

**EAGLE DANCE  
AS CULTURAL IDENTITY  
IN THE ISOLATING TRIBAL COMMUNITY CHANGES,  
IN *PEMATANG KABAU VILLAGE, AIR HITAM DISTRICT,*  
*SAROLANGUN REGENCY, JAMBI PROVINCE***

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**ABSTRACT**

This dissertation discusses the Eagles dance as the identity of dance in cultural change in isolated tribal community (SAD), in the village of Pematang Kabau, Air Hitam District, Sarolangun Regency, Jambi Province. Central Government through the Ministry of Social Affairs moved SAD out of the jungle and then settling on a permanent area and this activity has been carried out since 1973. Furthermore, the settlement resulted in a fairly fundamental change, not only in style and environment of SAD, but more important to the identity markers and self-identity of SAD.

People of SAD who had been settled, strive to keep eagle dance even by making some changes as far as not to break out the essential elements of the Eagle dance in order to avoid a total loss of identity and their self-identity in the new neighborhoods, This study aims to see how art, in this case Eagle dance, can be a marker of identity that attaches to the SAD after they settle outside the forest. To achieve these objectives there are three main problems which will be sought answers in this study, namely: (1) What does the Eagles dance of SAD in the village of Pematang Kabau looks like?; (2) how is the status of the Eagles dance for SAD in the village of Pematang Kabau; and (3) how is the impact and meaning of Eagles dance towards the SAD changes?

The study with the perspective of cultural studies designing as this qualitative research is used to solve the three problems mentioned above by using several concepts, theories and techniques of data collection. Concepts are referred to Eagle dance, cultural identity, change, and isolated tribal community. The theory used is the identity theory, the theory of semiotics, hegemony theory, and theory of deconstruction. Data collection techniques include participant observation, depth interviews, and study of literature / documentation. The data collected is processed in a descriptive analytical and subsequently presented in the form of narrative, tables, and visual illustrations.

The results indicate that there had been changes towards the Eagles dance in SAD which had settled in Kabau Pematang village, although the use of holy

spells as a musical accompaniment and distinctive gestures symbolic of this dance is still maintained. In residential SAD, Eagle dance is treated as a cultural group identity, and the regeneration of the dancers began to be conducted. The impact of this treatment which is carried out by citizens of SAD making the Eagles dance becomes sustainable dance despite the new of its socio-cultural functions. For SAD in residential areas, Eagle dance means as a symbol of cultural expression, equality, and welfare. The main meaning of Eagles dance, who built from tradition and cultural power of SAD, becomes a representation of community groups concerned, in the midst of pressure, domination and influence of the majority culture.

**Key words:** Eagle Dance, cultural identity, change, isolated tribal community

## INTRODUCTION

There is a new residential area for isolated tribal community (SAD) in Kabau Pematang Village, Air Hitam District, Sarolangun Regency, Jambi Province, While claiming to improve the standard of living of the underdeveloped rural communities, a culture considered primitive and backward, then since 1973, the central government through the Ministry of Social Affairs moved the SAD out of the jungle, which makes them leave their old lifestyle, which is always close with nature and entering into a new and modern lifestyle that's far from the jungle.

Before settled, SAD, which is the origin community of Jambi, living in the wilds of the jungle in the province of Jambi to the borders of Palembang. They live in groups and spread out in the jungle. Their life is depending on the natural resources in the jungle. The SAD also lives in jungle to continue their generation. Jungle is everything for SAD. The *Bukit Dua Belas* jungle region becomes the center of SAD distribution. It is called Bukit Dua Belas because there are twelve steps surrounding jungle hillside. The SAD group believes that the respected Gods, spirits of ancestors and ghosts reside in this hill. Then, in 2000 Bukit Dua Belas is functioned as National Park forest with an area of 60,500 ha.

Furthermore, SAD is the name given by the government through the Ministry of Social Affairs to the community. They are classified as public in isolated, primitive, and backward. The concept of isolated communities is introduced by the Ministry of Social Affairs is attached to the original community or now known as Indigenous People outside of Java, who live in the forest with the livelihoods of hunting, gathering, shifting cultivation, and so on.

So far, the planners and development practitioners assume that the SAD was isolated communities which reflect the backwardness of their living standards. Therefore, they are considered not in accordance with the aims of development. Way of life and culture run by the SAD assessed as poverty, alienation, and underdevelopment. Starting from these assumptions, occurs a kind of an understanding for the importance of the changes. These changes are sometimes shaped as traditional values taken off then replaced with other values, in order to achieve the development goals. One of the changes made to help the

the SAD is an effort to settle the isolated communities or known as the Indigenous Custom Community Empowerment. SAD moved out from the jungle then settled in developing villages.

