



The indigenous people *Suku Anak Dalam Batin Sembilan* livelihood: Adaptation and socio-cultural dynamics

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ABSTRACT

The *Suku Anak Dalam (SAD) Batin Sembilan* living in the Hutan Harapan area of Jambi Province has experienced socio-cultural dynamics resulting from the impacts of development and ecological changes of forest. The various interventions of extractive companies and others (*Orang Terang*) require them to learn new things that are absent in their knowledge system and traditional way of life. The present study is based on anthropological studies that rely on qualitative methods with a cultural ecology perspective aiming to describe the adaptive actions of SAD Batin Sembilan in responding to changes in their physical and socio-cultural environment as well as the reconstruction of their cognitive. The findings show that although they have long been in contact with people from outside the community, suggesting an influence on the way of thinking, living, and fulfilling their needs or livelihood, the SAD community seems to have preserved their socio-cultural identity closely associated with life dependence on forest. This study sheds new light on the actual picture of the SAD Batin Sembilan community in responding to changes.

1. Introduction

For generations, the indigenous people of *Suku Anak Dalam* (henceforth SAD) Batin Sembilan, who are dispersed throughout the interior of Jambi and South Sumatra Provinces, have been dependent on the forest; they live, look for food, meet their medical needs, and live a socio-cultural life in the forest. They plant cassava, search for food, and make medicine from tree leaves and roots. The forest is their primary source of livelihood. The survival of the Batin Sembilan is highly dependent on the forest, both individually and socially. The SAD Batin Sembilan community's use of the forest to meet their various needs makes it impossible for them to live without the forest.

The cultural patterns of the Batin Sembilan include spatial categories and social relations with one another or between families and groups. These patterns are regular and well-established in their relationship with the natural environment. For example, the division of forest areas for production (*sesap*) and forest cover (*rimbo larangan*) (Hutan Harapan, 2020). This system of indigenous knowledge and cultural wisdom is crucial in maintaining forest sustainability. Although they are known as a nomadic community who move from place to place periodically, they live this way so that they are close to food sources. They do not live so to encroach on forests on a large scale like what extractive companies, illegal loggers, and encroachers do.

The presence of logging companies, transmigration programs, the opening of oil palm plantations, encroachment, and other extractive activities of mining companies for approximately three decades (1980-2000) has had a huge impact on the life of the SAD Batin Sembilan community. From an environmental perspective, massive extractive activities indeed have had an impact on forest destruction. Ironically, most of such destruction was undertaken in the name of development. This damage has directly impacted the indigenous SAD Batin Sembilan people in particular. For example, the availability of fruits has continued to decrease from time to time because of smoke pollution; the availability of trees due to massive logging activities has resulted in a scarcity of food ingredients. Likewise, the lack of plant resources used as traditional medicinal ingredients has put the SAD Batin Sembilan community in a vulnerable situation. In addition, the contacts between the SAD Batin Sembilan community and the outside world have been increasingly wide open. The outsiders who come and carry out activities where the SAD Batin Sembilan community lives come from different cultural backgrounds. These contacts result in information exchanges, affecting the indigenous people's knowledge system and way of life.

Regardless, the Batin Sembilan SAD community believes they have received new hope. In 2010, PT. Indonesian Ecosystem Restoration (PT. REKI) started its activities in Jambi Province.¹ It brought up the issue of environmental conservation in a sustainable manner. This ecosystem restoration activity also included efforts to empower the SAD Batin Sembilan community. In reality, the indigenous people do not live in a vacuum. Their lives are also inseparable from the rapid flow of social change that comes from outside. For example, introducing money as a medium of exchange has inevitably changed their orientation in fulfilling needs. They have also begun to learn how to make money by tapping resin and sap or looking for rattan and selling it to collectors. For example, we found the SAD Batin Sembilan community group who lives close to the base camp and office of PT. REKI is familiar with the use of cell phones and the internet. Various ongoing conditions have caused the SAD Batin Sembilan community to take adaptive actions in responding to the changes taking place in their physical and socio-cultural surroundings.

¹ On its official website <https://hutanharapan.id>, PT. REKI is a company with a legal entity, and REKI stands for Indonesian Ecosystem Restoration. PT. REKI was intentionally founded by the Indonesian Forest Ecosystem Conservation Foundation, which consists of the Birdlife Consortium, concerned with forest preservation as a home for various biodiversity. This initiative deliberately manifested in order to fulfill the administrative requirements for the ownership of production forest concession permits by the government.

The economic activities are no longer limited to production for self-consumption. The SAD Batin Sembilan community began considering how the product could be sold. Thus, they can make money to buy additional needs (in fact, they can buy even basic needs such as rice and side dishes that can no longer be obtained from the forest). The way of subsistent paradigm, which is characterized by simple and minimalist living, namely production activities only for self-consumption, has shifted. In addition, the intervention they received through community empowerment and social development programs required them to learn new things they had never found in the indigenous knowledge system, and tradition handed down from the older generations.

Changes in the physical environments where the SAD Batin Sembilan community lives have also affected their ways of life and knowledge as a cultural product. Related to this, (Abdullah, 2015) describes a culture as a set of knowledge that guides humans in making sense of life, regulates the appropriateness or inappropriateness of behavior, and concerns the material they produce. Culture is dynamic, continuously changing, and negotiable in the context of the life of a community group. The process of adjustment to the environment is a form of adaptation. In the theory of biological evolution, it is defined as an effort to maximize its existence from generation to generation in changes in a particular environment. This has also become an important argument in studies of the relationship between culture and the environment as an analogy of organismal processes. The correspondence between the cultural and natural or environmental realm is the law of life: even though the two are different (there is the climate and flora and fauna as part of particular ecological complexity, on the one hand, and on the other hand, there is the culture of the people who live in that location), both culture and nature are an interconnected unit (Wissler in Meggers, 1954). Furthermore, (Meggers, 1954) suggests that human life is inseparable from the specific manifestations of the general pattern of its relationship as an individual who is also part of a community and cultural group with a certain locality.

