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CONSERVING THE JADI MALI FOR THE INDIGENOUS SUSTAINABILITY

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ABSTRACT

The ancient practice of Jadi Mali among the indigenous Iban tribe in Sarawak is a custom and tradition birthed with the aim of attaining a marriage free from any unwanted catastrophe due to violating a taboo. This paper anticipated the protocols of Jadi Madi ritual as a vital intangible culture passed down from our ancestors' knowledge to be preserved for future references. This paper adopted a philosophical approach of the Husserlism of Transcendental Phenomenology (TPh) to qualitatively the issue of Jadi Madi as main interest of this paper. The

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affirmative lessons obtained from this ancient ritual may act as a rule for the younger Iban generation to be mindful of their courtship, and to choose the right life partner in the future. The ancient ritual of Jadi Mali indicates a need for mutual respect and teaches intensive empathy about life's details for genetic sustainability. This paper provides a record for future reference on the ancient ritual of Jadi Mali among the Iban indigenous community in Sarawak. Foremost, this paper is important for indigenous sustainability in conserving ancestral knowledge.

Keywords: Indigenous Knowledge, Intangible Culture, Ethnicity, Indigenous Sustainability, Transcendental Phenomenology

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is geographically located at the centre of the multicultural Southeast-Asia region. Malaysia has 28 million populations as reported in the Preliminary Count Report on the Malaysian population and housing Census 2010. The *Bumiputra* (aboriginal) represented 65.1% of the population, followed by Chinese (26.0%) and Indian (7.7%) (DOSM, 2018). However, non-Malay indigenous groups make up half of east Malaysia which is about 50% population of Sarawak (apart from Malay 23%, Chinese 26.7%, Indian 0.2% and others

0.2%), and about 66% population of Sabah (apart from Malay 15.3%, Chinese 13.2%, Indian 0.5% and others 5.0%). The federal government of Malaysia officially recognizes 28 ethnic groups in Sarawak with its indigenous groups of Iban, Malay, Bidayuh, Melanau and others. The ethnic fidelity of a person has much influence on their ways of life which vary from one group to another due to the socio-ecocultural variation of ethnicity (Rozaimie, 2018) and other demographic and socio-political profile (Beginda, & Bala, 2018). Thus, profound thought and awareness are crucial in obtaining the harmonization of intercultural relations among multiracial society (Rozaimie & Ali, 2014). Modernization and simplification of modern living have altered the way of life and lead to changes in some of the ethnic groups' traditional identity. Along with this change, precious indigenous knowledge is gradually forgotten. This concern is also present in the ancient ritual of *Jadi Mali* among the Iban community in Sarawak, a ritual which is gradually diminishing. Thus, the main objective of this paper is to find what are the authentic and ancient protocols of *Jadi Mali* ritual, which the young generation today should acknowledge?

First and foremost, the *Iban* constitutes most of the ethnic community in Sarawak and they belong to the *Dayak* ethnic group together with the *Bidayuh*. The *Iban* community is known as Sea *Dayak*, while the *Bidayuh* are recognised as Land *Dayak*. The way of life of the ancient Ibans was influenced by the forces of

nature. This led them in their daily activities and daily life's direction before the teaching of Christianity replaced their pagan beliefs. Although most drivel beliefs and norms are discarded by the logical teaching of the Bible, some ancient rituals (for example, a celebration known as *Gawai*) is still perceived to significantly influence mutual linkages between the society members and the universe. The *Gawai* (festival) especially *Gawai Kenyalang* (hornbill festival) and *Gawai Antu* (festival of the dead) is observed to celebrate life and death, with the hope that community members rejoice in the present and craft the future without neglecting the past. Some other intangible cultures deemed as sacred rituals among the *Iban* community of descended traditions and customs are, rejoicing pregnancy, postnatal, marriage, death and funerals.

Additionally, there are specific rituals and protocols to follow in aligning life with the universe. Some of the specific rituals are performed to bless the universe when unexpected situations happen, such as *Jadi Mali* (rituals carried out due to prohibited marriage) and *Berserara Bungai* (rituals related to death). Hence, this explanatory paper attempts to preserve the understanding of the intangible culture of *Jadi Mali*. *Jadi Mali* is an ancient intangible culture that gives significance to the harmonisation of married life especially among Pagans (those with no specific religion, but rather are eclectic and who believe in the force of nature to dictate one's life) (Postill, 2003). The intangible culture tends to be forgotten due to the evolution of modern living, undocumented records and the influence of the

new generation of Ibans' religion. *Jadi Mali* ritual is solely based on the belief that new life is started with marriage. A decent life is attained when the couple is solemnised and are genetically blessed. Hence, the following section of this paper discusses the concept of intangible culture. The study's methodology and discussion on the *Jadi Mali* ritual are discussed following that. The paper ends with a view of the future of *Jadi Mali* and the conclusion.

