

## HALAL AWARENESS AMONG ORANG ASLI IN SUNGAI CHIONG VILLAGE, BANDING LAKE, PERAK

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### **Abstract**

*Industrial Master Plan (IMP) 2006-2020 aims to make Malaysia to become global hub for the production and trade in Halal goods and services. In order to reach this vision, all the information and output must be channeled throughout all segments of people including the underserved community such as the Orang Asli community. One of the methods for delivering the awareness was education program. Therefore, the Halal awareness program was conducted under the purview of the IIUM International Institute for Halal Research and Training (INHART) on May 2015 in Orang Asli settlement Sg. Chiong village in Temenggor Lake, Gerik Perak. The objective of this paper is to study the level of Halal awareness amongst the Orang Asli community in Sg. Chiong village, Perak and to evaluate the issues and challenges in enhancing the Halal awareness and education in this area. This study uses a qualitative approach for the analysis, on-site observation and also semi-structured interview as part of the Knowledge Transfer Program (KTP) report. The result showed that the level of Halal awareness amongst the Orang Asli community in this settlement is in low level and it can be continuously improving in the future. In order to make Orang Asli community well aware and educated on Halal, necessary steps must be taken during the early ages of childhood to ensure the chain of knowledge would be continuous and sustainable throughout generations.*

**Keywords:** Halal, Education, Awareness, Orang Asli

## INTRODUCTION

Development of *Halal* industry in Malaysia has shown bright prospect since the introduction of Industrial Master Plan (IMP) 2006-2020. IMP aims to make Malaysia as the *Halal* hub for the production and trade in *Halal* goods and services (EPU, 2015). In light of success of the expansive *Halal* industry, each stakeholder should work together to include all segments of the community including those living in the rural

areas such as the Orang Asli (indigenous) community (EPU, 2015). To improve the quality of life of Orang Asli, the government has implemented many educational programs in line with educational policy where opportunities to the indigenous people become high priority. This community should be given equitable access to knowledge so that they will be in at par with other populations (Kasimin, 1991).

In Malaysia, the interest and welfare of Orang Asli community are taken care by the Orang Asli Affairs Department (JAKOA). In 2014, the government allocated RM38 million for the educational development of Orang Asli (eWarta, 2014). The government set out seven initiatives in the Orang Asli Education Transformation Program to transform the Orang Asli educational scenario related to administration, infrastructure and facilities (Sinar Harian, 2012). The Tenth Malaysia Plan (2011-2015) also recognises a critical need to enhance the quality of life especially amongst the underserved communities in Malaysia, such as the Orang Asli and other native groups (Mustapha *et.al*, 2010).

Other programs have also been organised to cater the Orang Asli needs in enhancing their educational development such as Education Assistance Scheme, Educational Development Action Plan for the Orang Asli community and Toy Library (JAKOA, 2015). Nonetheless, there is least emphasis on programs to improve *Halal* education in the Orang Asli community. The literature review revealed that more than 20 studies have been carried out on the level of education of Orang Asli. However, none of these studies concentrate on *Halal* education and its related matters.

To date there is approximately 35,975 Orang Asli who converted to Islam and registered with the various State Religious Departments from a total of 178,197 Orang Asli population in Malaysia (Utusan Malaysia, 2013). In addition, most of the Orang Asli Muslim came from community in Perak. Based on this fact, it is strongly suggested that *Halal* education and awareness program are as important as other types of education programs. Indeed, early education and awareness on *Halal* is very essential in molding their understanding on the concept, meaning and application of *Halal* in their daily life.

This study intends to identify the level of *Halal* awareness amongst the Orang Asli community in Sg. Chiong village, Perak and to recognise the issues and challenges in creating *Halal* awareness and education of Halal in the Orang Asli community in Sg. Chiong village, Perak.

## DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

According to JAKOA in 2013, the state of Perak had a large number of Orang Asli population, the second highest after Pahang with a total of 53,299 people. Based on data from JAKOA Gerik, until 2014, the total population of Orang Asli in the Royal Belum-Temenggor was 6,576 people (Kamarudin, 2015) as indicated in Table 1:

**Table 1: List of Orang Asli Villages and Population in Royal Belum-Temenggor RPS Banun**

No.	Villages	Population
1	Sungai Banun	122
2	Kabel	51
3	Sungai Raba	143
4	Desa Permai	24
5	Pengkalan Permai	68
6	Desa Damai	113
7	Cadak	20
8	Desa Ria	87
9	Semelor	159
10	Sungai Tekam	83
11	Pulau Tujuh	87
12	Sungai Chuweh	97
13	Sungai Tebang	131
14	Selaor	113
15	Sungai Kelab	75
16	Sungai Tiang	409
17	Desa Pelancongan	143
<b>18</b>	<b>Sungai Chiong</b>	<b>234</b>
19	Sungai Kejar	100
20	Charok Bus	397
<b>Total</b>	<b>2656</b>	<b>2656</b>

Sg. Chiong village is one of the 20 villages located in Temenggor Lake, Gerik Perak. There are 57 families with 234 population in this village and most of them become Muslim for many years includes their headman or well known as *Tok Batin*. Most of them originate from Jahai tribe who are commonly live near the lake and some of them from Temiar tribe due to migration from other state in Peninsular Malaysia. The differences in tribes followed by different lifestyle for their community in terms of economic activity, religious belief, language and culture. Meanwhile, the economic activities are very much influenced by their surrounding environment. For instance, the community in Temenggor Lake, Perak; their main activity is fishing and gathering forest product such as tapioca, raw honey from *kelulut* and sandal wood (*gaharu*).

## HALAL CONCEPT

*Halal* comes from Arabic word which means lawful or permitted and doing of which the Law-Giver has allowed. Allah mentioned in the Qur'anic verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ كُلُوا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

Meaning:

*“O Mankind! Eat of what is in the earth lawful and good and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed he is to you a clear enemy.”*

(al-Baqarah, 2: 168)

In this verse Allah commanded two important criterion in choosing food and beverages which is “lawful” and “good” (*tayyib*). For example, sugar is permissible however it is not good (*tayyib*) for person who have diabetic. Although it is originated from plant and *Halal*, but it is hazardous for diabetic patient.

According to Malaysian Standard (MS 1500:2009), *Halal* can be defined as things or actions which are permissible by *Shariah* law on the doer without any punishment imposed (DSM, 2009). Applying this concept to the Orang Asli community, the main production of their own foods, there are certain process and procedures need to be complied with in order to ensure that the food is *Halal*. In Islam, all food must be *Halal* except for what Allah SWT mentions in Quran:

إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ الْخِنْزِيرِ وَمَا أُهْلَ بِهِ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ فَمَنْ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Meaning:

*“He has only forbidden to you dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah. But whoever is forced (by necessity), neither desiring it nor transgressing (its limit), there is no sin upon him. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.”*

(al-Baqarah, 2: 173)

In the another verse Allah has mentioned about types of animals which cannot be eaten for the sake of Allah and the reason for forbidding is beneficial to human being itself.

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةُ وَالدَّمَ وَلَحْمُ الْخِنْزِيرِ وَمَا أُهْلَ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ وَالْمُنْخَنِقَةُ وَالْمَوْقُوذَةُ وَالْمُتَرَدِّيَةُ وَالنَّطِيحَةُ وَمَا أَكَلَ السَّبُعُ إِلَّا مَا ذَكَّيْتُمْ وَمَا ذُبِحَ عَلَى النُّصُبِ وَأَنْ تَسْتَقْسِمُوا بِالْأَزْلَامِ ذَلِكُمْ فِسْقٌ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ دِينِكُمْ فَلَا تَحْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنَ الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتِمَمْتُ

عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمْ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا فَمَنْ اضْطُرَّ فِي مَحْمَصَةٍ غَيْرِ مُتَجَانِفٍ لِإِيْمٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Meaning:

“Prohibited to you are dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah, and those animals killed by strangling or by a violent blow or by a head-long fall or by the goring of horns, and those from which a wild animal has eaten, except what you are able to slaughter (before its death), and those which are sacrificed on stone altars, and (prohibited is) that you seek decision through divining arrows. That is grave disobedience. This day those who disbelieve have despaired of your religion and completed my favor upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion. But whoever is forced by severe hunger with no inclination to sin- then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.”