Meanwhile, in relation to culture, adaptation is a strategy of human adjustment based on their experience in responding to environmental and social changes (Alland, 2003). Human adaptation to the environment is seen as a complex and dynamic phenomenon related to culture (Steward, 1955)². The heterogeneity of human interaction with the environment is related to the relationship between cultural patterns and environmental factors, which are complex and are more than just a matter of adaptation, exploitation, concordance, and so forth to the environment (Bennett, 1944).

Adaptation refers to the interaction process between changes caused by an organism in an environment and changes caused by the environment in organisms. In other words, humans and their environment will mutually respond to the various changes that occur. The form of human adaptation starts from the simplest, namely hunting-gatherer, to the highest and more complex cultural level (Poerwanto, 2010). Adjustments occur because of changing circumstances through a long series of processes, and such adjustments take a long time in which actions occur repeatedly (Ahimsa-Putra, 1994). The foundation of

² Julian Haynes Steward first introduced the theory of cultural ecology, which was ever used as a reference by many researchers to explain people's responses to environmental change, community adaptation strategies, environment, and culture with a cause-and-effect perspective.

adaptation is the human ability to do self-objectification, learn and anticipate such that it enables humans to conceptualize themselves in the environment's adjustment process (Bennett, 2017).

The existing studies on the SAD Batin Sembilan community predominantly examine the agrarian conflicts related to sustainable natural resource management and the rights of indigenous communities. (Hein & Faust, 2014) show that marginalized farmers and customary groups can build strong coalitions to defend their land claims. (Kunz et al., 2017) examine the contestation of land use and exploitation of natural resources to encourage local actors to form a union.

Regarding the interaction of state law with customary law pluralism in Indonesia (Buergin, 2016), his research states that the ecosystem restoration concession forest and market-oriented projects applied in Jambi province must follow international standards concerning nature conservation, indigenous community rights, and sustainable development. Meanwhile, (Steinebach, 2017a, 2017b) highlights the role of local elites and stakeholders in taking advantage of the appropriation of indigenous community land and resource rights. (Syuroh, 2011) conducted research on the SAD Batin Sembilan community occupying the Bukit Dua Belas area of Jambi and found that this community practices a nomadic life to meet their needs by hunting and gathering. They still uphold their ancestral traditions, such as using forest products to provide food and hunting wild animals with spears and arrows. Syuroh's article briefly mentions the negative impacts of the transmigration program and the economic activities of outsiders whom they refer to as Orang Terang (literally 'bright people'), that is, people outside the SAD Batin Sembilan community). Her study, however, does not comprehensively describe the impacts and is supported by specific data.

The present study is expected to complement previous research. This article describes actual data regarding the adaptive actions of the indigenous SAD Batin Sembilan people in responding to changes in the physical and socio-cultural environment and in negotiating these changes and reconceptualizing their world. In this case, we focus on exploring adaptive actions for ecological and socio-cultural changes in the SAD Batin Sembilan community and reconstructing their cognitive map in viewing their world.

2. Methods

This study applied a qualitative-descriptive method to explore and understand the phenomena that occur through observation and asking questions that were analyzed inductively (Creswell, 2012). This method allows the description of the fundamental aspects of humans about what they know, practice, and produce (Spradley, 2007). This method also considers why the data to be collected is in the form of a portrait of the socio-cultural dynamics taking in the SAD Batin Sembilan people, especially those living in the Hutan Harapan area and their adaptation to changes.

This research was conducted in Muaro Jambi District or, more precisely, in the Hutan Harapan area where the SAD Batin Sembilan community lives. Our informants included the SAD Batin Sembilan natives, community leaders at village, sub-district, and district levels, and leaders and field staff of PT. REKI. The latter has also provided social assistance for the community in recent years. In collecting the primary data, we were

directly involved in the daily activities of the SAD Batin Sembilan community, observing how they interacted among themselves and with people outside their community. Questions (interviews) were also asked to explore the knowledge and views underlying their behavior. In addition, we collected archives/documents to obtain objective data and related secondary data from reliable existing sources, dialogues, and observations from the field.

Data were analyzed by collecting daily notes in the field regarding interaction and events. The data were then combined with the interview transcripts for data classification or coding. Once the data were classified, the interrelationships between all the data were further analyzed by juxtaposing the literature review results and relating them to a higher level of abstraction. Information that had no relevance was reduced so that it was more specific to the research focus.

3. Results and Discussion

- **Dynamics of the Indigenous People in Hutan Harapan**

The Sumatran Malay community generally refers to native people who live in the forest as Orang Kubu. This term, however, is often meant discriminatorily because it has bad connotations, such as stupid, snobbish, stupid, stubborn, irreligious, and uncivilized people. The native people are also classified based on their social strata. The Orang Kubu are divided into two groups: Orang Kubu Jinak (domesticated Orang Kubu) and Orang Kubu Liar (Wild Orang Kubu). The former refers to a group of indigenous people who have settled in a certain area and do farming activities, while the latter refers to a group that still lives the nomadic life: they move places, hunt and gather their food (see Prasetijo, 2011).

Etymologically, Malays (the dominant ethnicity in the region) use the term 'Kubu' according to its meaning in Malay. 'Kubu' or 'ngubu', or 'ngubun' means a group of people who choose to hide in the forest or seclude themselves. Orang Kubu, in the opinion of the Jambi people, indeed includes both the Orang Rimba and the Batin Sembilan communities. The naming of each community has been maintained since it was introduced for the first time by their ancestors a long time ago (Sukmareni, 2015). As time passed, the term 'Kubu' became a swearing word so that Orang Kubu now refuses to be called Kubu. In 1974, the Ministry of Social Affairs introduced the term 'Suku Anak Dalam' in their programs related to the previously known 'Orang Kubu' (Jauhari & Said, 2012). This term has gained currency ever since.

The term 'Suku Anak Dalam (SAD)' refers to the entire group of indigenous people who inhabit the inland forests of Sumatra. Scholars use different names for the SAD groups, namely Orang Rimba and Batin Sembilan. The identity of the Orang Rimba has emerged through research reports stating that they identify themselves as Orang Rimba (see Manurung, 2013; Muntholib, 1995; Sandbukt & Sandbukt, 1984). Other studies from academics and advocacy movements by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) led the indigenous people groups to state their identity based on historical narratives passed down from generation to generation regarding the origins and characteristics of their cultural practices.