Indigenous Perspectives and Intangible Culture

Kim and Berry (1993) defined indigenous theory as a "theory of human behaviour or mind that is specific to a context or culture, not imported from other contexts/cultures and purposely designed for the people who live in that context or culture". The operational definition of indigenous varied across geographical location, instructional missions and scholarly objectives. The core elements of acceptance indigenous identification include those maintaining some distinctive social-cultural norms and institutions (Kim & Berry, 1993; Kim, Park & Park, 2000; Peredo, Anderson, Galbraith, Honig & Dana, 2004). Furthermore, indigenous people are identified based on their "descent from populations inhabiting a region before later inhabitants; and geographical, political, and/or economic domination by later inhabitants or immigrants" (Peredo et. al, 2004). Existing indigenous culture presents a geographical identity as a tourism

attraction. Cultural Diasporas happen where the ancestor's knowledge is eroded far from its original due to immigration, cross-culture marriage or the effect of colonization. For example, a practice of indigenous 'head-hunter' is associated with many other rituals and ceremonies. All those indigenous associations are erased as not relevant in today's life and constitutional legal application.

According to Moreton-Robinson (2009), "Colonisation morphologies in multiple ways as it continue to operate discursively and materially within cultural formations, institutions and public culture". A postcolonial world we inhabit today has changed the geographical, political, and/or economies of indigenous landscape. However, a growing awareness of the importance of conserving the indigenous knowledge obtained support from the national and international organization in recognition of the ancestral identities. Thus, an indigenous conservation awareness movement around the globe has strengthened and resolved the indigenous ownership issues. For example; the issues of '*Pulau Galau*' in Sarawak where the traditional land ownership dispute is solved, and the land is titled by taking into consideration the indigenous descended stories. Therefore, indigenous sustainability is expected to be significant in the exploration and conservation of indigenous and cultural information.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

(ICHC) on May 18, 2001, published the UNESCO Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. This proclamation recognizes and protects most of the sociocultural phenomena inclusive of theatre, music, folklore, and rituals from all over the world. Specifically, the intangible cultural heritage is defined as “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills, as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2001). The conservation effort is vital to keep the intangible culture that is endangered and deserved to be preserved for future generations (Prott, 1998). The gradual loss of intangible culture is seen to be replaced by modernisation and simplicity of today’s living.

Most of the intangible cultures (oral traditions knowledge) were treated as sacred and not passed down to be documented (which believed to be a taboo). These intangible cultures of our ancestors were the key to character building of people in the past. Thus, it is essential and vital to conserve these intangible cultures and document them so they may be passed on to our future descendants. One of those intangible cultures worth documenting is *Jadi Mali*. From a different perspective, *Jadi Mali* is considered a social phenomenology where there is a possibility of thinking, motivating and developing social acceptance and social connectedness (Arslan, 2018; Schutz, 1963) guided by the social relations which is established

through this ancient ritual. Hence, the cultural context of *Jadi Mali* needs to be valued both by individuals and society collectively, for harmonization of social relationship and sustaining cultural identity, especially among the Ibans. The intangible culture elements created in the past is perceived as a basis of character building for the society in reducing psychological maltreatment (Arslan, 2018). Specifically, the psychological maltreatment was a negative and significant predictor of social connectedness and social acceptance addressed in this paper through the *Jadi Mali* ritual. Although there are initiatives taken by library services to indigenous peoples, this paper served as a knowledge supply to the library and trendsetter to assemble expanded traditional knowledge conservation initiatives. Hence, this paper anticipated the protocols of *Jadi Mali* ritual as a vital intangible culture of our ancestors' knowledge to be preserved for future references.

***Jadi Mali* among Iban in Sarawak**

There are specific rituals which are rarely performed, but the implementation depends on the need, event or expected incident. The ritual is performed to motivate the victim to renew their life. Some of the rare rituals performed nowadays include *Mlah Pinang* (engagement), *Enselen Tikai* (marriage blessing), *Jadi Mali* (forbidden marriage) and *Berserara Bungai* (death). Among others, the *Jadi Mali* ritual is considered almost sacred because it may bring dishonour to a

family by society. In the case of *Jadi Mali*, preservation of the distinctiveness of the rituals and adaptation for the younger generation is done for the sake of continuity of this intangible culture, especially among the Ibans. In principle, *Jadi Mali* is the unacceptable act of marrying one's close relatives such as an Uncle or an Aunt. In order to ward off bad luck, the couple is 'bathed in swine blood'. The ritual is conducted when a couple decided to get married despite being closely related. In other words, they committed incest or is in a consanguineous relationship (i.e. relationship with closed kinship or first-degree relatives). *Jadi Mali* happens when the marriage is prohibited or is considered as a 'universal taboo' due to the moral contradiction. Taboo violation (Wadley, 1999) means breaking social relations' structure and shows interpretations of disrespect. Hence, *Jadi Mali* ritual is performed as a remedy "to restore cosmic and social balance and to avert supernaturally-caused misfortune" (Wadley, 1999), especially among the Iban. However, *Jadi Mali* is not part of *Dayakism* ideology (Mason & Jawan, 2003) instead, it is a phenomenon among the Iban society to be observed in a matter of social acceptance and social connectedness (Arslan, 2018).

