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**Agrotourism and Caucasian Tourists: Tales from
Tekan Plantation Resort and Taman Rekreasi
Kampung Guntung Luar**

SULONG MOHAMAD

ABSTRACT

The present study, conducted at Tekam Plantation Resort and Taman Rekreasi Kampung Guntung Luar, reveals that the Caucasian tourists, though small in number, are drawn to these agrotourism locations because they are attracted to Malaysian agricultural landscape which according to them is unlike theirs. For that reason they want to experience and know more about our agricultural crops and activities. This, the study finds out, is related to their perception of exoticism which has motivated many of them to seek unknown frontiers. Thus, if agrotourism industry in Malaysia is to be further promoted, the exotic aspects of our agricultural system could be carefully and imaginatively engineered in the marketing campaigns abroad.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini, yang dijalankan di Tekam Plantation Resort dan Taman Rekreasi Kampung Guntung Luar, mendapati bahawa pelancong Kulit Putih melawat tapak pelancongan-tani di atas kerana mereka tertarik dengan landskap pertanian Malaysia, yang menurut mereka, berbeza dengan sistem pertanian di negara Barat. Hal yang demikian menyebabkan mereka ingin melihat, mengalami dan mengetahui lebih mendalam lagi tentang tanaman dan aktiviti pertanian negara ini. Hal ini didapati berkait dengan tanggapan mereka mengenai eksotisme yang telah merangsang ramai daripada mereka untuk mencari pengalaman dan keseronokan yang luar biasa. Maka sekiranya industri pelancongan-tani di Malaysia hendak dikembangkan lagi, aspek eksotik sistem pertanian kita hendaklah dijuruterakan dengan teliti dan secara imaginatif dalam kempen penggalakan di luar negara.

INTRODUCTION

In August 1991, the Malaysian Minister of Agriculture, who is known for his many innovative and strange ideas, announced the notion of agrotourism, a term which has never been coined and used before (Sulong Mohamad 1994). Following the pronouncement, an International Conference on Agrotourism Industry which drew international participations from Germany, Great Britain, Australia and Malaysia, was held in Kuala Lumpur from 28-30 July 1992 (Ailin Ton et al. 1993). The objectives of the conference, among other things, were to seek clarification of the concept of agrotourism, to learn the experiences of other countries and to chart the development strategy of agrotourism in this country.

Clearly there are sufficient rationales for the optimism shown towards agrotourism. Tourism is officially recognised as one of the major contributors to economic development of this country (Malaysia 1991). This industry, as has been claimed, has improved the country's balance of payment, increased foreign exchange earnings, diversified the economic base, generated employment opportunities, increased value added and fostered industrial linkages. In terms of its contribution to foreign exchange, this economic sector ranks third after petroleum and manufacturing. Malaysia has ambitious plan to expand this industry to its limit. By the year 2000, this nation hopes to bring in 20 million tourists a year. If that is achieved, the number of foreign tourists would exceed the total figure of national population in any year. What it would mean in terms of its impact on the environment, culture, infrastructure and economy is not an issue to be addressed here. That ambitious plan can be seen from its formulation of national tourism plan and its two Visit Malaysia Year campaigns held in 1990 and 1994. The first was hailed as a great success with an impressive jump in tourist arrival statistics.

In line with the above plan, Malaysia, which still lacks tourism base, is looking for an avenue to diversify its products so that there will be wider opportunities at the disposal of the tourists. There are also other issues of major concern. First, Malaysia does not have an identity and image of its own to be promoted to the foreign market. As the Minister of Culture, Art and Tourism said, the Malaysian image needs to be found and created (Sulong Mohamad 1994). Secondly, tourism development in this country produces very little benefit to agricultural sector which is now assuming a declining role in the Malaysian economic life. According to a report (A. Aziz Rahman et al. 1990), at present, only six per cent of tourist expenditure trickles down to the agricultural sector. Hence, there is obviously vast scope to strengthen the industrial linkage of tourism industry to the latter sector. Thirdly, as a response to the Western

media's claim of Malaysia's lack of concern and commitment to the global environmental worsening situation, which has given this country a bad image, the government has explicitly tried to promote environmental or green tourism (King 1992b). Thus, agrotourism fit in very well within this frame of thinking.