The term Suku Anak Dalam (SAD) is a post-colonial categorization of nomadic groups living in the forest (Steinebach, 2017b). Using the term Suku Anak Dalam makes it easier for policymakers and program administrators to identify groups of people living in the interior of Sumatra Island (Hidayat, 2012). The current Indonesian government's development intervention program categorizes them into Komunitas Adat Terpencil (KAT [Remote Indigenous Communities]) and uses the term Suku Anak Dalam.

The story about the origins of the Batin Sembilan community tells that they are descendants of Prince Bagas Gayur from the Pagaruyung Kingdom, who married a white-blooded woman sent by the gods. The name 'Raden Ontar' was mentioned as his great-grandson who had nine children named Singo Jayo, Singo Jabo, Singo Pati, Singo Inu, Singo Besak, Singo Laut, Singo Delago, Singo Mengelo and Singo Anum (Hidayat, 2012). The nine brothers then controlled nine tributaries in Jambi Province and recognized each other's territorial boundaries (Andaya, 1993). It is this historical narrative that confirms the identity of the Batin Sembilan community as indigenous people who have occupied or controlled Jambi's lowland forests for hundreds of years. The Batin Sembilan community is spread throughout lowland forests in Jambi and South Sumatra provinces. In the past, thousands of families from the community were recorded as living there (Marcus et al., 2011).

The mention of SAD Batin Sembilan also indeed explains their social identity as indigenous people and distinguishes them from members of other ethnic groups, namely, immigrants, transmigrants, and company workers in the area. This naming also relates to their legitimacy over access to the forest and protects them from outsiders' claims to their land and forests. The indigenous people of SAD Batin Sembilan, who are still wandering in the forest's interior, generally do not understand this naming. However, their social, economic, and cultural livelihoods are very closely dependent on the forest (rimbo) as their living space. Meanwhile, the indigenous people of SAD Batin Sembilan who live in the villages have somewhat changed as their characteristics are now closer to the Malay people in general and, at the same time, tend to differentiate themselves from the native people who live in the interior of the forest. However, they cannot deny that their life is still closely related to the forest. They stated that their identity as part of a group of indigenous people affiliated with past rulers (kingdoms) played a very important role as it can support the legitimacy of their land and forests.

Confirming Identity

Indigenous people groups³ Inhabiting the Hutan Harapan ecosystem restoration area (PT. REKI) is divided into two categories: nomadic and non-nomadic groups. The living areas of the nomadic group are in the Daerah Aliran Sungai (DAS [watershed]) of Meranti or its sub-DAS. Meanwhile, the group that has settled down and built semi-permanent and/or permanent houses live in villages near the Hutan Harapan office (camp). Indigenous people from the non-nomadic group have mingled with immigrant inhabitants with different ethnic backgrounds from them, namely Jambi Malay, Palembang Malay, Minangkabau, Batak, and Javanese. The presence of migrants has

³ In this study, we use the term indigenous people to express the identity of indigenous ethnic groups who socio-historically belongs to a proto-Malay ancestral group.

become increasingly massive since companies were granted permits to manage forest resources in Jambi's hinterland. Field workers in the area are generally immigrants employed by the companies which provide housing complexes for these employees. In the past, the transmigration program during the New Order regime marked ethnic plurality in Hutan Harapan under the management of PT. Asialog.

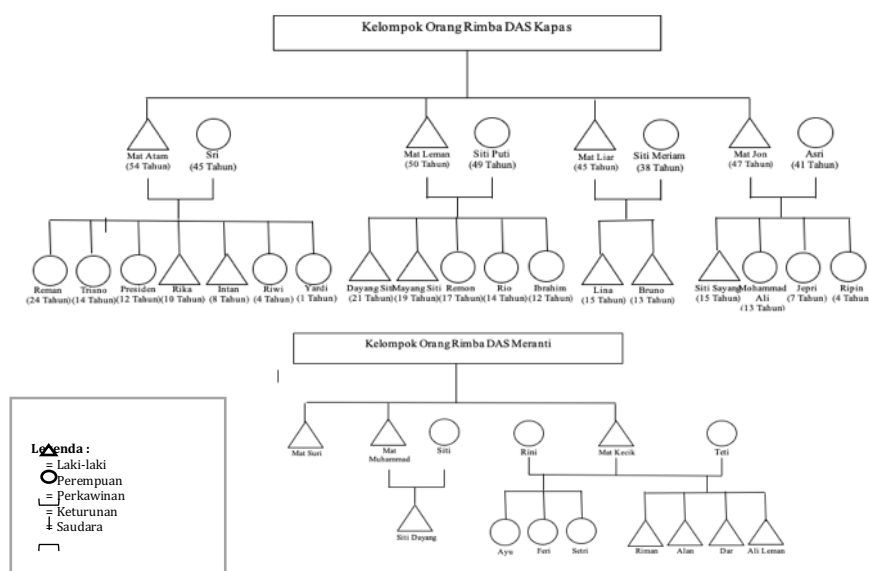
The Batin Sembilan identity belongs to indigenous people whose lifestyle is relatively more advanced than the Orang Rimba. The term 'Orang Rimba' in this article refers to groups of indigenous people who move around looking for food in the forest. Even though Mang Rusman, a figure belonging to SAD Batin Sembilan, stated that the nomadic group living in the Meranti area is also part of Batin Sembilan and has a very close kinship relationship with it, studies suspect that the native people in the Meranti area are more like the Orang Rimba from the socio-cultural perspective.

In contrast to the statements of several Batin Sembilan community leaders such as Mang Munche and Mang Rusman, Bi Teguh firmly declared himself a native of Batin Sembilan. The indigenous people who live in the Meranti River area do not specifically mention who they are. When asked about their origins, they only pointed to a location at the Kapas River's headwaters. The natives in Meranti do not understand the name given to them by outsiders. Upon closer observation of their pattern of life, cultural practices, and linguistic aspects, the indigenous people in Meranti seem to be closer to the Orang Rimba in Sumatra island in general.

