

## **Analysis of Local Community's Involvement in the Archaeotourism Sector in Lembah Bujang, Kedah**

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**Abstract:** This study focuses on the involvement of the local people in the archaeotourism sector in Lembah Bujang, Kedah. This is because as one of the popular tourist destinations that is based on site of archaeological heritage, the progress and development around Lembah Bujang indirectly also have positive effects on the life of the community in the vicinity the area. The issue is to what extent does the involvement of the local community in the archaeotourism sector brings benefit, especially in terms of the aspect of increase of income or their quality of life. In addition, what are the issues or challenges faced by the local community as a result of the surge of rapid development in the area? Thus, in order to answer these problems, the research methodology employed were the qualitative and quantitative method. In addition to referring to the secondary sources in libraries and archives, examination in the field through interviews and questionnaires were also carried out to identify the issues or prospects that need to be addressed or handled. The study found that the archaeotourism sector in Lembah Bujang has high potential to be developed. Apart from the infrastructure facilities that are provided in general the local people gain benefit as a result of tourist arrivals in the form of the increase of income through business, sales of souvenirs, transportation, rentals, homestay and many others. Nevertheless, not all the community members were involved in the archaeotourism sector as a result of the lack of understanding, limited opportunities or the relatively limited financial capacity.

**Key words:** Archaeotourism, Lembah Bujang, archaeology, heritage site, quality of life

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The reality is that archaeotourism has potential to develop in this country because Malaysia has many interesting archaeological sites. In terms of concept archaeotourism is the result of the combination of two words which are archaeology and tourism. Nevertheless, archaeotourism indirectly has relationship with heritage tourism. Swarbrooke (1994) defined heritage tourism as 'tourism that is based on heritage where the heritage itself is the main pillar of the product offered and heritage is the main motivating factor (the drive/impetus) for the tourists or visitors'. Meanwhile Timothy and Boyd (2003) defined heritage tourism as a part of tourism where the main motivation of the tourists to visit the heritage site is the character of the heritage site itself and based on the perception of the tourists of their heritage. Therefore, in simple language, archaeotourism means a tourism destination that is based on archaeological heritage

site. In order to achieve that goal effort must be carried out to maintain and conserve the archaeological heritage sites that have potential to be developed into an attractive tourism destination. The reality is that archaeotourism is related to all the concerted effort to attract the arrival of tourists so that they would visit the heritage site. As a result of the visit, the visitors will not only obtain various information about the site, in fact they will also achieve mental satisfaction through recollections in the form of nostalgia or appreciation of past heritage.

**Historical background:** Lembah Bujang is the site of an ancient kingdom which is located in the state of Kedah, particularly around the 5-13th century AD. Lembah Bujang is located on the coast in the Southern part of Kedah that is between longitude 100°20 East and 100°30 East and latitude 5°32 North and 5°38 North. It began as a small settlement and later Lembah Bujang rapidly developed into a trading port in the Malay

Archipelago until it became the focus of traders from the East and West. According to Ismail Adam Lembah Bujang which was a historical site of the Kedah kingdom in the 5-14th century, started to become well known since 150 years ago. Its importance as a centre of administration, port and centre of knowledge development in the Malay Archipelago has been acknowledged by many historians.

According to Taha (1998), the name Lembah Bujang began to be used widely since the 1970's until the department of museums and antiquities limited its location to an area of 144 square miles. It includes the border of bukit choras or choras hill in the North, sungai muda or muda river in the South and the straits of melaka in the East and the North-South expressway in the West. This means Lembah Bujang includes jerai mountain and the area that extends to seberang perai until cherok tokun. Choras hill which is located on the North of jerai mountain is also considered as part of Lembah Bujang. Meanwhile, according to Shuhaimi and Rahman (2008) even though the Lembah Bujang area is quite vast, the main areas that inherited the archaeological remains are areas such as Ulu Sungai Merbok (slopes of Bukit Gunung Jerai) including Tupah, the left and right side of the Sungai Bujang tributary (especially in Pengkalan Bujang), Estate of Sungai Batu, Semeling (the riverbank of Sungai Semeling), Kampung Sungai Mas, Kampung Aur, Seberang Prai, Anak Bukit, Bukit Choras, Bukit Meriam, Bukit Pendiat, Bukit Kecil and Bukit Penjara.