From the biblical perspective, the most comprehensive identification to the prohibition of incest and consanguineous relationship is found in the book of Leviticus 18:6-17 and 21:2-3. It is stated that "No one is to approach any close

relative to have sexual relations. I am the LORD (Leviticus, 18:6)". The book of Leviticus stated the prohibition of all sexual relations (which also means prohibition to be married to) one's mother, father, sons, daughters, brothers, and one's virgin sister; including stepchildren, aunt, sister or half-sister, daughter-in-law, sister-in-law, granddaughter, and step-granddaughter. The forfeits for those who committed this sin include exclusion from the covenant (Leviticus 18:29, 20:17 - 18), childlessness (Leviticus 20:20 - 21) or even death (Leviticus 20:11 - 12, 14). Nevertheless, there is some exception of being legally married as stated in Deuteronomy 25: 10 and Genesis 20:12. Spiritually, *Jadi Mali* is also discouraged by other ethnic and religious groups in Malaysia. In Islam, it is defined in the Quran that marriage is prohibited as such:

Prohibited to you [for marriage] are your mothers, your daughters, your sisters, your father's sisters, your mother's sisters, your brother's daughters, your sister's daughters, your [milk] mothers who nursed you, your sisters through nursing, your wives' mothers, and your step-daughters under your guardianship [born] of your wives unto whom you have gone in. But if you have not gone in unto them, there is no sin upon you. And [also prohibited are] the wives of your sons who are from your [own] loins, and that you take [in marriage] two sisters

simultaneously, except for what has already occurred. Indeed,

Allah is ever Forgiving and Merciful. (4:23)

Scientifically, Herzog (2012) demonstrated the results of a study among Czechoslovakian children whose parents were first-degree relatives. The study highlighted, "*fewer than half of the children were completely healthy, forty-two per cent of them were born with severe birth defects or suffered early death and another 11 per cent were mildly mentally impaired*". In a consanguineous relationship study on the first-degree incest shows, "*forty per cent of the children were born with autosomal recessive disorders, congenital physical malformations, or severe intellectual deficits; and another 14 per cent of them had mild mental disabilities*" (Herzog, 2012). Thus, incest or consanguineous relationships raise tendencies for children born of this couple to be biological or genetically affected. This leads to a high possibility of new-born borne of these couples to suffer an early death, a severe birth defect or some mental deficiencies.

Likewise, among the *Iban*, the violation of the prohibition of couples who are first degree relatives to be married is believed by the elderly as a form of disrespect to familial ties. It also invites a stroke of bad luck to the family of the married couple and splashes *kudi'* (nature disaster) to the surrounding community such as land-slides or unusual monsoon. Unfortunately, this prohibited

relationship may have bloomed (before married) far away from the village due to a family's migration, separation or the cliché love is blind. The couple who committed such a violation will face social judgement in terms of isolation from the community who are afraid that the curse-of-nature (*Mali* or *Kudi*) may spill-over to anyone who dares to be close to the doomed couple. Should couples who violated this marriage law be caught, they must undergo the ritual of *Jadi Mali* to ask for forgiveness from the spirit of nature and to purify the marriage because *Jadi Mali* is viewed as a sexual peril which poses the danger of childbirth (Sather, 1978). However, there is an exemption for those who are married among cousins, and these marriages are not viewed as *Mali* (bad luck).

The *Jadi Mali* ritual is performed by those who live in a longhouse. Anyone who live away from the longhouse but have committed this 'marriage offence' must return to the longhouse to ask for advice from the elderly and undergo the ritual. It is a ritual which is considered a must amongst those who are Pagans (atheist or still practising the Iban ancient tribal beliefs) who believe in augury (Freeman, 1961). In this modern era, the ritual of *Jadi Mali* is rarely performed as most Ibans have converted to Christianity. To some Ibans, this ritual is considered old fashioned and scientifically insignificant. Hence, the ritual is performed only when there are requests by Pagans or any religious believers who are seeking spiritual purification through a traditional healing technique.

Jadi Mali tends to be a diaspora of culture due to the diminishing practices of this ritual in the present day. Diasporas of culture happens as a result of colonization in the nation (Hall, 2014), migration, settlement, religious evangelical, evolution ways of living and consolidation of social, economic and politic in the recent demographic environment (Clifford, 1994; Cohen, 2002; Safran, 1991). In the Iban society, social changes and local migration to the cities (Appell, 1997) makes the traditional system of living in rural villages obsolete. Scholars (eg. Appell, 2001; Yea, 2002) have proved Iban studies insightful to the national development but most of these studies were emphasized on the socio-economic (Soda, 2001) and political (Beginda & Bala, 2018) implication. The taboo on the written document of the ancient ritual is imperative for the future generation to evade this Diasporas of culture (Appell, 2001; Nyuak & Dunn, 1906; Postill, 2003), especially on the traditional familial system (Freeman, 1969, 1961; Mitchell, 1963; Sather, 1978).