In addition, there is a suggestion made by the Minister of Agriculture himself that foreign tourists would be very much interested to visit, see and experience Malaysian agricultural landscape which is different from theirs. This, the author conceptualises, is related to the Western concept of exoticism. The present study explores the links between the above suggestion and the idea of exoticism. Thus, the next section will discuss the Western idea of exoticism, followed by a general description of agrotourism efforts at Tekam Plantation Resort and Taman Rekreasi Kampung Guntung Luar. Following that the behaviours of selected tourists will be examined based on the author's interviews to see if the tourist responses fit in with the model.

AN EXCURSION INTO THE WESTERN CONCEPT OF EXOTICISM

Exoticism is related to conception, image and perception, and thus could contribute to stereotyping. The Western notion of exoticism, as hinted by King (1992a) was a colonial creation. During colonialism early travellers and explorers, who came for an extended stay in the colonies, wrote about their experiences in the remote, primitive and unknown land. Their writings were filled with colours of exoticism, with images such as 'tatoos', 'spectacular varieties of pitcher plants', 'wild jungle', 'dense tropical forest', 'land of White Rajah', 'longhouse', 'blowpipes', 'land Dayak', 'feather headdressed Iban warriors', 'remarkable beetles', 'flying frogs', 'jungle walks', 'dusky bare-breasted women' and 'wild head-hunters' (Sauders 1992; King 1992b; Zeppel 1992; Caslake 1992). Sauders, in the References of her Chapter, 'Early Travellers in Borneo', gave a list of titles published by those explorers; and out of 23 titles, four immediately and clearly strike the messages of exoticism:

1. Boyle, F. 1856. *Adventures Among the Dayak of Borneo*. London: Hurst and Brackett.
2. Bock, C. 1881. *The Head-hunter of Borneo: A Narrative of Travel up the Mahakkan and Down the Barito: Also, Journeying in Sumatra*. London: Sampson and Lows (Reprinted with Introduction by R.H.W. Reece, 1985. Singapore: Oxford University Press).

3. Mershon, E. 1922. *With the Wild Men of Borneo*. Mountain View: Pacific Press Publishing Association.
4. St. John, S. 1862. *Life in the Forest of the Far East*. 2 vols. London: Smith, Elder and Co.

How was this sense of exoticism created, propagated and perpetuated in the European mind has been reported by Sauders (1992) in her recent work on Borneo. She said:

In the nineteenth century, the number of travellers visiting Borneo increased considerably, especially after James Brooke arrived in Sarawak and Dutch, in response, extended their influence in Kalimantan. Brooke's journals and letters were published and his exploits aroused great interest and controversy.... These and the writings of others like Belcher, Keppel, Hugh Low and the young Frank Marryat introduced the Western world to headhunting, longhouse-dwelling Dayaks, piratical Illanun, scheming Malay Rajahs and other colourful people who captured the Western imagination in ways the more peaceful dwellers of the Island did not ..., so that they appeared thereafter in stories and novels for boys and adults for the rest of century. Sketches and illustrations reinforced the written words. This influence was felt not only in England. In Italy, Emilio Salgari's novels, set in North-west Borneo, were immensely popular.

The 'wild' imagination of the Western people about the exotic Eastern world did not end there. It spread to other parts of Europe when Bock's 'sensation account of his travels, the *Head-hunter of Borneo*, was reprinted and translated into Norwegian and German, (Sauders 1992).

The image of the exotic Far East or Borneo in particular has been encouraged and sustained to the present-day by tourist-commercial literature (King 1992b; Caslake 1992), though this may lead to a misrepresentation of the true daily realities (Kadir Din 1982). As King commented, in the case of Sarawak, exoticism has been emphasised and marketed by tour agencies and companies to lure Caucasian tourists to visit the unknown East. Thus it seems, the quest for exoticism is very much alive and ever-present among the civilised Western people; and exoticism, no doubt, has been one of the motivating forces for undertaking a long journey into the unknown. This explains why longhouse tourism which involves a tedious and many-hour journey into the frontiers has been popular among the White visitors since its inception in the early 1970s (King 1992b; Caslake 1992; Zeppel 1992; Kedit and Sabang 1992). The search for exoticism becomes more apparent if responses of satisfied Caucasian tourists who have participated in longhouse tourism are examined. These have been recorded by Kedit and Sabang (1992), as given below:

1. "The people are very kind and always smiling. The longhouse folks are kind too. The dance that they perform is very different from the dance I usually see" (Anna from Germany).
2. "Touched by extreme hospitality. Very graceful dancing" (Mike and Ann from Australia).
3. "Very special, remarkable place" (Karen from USA).
4. "Hoping this will never change" (Martina from Germany).
5. "Very interesting and friendly" (Lia from Holland).