Lembah Bujang is located in a very strategic place. Its geographical background is covered by three main units, namely mountains, hills and river basin. Mount Jerai is the highest peak at about 1,300 m with schist rock cover, namely rocks that have several layers of components and quartzite (Khoo, 1996). From this upland area, rivers flow into the valley before ending in the straits of Melaka. Muda river and merbok river are the two main rivers that irrigate Lembah Bujang. According to Nik Hassan a place or an area in Lembah Bujang was selected based on the characteristics of the beach and the banks of Merbok river that act as the natural waterways along Muda river and the slope at the foot of the hill. With two major rivers, namely Merbok river and Muda river of which its estuary ends at the straits of melaka, this results in lembah bujang being very strategic in terms of its position. Both the rivers were the main trade route between India, Arabia and India. Archaeological evidence suggests that this area had once traded with Takuapa in Southern Thailand, Pengkalan Bujang in Kedah and Pulau Kelumpang (Lamb, 1982; Allen, 1988; Shuhaimi and Rahman, 2008).

Archaeological discoveries also show that Lembah Bujang had once been instrumental in terms of trade between the Malay Peninsula and other areas and controlled the main route in the Straits of Melaka. In addition, the route of merchant ships at that time was controlled by the direction of the monsoon winds (Lamb, 1982; Sabtu, 2002). Therefore, Lembah Bujang became a stopover for merchant ships, traders and other passengers like religious pilgrims who lived in this area for quite some time while waiting for the transition of the monsoon wind which would enable them to continue with their journey (Shuhaimi and Rahman, 2008; Lamb, 1982). Thus, many researchers concluded that Lembah Bujang was once a site of the early kingdom of Old Kedah. Indirectly, this indicated that Lembah Bujang had originally began with a human settlement. The strategic location and the ease of obtaining raw materials resulted in it to begin to grow into a port. Starting from a port of call, it changed into a supply port and eventually it developed into an entrepot.

Nevertheless, the beginning of a human settlement is usually or typically influenced by environmental factors. According to Kvammle and Joachim (1990) environmental factors such as gradient, aspect of distance to the river and geological features or characteristics which are among the environmental factors that are prioritized in the selection of a settlement location. This is consistent with the view expressed by Allen (1988) who stated that there were two main ports in Lembah Bujang, namely 'Kampung Sungai Mas' and 'Pengkalan Bujang'. This phenomenon is supported by scientific analysis which proved that Lembah Bujang's location is within a location that is very strategic. Analysis of the Lembah Bujang basin using DDEM showed that the archaeological site in Lembah Bujang is located in two main basins, namely 'Sungai Merbok Basin' and 'Sungai Muda Basin'. This is because Sungai Muda and Sungai Merbok are two rivers that played an important role in the kingdom of old Kedah. This strategic position of Lembah Bujang resulted in it to emerge as a centre of human settlement or port until it became the focal point of Hindu and Buddhist religious propagators.

Post-independence saw the Lembah Bujang area and its surrounding to continue to develop with various forms of development, whether from the spill-over of the First Malaysia Plan until the 10th Malaysia Plan or the development that have been implemented by the state government. Various infrastructure facilities have been provided for the people in Lembah Bujang resulting in their standard of living to continue to improve whether in terms of education, household income, health, property ownership, business and so on. The government through

appointed agencies has established various facilities such as schools, hospitals, police station, fire station, government offices, business space, community hall housing projects, health clinics, supermarkets, hotels, transportation network and many others to benefit the entire community in the vicinity of Lembah Bujang. The reality is that until the present time the community around Lembah Bujang and Sungai Petani has not been left out from the current of progress even though in certain aspects, the state government is also developing other areas out of the demand of development for the comfort of the people.