Conserving ancient tradition in light of new situations or experiences requires social education and learning for the young generation to understand the significance of rituals in their social life. Certain subjects in the form of capital, respect, honour of reputation and prestige need to become the basis of being acknowledged (Nyuak & Dunn, 1906). Maintaining and reproducing culture are subject to judgments at a spectrum of social levels, from individual to family, the

community, and religious groups concerned. Considering the issues discussed above, this paper could capture attention towards the preservation of tradition, and find cultural acceptance within different spheres to preserve the understanding of the intangible culture of *Jadi Mali*. Hence, this paper will descriptively document the protocols of *Jadi Madi* especially for the attention of the young Iban generation. The following sections discussed the methodology used to acquire the indigenous knowledge of *Jadi Mali*.

METHODS

This phenomenological paper aims to be a transcendental experiential consciousness inquiry to conserve the understanding of the sacred protocols of *Jadi Mali*. The phenomenology enquiry focuses on the individual experience in interpreting the issue of *Jadi Madi* as the main interest of this paper. Specifically, the Husserlism of Transcendental Phenomenology (TPh), is a philosophical approach adopted to qualitatively seek to understand human experience (Moustakas, 1994). The TPh focuses on people's meaning of the lived experience of a concept or phenomenon. According to Moustakas (1994) “...*the understanding of meaningful concrete relations implicit in the original description of experience in the context of a particular situation is the primary target of phenomenological knowledge.*” (p.14). Husserl thought that different stages of empirical reduction are possible to reach a more fundamental

understanding of the observed phenomenon. Furthermore, a transcendental phenomenology involves the process of identifying a significant phenomenon which requires a researcher to bracket out the participant's experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In principle, this paper does not attempt to establish a substantive theory or test a conceptual model or hypothesis, nor generalise the fundamental understanding of the *Jadi Mali* ritual. Instead, the basic investigation initiated in this paper attempts to preserve the understanding of the intangible culture of *Jadi Mali* especially among the younger generation on the practices of the *Jadi Mali* ritual. It is important to restore traditional practices to enhance understanding of social development.

The empirical transcendental phenomenological embodied in this study is “...to experience the comprehensive descriptions which provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis to portray the essences of the experience.” (Moustakas, 1994). The experience is nurtured as the second and third authors of this paper are Ibans. Additionally, the data gathered consisted primarily of extensive critical and in-depth interviews. The unstructured interviews were conducted using a non-formalised interview schedule in which an in-depth conversation was developed from casual encounters with individuals (Burgess, 1995). As mentioned earlier, *Jadi Mali* is one the Iban's ancient rituals which are exposed to the Diasporas of culture. This paper is conscious of the saturation of

knowledge (Bertaux, 1981: p. 37) on the feasibility of sampling (Seidman, 2006). This paper is considered a preliminary point in exploring issues in preservation of the ancient ritual of *Jadi Mali*. Hence, to preserve the fundamental understanding of the intangible culture of *Jadi Mali*, two unstructured in-depth interviews were conducted.

The selection of the participants in this study is based on the credibility sources of the data. First, a *Tuai Rumah* is selected as he is considered as the cultural practitioner; trusted by the community to behold the Iban's customs and tradition. Second, there is an official Council for Customs and Traditions in Sarawak which is esteemed as a trustee and referee when comes to the local customs and traditions of the Ibans. The selection of the research participants was made as the interviewees are considered 'the insider' (Schutz, 1964; Wilson, 2002) who are highly credible to accomplish the objective of this paper. 'The insider' according to Alfred Schutz is "*someone who, because of his relationship to a group which is more direct than my own, can report some event, or the opinions of others, with the authority of sharing the same system of relevance as the other members of the group*" (Wilson, 2002). Furthermore, the insider information is perceived as valid (at least in part) referring to the insider's knowledge and experiences to the context of the discussed situation (Wilson, 2002).

Therefore, the first interview was arranged with the Head of a Longhouse (*Tuai Rumah*) who is also one of the respectful and eldest people of a village (a longhouse) in the *Betong* province. This *Tuai Rumah* is selected as he is one among a few other Iban's long houses which still practices this ancient ritual *Jadi Mali*. Geographically, the Iban community from *Betong* province is found residing at the *Paku, Padeh, Layar* and *Rimbis* area which originated from the *Saribas* basin. The ethical concern in writing this paper is obtained from the elder at the *Suri Tengah* longhouse and it's *Tuai Rumah*. Normally, the *Tuai Rumah* will chair and lead the ceremony and perform the ritual organised at the village. The *Tuai Rumah* is a trusted person and receives the most respect from the villagers. The interviews were conducted between April to June 2018. Questions asked included; what is *Jadi Mali*? What is the story behind *Jadi Mali*? What are the conditions necessary to perform *Jadi Mali*? And what are the rituals incorporated in performing *Jadi Mali*? As stated earlier, the *Jadi Mali* ritual is hardly performed nowadays but is executed when there is a mutual confession from any married couple who have violated marriage rules or other family members.