(Surah Al-Ma'idah, 5: 3)

In light of this verse, there is a clear understanding on the concept of hunting, use of dog for hunting which very much practised by the Orang Asli community need to be explained in order to make them understand that actual concept of hunting from the Islamic perspective. Hunting animals is permissible in Islam with specific conditions. The main requirements begin with the type of animals that are lawful to be hunted and cannot be easily caught and slaughtered. Other requirements are closely related to the hunter himself and type of instruments used for hunting. Prophet Muhammad said in one hadith:

حدثني محمد: أخبرني ابن فضيل، عن بيان، عن عامر، عن عدي ابن حاتم رضي الله عنه قال: سألت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فقلت: إنا قوم نتصيد بهذه الكلاب. فقال: (إذا أرسلت كلابك المعلمة و ذكرت اسم الله فكل مما أمسكن عليك إلا أن يأكل الكلب فلا تأكل فإني أخاف أن يكون إنما أمسك على نفسه، وإن خالطها كلب من غيرها فلا تأكل.

Meaning:

“The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: When you set your dog (for the chase), mention the name of Allah. If he catches the game, and you reach it while it is still alive, cut its throat.”

(Sahih Bukhari: No. 5487)

There are types of *Halal* animal which are allowed to be hunted such as animals which are difficult to catch like deer. For hunting animals, there are two opinions whether slaughtering is required before eating after hunting when the animals showed the sign of life remaining. The first opinion states that it is preferable to slaughter and the second opinion is that if the hunter die without slaughtering, then there is no harm in it (Al-Qaradhawi, 1993).

## CLASSIFICATION OF HALAL AWARENESS

Awareness can be defined as knowledge or understanding of particular subject or situation. Generally awareness is where a person may be partially aware, subconsciously aware or may be acutely aware of that particular issue (Ambali & Bakar, 2013). The same concept can be applied in order to understand Halal awareness. There are three levels of Halal awareness: elementary, intermediate and advanced levels.

### Elementary level

For the elementary level, a person is expected to possess fundamental knowledge on Halal includes definition and sources of Halal and haram. The sources of Halal and haram includes from animals and plants. Animals can be classified into two types which is aquatic animals and land animals. For aquatic animals, all are permissible to eat in Islam except those are poisonous and hazardous to human health. As Allah says in Quran:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ الْبَحْرَ لِتَأْكُلُوا مِنْهُ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا وَتَسْتَخْرِجُوا مِنْهُ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ مَوَازِيرَ  
فِيهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

Meaning:

*“And it is He Who has subjected the sea for you to eat from it tender meat and to extract from it ornaments which you wear. And you see the ships plowing through it, and He subjected it that you may seek of His bounty; and perhaps you will be grateful.”*

(Surah Al-Nahl, 16:14)

Besides, animals which live both on land and water are also prohibited to be eaten such as crocodiles, turtles and frog (DSM, 2009). For plants, all types of plants can be eaten except for plants which are poisonous and harmful to human health. In addition, every human must be able to identify the Halal logo for every products especially which must be JAKIM certified. Hence, the person must have knowledge to differentiate between Halal and Haram particularly in food and beverages.

### Intermediate level

Regarding Halal awareness at intermediate level, a person should possess basic knowledge on Halal and slaughtering according to Islamic teaching. According to Shariah, a slaughtering act must sever the trachea (*halqum*), esophagus (*mari'*) and both the carotid arteries and jugular veins (*waddajain*) to hasten the bleeding and death of the animal (DSM, 2009). In Islam, animals which can be eaten must be slaughtered except for marine animals whether they are taken out of water dead or alive which do not to go through slaughtering process. In Orang Asli lifestyle, one of the main activities to get the protein source is by hunting and fishing. Table 2 shows

the types of meat and meat products for their consumption from hunting and fishing activities.