**Research problem:** With its great reputation whether as an early location of human settlement, trade port or centre of religious propagation from India, Lembah Bujang's contribution towards the country's historiography is very significant. Although, its importance began to fade after the 14th century AD, its archaeological remains indicate that it is a very strategic location if it is developed as a tourism location. This is because many archaeological discoveries at several sites in Lembah Bujang have the potential to be exploited from the aspect of archaeotourism. Although, the spill over of development around Lembah Bujang has been felt especially since the 1980s to what extent do these development activities or programmes, particularly in relation to archaeotourism in Lembah Bujang, Kedah have impacted the socio-economy of its community? In addition, in which sectors do the local people choose to participate or be involved in does it involve huge capital, skills, large workforce or employees, whether the job is permanent or just an ancillary one, transportation sector, grocery store, homestay and so on?

**Research objectives:** There are several objectives to be achieved through this research. The main research objectives are to examine the involvement of the local people and the impact in terms of development on the growth of archaeotourism in Lembah Bujang, Kedah. In addition, the other objectives to be achieved are to examine the benefits gained by the community as a result of the existence of the heritage sites around Lembah Bujang. Furthermore, the study also sought to investigate the extent of the community's readiness level and their interest of business area in archaeotourism development in Lembah Bujang.

**Scope of research:** The scope of this research is related with the involvement of the people in the vicinity of Lembah Bujang, Kedah. The selection of Lembah Bujang as the study location is due to the distribution of the

archaeological heritage sites, historical buildings and the natural environment which caused it to be visited often whether by local tourists or those from abroad. The arrival of tourists to Lembah Bujang indirectly will have a positive impact, particularly in economic terms. This is because indirectly the people will gain benefit as a result of the growth of the archaeotourism sector in Lembah Bujang. The benefits enjoyed by the people can be seen either directly or indirectly. For example, the opportunity for the people to increase their income through business, job opportunities, supply of food, rental of vehicle or transportation service, homestay, souvenir shop and so on.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This research used the qualitative and quantitative method, involving the examination of resources in several libraries including Tuanku Bainon Library (UPSI) Tun Seri Lanang Library (UKM) National Archives of Malaysia and the department of museums Malaysia. In addition to the interview sessions with several individuals who are involved in research at Lembah Bujang, a survey was also carried out to obtain data. This study used the instrument of a questionnaire. A total of 150 questionnaire were distributed to the local people who lived around Lembah Bujang, Kedah. The data obtained from the questionnaires were then analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Software. Descriptive analysis (frequency and percentage) was used to obtain overall data distribution while the interview data were analysed based on themes. Data analysis using the basic quantitative technique or in the form of descriptive statistics, namely frequency, percentage, mode and mean was employed to examine the distribution of respondent's background such as age, race, gender and occupation. Analysis was also presented in the form of percentages tables, figures or pie chart to explain the findings of the study more clearly.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The total number of respondents involved in this survey was 150 respondents with 102 male respondents (68%) and 48 female respondents (32%). In terms of the age group, it was found that in general most of the respondents were of the age between 25-29 years old with 30 respondents (20%). This was followed by respondents of the age between 35-39 years old with 29 respondents (19.3%) and respondents of the age between 40-44 years old with 28 respondents (18.7%). Additionally, there were also 5 respondents who were above 50 years old.

Meanwhile, looking in terms of the category of race, the Malays made up the highest number with 129 respondents (86%) followed by the Chinese with 12 respondents (8%) and Indians with 8 respondents (5.3%). However, there was also a Siamese respondent involved in this study. Additionally, in terms of the marital status of the respondents who were involved in this survey, the number of married respondents was 98 respondents (65.3%) while respondents who were single was at 52 respondents (34.7%).