In this study, categorizing the nomadic group of indigenous people as SAD Batin Sembilan and the non-nomadic group as SAD Orang Rimba is only intended to differentiate their identity. Rather, this classification allows us to express the differences in their developmental lifestyle. A study (Marzali, 2018) regarding Orang Rimba argues that Orang Batin and Orang Melayu in Jambi use an ethnohistorical approach and then question the historical reconstructions and classifications raised by several previous researchers. Marzali believes that the three social groups are descended from Austronesian migrants - in which the differences arising from economic, political, social, and cultural aspects between one group and another are influenced by the history of their development, the process of mixing through acculturation, modernization, and intermarriage.

The Orang Rimba group living in the southern part of Hutan Harapan, which administratively belongs to the Musi Banyuasin Regency, South Sumatra Province, consists of two groups based on blood ties: the Mat Suri group and the Mat Atam group. Each group is subdivided into smaller or nuclear family groups (see Figure 1). Each has a home range for gathering food and making a living. While the Mat Suri group wanders in the area around the Kapas watershed, the Mat Atam group occupies the area around the Meranti watershed. Meanwhile, the Batin Sembilan generally live in groups and intermarry with ethnic immigrants.

Figure 1. Family Tree of the Orang Rimba Living in the Kapas and Meranti Watershed



According to a report issued by Hutan Harapan (2020), the population of the Batin Sembilan community who live permanently in the Hutan Harapan area reaches 897 people (see Table 1). This community consists of nine family groups spread across six villages (locations). Three groups live in Bungin/Kelompok River close to the Hutan Harapan field office (Camp), namely the Lamban Jerenang, Tanding, and Gelinding groups. One group is at the Simpang Macan Luar, the Maju Besamo group (SML). Then, there are two groups at Simpang Macan Dalam: Ruslan's and Herman's groups, and one group live at Kilometer Four and Five (KM 45): the Khotib group. Next, one group lives in Sungai Jerat, namely the Jupri Group, and the last group inhabits the Hulu Badak village, namely the Burhan Group.

Table 1. Batin Sembilan Groups in the Hutan Harapan Area

No	Nama Kelompok	Areal Bermukim	Jumlah Orang
1.	Kelompok Tanding	Bungin	72
2.	Kelompok Gelinding	Bungin	29
3.	Kelompok Ruslan	Simpang Macan Dalam	89
4.	Kelompok Herman	Simpang Macan Dalam	91
5.	Kelompok Khotib	Km 45	51
6.	Kelompok Jupri	Sungai Jerat	150
7.	Kelompok Burhan	Hulu Badak	92
8.	KTH Maju Besamo / SML	Simpang Macan Luar	224
9.	KTH Lamban Jernang	Bungin	99
T o t a l			897

Source : Hutan Harapan Report, 2020.

Strengthening the identity of indigenous people is considered a capital in fighting land claims by outsiders, whether from ethnic immigrants, transmigrants, employees or business entities, or companies that intend to exploit natural resources. In order to strengthen their legitimacy for the forest, the indigenous people declare their identity based on historical stories of origins affiliated with rulers in the kingdom era or past

government systems. Such historical accounts can be traced from the historical narrative expressed by the community leaders who argue that they are part of the kingdom that once ruled the region. Affiliating oneself as a descendant of Batin Sembilan is important because it has something to do with political power in maintaining access to land and forests. Mang Rusman, a Batin Sembilan community leader, said:

“There are so many people who want to claim the forest, take various produces from it, plant oil palm and rubber, but we fight against them. We always are in conflict with these groups of outsiders. Fortunately, PT. REKI has been here for a while now and it helps the Batin Sembilan people take care of the forest” (Rusman, 58 yo).

The Batin Sembilan community resists outsiders who intend to exploit the forest, whether they come from neighboring villages or companies. Their efforts have become stronger because of the support from PT. REKI, which legally has the legal power to manage the forest around dwellings. However, this does not mean that the Batin Sembilan people as a whole acknowledge the existence of PT. REKI. Some of them have protested against the company because they feel that PT. REKI limits its activities to utilizing the forest. Mang Sumo, for example, stated:

“I don't care what PT. REKI and its employees do. Just to be clear, don't try to interfere with my work which I have done long before they came here... it was only recently that I heard that there is Batin Sembilan. As far as I know, we are only referred to as Orang Kubu” (Mang Sumo, 37 yo).

In Mang Sumo opinion, only people who are close to and employed by PT. REKI benefits from it. As a rule, the company does not support the livelihood of the rest of the Batin Sembilan people. For Mang Sumo, the absence of a solution for the disadvantageous livelihood of some of his people reflects what PT. REKI has done so far has not met the ecosystem restoration and conservation criteria. His community even feels disadvantaged by PT. REKI. This skeptical statement emerging from within the Batin Sembilan community itself signals the existence of competition among the local actors. This feud seems to stem from the fact that they did not receive equal, direct benefits from Hutan Harapan. Before PT. REKI obtained a restoration permit in Jambi Province in 2010, some of the Batin Sembilan people depended on oil palm and rubber plantations for a living, in addition to selling forest products, including wildlife and illegal logging. It is these people who need special treatment in order to minimize the risk of or prevent horizontal conflict from occurring. If they are claimed to have committed violations from their work activities without first providing education and alternative jobs to meet their needs, the resistance movement will continue to exist.

Getting in Contact with the 'Orang Terang'

When the forest management was managed by Inhutani V and an extractive company called PT. Asialog (≤ the 1970s), the indigenous people of the Hutan Harapan area rarely met company workers and villagers, whom they call 'Orang Terang'.⁴ Back then, Orang Terang was still considered a threat that could harm them. As a result, they would stay away and go into the forest when they happened to pass each other. Because of this,

⁴ *Orang Terang* is a term used by the indigenous people to refer to people who live outside the forest and tend to live a modern lifestyle. This also marks the difference in identity between them and immigrants

interactions between native people and the Malay community and transmigrants were very rare. According to Mr. Kancil, someone who worked for decades for PT. Asialog as a driver for a timber transport truck, SAD people were not as brave as they are now in terms of interacting with outsiders. In his own words:

"In the past, Orang Kubu was afraid to approach us⁵. If they heard a motorbike or a car, they would go back into the forest. Once, I was transporting logs. Then, I saw a family of Orang Kubu near the roadside. They then went into the forest to get away from us. They just stared at us in silence. Not long after, they entered the forest again. They carried spears for hunting."