**Table 2: Food Consumption of Orang Asli Community (Haemamalar *et al.*, 2010)**

Food groups	Types of Food	Examples
Meat and meat products	Meat	Mutton, beef, pork
	Birds	Duck, chicken
	Large mammals	Monkey, deer
	Reptiles, amphibians	Tortoise, frog, snake
	Rodents	Porcupine, squirrel
	Eggs	Duck egg, chicken egg
Fish/ seafood	Fresh water fish	<i>Ikan haruan. ikan keli</i>
	Salt water fish	<i>Ikan kembong</i>
	Seafood	Crab, prawn, squid
	Salted fish/canned fish	Anchovy, sardine

### Advanced level

A person reaches an advanced level based on his knowledge on Halal, aware and practice in the daily life. One important concept in Halal is *tayyiban* as mentioned above as Allah says in Quran eat the lawful (*Halal*) and also good (*tayyiban*) things. This concept includes many aspects of personal hygiene such as body cleanliness, clothing and any equipment in preparation food and drinks. The objective of Halal is to ensure that the food and products free from contamination or dirt (*najs*), not hazardous and safe for human consumption.

Othman *et al.* (2012) found that the modern lifestyle leads to more vulnerable to any modern disease to their community such as Osteo disease and cardiovascular disease. Besides, the Orang Asli community is fond with the traditional disease such as intestinal worms disease. In this research, researcher did not mention about causes of the diseases although it actually have significant relationship between *Halalan tayyiban* lifestyle amongst the Orang Asli community. For example intestinal worms disease; the disease may occur when person eating and drinking contaminated food and also water, poor personal hygiene and also poor sanitation (Anonymous, 2012). Therefore, it is closely related to *Halalan tayyiban* lifestyle and crucial especially to the Orang Asli community.

Although many studies have been conducted to measure the level of *Halal* awareness amongst Malaysian from different ages and background, no study relates to *Halal* awareness among the Orang Asli community. According to Ambali & Bakar (2013), the awareness of the food and products can be defined as internal state on how their feeling and perception towards what they are consumed. This study showed that the level of *Halal* awareness amongst Muslim and non-Muslim

consumers is closely related to factors like religious belief and health. However the study did not focus on specific group of people especially Orang Asli community.

Golnaz *et al.* (2010) have assessed the level of non-Muslim awareness and their understanding on *Halal* food and products in Malaysia. It appears that the non-Muslim consumers are highly aware on consumption of *Halal* products, largely related to the grounds of food safety and also animal welfare. From this study, it suggested that *Halal* food and products is not only for Muslim community but also very important to all. This study also provided an overview on *Halal* awareness in general and focusing on non-Muslim community in the urban area only.

Aziz (2012) identified that level of *Halal* awareness has positive relation with *Halal* purchase intention amongst non-Muslim consumers in Malaysia. Similarly, study done by Teng (2013) also determined the level of *Halal* awareness amongst non-Muslim consumers and the result shown that majority of the non-Muslim consumers are aware about *Halal* labelled food and the JAKIM *Halal* logo on food products. Besides, the studies also identified the geographical areas; education level and income level have positively relationship with intention to purchase *Halal* labelled food.

On the other hand, Rahim *et al.* (2013) have conducted the study on awareness and perception of Muslim consumers on consumption non-food *Halal* product such as toiletries, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals and others. The study revealed that there are many factors influencing the level of *Halal* awareness amongst government servants in the state of Selangor. In 2014, Alqudsi have conducted a survey to identify the awareness on meat and poultry products amongst Muslim consumers in Malaysia, Singapore and Australia. He suggested that Muslim consumer should assure that meat and poultry products must be *Halal* to be consumed. The result from this study shows that Muslim consumers in those three states are highly aware of the *Halal* food laws requirements and are willing to pay a premium for *Halal* meat products with 100% *Halal* supply chain.

The past studies have mostly emphasised on people living in urban areas. Little attention is given to community in the rural areas. As part of the Malaysian community, the Orang Asli needs to be given extra attention in developing *Halal* lifestyle in their community.