The data collected for this paper are narrated and justified based on the cultural memory of the interviewed *Tuai Rumah*. In particular, the practitioner embraced the culture's memory on specific knowledge about the texts, images, and rituals to

each society (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995). Although culture memory contributed to some contextualisation issues of representation (Kansteiner, 2002; Confino, 1997), the present study believes it gives some significant reliability on the exclusivity of the ritual. The interviewees' narrations are illustrated and contextualized to identify possible levels of indexing codes relating to emerging themes and patterns. Then the codes are checked to identify any single instances or recurring patterns. According to Polkingshorne (2005), the narratives or stories are data obtained which exclusively stand as an untainted description of the experiences. The data gathered are important to dismantling the *Jadi Mali* issue highlighted in this study to identify the significance of the *Jadi Mali* ritual to the young generation today. Therefore, the cultural memory narrated in this paper is justified and credible due to the insufficiency of any related references to the exceptional socio-cultural appearances of the observed environment.

An inter-rater reliability check is conducted assesses the external consistency of the main interview data. Henceforth, a second interview was conducted with a government-appointed official at the *Majlis Adat Istiadat Sarawak* (Sarawak's Council for Customs and Traditions) to validate the realism of the transcript data. Moreover, the second interview conducted is considered a validation interview to cross-check and confirm the fact narrated in the main interview and obtained their approval to expel the validity and credibility of the study. In addition, the second interview was conducted to seek consent from the official authority to

share this paper publicly. This process is considered accepted and sufficient to validate the narrated data provided by the first interviewee. According to Beck, Keddy and Cohen (1994), a cross-paradigmatic communication could result in interpretation difficulties but the truth value, applicability, **consistency**, and neutrality may offer phenomenologist an appropriate alternative to logical positivists' terminology. Hence, the depiction findings of the ancient ritual of *Jadi Mali* in this paper are possibly well representative and sufficiently justifiable for the methodological validity (Winter, 2000) and credibility (Patton, 1999). The following section illustrates the encryption of the ancient ritual of *Jadi Mali*.

FINDINGS

Although the *Jadi Mali* is perceived irrelevant especially among young *Iban* generation nowadays, it is crucial to understand the philosophy which lies behind this almost extinct ancient ritual. To achieve the main objective of this paper (i.e. seeks to explicate the authentic and ancient protocols of *Jadi Mali* ritual, which the young generation today should acknowledge), the transcript data are contextualized according to the three thoughtful understanding which includes: the folklore of *Jadi Mali*, types of *Jadi Mali* and the ritual of *Jadi Mali*. Basically, in the local language, *Mali* is described as a taboo act which may cause disaster. *Jadi* means simply to happen or to become husband and wife. Thus, *Jadi*

Mali means disasters which may happen either to a married couple, a closed cluster of a family or to the whole community. Hence, the sacred ritual of *Jadi Mali* is performed to break the curse from the universe due to couples who engage in a marriage that is prohibited. To understand *Jadi Mali*, we should acknowledge the principle of the *Jadi Mali* as mentioned in the earlier part of this paper. The *Tuai Rumah* emphasized that *Jadi Mali* is not merely a ritual, but covers the values of living:

“We should understand the folklore behind the ritual and types of *Jadi Mali* before performing the ritual” (*Tuai Rumah*)

The Folklore of *Jadi Mali*

Jadi Mali is defined as a marriage taboo and refers specifically to those who marry their very close relatives. In the ancient days, couples who committed the offence were killed using *Buloh aur Pantang* (a sharp-end bamboo) by the ritual's leader. Their corpses will be buried together in one grave. The executioner's bamboo will then be planted near the grave to commemorate *Jadi Mali* as a warning sign to the others not to repeat the same shameful behaviour.

The punishment of killing the couple was ceased when a girl named *Simba* was impregnated by her brother. She had an innocent virgin-look, and despite being

caught and interrogated by the villagers, she kept her secret from the gods. The day she gave birth, a catastrophe stoked the village. It went on for quite some time. Thunderstorm and heavy rain forced the villagers to stay at home and this crippled their economic activities. Despite her parents' pleading for her to tell the truth, she kept her mouth shut. This caused the villagers to decide to kill *Simba* and the baby. Before being killed, *Simba* sat at the *ruai* (the corridor of the longhouse) *ngenjut anak* (cooing the baby) and she sang a *timang* (chant). According to the *Tuai Rumah*:

“The chant was about the incident which led to her pregnancy and a plea to not kill them.” (*Tuai Rumah*).

In her chant *Simba* suggested the bathing ritual and several traditional apparatuses to be used such as *Nyabor Chundur* (sword), *Beliong Lajong* (axe), *Jalong Jebong* (skull), *Pua Kumbu* (weaved mat), *Sumpit Tapang* (wooden blowpipe), *Chapak sesingkap* (a plate of offering dishes), and *Benda Rusa* (ceramic vase) instead of killing them. The chants were wistful and softened the hearts of the villagers to negotiate and replaced her punishment with the rituals she chanted. Only then did *Simba* reveal that her biological older brother named *Lamit* was responsible for her pregnancy. Since then, the ritual of *Jadi Mali* is performed as a symbol of *Simba*'s honesty and the catastrophe stopped.

