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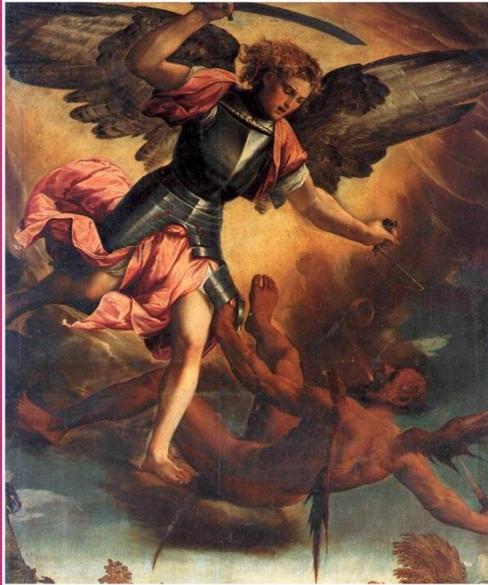
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The Paddy Cultivation in District of Lower Perak: Traditional Heritage Until 1957

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Abstract

The research was carried out to identify the development the paddy planting in the district of Lower Perak during the colonial era in 1900 until 1957. The research was carried out by using qualitative methods by analyzing official colonial documents, annual report and writing on paddy cultivation in Perak. The Results showed that the District of Lower Perak had paddy cultivation area that had been developed during the British colonial era. The new settlement has also been developed due to the increase of paddy planting area and construction of the irrigation system.

Keywords: Paddy, Traditional, Agriculture, Development, Irrigation

El cultivo de arroz en el distrito de Lower Perak: patrimonio tradicional hasta 1957

Resumen

La investigación se llevó a cabo para identificar el desarrollo de la siembra de arroz en el distrito de Lower Perak durante la era colonial en 1900 hasta 1957. La investigación se realizó mediante el uso de métodos cualitativos mediante el análisis de documentos coloniales oficiales, el informe anual y la escritura sobre el cultivo de arroz en Perak. Los Resultados mostraron que el Distrito de Lower Perak tenía un área de cultivo de arroz que se había desarrollado durante la era colonial británica. También se ha desarrollado un nuevo asentamiento debido al aumento del área de siembra de arroz y la construcción del sistema de riego.

Palabras clave: Arroz, Tradicional, Agricultura, Desarrollo, Riego.

1. INTRODUCTION

The state of Perak lies in the West of the Peninsula of Malaysia with a 100°30'T longitude with 101°45 'and is within the 3°40'U latitude and 5°50'U. The Perak State is located bordered to the state of Selangor where the Bernam River makes the border between two states. Lower Perak is one of the districts in Perak that consist of ten sub-districts and villages. Before the British colonialism in Perak, the locals practised the traditional way in many aspects which had been inherited from their ancestors in several years ago. Since the British

colonization in Perak in 1874, the economic activity was still being continued but with a different technique. The British intervention had caused the changes in economic activity, including the agriculture sector in Lower Perak.

Agriculture sector had been one of the biggest contributions in the development of Perak after the British colonization. British administration had separated the agriculture sector into two types of cultivation which were the main cultivation and secondary cultivation. The district of Lower Perak was well known agricultural area since before British colonization. Paddy is one of the main crops other than coconut, palm, rubber, sugar cane and tobacco. The economy of the Malay people in Lower Perak was depending on paddy cultivation, which had become the staple food of the people in that district (Sidhu, 1980)

The paddy cultivation was also the main occupation and became the source of income of the Malay people in Lower Perak before the 1890s (Kim, 1995) Before the British administration, the Malay people carried out the paddy cultivation activity just to earn a living. Hence, there was no systematic management that held the responsibility to monitor and control the paddy yield annually. After the 1890s, most of the Malays in Perak became the labourers by transporting the merchandise through the river to the nearby mining site. After British colonization in 1874, there were changes in agriculture development implemented by the British colonial. This was due to the emergence of the new administration of British colonial causing the socioeconomic transformation among the Malays. They did not only practice the

subsistence economy. As a novel strategy, this study was conducted entirely by using a qualitative method which emphasized the official documents analysis and manuscript (Yang et al., 2019; Soo et al., 2019; Ranjbaran, 2014).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The potential of the Perak state, especially in the Lower Perak region as a developing region as a paddy field had been identified since before the era of the British colonial administration. Lim, (1968) in his thesis entitled *Perak-Aspect of the British Land and Agriculture Policy* was about the development of land and agriculture in the state of Perak. Lim Tech Ghee also emphasized the study of agricultural development in the area involved in paddy cultivation in Perak. The development of the paddy cultivation was closely related to land policy to meet economic needs. This study focused only on British policy on the use of land for agricultural development purposes, especially paddy cultivation and not focused in Lower Perak. However, the study had shown that after the British colonial administration, there was a British agricultural development that had contributed to the increment in rice harvesting every year (Sarhazi & RasooliSharabiani, 2016; Hojati et al, 2014).

