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Negotiating Cultural Sovereignty Vs Tourism Commodification in Tourism Governance A Case Study of Pampang Cultural Village, East Kalimantan

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the complex dynamics of tourism governance in the Pampang Cultural Village, East Kalimantan, focusing on the ongoing negotiation between the cultural sovereignty of the Dayak Kenyah community and the inevitable pressures of tourism commodification. As a prominent cultural destination, Pampang faces a critical dilemma: the need to generate economic revenue versus the imperative to protect sacred traditions from being reduced to mere commercial spectacles. Using a qualitative case study approach, this research investigates how local governance structures comprising indigenous councils, government agencies, and private stakeholders mediate these conflicting interests. The findings reveal that while tourism has provided a platform for cultural visibility and financial gain, it has simultaneously led to the staged authenticity of rituals and the modification of traditional arts to suit tourist expectations. This process of commodification poses a significant threat to the community's autonomy over their ancestral heritage. The study identifies the negotiation strategies employed by the Dayak community to reclaim their sovereignty, including the enforcement of customary laws (Adat) and the selective disclosure of sacred knowledge. The research concludes that sustainable and responsible tourism governance in East Kalimantan requires a shift from top-down management to a community-led model that prioritizes indigenous rights over commercial expansion. This balance is essential to ensure that the development of the New Capital City (IKN) nearby does not further marginalize the cultural integrity of East Kalimantan's indigenous populations.

Keywords: *Cultural Sovereignty, Dayak, Indigenous Governance, Tourism Commodification*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the third decade of the 21st century, the dynamics of global tourism are no longer understood merely as the physical mobility of people across geographical boundaries; instead, they have transformed into an arena for identity contestation, the negotiation of meaning, and the struggle for symbolic authority. Within the cultural landscape of East Kalimantan, the Pampang Cultural Village—home to the Dayak Kenyah Apokayan community—emerges as a microcosm of these tensions. Since its official designation as a cultural village in 1991, Pampang has been positioned as a primary "ethnic showcase" within the province's tourism portfolio [1]. However, beneath the visual exoticism of tattoos, the long-ear tradition (telingaan aruu), and the aesthetics of traditional dances, lies a far more complex discourse regarding cultural sovereignty. This tension is frequently triggered by the clash between national development narratives and the traditional rights of indigenous communities, which are often marginalized within strategic tourism planning [2].

In this context, cultural sovereignty transcends the mere preservation of artifacts or rituals; it constitutes the fundamental right of indigenous communities to self-determination, as well as their authority to manage and protect the integrity of their ancestral heritage from reductive external interventions. This sovereignty crisis emerges when profit-centric tourism market logic begins to encroach upon private spaces and dictate the rhythms of indigenous life [3]. Such a phenomenon triggers what is known as cultural commodification, where sacred elements and ethnic identities are deconstructed into market commodities ready for consumption. Uncontrolled commodification ultimately leads to a state of collective alienation, where indigenous people begin to lose control over the philosophical meanings of their own cultural symbols simply to satisfy the aesthetic expectations of tourists. Consequently, a shift occurs from use-value and sacred-value toward economic exchange-value, which, in the long term, risks uprooting the community from its own cosmogonic foundations [4].

The urgency of this research is further heightened by the massive acceleration of the New Capital City (IKN) development in the surrounding region. The geographical and cultural positioning of Pampang Village now stands at a crossroads between national modernity ambitions and the defense of local traditions. This vulnerability is rooted in governance models that are often top-down and technocratic, where tourism success is quantified solely through visitor numbers without considering the sociological burden on the community. Recent studies indicate that infrastructure megaprojects like IKN have the potential to accelerate an unbalanced process of cultural assimilation if not accompanied by legal protections for the communal rights of indigenous peoples [5]. If the management paradigm continues to disregard local agency, the risks of cultural marginalization and the transformation of the village into a mere "living museum" devoid of meaning will become a bitter inevitability.

This research aims to deconstruct and analyze the ongoing negotiation mechanisms within local governance structures. By involving key actors such as the Customary Council (Dewan Adat), government agencies, and the private sector, this study seeks to map how economic interests can be mediated without compromising cultural integrity. Through this lens, it is expected that a more emancipatory governance model will be identified one that positions the Dayak Kenyah community as sovereign subjects over their own identity narratives amidst the inevitable roar of IKN's development.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Dialectics of Commodification and Staged Authenticity

In the discourse of tourism sociology, cultural commodification is understood as the process of transforming both material and symbolic cultural elements into standardized objects of economic exchange. Dean MacCannell's (1973/1999) classic concept of Staged Authenticity remains salient in deconstructing how cultural destinations respond to the tourist's thirst for "authentic" and "primordial" experiences. MacCannell bifurcates social space into two realms: the Front Stage, where traditions are theatrically packaged for public consumption, and the Back Stage, the private sphere where indigenous communities lead their authentic lives shielded from external intervention [6].