If exoticism, which has been cultivated in the Western mind since the colonial days, or perhaps earlier by such adventurer as Marco Polo, has the quality of motivating tourists to go visiting, then it also has the power of explaining why a tourist visits a particular destination. Hence, the Western notion of exoticism has to be probed and concretised. The following paragraphs devote to achieving this goal.

After reviewing the literature (some of which include dictionaries and thesauruses – see References) and consultation with a few Westerners, the author was able to identify six elements of the Western concept of exoticism. These are listed below:

1. Objects of focus – people, culture, lifestyle, custom, technology, art and craft, dress, food, architecture, flora, fauna, sex, place and landscape.
2. Object's availability – rare, unique, location-specific, far-away places.
3. Object's appearance – different, strange, unusual, alien, foreign, distinctive, striking.
4. Object's effect – amusing, exciting, interesting, romantic, adventurous, seductive, glamorous.
5. Object's setting – natural, indigenous, wild, untamed, unknown, unfamiliar, authentic.
6. Object's state of development – ancient, primitive, simple, traditional, little touched by modernisation and Westernisation.

As can be seen from the above, the subjects of exoticism are varied, and they range, among others, from people, culture, dress, food, architecture, flora, fauna, sex and landscape. These should be rare, unique or could be found in far-away and specific locations. Surely they are not omnipresent for if they are ubiquitous, their quality of exoticism is lost. At the same time, the objects should be bizarre, strange, unusual, alien, foreign, distinctive and striking which could produce amusing, exciting, interesting, romantic, adventurous, seductive and glamorous

effects on feelings and sights. They should be authentic as opposed to created. In another word, they should be present in their natural or indigenous environment which would be unfamiliar, unknown, wild, untamed or uncivilised. Another point is that these objects should, in any way, be little-touched by modernisation or Westernisation. Hence they could be ancient, primitive, simple or traditional.

It should, however, be stressed that for an object to be conceived as having exotic quality, it need not have to satisfy all the above elements. Meeting a few of the above attributes would be sufficient to make it exotic.

To elaborate the above point, a few cases are cited and discussed here. In the early 1980s there were reports that the Germans were participating in sex tourism in Thailand, which has a well-developed sex trade (Contours 1991; Phongpaichit 1981 a). To undertake such a long journey to a far-away land in the sub-tropical eastern land for the main, not necessarily the sole, purpose of unknown pleasure makes one wonder and try to seek for an explanation. Why should the Caucasian race who can enjoy such pleasure freely and comfortably at home and in the neighbouring lands have to come all the way to Thailand to satisfy such manly desire? This is an analysis that we are attempting here.

To the Germans, the ambience of their country and other European nations is too familiar and easy that it does not entice nor tantalize unknown excitement, romance and adventure. But the young, vibrant, oriental girls, some may have just barely passed the age of puberty and still a child (Srisang et al. 1991) may arouse a different image, scene and effect. One, however, should not loose sight. The Thai girls who are in the 'man-service' industry may not in every respect be authentic for they may put up Western make-up and dresses, and servicing their civilised clients comfortably in modern-city hotels, equipped with modern fittings and furnishings. But they, being oriental from the Buddhist land, are nevertheless 'exotic'. Describing this situation in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Phongpaichit (1981 b:16) wrote and quoted:

American, German and Japanese are the most numerous foreign tourists, and travel agencies in those countries hawk the attractions of Thailand in no uncertain terms. A brochure put out by the German Rosie Reisen (Rosie Travels) agency notes:

Thailand is a world full of extremes and the possibilities are unlimited. Anything goes in this exotic country, especially when it comes to girls. Still it appears to be a problem for visitors to Thailand to find the right places where they can indulge in unknown pleasure... Rosie has done something about this. For the first time in history you can book a trip to Thailand with exotic pleasures included in the price.