Types of *Jadi Mali*

There are three types of *Jadi Mali*. The first is known as *Satu Nangga Dua* (one to two). The ‘marriage offence’ happens when a father marries his daughter, or a mother marries her son; an uncle marries his niece (his brother’s or sister’s daughter), or an aunt marries her nephew (her brother’s or sister’s son). The rituals are performed at two places; at the nearest river known as *Sapat di Ai* (divided at the water) and in front of the longhouse known as *Sapat di Darat* (divided at the land). Additionally, the couple will be charged a penalty known as *Adat Pelasi Menua* (a custom to take-off the land) of four hundred ringgit (RM400) per person.

The second type of *Jadi Mali* is known as *Dua Nangga Tiga* (two to three). The ‘marriage offence’ happens where an uncle marries his niece (his first cousin’s daughter), or an aunt marries her nephew (her first cousin’s son). The rituals are performed only at the nearest river (*Sapat di Ai*). The couple will be charged the *Adat Pelasi Menua* penalty of three hundred ringgit (RM300) per person.

The third type of *Jadi Mali* is known as *Tiga Nangga Empat* (three to four). The ‘marriage offence’ happens where an uncle marries his niece (his second cousin’s daughter), or an aunt marries her nephew (her second cousin’s son). The rituals are performed only in-front of the longhouse (*Sapat di Darat*). The couple will be

charged the *Adat Pelasi Menua* penalty of two hundred ringgit (RM200) per person.

The penalty charged is minimal with no standard rate and is considered as alms from the couple to the universe.

“The penalty is compensated to the *Tuai Rumah* and divided accordingly to the number of 'doors' or houses in the longhouse. The penalty is assumed as alms and sign of respect to establishing a blissful relationship with the universe.” (*Tuai Rumah*).

The Ritual of *Jadi Mali*

To avoid a *Mali* or *kudi* (disaster), the couple who committed *Mali* must confess to the eldest member of the family as soon as possible. It is the responsibility of the family to advise the couple to stop, or discontinue such a relationship. Otherwise, the ritual of *Jadi Mali* is performed, and led by the *Tuai Rumah*. The couple themselves will prepare the traditional apparatuses such as *Sumpit Tapang* (blowpipe), *Kain Berangi* (fabric), *Kumbu Rayung* (waived mat), *Pedang Panjang* (sword), *Beliung Lajung* (axe), *Pinggai besai* (dish), *Rangki* (male

bracelet), *Kebuk* (pot), *Tanggui Seraung* (cap), *Piring* (plate) and *Kelam* (clothes used to submerge themselves under the water in the river). These apparatuses are to be used for the ritual, especially at the river. Each apparatus has its own function and significance in the ritual. Additionally, the couple will provide a rooster and swine to be sacrificed (two swine for *Satu Nangga Dua* type of *Jadi Mali*; a swine each for *Dua Nangga Tiga* and *Tiga Nangga Empat* type of *Jadi Mali*). The ritual is only granted and performed once the necessities are prepared and completed. Besides, all the villagers are invited to witness the ritual of *Jadi Mali* except unmarried individuals and children. The rationales unmarried individuals and children are not allowed to join the ritual will be discussed in the discussion section.

The *Jadi Mali* ritual began with the *Miring* ritual. *Miring* is a prayer to the spirit of the universe, to ask for blessings and protection from any disaster, while performing the *Jadi Mali*. For the *Sapat di Ai* of *Jadi Mali*, the *Miring* is performed by the eldest person in the family at the nearest river. While performing the *Jadi Mali* ritual, the couple could wear regular attire instead of *Ngapan* and *Sirat* (a traditional *Iban*'s custom). After the *Miring* and upon arrival of the couple, one person is selected, and will be directed to hide in the bushes to cover the ghost spirit (which is believed to be a disturbance the ritual). The attendees' or villagers will speak of the intention of their presence i.e. enunciate

to the spirit that their presence is to *ngintu* (witness) the couple for the *Jadi Mali* ritual. According to the *Tuai Rumah*, the present intention, spell as:

“Kami saritu datai ngintu seduai Jadi Mali mandi darah babi’

(‘We are present here today to celebrate both the *Jadi Mali* couple to bath in swine's blood’)” (*Tuai Rumah*).

The disguised man will respond to the call by the villagers; only then the ritual of *Jadi Mali* can begin. The ritual starts by slaughtering a wild boar by the eldest family member of the couple. The couple will be submerged in the water at the downstream of the river, while the *Tuai Rumah* chants the mantras and let the swine’s blood flow from the upstream of the river. Once completed, the ritual is followed by the *Sapat di Darat*, especially for the *Satu Nangga Dua* type of the *Jadi Mali*.