In a contemporary context, this distinction has become increasingly complex due to digital mediation, which tends to blur the boundaries between the private and public spheres. Within the Pampang Cultural Village, these boundaries are often fluid; commodification does not inherently signify the destruction of value but can instead transform into a survival strategy. Existential challenges arise when commodification occurs without full community control, leading to cultural alienation [7]. Indigenous communities risk becoming estranged from their own rituals when the rhythm and essence of such practices are forced to submit to the standardization of tour packages. Consequently, staged authenticity in Pampang should be understood as a form of tactical compromise designed to protect sacred spaces from total market penetration.

Cultural Sovereignty and Governance Autonomy

Cultural sovereignty transcends static or museological preservation paradigms. Sovereignty is a manifestation of a community's ability to engage in active negotiation against global narratives and hegemonic state policies [8]. In tourism governance, this sovereignty is manifested through the recognition of customary institutions (lembaga adat) as the supreme authority in decision-making, rather than mere administrative adjuncts to bureaucratic interests. An emancipatory governance model demands a paradigm shift from tourism for the community to tourism by the community [9]. This sovereignty encompasses the prerogative to determine tourist access zoning and to protect restricted knowledge (sacred customary information). Without legally protected bargaining power, community involvement in tourism will remain trapped in "pseudo-participation." In such a state, indigenous peoples continue to be positioned as passive objects controlled by government policies and the interests of private operators.

The Political Economy of Tourism in the Era of the New Capital City (IKN)

The province of East Kalimantan is currently undergoing a massive spatial reconfiguration due to the transition of the national administrative center to the New Capital City (IKN). Tourism development in this region is squeezed between the interests of national economic growth and the protection of customary land rights (hak ulayat). The presence of IKN creates a double pressure: an exponential surge in tourist volume and the potential for a lopsided comparison between modern standards and local entities perceived as "traditional" [5]. Within this political-economic landscape, Dayak culture in Pampang faces the risk of being reduced to mere "wall decorations" or branding instruments for the Forest City concept promoted by the IKN Authority. Without a sophisticated negotiation model based on the legal recognition of customary territories, this urban expansion could result in the systematic marginalization of indigenous cultural integrity. Therefore, it is imperative to integrate local values into IKN's macro-development policies, where indigenous sovereignty is recognized as a central pillar rather than a mere secondary variable in regional tourism development indices.

3. METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative approach with an intrinsic case study design, a methodological choice that allows the researcher to delve into the unique phenomena of tourism governance in Pampang Cultural Village in a particular, in-depth, and contextual manner [10]. The primary focus of this study transcends the mere documentation of surface-level tourism practices; it is

designed to dissect the complex dialectic between power structures represented by global market logic and government authority and the agency of the Dayak Kenyah indigenous community in maintaining their cultural sovereignty.

Philosophically, this study is grounded in Critical Theory (Critical Paradigm). This perspective was chosen because the researcher views social reality in Pampang not as neutral, but as a product of asymmetrical and historical power relations. Within this framework, the researcher does not position themselves as a passive observer; instead, they act in an emancipatory capacity to expose how cultural sovereignty is contested, negotiated, and occasionally sacrificed under the pressure of hegemonic governance structures [11].

Data collection was conducted through participant observation. The comparison between the "staged" public space and the "authentic" private space serves as a methodological key to understanding the extent to which cultural modifications have been implemented to satisfy tourist expectations. Primary data were enriched through semi-structured in-depth interviews with key stakeholders. At the grassroots level, the researcher explored the subjective perceptions of customary leaders (Penyen), the Head of the Customary Council (Lembaga Adat), and the younger generation of dancers regarding the perceived "price" of a commercialized tradition. Additionally, the researcher conducted bureaucratic interviews with representatives from the Samarinda City Tourism Office and the New Capital City (IKN) Authority to map macro-policy directions and the economic achievement targets imposed upon the cultural village entity.