#### LEVEL OF HALAL AWARENESS IN SUNGAI CHIONG VILLAGE

On 18 May 2015, the International Institute for Halal Research and Training (INHART) organised the Halal Knowledge Transfer Program (HKTP) under the grant Knowledge Transfer Program (KTP) among Orang Asli community in Sg. Chiong Village. There were 25 academic staff, administrative officer and students involved in this program as volunteers. The objectives of the program were to transfer fundamental knowledge on Halal amongst the villagers, identifying Malaysian Halal logo and to expose them on the importance of Halal consumption and slaughtering in the daily life.

The participant was divided into three main groups, consisting of men, women and children. There were no participation from men due to gathering forest product activity. Meanwhile participation from women and children are encouraging as shown in Table 3:

**Table 3: Total Number of Participants in Halal Awareness Program**

No.	Villagers	Participants	Total villagers
1	Adult	55	498 people 57 houses
2	Children	100	
	Total	155 people	

The activities organised during the program were designed differently for adult and children. For adult, they have been exposed on choosing Halal products and identifying Malaysian Halal logo. Meanwhile for children, the knowledge transferred to the participants related to the concept of Halal and Haram and its sources of materials and recognising Malaysian Halal logo by drawing, coloring and story-telling activity.

From the on-site observation and interviews with Orang Asli Headman and Religious Officer, we found that the level of Halal awareness amongst those community is minimal. In relation to the concept of Halal and Haram, most of the adult aware on the definition and were able to differentiate between which animals can be eaten or not. For sources of protein in this village, they usually eat aquatic animal such as fish due to their location which is near to the lake. Besides, the animals they always hunt are deer, wild chicken and mousedeer. About 40 out of 100 children did not recognise the Halal logo before the program. Based on the interview with the Religious Officer, the people has not been much been exposed to the concept. It was only highlighted during the performance of personal obligation (*fard 'ain*) session with them two times a week. The practical aspect such as animal slaughtering also has not been practised widely amongst the community in this settlement. The same conclusion was observed for the hunting procedure according to Islamic ritual.

Based on the observation, the cleanliness of this settlement is well kept. The Headman of the village organises cleanliness activity every month around their house compound and meeting area (*balai sewang*). Besides, as the majority of the villagers are Muslims, they have only a few dogs around their settlement, and there is minimal issue regarding *najs mughallazah* around their settlement.

## ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN ENHANCING HALAL AWARENESS IN SG. CHIONG VILLAGE

Challenges to increase the level of Halal awareness amongst the Orang Asli community in Sungai Chiong village can be categorized into two aspects which are internal and external challenges. For the internal challenges; about seven out of ten people in the community is illiterate people. Therefore, it is quite difficult to teach them especially on Halal issue such as identifying Halal logo and others. Besides, the religious officer who came to guide them the basic of Islamic teaching, normally only covers on worship issue and not Halal education. Similarly, programs conducted by outsiders with the community only focused on basic worship activities and charity events.

Another challenge for the officer in this area is transportation. From the interview conducted with the officer, they have been asking for a speed boat for almost 20 years in order to reach to the village faster and safer. Moreover, the location of the village quite far from the town and it takes one and half hour at least to reach the place. Another challenge is lack of staff. Due to high cost to reach the village, the religious officer will stay up in the village, and not many staff is available to stay overnight due to family issue and others. Moreover, communication signal in the village is very low hence it can hinder the process of transferring Halal knowledge via modern communication to the local people.

## CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, the level of Halal awareness amongst Orang Asli community in Sg. Chiong settlement is in a basic level and still minimal. The community in this village is in dire need of knowing Halal knowledge. Majority of the community have converted to Islam for many years. Halal awareness program should be conducted more frequent in order to improve their Halal knowledge.

Adequate knowledge in *Halal* is vital in creating the awareness on the importance of choosing and consuming *Halal* food among the Muslim community in Malaysia Therefore, Halal educational material is highly recommended to be developed in order to transfer Halal knowledge easier. The knowledge on *Halal* should not be made available to certain groups or segment of the nation in the city or the well-reached community only but it should also be made available to every level of the Muslim Orang Asli community particularly the children and younger generation. These children and the younger generation could be the internal mechanism to educate the older generation.

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