The majority of the respondents involved in this survey were local people who came from Kedah with a total of 118 respondents (78.7%) while 8 respondents came from Pulau Pinang. In addition, there was one respondent each from that state of Johor, Kuala Lumpur, Perlis and Selangor. In terms of their level of education, most of the respondents were secondary school leavers, with 87 respondents (58%). This was then followed by diploma holders or bachelor degree holders with 35 respondents (23.3%). A total of 21 respondents (14%) were primary school leavers. About 5 respondents had no formal education while 2 respondents were masters or PhD degree holders. In terms of employment sector, 66 respondents (44%) were general workers or work on their own, 47 respondents (31.3%) were technical workers and support staff while 19 respondents (12.7%) were management and professionals or administrators. As for the rest of the respondent's employment status, it was found that a total of 11 respondents were housewives, pensioners or unemployed and 7 respondents were students.

In general, the majority of the respondents involved in this survey earned income less than RM 3000 per month. A total of 38 respondents (26%) earned income between RM 1501-2000 while 34 respondents (26.0%) earned income between 901-1500 RM and 31 respondents (21.2%) earned income of less than RM900. There were 5 respondents who obtained income between 4001-5000 RM and only one respondent in this study who earned an income of more than RM 6000 per month.

The study's findings also revealed that the majority of respondents (97%) who were involved in this survey agreed if the development in the Lembah Bujang area is specifically carried out to develop the archaeotourism sector while only 3% of respondents disagreed with the suggestion (Table 1, Fig. 1 and 2).

From the 150 respondents who were involved in this survey, it was found that 40% of the respondents agreed that the effort of developing archaeotourism in Lembah Bujang can reduce the rate of unemployment of the local community. In addition, a total of 64% of the respondents also agreed that the effort of archaeotourism development will increase the income of the local people. The majority of the respondents (79.3%) also agreed that if

Table 1: Respondent's perception on the effect of archaeotourism development in Lembah Bujang

Effect of archaeotourism on the economy	Perception		
	Disagree	Not sure	Agree
Reduction in the local unemployment rate	22.7	37.3	40.0
Increasing income	14.7	21.3	64.0
Job opportunities in the tourism sector	11.4	9.3	79.3
Increase in the price of land	12.7	18.0	69.3
Increase in the price of goods	24.4	38.3	37.3
Only a small number of local people are involved in the archaeotourism activities	23.3	23.3	53.4
More infrastructure improvements	6.7	12.0	81.3

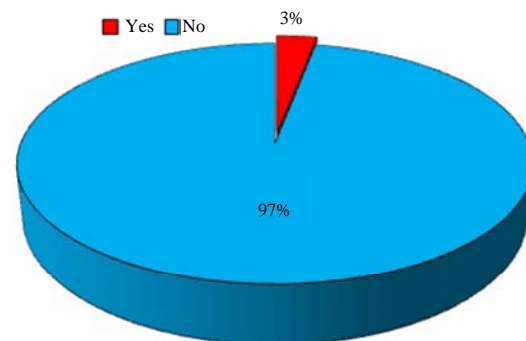


Fig. 1: Percentage of respondents who agree with tourism development in Lembah Bujang

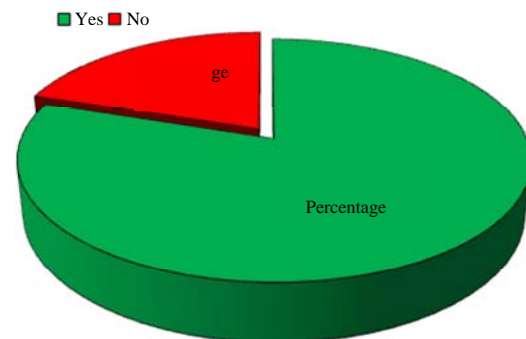


Fig. 2: Percentage of respondents interested in being involved in archaeotourism business and programmes