"... they were afraid to approach us because we used to be assisted by the military officers for security equipped with weapons. In fact, what was being guarded was the illegal logging which was often stormed by a large group of people and equipped with kecepek (locally made guns). However, the Orang Kubu people probably thought that at that time, we were still in the colonial era, so they were afraid like those Mat-Mat in Meranti" (Mr. Kancil, 49 yo).

The military officers who often accompanied the Asialog workers at that time likely made some groups of indigenous people insecure in interacting with the company workers. Compared to company workers, they used to interact more frequently with Malays, consisting of illegal loggers, forest clearers, or groups of illegal oil miners in the forest. Over time, more and more native people have visited the settlements and workers' housing complexes and interacted with them. The Malays and transmigrants refer to these native people as the Kubu Jinak.⁶ People, distinguishing them from the Kubu Liar, people who remain wandering in the forest. The Kubu Jinak group includes those from the Batin Sembilan group; they used to move around looking for food in the forest, but eventually, they visited villages more and more often to exchange their catch and ask the transmigrants and company workers for rice. Eventually, such frequent contact conditioned them to begin to learn the way of life of Orang Terang and even form intermarriage relationships.

These Batin Sembilan groups have then lived side by side with the Orang Terang settlements and have adapted their way of thinking. They learn many new ways: they, to mention but a few, process food ingredients using spices, learn to live clean and healthy, get to know modern technology, and build new relationships with other villagers. So far, almost all of the Batin Sembilan people live permanently (non-nomadic) and work in the informal sectors, such as palm fruit pickers and scrap metal collectors. They feel that their needs increase day by day, and they need to work to make money to meet these needs. It is no longer sufficient to look for food in the forest as there are other needs that the forest cannot provide. The adaptation process has reconstructed their cognitive map in viewing the world. Intensive interactions with Orang Terang has brought out drastic changes to their life. In this way, it is the kind of life that is

⁵ By "we," Mr. Kancil refers to people who used to work at the Asialog company and outsiders other than indigenous people who collected forest products for selling, including company workers.

⁶ Kubu Jinak refers to the indigenous people who have lived and mingled with the Malay people in general, while Kubu Liar refers to the indigenous people who live nomadically and wander around in the forest. These terms, which carry a discriminatory sense, are given by the Malay people.

significantly different from the Orang Rimba community, who still live nomadically (moving places for hunting and gathering food) in the Meranti area.

The Orang Rimba group lives in the Meranti watershed, which is very remote because it is located deep in the forest with difficult road access. They rarely interact with the outside world compared to the Batin Sembilan group, who now live in the villages. Socio-economically, the latter tend to be more advanced as they have lived together with transmigrants and modern Malays who work in the companies nearby; they farm or make a living from selling forest products. In terms of culture, there is a striking difference between the two. The Orang Rimba belief system adheres to the teachings of their ancestors, which contain values and spirituality in relation to the forest. They use simple knowledge and technological tools and fulfill their logistic needs by hunting using a javelin and *kecepek* in the forest. On the other hand, the Batin Sembilan people farm, work in informal sectors, and sell the forest products they collect to earn money to buy food (rice, side dishes, and spices) and other secondary and tertiary needs (clothes, furniture and vehicles). The Mat Suri and Mat Atam groups refused to settle down permanently with the Batin Sembilan people in the village and chose to continue living nomadically according to their ancestral traditions. The interaction between the Mat Suri and Mat Atam groups and outsiders is limited to illegal loggers, oil miners and wildlife poachers in the forest. Their living area belongs to the administrative area of Musi Banyuasin District, where PT. Asam Merah used to do oil mining. Here, the Orang Terang takes advantage of the company's ex-mining wells using simple mining tools.

The contact between the Mat Suri and Mat Atam groups with the limited Orang Terang in the forest, in one way or another, has an influence on the knowledge and way of life of the Orang Rimba. However, this influence is not as radical as the Batin Sembilan community has experienced. A few adaptations include the use of the *kecepek* as a hunting tool, knowledge about cooking spices and how to process them, use of whetstones, laundry soap and forest products of economic value that can be exchanged for rice, cigarettes, milk, coffee, tea, soap and sugar. Nowadays, the Mat Suri and Mat Atam groups do not only rely on their *kujur*⁷ (javelin) to hunt their prey, but also use homemade firearms (*kecepek*⁸), which they obtained from a group of illegal loggers and wildlife poachers in the forest by exchanging the results of collecting sap of the *jernang* (dragon's blood; a red resin from the fruit of the dragon's blood pal).

The Mat Suri and Mat Atam groups complained about the drastically reduced availability of animals for hunting. They also started to feel frail, and their stamina decreased, making it harder for them to hunt their prey. This is where *kecepek* comes to the rescue. In general, though, due to a shortage of animals for hunting and of food derived from plants such as tubers/roots and fruits as a staple food, the Orang Rimba community has become more and more dependent on rice and other necessities. As a result, they wander around in the forest to search for food and *jernang*, gum resin and

⁷ Kujur is a traditional tool that looks like a spear for hunting.

⁸ Kecepek is a locally made firearm used by indigenous people for hunting. Kecepek is also widely used by the Malay people who make a living in the forest to hunt wild animals.

other forest products with economic value. These products later are bartered with some products by the Orang Terang. They usually do the exchanges in the forest.

