

THE
ORANG KEMBOJA
OF EAST COAST
OF PENINSULAR MALAYSIA

© Penerbit Universiti Sains Malaysia, 2021

© Penerbit Universiti Sains Malaysia, 2021


THE
ORANG KEMBOJA
OF EAST COAST
OF PENINSULAR MALAYSIA


Siti Nor Awang




PENERBIT UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA
PULAU PINANG

Buy at www.emdash.my

 www.penerbit.usm.my

 penerbit@usm.my

 PenerbitUSM

 PenerbitUSM

 penerbit_usm

© Penerbit Universiti Sains Malaysia, 2021

Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia

Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Siti Nor Awang

The Orang Kemboja of East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia / Siti Nor Awang.

ISBN 978-967-461-581-9

e-ISBN 978-967-461-582-6

1. Cham (Southeast Asian people) – Malaysia.
2. Cham (Southeast Asian people) – history.
3. Government publications – Malaysia.

I. Title.

305.89922 DS595.M2

Typeset in Adobe Caslon

Copy Editor: Che Su Yaakub

Cover Designer: Mohammad Ridhwan Jaapar

Proofreader: Wan Mahanum Abdullah

Typesetter: Nur Syakirah Othman

Published by Penerbit Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800 USM Pulau Pinang, Malaysia.
A member of the Malaysian Scholarly Publishing Council (MAPIM).

Printed by Sinaran Bros. Sdn. Bhd., 5-3-18 The Promenade, Persiaran Mahsuri, 11950 Bayan Baru,
Pulau Pinang, Malaysia.

Contents

Preface	vii
Preamble	ix
Abbreviations	xi
Chapter 1 The Origin	1
Chapter 2 The Ethnographic Setting	6
Chapter 3 Economic Activities	27
Chapter 4 From Cham to Khmer Muslim to Orang Kemboja	39
Chapter 5 Conclusion	58
References	63
Index	69

© Penerbit Universiti Sains Malaysia, 2021

Preface

This book unfolds a fascinating story of the contemporary nature within the Cham people or currently known as Orang Kemboja amongst the local Malays. The Orang Kemboja, literally means the Muslim minority people from Cambodia. It has been 14 years since this research was conducted in a small settlement in Pekan, Pahang, for my PhD studies. This research employed an ethnographic research approach combining traditional participant observation and simple survey techniques. I was pregnant during the time of this research and gave birth to my third child. As an ethnographer it is considered a huge advantage and opportunity to be accepted as a researcher by the community with my condition as a wife, a mother and pregnant woman. Living with the Orang Kemboja for nearly one year gave me an opportunity to learn about their language, life experiences in their motherland, the agony they have been through, their journey finding a safer place, life in the refugee camp and life with the local Malays.

The aim of this book is to provide a detailed overview of the Orang Kemboja who are now residing in Malaysia for more than 40 years. The process of movement and resettlement from their country of origin to Malaysia has forced this community to confront real challenges and new means to develop a new way of life in this milieu. From traditional Cambodian farming and fishing method, these people utilized similarities in the physical environment of the new place to develop commercial farming and fishing-oriented economic activities in their new settlement.

This book would not be possible without the generous contribution of many parties. First of all, I would like to thanks the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Universiti Malaya for granting me a study leave for four years at University of Hull, United Kingdom to pursue my PhD. My supervisors, Dr. Collin Creighton and Dr. Mark Johnson who played an important role in my completion of this research. I would like to express my gratitude to all the community in the villages of Pulau

Preface

Keladi, Mr. Safi and family, Haji Ahmad and family, Wak Rip and family and Cik Long and family who accepted me with open arm and without hesitation. A special thanks to late Abang Ramli, Aoung Tuan, Mat Yuan, Mai Roh, Mai So and Mai Su, may Allah granted all of you Jannah. I would like to extend my heartiest thanks to my lovable parents, siblings, husband, sons (Danial and Darwish) and daughter (Shasha) for their endless moral and spiritual support.

5 September 2020

© Penerbit Universiti Sains Malaysia, 2021

Preamble

The process of migration of the Cham people to vicinities countries, especially Malaysia, has become a sociopolitical phenomenon which enthralled many scholars including the one writing this very book. This book could be regarded as a brief overview of the economic and social history of the Cham Muslim migration and above all, to highlight Malaysia's open-arm welcoming in terms of supportive settlement in Pulau Keladi.

Locally, these people are known as Orang Kemboja or 'riverside dwellers', who are also well known in Pahang, particularly in Pekan, as fish farmers. The Patin fish has been synonymous with the Orang Kemboja of Pekan since the 1980s and now they are the biggest supplier of freshwater fish, not only in Pahang, but also in other states of Malaysia. In contrast to their self-sufficient economy in the past, now they are involved in commercial economy: fish farming, farming, food stalls, coffee shops and construction.

Furthermore, the aim of this book is to add an ethnographical characterization of the Cham people or Orang Kemboja culture to our reservoir of comparative data. There is a fairly voluminous literature on the Cham in Cambodia, but a greater part of it is outdated, limited to particular topics or relatively inaccessible (Ebihara, 1993). Moreover, Crystal (1991: 72) asserts that it is most unfortunate that at the present juncture, there are no historians or ethnographers who are actively pursuing research on 'Champa'. There has been little discussion about the Cham's social organization. The previous studies on the Cham^{*} were mostly focused on historical perspective, cultural interpretation, language, political dimension and literature. On top of that, most of the materials written in Khmer or French about the pre-war period, that were stored in the country, were destroyed during the years of war and revolution in Cambodia (Ledgerwood, 1998: 137). Therefore, another main purpose of this book is to add to, and bridge the gap in the literature, particularly on the socioeconomy of the Cham people.

* For more discussions on French scholarly research in Indochina, *see* Lafont (1978).

Preamble

However, this statement is not meant to denigrate the contribution of numerous French scholars. As Lafont (1978) highlights, a considerable amount of Cham literature has been published by French researchers and administrators. Aymonier (1891), for example, produced information on the Cham people in 1871 and 1885, followed by Bergaigne (1888) and, in the early 20th century, Cabaton (1901) produced a study of the Cham, as did by Maspero in 1928 (cited in Lafont, 1978). Yet none of these were ethnographers. Reynand was the first ethnographer to work on the Cham, and was published in 1880 (cited in Lafont, 1978). Later on, in the modern era, Baccot (1968) conducted a study on Cham Muslims in Cambodia. Recently, one of the most prominent scholars of the Cham people is Lafont (1964) who has traced three main different categories of kin group (see Chapter 2).

This book employed an ethnography approach, which emphasizes on the collection of the data in a naturalistic social setting to produce complex, textual, real descriptions of social structure, values, norms, socioeconomic condition and live experience of the Orang Kemboja from first-hand experiences. The ethnographic data was captured by using participant observation as a tool in gaining better understanding of the context and phenomenon under study. In order to gain depth of data, the author spent almost a year for the fieldwork; observing and participating in almost all activities among these people.