The detailed itinerary includes such entries as:

Breakfast in the Royal Hotel, rest of the day free. In the coffee shop there are many girls available. You can take them to your room, of course ...”

Furer-Haimendorf (1984) who conducted an extensive anthropological study of the Sherpas living at the foothills of the Himalayas, reported that lately the number of tourists who came to seek unknown adventure on the roof of the world has been on the increase. This affected the life of the Sherpas for many of their young males were recruited as porters. In the course of their interactions with the foreign guests, there were cases where the White female tourists made advances and had intimate physical relations with the young, strong porters. What could have been a better explanation for such a brief involvement between the Sherpas and Western female tourists who could have a better and meaningful relationship with their own kind if not for the lure of exotic adventure and unknown fantasy in untamed landscape? But in this case, because of the setting, state of development, availability, appearance and effect, the Sherpas exhibited a greater degree of exoticism than the Thai girls. But they also wore Western outfits and spoke little English.

Similarly, Tibet, an autonomous region of China, and situated on ancient Silk Route on the highest plateau of the world, has just been opened to the outside world. Hence this peculiar place is little known to outsiders. For that location-quality, it has generated a lot of romantic interests among the Western people, and tourism, needless to say, has crept into this ancient land of the Lamas. But Tibet is not environmentally, culturally and economically static. Lately it has experienced a considerable amount of development, and there is little doubt that this land has been touched by modernisation (El Popola Cinio Magazine 1987). But it is, as yet, an exotic place as the quotation cited below illustrates:

Tibet is unfamiliar to most outsiders. Yet its unique geography, wondrous scenery, interesting customs and splendid arts are enchanting (El Popola Cinio Magazine 1987: 3).

This kind of analysis has been pursued with full realisation of its subjectivity. What is ‘exotic’ to a person may be considered otherwise by another person. The earlier quotation from Kedit and Sabang (1992) who recorded a response from Lia of Holland, who said, ‘very interesting and friendly’ could be interpreted in many different ways if the context was not given. But if that comment is set within the milieu of traditional Iban society living at uncivilised end of an unexploit tropical environment,

then the picture of exoticism may become clearer. Despite that, another observer may have his reservation. Thus, this subjectivity has to be appreciated.

AGROTOURISM INITIATIVES AT TEKAM PLANTATION RESORT

The Tekam Plantation Resort, which is a part of the Tun Abdul Razak Agricultural Research Centre, is situated in the central region of Peninsular Malaysia, in Jerantut district, Pahang. Though the Research Centre was opened in 1972, the Tekam Resort began its business only in June 1991. Before that this place was not accessible to the public and tourists. Nevertheless, it has accommodation facilities, known as the Banglo Semai Bakti, which comprised 16-room guest-house and managed by FELDA Niaga, a cooperative organ of FELDA settlers which run business activities in FELDA schemes throughout the country. The facilities were available only for the FELDA officers and other government servants who were on duty here.

Slightly over three years ago, the management of Banglo Semai Bakti was taken over by FELDA Agricultural Services Corporation, a statutory body. There was a shift in management paradigm and its scope of activities expanded. Its former name was changed to Tekam Plantation Resort to give a new corporate image. This place was soon being promoted as the first agrotourism site in the country and tourists were accepted and encouraged. Accommodation facilities were added. Now, besides the 16-room guest-house, Tekam has 15 cottages, four chalets, a hostel, two restaurants and a conference room which can accommodate 100 participants. Each cottage and chalet has two rooms and a kitchen. For recreational pursuits, there is swimming pool, two tennis courts and a few ponds for fishing, boating and kayaking.

In its effort to promote and market this place as an agrotourism centre, the management of Tekam Plantation Resort has also instituted a special programme called farm-visiting programme, which is only available during the fruit season, starting from July to September each year. With a minimum fee, the tourists will be taken by landrovers to the *durian*, *cempedak* and *rambutan* orchards, and they can enjoy the fruits as much as they like within the designated time.

