tourism: are they really an industry? In W.Theobald (Eds),Global tourism (pp.21-26) : Butterworth-Heinemann Ltd

George, W. E (2010). Intangible cultural heritage, ownership, copyrights, and tourism. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 40 (4), 376-388.

Goeldner C.R , Ritchie J.R.B & McIntosh R.W (2000)*Tourism principles, practises, philosophies*

Lee A.L (2010) Tourist Satisfaction with Cultural Heritage Site- A Case study of the Malacca State. Retrieved from http://etd.lib.nsysu.edu.tw/ETD-db/ETD-search/view_etd?URN=etd-0816110-141610

Marzuki Azizan (2011). Resident attitudes towards impacts from tourism development in Langkawi Islands, Malaysia.*World Applied Sciences Journal (Special Issue of Tourism & Hospitality)*,12,25-34.

McKercher, B & Hilary du Cros (2002). Cultural Tourism . The Partnership between tourism and cultural heritage management National Heritage Act, 2005

Musa, G. Tourism in Malaysia. In C.M. Hall and S. Page (Eds.) *Tourism in South and Southeast Asia: Issues and Cases* Oxford: ButterworthHeinemann, 2000.

Suet Ching, C. Mah Meri on Stage: Negotiating National Policies, Tourism and Modernization in Kampung Sungai Bumbun, Carey Island. PhD theses. University of Hawaii, 2010. 14-17

UNWTO (2004). Sustainable Tourism Development. [online] (Retrieved on 20 September 2012) Available at: <http://sdt.unwto.org/en>.