The data analysis process was carried out iteratively using Thematic Analysis. To ensure trustworthiness and the integrity of the research findings, the researcher applied Source Triangulation by comparing oral testimonies from customary leaders, field observations, and official policy documents. The researcher also performed Member Checking an ethical step to reconfirm the draft findings with the Pampang community to ensure that the researcher's interpretations align with their lived realities, while preventing the voices of the indigenous people from being distorted in this scientific report.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Anatomy of Commodification: From Ritual Sacredness to Performance Aesthetics

The results of participant observation in Pampang Cultural Village indicate that commodification is not merely an economic phenomenon of entrance ticket monetization; rather, it represents a profound ontological transformation of Dayak Kenyah cultural elements. This process does not occur linearly, but through complex layers of negotiation where the indigenous community acts as agents, actively discerning which elements are suitable for public consumption and which must remain communal secrets. Based on field analysis, this commodification phenomenon manifests across three distinct levels:

1. Negotiating Visual Aesthetics: Between "The Gaze" and Bodily Protection

Visual aspects are specifically curated to satisfy the tourist gaze. Visitors frequently arrive carrying a colonial imagination of the exotic Dayak figure complete with traditional tattoos, elongated earlobes, and the mandau. People of Pampang are acutely aware of these expectations and engage in sophisticated visual negotiations.



Figure 1. Dayak figure complete

Interestingly, the use of cultural attributes in Pampang has become situational and artificial. For instance, the practice of earlobe elongation, which is increasingly rare among the younger generation, has been replaced by the use of metallic weighted earrings worn exclusively during performance hours. Theoretically, this reinforces MacCannell's (1973) concept of staged authenticity; however, from a humanistic perspective, this practice constitutes a form of silent resistance. This phenomenon aligns with findings noting that aesthetic modifications in Pampang often serve as a defense mechanism to prevent original identity from being fully distorted by market demands [12]. By donning a visual identity only while on stage, the indigenous community is, in fact, drawing a firm line between their professional bodies as performers and their private bodies as individuals outside of visiting hours. This is a self-protection strategy to ensure their identity is not entirely eroded by commercialization an act recognized as identity politics within the performing arts to maintain the bodily autonomy of indigenous peoples.

2. The Customary Lamin as Theater and Spiritual Fortress

The Lamin Adat Pamung Tawai, which historically served as the heart of communal life, a place for deliberation, and a center for spiritual activities, has now undergone a dual functionalization as a performance theater. Within the structure of tourism governance, the Lamin is positioned as a front stage open to the public. However, cultural sovereignty is maintained through strict zoning mechanisms. The researcher found that while tourists are free to explore the central area of the Lamin, certain altar sections remain strictly off-limits to cameras and foreign presence. The decision by the customary council (Penyen) to restrict access to these sacred corners is a tangible manifestation of spiritual sovereignty. The success of community-based tourism depends heavily on the local community's ability to

protect sacred spaces from economic desacralization [13]. In Pampang, space is no longer merely an economic asset; it serves as a final fortress ensuring that, while the physical structure is visually consumed, the soul and sanctity of the site remain under the full control of the customary custodians. This reinforces the argument that emotional heritage is often protected through physical access restrictions to preserve its intrinsic value.



Figure 2. The Lamin Adat Pamung Tawai

3. Secret Knowledge Narratives Behind the Myth

The third and most subtle level is the commodification of narratives and mythology. Tour guides often convey folklore or carving philosophies using simplified language to be easily digested by the modern logic of tourists. These narratives tend to be "light" and entertaining, distancing the original depth of meaning from the migration history or cosmology of the Dayak people. However, through in-depth interviews with elders, it was revealed that this simplification of narrative is a deliberate act of restricted knowledge. Customary stakeholders have collectively agreed not to disclose the full meaning of sacred symbols or specific incantations to outsiders. This strategy of "selective silence" is employed to prevent total desacralization. This analysis aligns with theories of cultural resistance amidst globalization, where information fragmentation is used to ensure that the cultural core is not "stolen" by capital logic [14]. By providing fragmented narratives, the Pampang community engages in a negotiation of intellectual sovereignty; they allow tourists to "feel informed," while the core of cultural truth remains tightly guarded as ancestral secrets that are not for sale a phenomenon identified as a form of intelligent adaptation by local communities facing the pressures of mass tourism [15].

Governance Structure and Power Asymmetry: Contesting Authority in the Tourism Arena

Tourism governance in Pampang Cultural Village reflects a persistent power struggle between traditional customary-based authority and bureaucratic authority driven by state logic. This relationship does not exist in a vacuum but within a structure that often places indigenous communities in a vulnerable bargaining position. Based on the analysis of local governance dynamics, two crucial points of power asymmetry were identified:

1. The Legitimacy Dilemma: Customary Calendars vs. Bureaucratic Targets

The fundamental tension in Pampang's governance is rooted in a dichotomy of legitimacy sources. On one hand, the Customary Institution (Lembaga Adat) holds moral and spiritual sovereignty inherited through generations; on the other, the Tourism Office controls budgetary authority and formal regulations. This imbalance creates a pattern of asymmetrical dependence; the indigenous community owns the "cultural content," but the government possesses the "means" to mobilize crowds and infrastructure. In practice, decisions to host major festivals are often top-down. Government-mandated visitor targets force the community to operate within a rigid, fast-paced bureaucratic rhythm. Tourism in developing nations often serves as a state tool to control local communities through the standardization of cultural activities. When indigenous people are forced to violate "sacred time" to meet "bureaucratic time," their sovereignty is being intervened by the interests of development statistics [16]. The failure to integrate local calendars into formal planning constitutes a form of administrative marginalization that relegates indigenous people to mere "technical executors" rather than policy-making subjects.