For the *Sapat di Darat* of the *Jadi Mali* ritual, a wild boar will be slaughtered in front of the longhouse. The couple is to step on the swine’s blood and then they are seated on a *Tawak* (a traditional Brass Gong). While their heads are covered with *Pua Kumbu*, the *Miring* will be performed by the *Tuai Rumah*. A rooster is slaughtered, detained upside-down, and circled around the *Miring* plate seven times.

Once completed, the couple pays the penalty to the *Tuai Rumah* and the monies are for the longhouse uses and not for any personal use of the *Tuai Rumah*. The couple is declared and accepted as legally married in accordance to the *Iban* tradition. The significance and related issues raised from the ritual of the *Jadi Mali* are discussed in the following section.

DISCUSSION

The findings discussed above show some life lessons, particularly for the young generation. To reemphasize, *Jadi Mali* is an ancient ritual which provides a social guideline for a social arrangement which leads to marriage. The understanding of this ancient ritual is vital in developing social acceptance and social connectedness (Arslan, 2018). There are several life lessons and both individuals and community should take care of these lessons especially in social building from the context of *Jadi Mali*. First, the prohibition or *Mali* as descended through generations is not just folklore. It teaches the young to carefully plan their lives following the rules of life. The biggest lesson is to respect the older generation and other society members. When it comes to married life, the purity of the relationship is important to ensure the generation or offspring is genetically normal. In the case of *Jadi Mali*, the eldest is strongly believed to be the one who will bear the effects of *Mali* (bad luck) curses from the universe unto his life.

Thus, prevention is very important before a *Mali* happened. From the Iban tradition, *Mali Jadi* is a case of incest (totally prohibited in marriage) where the marriage ought to be dissolved and '*pelasi menua*' (ritual offerings to avert evil forces) must be performed (refer Adat Iban, 1993, IV (144)). In contrast, *Jadi Mali* is an incident of prohibited marriage but there is still room of forgiveness by performing the *Jadi Mali* rituals (purification ritual of the marriage). Thus, parent's intervention is necessary for the young generation of Ibans who wish to get married. This is to avoid the mismatched of the marriage arrangement. Or else, the couple needs to follow the customary protocol of "*nanya bini*" (to seek a maiden's hand in marriage) and "*nanya indu*" (the discussion to seek both family approval with the witness of *Tuai Rumah*). In particular, the "*tusut*" (family tree investigation) should be clear during the "*nanya indu*" stage. Therefore, the young generation needs to recognise the chain of familial ties and possibly avoid *Mali Jadi* (instances where it is not possible for them to marry) or *Jadi Mali* occurrence.

Secondly, the restoration of the intangible culture is found to be important for national identity creation. From the economic perspectives, the UNESCO recognition of the intangible culture becomes a selling point for the tourism industry. While performing the *Jadi Mali* rituals, the chair of the ceremony (*Tuai Rumah*) who leads the rituals will utter mantras and chants (Nyuak & Dunn,

1906). It is read in the old *Iban* dialectal scripts which some of the young generation today could not understand. These mantras and chants are highly sacred, practically descended to the *Tuai Rumah's* successor through memorization. The 'cultural lost' issues are raised when there is a lack of a qualified or competent successor, a successor who experiences memory health issues, and written documents to record the ritual, mantras and chants are non-existent. This problem transpired as the elders believed that writing of the mantras and chants is prohibited. *Mali* is invited if the mantras and chants are transformed into any sort of written form. Inexistence of proper documentation leads to the Diasporas of the intangible culture. Therefore, agreeing to the preservation call by Prott (1998), future study is invited to meet the elders of the community, to find solutions to document the mantras and chants for future references.

As mentioned in an earlier section above, throughout performing the *Jadi Mali*, unmarried individuals and children are not allowed to witness the ritual. Unmarried individuals and children are considered spiritually pure and clean (Nyuk & Dunn, 1906). Thus, the elderly believe that *Mali* may spill-over to them if they participate in the rituals. Furthermore, they are also prevented from asking, talking and discussing *Jadi Mali* due to the *Mali* effect which is considered as taboo. The elderly also believes that talk about the rituals stands like a prayer to welcome *Mali*. Therefore, the best solution is to keep their

mouths shut, and the ritual is only performed when unwanted incidents happened. This sentiment is found to restrict the social learning process. Clearly, from cultural, even religious perspectives, *Jadi Mali* is considered a social problem on marriage offences. It is a ritual understood to cure rather than prevent social problems. Hence, the main question raised is how to educate the generation if they are not allowed to learn the knowledge. When unwanted incidences happen, the blame will fall on their shoulders. Therefore, proper and comprehensive documentation of the ritual is vital for future references (Prott, 1998) and social learning.