Jackson (1972) in his writing described the relationship between history, culture, practice and the development of paddy crops among peasant communities in the western state of Malaya. The research also

emphasized the history of cultivation techniques originating from Thailand. This study described the history of rice cultivation techniques prior to the entry of the British colonial. Although not focusing on the development of paddy crops in Hilir Perak, the writing was helpful in obtaining ideas on the development of paddy cultivation in Malaya.

Kim, (1995) in *Telok Anson: 1882-1941: Ports, Agriculture and Erosion* focusing on agriculture and economic ports at Telok Anson located in Lower Perak. Agriculture in the district of Lower Perak began in the 20th century and the authors stated that the types of plants that were planted in lower Perak. Telok Anson was also one of the ports on the West Coast which developed by their agricultural sector. This writing elaborated that these two sectors already existed before the British administration and its role as a catalyst of development expanded after British colonization.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As a novel strategy, this study was conducted entirely by using a qualitative method which emphasized the official documents analysis and manuscript. The official documents consist of a British official colonial file including Annual Report on Social and Economic Progress of People of Perak, Federated Malay States Agriculture Report and Perak Secretariat obtained from the National Archives of Malaysia had been used. The use of secondary resources such as books

and academic writings on paddy cultivation before and during British colonization in Perak were used to strengthen the writing and research finding (Indriastuti, 2019; Putri et al., 2019).

4. RESULTS

The Paddy was widely cultivated in a rural settlement in the district of Lower Perak (Andaya & Andaya 2016) However, the paddy was not considered as profitable yield among them. Before British colonialism, the Malay peasants faced certain constraints to carry out paddy cultivation activity in Lower Perak. The Malay peasants also used to face the land rental problem and limited sources of income. The technique of traditional paddy cultivation more depended on the physical and environmental condition of the plant area (Ooi, 1963; Farashah et al., 2016)

Since the 15th century, the Malaya communities had high expertise in paddy planting activity. But they still could not be separated with superstitious beliefs, especially when related to the taboo during paddy planting (Ooi, 1963). Paddy cultivation had long been carried out in the Malay Peninsula, especially in Lower Perak. The paddy cultivation before the British colonial era was carried out by field manner since the irrigation system to supply the water to paddy field did not exist yet. The water supply to irrigate the paddy field was very important in order to ensure the growth of paddy. But,

the traditional Malay peasant relied on uncertain rainfall (Settlements, 1931).

The Malay traditional peasant also having problems with limited equipment and technology but this situation did not hinder them to cultivate the paddy which was sufficient for their living. The method of traditional paddy cultivation among the Malay peasants in Lower Perak was brought to the Malay states from Thailand throughout the north state during the 15th century (Ooi., 1963). The basic method of paddy cultivation consists of ploughing the soil and constructing the water flow in the paddy field area. The use of buffaloes during the process of planting the paddy was very synonym among the Malay peasants (McNair, 1972). The Buffaloes had a long life span and strength enough to pull the load during paddy cultivation activity. Besides being used during paddy planting, the Buffaloes also were well-kept pet among the Malay peasants to ensure the health of that animal and their capability to do the work in a paddy field.

Most of the peasants in Lower Perak that carried out the paddy cultivation activity was the Malay people. This situation occurred during the traditional era and continuing until the British administration in Perak. But, the arrival of British colonial had transformed the paddy cultivation activity. The irrigation management and technique to irrigate paddy cultivation area were introduced by the British colonial (Short & Jackson, 1971) Being a peasant was not popular among the Chinese although most of them were farmers before the migration to the Malay states. The district of Lower Perak was synonym as an agriculture area developed during the British

colonial period. The paddy field area in Lower Perak during the early British colonial administration did not have many areas compared to another district in Perak as in Krian. Krian district had been the main paddy field cultivation in Perak (Zaharah, 1970).

However, the administration of the British colonial still paid much attention to the potential of the Lower Perak district as the paddy field area by constructing the irrigation system to ensure the growth of paddy yield. The production of paddy yield and a new area of paddy field was increasing. These were due to British colonial policy and the increase in rice market price (Lim, 1977).

By the end of the 19th century, the new policy was implemented to make Malays as peasants which were profitable to British colonial and the society (Salleh, 1988). Hence, the deforestation and clearance works were carried out. This work was carried out for the construction of the irrigation system to irrigate the paddy field (Sadka, 1968). The government was encouraging the peasants to practice the cultivation of wet paddy instead of dry paddy to avoid the risk of soil erosion (Ooi., 1963) In fact, since the early 19th century, the cultivation of wet paddy field were increasingly acceptable, but dry paddy cultivation was still ongoing. Therefore, an organized system of irrigation was very essential to ensure the increasing of paddy yields for the basic necessities of food and commercial purpose.