2. Resilience in Economic Negotiation: Resisting Objectification through the Customary Endowment Fund

The economic aspect of tourism in Pampang is frequently the most palpable point of friction. There is a collective anxiety among residents who feel positioned merely as "staged objects," while the lion's share of economic value is absorbed by travel agencies or regional taxes. Without local economic protection, tourism profits tend to suffer from "leakage" to external parties, leaving the local community with a heavy sociological burden. However, amidst these limitations, an emancipatory initiative has emerged through the management of a customary endowment fund. Collected from voluntary tourist contributions for photos or donations, this fund is managed entirely by the village institution without bureaucratic interference. This initiative is a form of Indigenous Agency an effort to reclaim control over cultural assets from capitalist market dominance [17]. By autonomously managing these funds for emergency health and education needs, the Dayak Kenyah community is renegotiating the power structure. They reject the role of passive objects and choose to become managers of their own community welfare an act of economic resilience that is an essential step in the decolonization of the tourism industry.

The Existence of Sovereignty Amidst the Hegemony of Modernity

The presence of the New Capital City (IKN) in the Sepaku region does not merely bring physical landscape changes but also exerts existential sociological pressure on Pampang Cultural Village. Situated within the IKN's radius of influence, Pampang stands at a crossroads between economic integration opportunities and the risk

of destructive cultural assimilation. Three crucial dimensions determine the future of Dayak Kenyah sovereignty:

1. The Threat of Folklorization: Between Identity and State Decoration

A primary concern arising from IKN development is the risk of cultural folklorization. Within the logic of megastructure development, there is a strong tendency to treat indigenous entities merely as "ethnic showcases" or symbols of exoticism for the sake of international state branding. This phenomenon risks exacerbating commodification, where aesthetic attributes—such as carvings, Lamin architecture, or sacred dances—are extracted merely as decorative ornaments without substantial respect for customary land rights. This aligns with decoloniality theses, warning that the state often "tames" local identities to align with urban modernity aesthetics. Without concrete legal guarantees over customary territories, the use of cultural symbols in IKN megaprojects is merely a form of visual appropriation that ignores the community's political sovereignty [18].

2. Demographic Pressure and Carrying Capacity Vulnerability

The mass migration of civil servants (ASN), laborers, and tourists to IKN is predicted to exponentially increase visit volumes to Pampang. This surge brings serious challenges to the village's carrying capacity, both physically and psychosocially. Without strict governance, this mass influx risks triggering social degradation and invading the private spaces of residents. Findings suggest that rapid tourism growth around new economic hubs often destroys the social cohesion of local communities. This pressure demands a paradigm shift from mass tourism toward quality visitor management that respects the life rhythms of the indigenous community. Failure to manage social carrying capacity in the IKN context could turn the cultural village into a "cultural marketplace" that loses its spiritual value [19].

3. Reclaiming Strategy: Demanding Recognition as Legal Subjects

In response to these pressures, the Pampang community demonstrates significant political agency through a "Reclaiming" strategy. They have begun setting prerequisites for full involvement in "IKN Sustainable Tourism" planning, refusing to be mere spectators on a grand stage of development [5]. Their primary demand is the recognition that Dayak Kenyah identity must be valued as a sovereign legal subject, not just a bureaucratic aesthetic. This reflects the concept of Indigenous Sovereignty, where tourism is used as an instrument to demand political rights and territorial recognition. This struggle ensures that amidst the roar of the new capital's progress, the Dayak Kenyah remain respected hosts rather than mere displays on the porch of development [20].



Figure 3. Dayak Kenyah

5. CONCLUSIONS

Tourism in Pampang Cultural Village sits at a nadir between the opportunity for prosperity and the risk of cultural meaning extinction. The negotiations of the Dayak Kenyah community prove that they are not passive victims of commodification, but active agents making strategic compromises. However, current governance models remain asymmetrical. To navigate the impact of IKN development, a paradigm shift is required from mass tourism toward Sovereign Tourism. This entails granting full authority to the Customary Institution in determining cultural zoning and fair profit-sharing. Cultural sovereignty can only be achieved if indigenous communities possess the power to define the boundaries of what may be marketed and what must remain sacred.

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