Another programme available is the holiday-camp package, known as Vacation Camp in Plantation, specifically designed for school children, aged between 13 to 17. This programme is organised during school holidays and run for three nights and four days. By combining education and recreation, this programme provides opportunities to

school children to learn agricultural practices with respect to plant care for oil palm, rubber, coffee, cocoa and fruit trees; to experience nature by taking part in jungle trekking and cave exploration; to build up team spirit by participating in games and debates and to share life experiences with fellow participants and community at the Research Centre (Tekam Plantation Resort, n.d.).

Tekam Plantation Resort provides an ideal setting for these activities as the Tun Abdul Razak Agricultural Research Centre is surrounded by a vast track of FELDA agricultural schemes in the Jengka Triangle regional development project, which was initiated as early as 1970. On the ground of the Research Centre itself, covering an area of 5500 acres, several crops and fruit trees are grown for the purpose of research; these include oil palm, rubber, coffee, cocoa, *durian*, *rambutan* and *cempedak* trees and other crops (Sulong Mohamad 1993). Scattered about around Tekam Plantation Resort are the administrative offices, workshop, research laboratory and worker's quarters for all ranks. More than 200 families who work for the Research Station live here.

There is an extensive cave nearby, and the longest river in Peninsular Malaysia, Sungai Pahang, runs through this region. Thus, besides the above programmes, river-rafting activities have also been designed for the tourists who are seeking nature adventure. The resort has attracted various groups of agrotourists; among them are the conference participants, school children, holiday-makers, *durian* lovers and Western tourists. The first group is the largest, mainly because conferences, seminars and courses are frequently held here, with at least one in a month (personal communication with Encik Zaki Sulaiman, the Promotional and Marketing Officer of Tekam Resort, June 1992). According to Encik Zaki Sulaiman, this place has three locational advantages. First, there is facility for the purpose. Second, the rate is comparatively low. Third, this place is away from the hectic life of the cities and is surrounded by greenery and peaceful environment which is ideal for such a discourse. The Western tourists, as will be indicated in later section, are small in number.

AGROTOURISM ACTIVITIES AT TAMAN REKREASI KAMPUNG GUNTUNG LUAR

Set at a site by the foothill, on a 280-hectare agricultural plantation, developed and managed by the Setiu Area Farmer's Association, Taman Rekreasi Kampung Guntung Luar was opened in 1992 (Rosli Zakaria 1992). An area of 255 hectares has been planted with oil palm. The remaining land is being developed into an orchard, to be implemented on

an integrated farming approach. On a two-hectare site, fruit crops such as *durian*, *belimbing besi*, *cempedak*, *petai* and bananas have been planted. Besides, there is also an aquacultural activity with fish species like *patin*, *talapia*, *lampam jawa* and *udang galah* being stocked in five ponds and a nearby stream.

Located about seven kilometres away from Bandar Baru Permaisuri, an administrative centre of a new district, Setiu, this facility has attracted the attention of local media (Rosli Zakaria, 1992; Chandrasekaran 1993; *Berita Harian*, 25 August 1992; *New Straits Times*, 12 Oct. 1992; *Mingguan Malaysia*, 23 March 1993). But there were some mis-reportings. Contrary to what was reported by Rosli Zakaria, this agrotourism site has, actually, three standard-rooms, one master-standard room, 18 economy-rooms, a hostel and a lecture hall. This place, in fact, can accommodate up to 200 guests at a time. For the recreational activities, the guests can take part in jungle trekking and boating or playing tennis, badminton or *sepak takraw*.

However, at the moment, Taman Rekreasi has not been attracting tourists. Indeed, very few tourists visit this facility. Its guests are mainly the course participants. On average about four courses, with 400-500 participants, are conducted here every month by the Biro Tata-Negara. This was, in fact, the reason for building this facility.

There is a plan to expand the agrotourism activity here. According to Raja Amir Hamzah Raja Husin, the Coordinator of this facility (personal communication, November 1994), by next year, this place will be turned into an agrotourism resort when a restaurant and chalets of deluxe class will be built. Since it has not been finalised the number of chalets to be constructed is still not known. The name of this place will also be changed to reflect its new image. By then, this agrotourism facility will be promoted and marketed to the visitors.