development plans are implemented in Lembah Bujang it would definitely open up employment opportunities especially in the tourism sector for the local people. A total of 69.3% of the respondents agreed that the effort of archaeotourism development will cause the price of land in the vicinity of Lembah Bujang to increase. However, they were unsure of the extent to which it will have an impact on the increase of the price of goods in the areas

around Lembah Bujang (38.3%). Nevertheless, a total of 53.4% of the respondents agreed that only a small number of local people are involved in the archaeotourism activities in Lembah Bujang while the rest are involved in other economic activities. The majority of the respondents (81.3%) involved in this study agreed that more infrastructure will be improved in tandem with the effort of developing archaeotourism in Lembah Bujang.

The study also found that a total of 120 respondents (80%) who participated in the study's questionnaire have interest to participate in business especially ones related to archaeotourism in Lembah Bujang. Min contrast, the rest (20%) were not interested to be involved in the archaeotourism activities.

The findings revealed that among the areas wished to be ventured by the respondents were food/drinks, accommodation, souvenir, equipment, tour guide and transportation. Generally, the respondents involved in this survey showed keen interest to be involved in the area of food/drinks business with 35 respondents (29.2%). This was followed by the accommodation sector with 29 respondents (24.2%) while 22 respondents were interested in souvenir business (18.3%). Additionally, a total of 14 respondents (11.4%) were interested in equipment business and 14 respondents (11.4%) were keen to be tour guides. Another 6 respondents (5%) were interested to be involved in the area of transportation (Table 2, Fig. 3).

Nevertheless, there were 30 respondents (20%) who were not interested in business and programmes related to the archaeotourism sector. Among their reasons were the lack of capital, not interested in business, no skills, no manpower and fear of failure. For the majority of them, i.e., 33% of the respondents, the reason was the lack of capital to do business and to be involved in archaeotourism programmes. Moreover, a total of 30% of the respondents were not interested at all to be involved in business nor tourism. The study also found that 20% of the respondents did not have the skills, 10% of the respondents did not have enough manpower and 7% of the respondents were afraid of failing if they started a business in this industry.

The study also looked at several suggestions to increase the involvement of the local people in the archaeotourism sector in Lembah Bujang and subsequently to increase the income of the local people. For instance, a total of 61 respondents (58%) who were involved in this study agreed that the government needs to provide the infrastructure for the traders, specifically for those who wish to be involved in this sector. Additionally, there was also suggestion so that they (the local community in Lembah Bujang) are given

Table 2: Business area (archaeotourism)

Area	Frequency (n = 150)	Percentage
Food/Drinks	35	29.2
Accommodation	29	24.2
Souvenir	22	18.3
Equipment	14	11.7
Tour guide	14	11.7
Transportation	6	5.0
Total	120	100.0

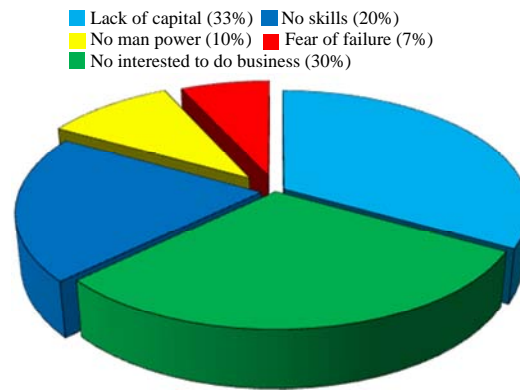


Fig. 3: Respondent's excuse for not being involved in business and tourism

leniency or leeway in bank loan terms or conditions with a total of 60 respondents (50%) suggesting so. A total of 58 respondents (48.3%) agreed if license and opportunities are given to the local people. The government should also hold entrepreneur training programmes especially those related to archaeotourism for the local people in Lembah Bujang. In addition, a total of 51 respondents (42.5%) who were involved in this study's survey suggested that government sponsorship committee is established and 20 respondents (16.7%) suggested that joint venture projects between the agencies involved and the local people are carried out.