In the 1930s, the new concept was introduced so that the people in Malay states did not overly rely only on the mining company and rubber planting. High dependency on these two sectors was not capable of encouraging economic growth during the British colonial

era. Hence, the paddy cultivation sector had been concentrated, which previously considered as a non-profitable crop. The Rice Cultivation Committee of 1931 had proposed the establishment of Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID) to ensure the water flow at the paddy field were well organized. In 1932, the Drainage and Irrigation Department was officially established.

By the year 1939, district of Lower Perak had a total land area of 23,000 acres with the potential for the paddy cultivation area. Most of the paddy cultivation area was located between Teluk Anson and Sungai Kroh. These paddy fields obtained the sources of irrigation from the Batang Padang river. The flow of the river was able to irrigate the paddy field near Teluk Anson by using the water pump at one cubic foot per second at every 50 acres.

In 1932, Sungai Manik Irrigation Scheme was implemented and it was the earliest irrigation system in Lower Perak. The earliest irrigation drains at Sungai Manik were built in 1932 and the drains were stemming from Batang Padang river.¹ Sungai Manik was being identified as a potential area and suitable for paddy cultivation activities.² The existence of Sungai Manik Irrigation Scheme gave influence on the amount of paddy yield produced annually.

The introduction of Sungai Manik Irrigation Scheme also affected the development of new settlements near the paddy cultivation area. The Lower Perak settlement scheme was the largest settlement

¹ Federated Malay State Reports On The Progress Of Scheme For The Improvement And Extention Of Rice Cultivation 1935. Page 5

² Malayan Union 48/46, Access Road To Sungai Manik

that provided by the British colonial (Ooi., 1963). One of the settlement schemes was the construction of shared houses (Rumah kongsi). The construction of the settlement is for the labourers that involved in the construction of the irrigation drain to irrigate paddy field in Sungai Manik.³

During the 1940s, the shared houses built in Sungai Manik had accommodated a total of 50 labourers. This early colonization proved that the Malay people during British colonial obtained the land ownership, which was the basic necessity with some conditions (Ooi., 1963) Besides, the labourers working in the construction of irrigation system had been categorized as the earliest residents in Sungai Manik area since the site was previously a jungle.⁴

Besides the irrigation scheme, the paddy crop area also had been expanded. The process of expanding the paddy cultivation area involved four stages. The four stages were summarized in table 1 below.

Stage	Work was done
Stage I (1938)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The total area of paddy field has reached 5977 acres with an estimated plant yield of 268 bushels per acre
Stage II (1938)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More rice was planted • The increase of paddy yields by 100 per cent.

³ Malayan Union 3444/1947, Development of Colonisation Area For Paddy Cultivation

⁴*Annual Report on Social and Economic Progress of the People of Perak 1939*, Page 12

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Peasants have been involved in cultivation such as corn and vegetables.
Stage III (1939-1940)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Upgrading paddy area up to 7,104 acres.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 967 acres of dry paddy planted• Jungle harvesting works
Stage IV (1940)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 293 acres of wet paddy planting.• New settlement or shared house built• The early settlers and residents were involved with the construction of irrigation systems.

Table 1: The scheme of paddy cultivation in Lower Perak

Sources: Annual Report On Social And Economic Progress of the People of Perak 1939

Based on table 1, the area of paddy cultivation in Lower Perak had increased since stage I in 1938 until stage III in 1940. The expansion of the paddy field area consequently caused the 100 per cent increment in the yield production. The increasing of paddy cultivation area had caused cultivation of the dry paddy decreased. The dry paddy cultivation had decreased from 967 acres to 293 acres. This was due to encouragement from the British colonial to plant the wet paddy instead of dry paddy. Deforestation and clearing work in stage IV was done to build the new settlement which was carried out by the earlier settlers that involved in the construction of irrigation system in Lower Perak.

Despite the implementation of the modern agricultural technique, the traditional equipment was still provided to the peasants. The British colonial government had introduced subsidies for a peasant to get the equipment such as seen, axe, machete, sickle and hoe (Ooi,

1963) The paddy seeds had been supplied for the first two years after paddy cultivation scheme was introduced.

However, there was still difficulty among the peasants to open up a new crop area. Malays peasants in Lower Perak also had faced constraints and financial problems in obtaining land for new paddy fields. The subsidy supplied by the colonial government was still insufficient and caused the peasants owed to creditors with high interest. However, the difficulties did not stop the agricultural activities in Lower Perak especially paddy cultivation sectors with the subsidies provided by the British colonial administration.

5. CONCLUSION

The amount of rice production before the British colonial era was at unsatisfied level. Even the harvested paddy was largely utilized for self-sufficiency and family used. However, the schemes introduced during the British administration had encouraged the development of rice cultivation in Lower Perak at the same time led to the opening of new settlements for labourers who were involved in carrying out irrigation works for the benefit of rice crops.

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