Settlements that have been made, leading to fundamental changes not only towards in lifestyle and environment SAD, but much more important lead on the markers of identity and the identity of SAD itself. Eagle dance is one of the SAD cultural identity, which distinguishes them with other community groups. Therefore, SAD people who lives in Pematang Kabau village, working hard to keep this dance even by making some changes as far as not ruin the essential elements of the dance itself.

This study aims to see how art, in this case Eagle dance, can be a marker of identity that attaches to the SAD after they settle outside the forest. To achieve these objectives there are three main problems which will be sought answers in this study, namely: (1) What does the Eagles dance of SAD in the village of Pematang Kabau looks like?; (2) how is the status of the Eagles dance for SAD in the village of Pematang Kabau; and ( 3) how is the impact and meaning of Eagles dance towards the SAD changes?

## **MATERIAL AND DISCUSSION**

This study applied qualitative methods to describe the efforts of SAD living in the village Pematang Kabau, Air Hitam District Sarolangun Regency, Jambi Province to maintain its cultural identity through the Eagles dance. This research was conducted in several stages. Firstly, ethnographic data collection about SAD and the Eagles dance as a kind of art they have. Then took a look at the SAD who had been taken out from the jungle with their Eagle dance.. Next, the process of analyzing the changes of eagle dance is conducted that followed by analyzing the identity of the SAD which is represented in the dance. Secondly, choose the theory that will be used to assess the problems. this research uses the theory of identity, semiotics, hegemony, and Deconstruction. Thirdly, analyze and interpret temporarily data, and the fourth stage as the final stage was the writing of the results of research that had been conducted.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

These research findings can be described generally as follows.

1. There is a change to the Eagles dance of SAD which had been settled in Kabau Pematang village. However, the changes has been made as an effort to keep the Eagle dance life based on the context of the SAD after they live outside the jungle. It is conducted by the SAD in order to disclosure and strengthening their identity and to demonstrate the existence of SAD as a civilized society and was able to prove their equality with other groups outside the community.
2. Sustainability identity of SAD towards Eagles dance can be seen from the spells that are still used and serve as musical accompaniment for the Eagles dance, as well as dance movement that is still patterned as the Eagle dance movement previously. This dance is put as a reflection of mythological animals, the eagle. Although the SAD which has been settled in Kabau Pematang Village has no longer believe in God of Bird, but they still appreciate it. In addition, the SAD in the village of Pematang Kabau, began to regenerate the dancer in order to avoid a discontinuity of identity.
3. The existence of Eagles dance belongs to a representation of the SAD as a force that built within the culture itself in the midst of change and majority cultural pressure which are felt to have been pressing them towards their backwardness label. The existence of harmonization efforts undertaken by moving the SAD out of the jungle causes waning of identity of the SAD itself, it would be fortified with retaining the existing art as the Eagle dance. Surely the existence of SAD is not to be discriminated against, not as a scorn, but the recognition and equality with other people is highly expected.

## **RESEARCH CONCLUSION**

Conclusions of this study is an effort of SAD in

First, SAD continually strives to maintain their identity, particularly through the Eagle dance. This is intended to eliminate the side view and a negative label toward the SAD. Although, there is a change of identity of the people who live the jungles within the people who live in rural areas and settle

down, but SAD does not want to erase his past as a rural community. This process proves that the identity belongs to a dialogical discourse that always bargains to achieve a complete understanding of the identity construction of a group of indigenous peoples.

Second, although the SAD in Kabau Pematang Village has been moved out and settled and has been changed its lifestyle, beliefs, etc. but the label as rural communities remain sealed because until now they still referred to as SAD. They still get different treatment, and remained as second-class communities whose existence remained marginalized. So what does the expenditure from the jungle mean?

Third, Eagle dance was the result of the reforms undertaken by the SAD to undermine the negative meanings that had been attached to the SAD, related to their identity as rural communities. Negative labels that have been attributed to SAD so far makes them conditioned as ethnic minorities. The Eagle dance related in the present context has both a new understanding in the sight of SAD people or people outside SAD. Eagle Dance as a continuity of tradition owned by SAD in Kabau Pematang Village becomes representation of the SAD to strengthen their existence in gaining equality with other community in various ways.

The fourth, the Eagles dance as a local cultural product of SAD which is built on the accumulation process of cultural, historical, and community representation of form of SAD is also functioned as an aesthetic that appears on the assumption which born within themselves and the surrounding environment. The cultural uniqueness of SAD should be able to reflect the cultural diversity owned by Indonesia and enrich the existing diversity itself.

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