THE CAUCASIAN TOURISTS

Within the context of this study, pertinent questions to ask are: 1) What proportion of Western tourists constitutes the total number of visitors to Tekam Plantation Resort and Taman Rekreasi Kampung Guntung Luar? 2) What motivates them to these places? 3) How long do they stay at these locations?

To begin with, statistics on these Western visitors are not easily obtained. Thus the first and third questions above cannot be accurately answered. What we can give here is just a very general picture based on information gathered through interviews with Encik Zaki Sulaiman, the Promotional and Marketing Officer of Tekam Plantation Resort; Raja

Amir Hamzah Raja Husin, the Coordinator of Taman Rekreasi Kampung Guntung Luar and a few foreign tourists.

Researcher's interviews with Encik Zaki Sulaiman (the interviews were conducted in June 1992)

Researcher : Since Tekam Plantation Resort was opened to tourists, had you received Western tourists as well?

En. Zaki : Yes, we had. But their numbers were small. On average we registered about three to five of them a month. I would say, they made up roughly about five percent of the total visitors to this resort.

Researcher : Where did they come from?

En. Zaki : All of them were Europeans from Sweden, Switzerland and Germany. The latter (sic) were more numerous.

Researcher : How did they come to know about this place?

En. Zaki : In our effort to promote this place, we have placed our brochures at several key places: the airport, tourist information centres and major hotels. On top of that, there have been several documentaries made on this place and aired on local TV and abroad. In fact, we were planning to produce one on our own effort. Besides, we also had established networking with overseas tour agencies, particularly one in Sweden which helped to market our product and had been sending its customers here. One common feature about them was this. Most of them stayed here for one night. Very few indeed spent two nights. All of them were going to Taman Negara. Since this place was located midway between Kuala Lumpur and Taman Negara, this resort had become a convenient and popular transit for them before proceeding to their next destination.

Researcher : When they were here, what did they do or what did attract them most?

En. Zaki : Ah! I have strange things to tell you. It was strange, at least for me, to see them spending hours staring at our fruit trees and crops. They were immensely engrossed. You know, they went from one plant to another, observing the leaves, trunks, fruits and other parts; touching them and smelling them. Sometimes they stood back a few meters away and stared at the trees for long moments. All of them did these kinds of things. It was fascinating to see them so interested and curious about our plants. A major part of their times here was spent this way.

You see, we had a farm-visiting programme which we charged a minimum fee of RM20.00 per head. We brought our participants to our orchard, located a few kilometers from the accommodation and administrative centre. Our orchard consisted of mainly *durians*,

rambutans and *cempedaks*. We conducted this activity for our guests during fruit season beginning in July and ending in September. All of them who visited our resort during this time took part in our programme. There were also local guests. In fact, most of the participants were domestic guests.

It was very interesting to observe the behaviours of these groups of tourists. There were two poles. One was the locals who were crazy about *durians*. We had among the best *durian* species here. D94 was excellent, much better than the popularly known D24. This group participated in our programme with the sole purpose of enjoying as much *durians* as possible within the stipulated hours. They were easily annoyed when there were not enough fruits.

Our Western guests, on the other hand, joined the programme to observe our fruit trees, how we harvested them and how was it like to be in a tropical farm. They were not interested to consume the fruits, though they might taste them. They, in fact, despised *durians* for emitting a strong smell, and curiously wondered how we liked them so much. But watching how our local participants waited, sometimes for long moments, for the *durians* to drop and then there was a sudden rush for the fruits was exciting and amusing to them.

Researcher : So, it was our trees that they were interested in?

En. Zaki : Yes, I thought it was too obvious. You see, some of them have heard about rubber trees, and in fact, have seen them in books or TV. But they wanted to see the real thing in their true surroundings. Well, that was what some of them told me.

Researcher : Do you think that resort of this kind could attract foreign tourists?

En. Zaki : Yes. I am quite certain. At present, though their numbers are small, we had a constant flow of them. We had just opened over a year ago. We were expecting to make break-even this year and hope to get some profits next year. When we are financially better off, we would embark on a rigorous marketing campaign, and I am quite sure that we would be able to get a fair share of the expanding market. Of course, we would capitalise on nature, greenery and tropical agricultural landscape as our marketing focus.