Nevertheless, the majority of the respondents (97%) who were involved in this study were never offered to participate in any tourism development programmes in Lembah Bujang. Only 3% of the respondents said that they have been offered tourism development programmes; however, they did not state in more detail about the form of these programmes. Meanwhile, a total of 56% of the respondents were interested to turn their home into a 'homestay' while the other 44% did not agree (Table 3 and Fig. 4). There were several reasons or excuses why the respondents who participated in the questionnaire did not agree to turn their house as a 'homestay' and these were due to several factors. For example, the majority of the respondents were not keen to turn their house into a 'homestay' because of the condition of their house

Table 3: Suggestions to increase the involvement of the local people in the tourism sector and increase their economic

Items	Frequency (n = 150)	Percentage
The government needs to provide infrastructure for the traders	61	50.8
Provide leniency in bank loan terms/conditions	60	50.0
Give license and opportunities to the local people	58	48.3
Hold tourism entrepreneur training programmes for the local people	58	48.3
Establish government sponsorship committee	51	42.5
Hold joint venture projects between the agencies involved and the local people	20	16.7

Table 4: Respondent's excuse for not being interested in turning their house into a 'homestay'

Items	Frequency (n = 150)	Percentage
The less than perfect home condition	46	88.5
Lack of familiarity with foreign culture	3	3.8
Not able to speak in the English language	2	5.8
Not comfortable with foreign culture/practice of tourists that are too free	1	1.9
Total	52	100

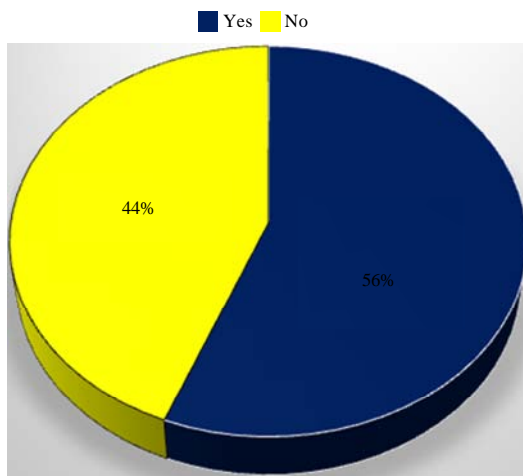


Fig. 4: Percentage of respondents who are interested to make their house a "homestay"

which is less than perfect (46 respondents). Additionally, several other factors or excuses why they were not keen to make their house a 'homestay' are because of their lack of understanding or familiarity with the foreign cultures and not being able to speak in English. There are also those among the respondents who were not comfortable with foreign cultures or the practice of tourists who are too free but their number is quite small (Table 4).

## CONCLUSION

Generally, the majority of the people in the area of Lembah Bujang welcome the development plans that are carried out by the government. This is because with the

development plans in the Lembah Bujang area, the archaeotourism sector will also grow rapidly. This situation indirectly will open up opportunities for the local people to improve and increase their income. Based on the feedback received, it clearly indicates that the population in the Lembah Bujang area are truly keen to get involved as operators of food and drink shop, accommodation sector particularly homestay, souvenir shop and transportation sector. In addition, local community with good knowledge of historical background of their living area have potential to get involved a tour guide as it can contribute to archaeotourism promotion in Lembah Bujang, Kedah.

Nevertheless, there are also those among the residents of Lembah Bujang who are not interested to be involved in the archaeotourism sector. This is because of the fact that most of them do not have enough capital to start a business. Apart from the lack of trained workforce or manpower, they also have no skills in business, resulting in them being disinterested and afraid of failure. Therefore, they suggested that they are given leniency or flexibility in bank loan terms or conditions and also business license. They also suggested for the government to diversify the economic opportunities to enable them to be involved in business. They also recommended that joint venture projects be carried out between the agencies involved and the local people in Lembah Bujang.

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