Hutan Harapan, which is mandated to restore the forest ecosystems, is also responsible for protecting and empowering indigenous people who live in the surrounding area of PT. REKI. It has made efforts to approach, embrace, and win over the indigenous people by providing coaching. The Community Partnership (CP) and Forest Protection divisions of Hutan Harapan are assigned to assist them. For example, these divisions organized workshops for the Mat Suri and Mat Atam groups living in the Meranti River area on how to grow some plants, such as sweet potatoes, bananas, and eggplants and raise chickens so they can produce food for their own consumption. In this effort to domesticate these communities, the divisions provided seeds of cassava, eggplant and banana seeds for the Mat Suri and Mat Atam groups in order to secure their food needs. The company also distributed chickens for them to grow. The Mat Atam group planted the given seeds and seedlings in the fields near their hut, but they then went back to the forest, hunting for animals and searching for looking tubers for their daily needs.

- **Restoring Forest Ecosystem and Livelihood of the Batin Sembilan Community**

The Ecosystem Restoration of the Hutan Harapan area was formerly managed by Inhutani V in collaboration with large-scale capital accumulation business entities that utilized the potential of natural resources in the area for profit. Before it was handed over to PT. REKI, which is a consortium of non-profit organizations and is active in the field of conservation, the forest area was part of the working area that belonged to PT. Asialog, the holder of a Forest Concession Right operating in the Timber Forest Products sector. Due to a significant decrease in timber tree resources, conflicts between the company and groups of illegal loggers, and financial losses, PT. Asialog decided to discontinue its operation. Research by a number of NGOs and academics shows that a very high level of forest destruction threatens biodiversity and the survival of indigenous people in it. Considering this, the government handed over the permission to PT. REKI, which is a consortium of Indonesian birds and several conservation organizations, engages in forest restoration. The permit was issued by the Minister of Forestry with a decree No. 293/Menhut-II/2007 concerning the Business Permits for Utilization of Timber Forest Products (IUPHHK) over the area production forest covering an area of 52,170 Ha in the Musi Banyuasin District. The license is effective for a period of 100 years. This decree was then followed by another decree, No. 327/Menhut-II/2010, that permits PT. REKI for an addition of an area of 46,385 hectares located in Sarolangun District and Batanghari District of Jambi Province. The permit lasts for a period of 60 years. The permit is granted with the intention that the company will restore the forest ecosystem and maximize its functions as a home for wild animals and a source of livelihood for the local community.

The programs run by PT. REKI, in the context of restoring forest ecosystems, have to take into account the economic, social and cultural conditions of local people who live and make a living in its area. Some emerging problems include a conflict of interest between local people and PT. REKI, as the company mandated to execute ecosystem restoration.

The policy of prohibiting activities that potentially damage the environment intersects with the interests of the livelihood activities of the indigenous and local people who have lived there for decades. For example, illegal logging activities, wildlife poaching, illegal oil mining, and the expansion of home-scale oil palm plantations have caused disputes. One of the solutions in place is through a social forestry partnership program in which the local people are given land management permits as a sustainable economic alternative. In the allocated land, they are allowed to grow crops such as vegetables and other non-staple food crops for short-term income and rubber trees for long-term income. This allocated land is referred to as the Kebun Campur (Mixed Garden). The program started in 2018, and, unfortunately, its implementation has not been optimal, so several families have not been able to meet their needs in this program. Consequently, the indigenous and local people remain dependent on the remaining forest products to survive.

Deforestation and Forest Restoration Efforts

The Hutan Harapan ecosystem restoration area in Jambi Province is classified as a group of dry lowland areas. It has rich natural resources and biodiversities such as timber trees, resin, latex, rattan, oil, coal and wildlife. Such natural wealth had drawn the interests of many extractive companies to obtain forest utilization permits for making profits. Perum Inhutani V and its partner companies, including PT. Asialog, were benefiting for decades in the lowland forests of southern Jambi.

On the other hand, their operations there have brought the indigenous people suffering. The companies that used to operate in the Hutan Harapan area include Asam Merah, Gulf, Medco, Musi Hutan Persada, Akasia, Asiatic and Asialog. All of them caused bad environmental conditions in the area. Even now, deforestation and abandoned oil mine pits are scattered in the forest.

The condition of Sumatra's forests has increasingly degraded by forest conversion activities for mining areas, timber exploitation for industrial purposes, illegal logging of trees, poaching and forest fires. These activities have seriously threatened the sustainability of biodiversity and the lives of indigenous people in the area. Currently, these companies' working areas have been transformed into the Hutan Harapan ecosystem restoration area of PT. REKI. The areas include Sorolangun and Batanghari Districts in Jambi Province and Musi Banyuasin District in South Sumatra Province. In this area, the indigenous people of Jambi's interior (Orang Rimba and Orang Batin Sembilan) have lived for hundreds of years, and they rely on forest resources for their survival. The two groups of indigenous people are divided into smaller groups based on their home ranges and living areas. These factors then determine their level of knowledge, socio-cultural conditions and livelihood patterns.

From Economic, social and cultural perspectives, the indigenous people depend heavily on forest sustainability. For them, the forest is a living space that provides all the needs for food, medicine and cultural and spiritual practices. The company's capital activities are profit-oriented and often ignore the risks of ecosystem damage, health problems and loss of livelihoods for community groups in the area (Li, 2020; Li & Semedi, 2021). The Batin Sembilan group used to be beumo enough to meet their daily needs. Similarly, the

Orang Rimba on the Meranti River is now hunting and collecting *jernang* (dragon's blood) so they can exchange them for rice and cigarettes. Driven by their increasing needs and decreasing availability of forest products due to deforestation, the Batin Sembilan group chose to become informal workers, supplementing their income by selling the remaining forest products they could get or growing crops with economic values. Even though the Orang Batin Sembilan have settled down and has turned to farm, they still search for forest products to supplement their family income and meet their medical needs. Plants they use for medicine are of various types, taken from the roots, stems, leaves and flowers of forest plants (Anwar et al., 2022).

PT. REKI has managed the ecosystem restoration in Hutan Harapan since 2007. It has tried to restore the forest ecology to protect endangered flora and fauna, maintain carbon stocks and optimize environmental services for sustainable livelihoods. Powered by the spirit of conservation, the company management has developed forest ecosystem recovery programs. The challenge is that the indigenous and local people have inhabited the area for decades and depend on selling forest products and cultivating the land for their livelihoods. The people who live in the villages around the ecosystem restoration area are ethnically diverse. Apart from the Batin Sembilan community, known to be the first ethnic group inhabiting the area, the local people are made up of the Malay, Batak, Javanese and even Balinese ethnic groups who came there through the government transmigration programs. All of these ethnic groups intermingle in the area.