Another pivotal element of concern is the findings of this paper, particularly the types of *Jadi Mali* are strongly required to be read with caution due to the different interpretation of the *Iban* community geographically. Although within the same society, different villages interpret and practise the ritual differently due to their demographic, socio-politic, cultural variation and ecocultural differences (Beginda, & Bala, 2018; Rozaimie, 2018). Getting beyond the obvious, the present study attempted to document the *Jadi Mali* ritual only from a single longhouse in Betong district in Sarawak. The *Iban* community are also found to reside in other locations such as in the valleys of Batang Ai, the Skrang River, Saribas, and the Rajang River basin. A different community may define and practice *Jadi Mali* differently. Therefore, future research is grounded to include

more Iban communities which cover the group of *Balaus, Baleh, Undups, Rajangs, Sebuyaus, Serians*, and *Saribas*. Methodologically, being grounded is vital for saturation of knowledge (Bertaux, 1981; Kyale, 1996; Seidman, 2006) in the preservation of the ancient ritual of *Jadi Mali*. Hence, a comprehensive understanding and generalisation of the *Jadi Mali* ritual is better understood.

As explained earlier, the empirical transcendental phenomenological embodied in this study emphasized the social context of *Jadi Mali* ritual as important signs for planning and performing the action of social relationship. In building a blissful community, both individual and society in collective are needs to consider the perspective of those who are involved in the establishment of the social relationship. Understanding the concept and context of *Jadi Mali* leads to the development and appreciation of social act (Schutz, 1964; Wilson, 2002). *Jadi Mali* ritual can be considered as a subjective interpretation where "...all kinds of human action or their result to the subjective meaning such action or result of an action had for the actor" as postulated by Wilson (2002). Those intangible cultures of *Jadi Mali* develop a method in character building of the society to avoid social-psychological maltreatment on the subjective well-being (Arslan, 2018; Appell, 2001; Nyuak & Dunn, 1906; Postill, 2003; Wilson, 2002). Family chain recognition is important to show respect and avoid "*tulah*" (plagues of disrespect). Although the Iban is not a hierarchical type of society; respecting the

elderly and being aware of one's origin is a welcomed personality for social acceptance.

On the corpus of knowledge and policy, the findings crafted in this paper demonstrated the support on the importance of social connectedness and social acceptance on adolescents' wellbeing as postulated by Arslan (2018) as psychosocial resources of psychological maltreatment and subjective well-being. From the legal perspective, the Iban tradition and customs in Sarawak are gazetted according to the Native Courts Ordinance 1992 (No.9/92) and the Native Customary Laws Ordinance 1955 (Chapter 51). Specifically, the marriage customs are written in section IV of the 1993s Iban Customs which outlined the event of *Mali Jadi* and *Jadi Mali* (Adat Iban, 1993). Mentioned earlier, although the *tusut* (family trees investigation) is to be carried out during the *nanya indu* stage, there is the possibility that the family member is not sure of their genealogy due to a broken familial chain (long lost separated family). Therefore, this paper is considered a mind opener to show that the *tusut* is the essence to unravel issues of *Jadi Mali*. The policymaker, the legislative and statutory bodies, especially a Council for Customs and Traditions in Sarawak could consider an invention on a reliable web-based system of *tusut*. This paper delightfully proposed a *tusut*-system which serves not only as a remedy to solve *Mali Jadi/Jadi Mali* matters, but will close the loop of broken family chains and aid

the Native Court of Sarawak in solving the issues. The following section states the final remarks of the present study.

CONCLUSIONS

As stated earlier, the main objective of this paper is to unearth authentic and ancient protocols of *Jadi Mali* ritual, which the young Iban generation of today should acknowledge. This generation should learn to understand and appreciate the folklore of *Jadi Mali*, types of *Jadi Mali* and the ritual of *Jadi Mali*. First, a lesson from the story about *Simba* explicate that *Jadi Mali* deemed a marriage to one's close relative as taboo. This incident should be avoided and but if it happened, the ancient ritual must be performed to stop any unwanted catastrophe. Second, there are three types of *Jadi Mali*. The type of ritual performed and the amount of compensation to be paid depends on the severity of the 'marriage offence'. Third, in performing the ancient ritual of *Jadi Mali*, there are sacred protocol, chants, taboo, equipments and other customs and traditions to be followed to break the taboo's disaster chains and to bless the couple in their future together. Notably, apart from modernisation and simplification of today's living, traditional practices are found significant to determine the harmony and politic of social development. Preservation and restoration of the intangible culture are vital for future references and social learning. Besides, it is also found that such indigenous knowledge to bring certain attraction points and commercial

values to the tourism industry in this country. For *Jadi Mali*, this ancient ritual should be given mutual honour and respect especially on the conviction and honesty displayed by the couple who committed the 'marriage offence'. The ritual of *Jadi Mali* is institute as a remedy to the problem and replaces social judgement and punishment. It is a life lesson for the young generation to carefully plan their future, especially when it comes to married life. Documenting this ancient knowledge is important for the next generation to instill appreciation and respect for their genealogy to establish a respectful personality; for cultural conservation and to ensure indigenous sustainability. Highlighting the intangible culture to celebrate the diversification of ethnicity adds more colour to this country.

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