Therefore, indigenous people have experienced a transformation over time due to interactions and relationships with people outside their group. The intermarriages between the indigenous people and outsiders drive the acceleration of the transformation of the Batin Sembilan community. The Malay and transmigrant people tend to have high mobility as they often leave the villages and, when they return, they bring with them new information from the outside world. Some illegal loggers and oil miners are descendants of the transmigrant families and company workers who have marital relations with indigenous people. They work by utilizing the remaining trees and wood abandoned by the companies operating in the area to earn income. Some of them, who intentionally work in a working group, even made new holes using simple equipment to mine oil. Apart from working in the informal sectors, some Batin Sembilan people are hired to work for the Forest Protection division of PT. REKI as community wardens. They are expected to be the front guard in protecting the forest from land clearers and illegal loggers. This is done by involving and empowering local communities for forest restoration. After all, forest restoration is an effort to provide living space for indigenous people groups and open opportunities for sustainable livelihoods for local people.

Eating the Leftovers, Selling the Precious

The survival of the SAD community, both Batin Sembilan and Orang Rimba in Hutan Harapan, depends on preserving the forest. Forests provide all their needs for food, medicine, livelihood, spiritual space, and cultural practices. The Orang Rimba, in particular, can only get their daily food from the forest. They meet their need for carbohydrates from tubers of climbing plants (*benor*), young stems of wild palm (*bayeh*) and taro. To get the tubers from the *benor*, they must dig 10 meters deep or more using

a pointy tree branch. It takes them a while to find and get the tubers out of the ground if they are lucky to find one (as the number of this particular plant has decreased). Meanwhile, their protein intake comes from forest animals such as deer, pigs, tapirs, mouse deer, porcupines, turtles, lizards, snakes, birds, and various types of river fish.

Due to the increasing deforestation, the indigenous people are overwhelmed to obtain forest products. One of the reasons is that they have to compete with the poachers who also hunt for deer or other wild animals. When they are hunting, the Mat Suri and Mat Atam groups eat from the young wild palm stems and fruits, such as cashews, to relieve hunger, and they collect the dragon's blood (*jernang*) which they exchange for rice for the Orang Terang group. In this context, the latter also illegally benefits from the forest. They make a living in the forest by cutting down timber trees, mining for oil in the abandoned pits and catching wild animals such as birds with melodious chirpings (Oriental magpie robin, magpie-robin, yellow-crowned bulbul) and exotic birds (hornbills).

The Non-Timber Forest Products collected by Orang Rimba to exchange for rice, cigarettes, sweetened condensed milk, biscuits, soap, sugar, and other basic needs are *jernang* sap, resin, aloe wood sap, *jelutung* (tree like the rubber tree) and *merpayang*. The Orang Rimba sometimes also asks for matches, blades (knives) and machetes for exchanges. The Forest Protection officers often help the Orang Rimba to exchange their forest products for their basic needs. The officers exchange the forest products for rice and cigarettes from the collectors. According to the officers, the price per bag of the *jernang* sap ranges from IDR 800,000 - 1,200,000, depending on the price set by the collector as it is he or she who sets the price by taking into account the quality of the *jernang* sap being sold, stock availability and market demand. From time to time, the Orang Rimba earn less and less from their *jernang* sap as the *jernang* trees have decreased. Even worse, many Orang Terang, who make a living in the forest, also search for it.

Mat Suri said he has never met pigs and *nangoi* (small, wild pigs). These animals are important for them as the source of protein. To keep the meat for days, they make racks out of tree trunks and fire pits underneath and then smoke it over the burning pits. Other animals, such as deer and antelope, are also difficult to catch because they need to go deep into the forest. Meanwhile, he and his dog are getting weaker, and they can no longer chase these animals: "The deer runs gallantly, I and my dog can't chase it." Mat Suri felt that his stamina has decreased, and he can no longer catch his preys whose movements remain agile. Nowadays, Mat Suri and his group eat whatever animals they can catch in the forest, such as porcupines, lizards, snakes, fish, and turtles. (Turtles and fish are difficult to find during the rainy season because of the large water volume). The caught animals are processed by burning or cooking using spices they got from the groups of illegal loggers or oil miners. They sometimes do not catch animals at all for a day and, if that is the case, they can only eat bayas, benor tubers or rice if rice is available. Mat Suri and his group go into the forest to set up temporary huts and start exploring the forest to hunt animals from morning until late at night. If it is raining, Mat Suri chooses to stay in the hut because his physical condition makes it impossible to hunt in

rainy conditions. Only the youngsters of them will still be out in the rain hunting so that they can feed the group.

Unlike the Orang Rimba, who are highly dependent on forest resources, many Batin Sembilan people who live in the Sungai Kelompang village are recruited to work for PT. REKI. They are placed in the Department of Forest Protection as a Community Warden and in the Community Partnership Department, which assists their group. In addition to preserving the forest environment from illegal logging, land clearers, and poachers, the officers are also expected to be at the frontline in educating their own indigenous communities about the importance of preserving tropical forests. Getting the indigenous communities involved in such programs also aim to ensure their survival (Islahuddin et al., 2022; Sze et al., 2022). Formulating related policies should be based on the community's social, cultural and economic realities and eco-agrarian goals, culture and patterns of adaptation strategies of the people at stake (Indrizal, 2000).

Those who work for PT. REKI, as Forest Protection officers, receive compensation of approximately two to four million rupiah per month. They spend their income not only to buy basic daily needs but also other needs such as paying for their vehicle installment. At the of conducting this research, there are around forty-two Batin Sembilan people working for PT. REKI. The rest, whom the company can not hire, earn their living by selling farming products, collecting scrap iron left over, collecting palm fruit, catching fish, and looking for honey, resin, aloe wood (gaharu) sap or forest rattan. According to Ros and Jon, both belong to the Batin Sembilan Kelumpang group. When the fruit season arrives, they go into the forest to collect durians, *petai* (smelly, edible bean), *jengkol* (vegetable, ngapi nut), rambutans, *langsar* (a tasty yellow-white fruit), breadfruit, and so on, and sell them.

The indigenous people and outsiders have lived intermingled for decades in the settlements, and as a result, the former can gradually increase their skills and knowledge so that they can work in the informal sector, such as company employees or simply learn how to farm and raise livestock. The Batin Sembilan people in the villages of Simpang Macan Dalam, Simpang Macan Luar, KM 45, Hulu Badak and Jerat work as small-scale farmers of oil palm and rubber, chilies, cassava, long beans, cucumbers, jengkol, watermelons, bananas, eggplants, mangoes, and durians. A few of them work as company employees as well. Some Batin Sembilan and local people (Malays and transmigrants from Java Island) who have small-scale oil palm and rubber plantations admit that they planted them for decades and can now feel the economic benefits for their families. This is in line with (Kubitza et al., 2018), who concluded that many small-scale farmers in Sumatra indeed feel the positive economic impact of the oil palm plantations.

Meanwhile, PT. REKI promotes the idea of the importance of conserving biodiversity and makes a policy prohibiting the indigenous and local people from planting oil palms in the restoration area. This conflicting interest sparked protests from the community, prompting the government to issue a decree granting land to indigenous and local people to be managed through a social forestry program. The allocated land specified by the permit can be used for mixed gardening to cultivate plants of economic value to the community.

Those granted the social forestry partnership land are the Batin Sembilan people and the Malays, and transmigrants from Sungai Kelompang and Simpang Macan Luar villages. The area of the partnership land for each group is the Sei Kelompang group (consisting of 23 families) with 353 hectares; the Mang Tanding group (17 families) with 675 hectares; the Gelinding group (9 families) with 26 hectares; and the Simpang Macan Luar group (37 families) with 399 hectares. Planting activities on the partnership land, both short-term crops (sweet potatoes and vegetables) and long-term crops (durian, oil palm, rubber), is commonly referred to as 'beumo/beume', which means 'farming'. The crops of the short-term beumo/beume plants are spent on food ingredients and kitchen appliances. Meanwhile, the long-term crops are used to buy basic and other needs such as farming tools, electronic equipment, motorbikes, and mobile phones. According to Mang Rusman, in a week, his family spends approximately 40 kg of rice, side dishes, soap and other basic needs approximately IDR 460,000. Additional costs, such as paying motorbike installments and buying cigarettes, amount to IDR 1,200,000. The average total expenses of the Batin Sembilan families who work in the informal sector and for PT. REKI ranges from IDR 200,000 – 4,000,000 rupiah per month. On the other hand, the Orang Rimba, the Mat Suri and Mat Atam groups, who remain nomadic, are not granted the partnership land because they cannot cultivate the land. They do not feel the need for farming land as they see the forest as a place to live and make a living, including to meet their daily needs.

4. Conclusion

Confirming identity as a group of indigenous people affiliated with past rulers (kingdoms) is a form of legitimacy that allows them to access forests and land. This identity factor is also related to their efforts to counteract the claims of outsiders who want to take advantage of the exploitation of forest products. From the economic, social and cultural perspectives, the indigenous people are heavily dependent on the availability of forest, both its spatial sustainability and products. Forest has become living spaces providing all their needs for food, medicine, and cultural and spiritual practices. Large-scale logging, legal or illegal, land clearing, forest fires, and the permits granted to extractive companies to exploit natural resources in the forest areas where they live have negated the role of forests in their survival, either the Orang Rimba or Batin Sembilan communities.

The increasing deforestation rates can threaten biodiversity and the survival of indigenous people in the forest. Indigenous communities who live wandering in the forest solely depend on fulfilling their basic needs from what the forest offers them. Meanwhile, those who have settled in settlements, such as the Batin Sembilan people, can be considered lucky; they have alternative livelihoods as farmers, informal workers, and employees of PT. REKI. The Batin Sembilan group feels that their needs are increasing as their knowledge develops and intensive exchange of information with people from outside their group, such as Malays and transmigrants, whom they also call "Orang Terang". Changes in perspectives seeking livelihoods are also influenced by the relationships they built with market people and collectors to whom they barter their forest products. Their contact with "Orang Terang" necessitate new interactions and

social relations, which in turn will change the construct of the indigenous tribal community in construing their world.

Since PT. REKI was granted permission from the government to execute the restoration of forest ecosystems in 2007 in South Sumatra Province, and in 2010 in Jambi Province, the company held public education about the importance of protecting biodiversity. The policies introduced include prohibiting cutting down timber trees, mining for oil, hunting wild animals for trading, and starting or expanding oil palm and rubber plantations. These policies have sparked debate with a number of Batin Sembilan and local people. The latter argue that such activities have been a source of livelihood for tens of years. To solve this problem, both parties then encouraged the government to issue a decree granting land to indigenous and local people to be managed through social forestry programs. The land is then allocated for the cultivation of economically valuable crops.

Another effort by the PT. REKI empowers the Suku Anak Dalam (SAD) community for restoration by recruiting 42 Batin Sembilan people to work as Community Warden in the Forest Protection department. These recruits are expected to be at the forefront of protecting the forest from land clearers and illegal loggers. Those who do not work as staff at the company make money by selling farming and gardening products, collecting scrap iron, becoming collectors of loose palm fruit, catching fish, and searching for honey, resin, aloe wood sap or forest rattan.

This study is expected to give insights into PT. REKI and the district governments to formulate more suitable policies in restoring the forest environment that matches with empowering indigenous communities in the area. It should be understood that the Hutan Harapan area has served as a living space for the indigenous people for decades. The forest is important for economic purposes, self-identity, social and organizational systems, cultural practices and spirituality. Therefore, restoration efforts should consider and involve all stakeholders and embrace the interests of indigenous people for sustainable livelihoods. In this, intensive, continuous and more meaningful assistance to improve the quality of life of indigenous people is very important so that they become part of the main utilization of optimizing environmental benefits.

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