Researcher's interviews with Raja Amir Hamzah Raja Husin (the interviews were conducted in November 1994)

Researcher : Do foreign tourists come here?

Raja Hamzah : This year, 1994, no. Last year we had a couple of them, perhaps less than 10.

Researcher : Where did they come from?

Raja Hamzah : They were from Sweden and Denmark.

Researcher : How did they come to know about this place?

Raja Hamzah : To be honest, I didn't really know. We didn't advertise or promote this place. Of course, there were a few write-ups about us here in the local media. But these were insufficient to catch their attention. As you could see, we were not ready to accept visitors. At the moment we only accept workshop participants organised by Biro Tata-Negara. It was for this reason that this facility was built in the first place. I guessed they might have asked the township people outside there and they hired taxis to bring them here.

Researcher : Did they spend overnight here?

Raja Hamzah : Yes. One night. They were lucky because at the time they were here, a workshop consisting of about 100 participants was going on. So we catered food to our guests. At other times, we did not provide such service, and so we were reluctant to accept guests unless they insisted.

Researcher : What things attracted them most when they were here?

Raja Hamzah : Among other things, they went trekking in the nearby jungle. We have an agroforestry here. But there was one thing very obvious. They showed a keen interest and great curiosity in our flora and fauna.

Researcher : Do you think this place has the potential to attract them?

Raja Hamzah : Yes, if we do real serious marketing. Our flora and fauna certainly would attract them to this place.

Researcher : Do you have future plan of that kind?

Raja Hamzah : Yes. You see the foothill over there. We are planning to build a few chalets of deluxe class there; maybe next year. The number, we do not know yet. It hasn't been finalised yet. Until then, we keep our profile low. When those facilities are ready, then we will promote this place to the visitors, both domestic and international. In fact, several mass media people have come to report on our place and helped to promote it. But I asked them not to, until we are ready.

Researcher's interviews with Caucasian tourist (the interviews were conducted in June 1992)

Researcher : Good morning. Welcome to Malaysia. I hope you are enjoying your stay here.

Caucasian guest : Thank you. Yes, I do.

Researcher : I am doing a research on Western tourists visiting this resort. I hope you don't mind if I ask you a few questions. I will not take much of your time. I only have a couple of short questions to ask.

Caucasian guest : No. What do you want to know?

Researcher : What country do you come from?

Caucasian guest : Switzerland.

Researcher : A mountainous country with beautiful scenery and diligent people. I wish I could visit your country one day. I see you have a companion. Of course, you do not come here alone by yourself. I like to know how did you come to Malaysia? I meant, did you arrange your own travels or was it arranged by tour agency in your country?

Caucasian guest : Yes, I come with another friend. We made our own arrangement.

Researcher : How did you come to know about this resort?

Caucasian guest : I read about this place some where. I didn't remember exactly. I guessed at the airport. A plantation resort! I thought it would be interesting and something different. Besides, this place was on the way to Taman Negara.

Researcher : When did you arrive here, and when did you plan to leave?

Caucasian guest : I arrived here yesterday by a taxi. I was leaving this afternoon.

Researcher : Since you arrived here, what had you been doing?

Caucasian guest : This was a nice place. Green and peaceful, very much different from cities and beaches, and totally alien from the place I come from. I enjoyed this place very much. Since yesterday, I had been observing your plants. There were many varieties here. I had seen oil palm and rubber trees on TV and in books before, but not in plantation like this. I had never heard of *durians*, *rambutans* and *cempedaks*. Yesterday I saw them and took a closer look at them. I also photographed them. They were very different from ours, though *cempedaks* similar to jack fruits. Yesterday I went to the fruit orchard. I saw a group of Malaysians, about five of them, waited for the *durians* to fall on the ground. Then I saw them running after the fruits, opened the thorny skins and ate them one by one. It was exciting for me to be able to see these. I could see that Malaysian loved the fruits. But the fruits emitted a strong smell. I was not used to that kind of smell. The fruits themselves had sharp thorns. Malaysians must have the skill to break open the husks without hurting their fingers and hands. *Cempedaks* were sticky and also had a strong smell. Then you had these small, rounded, hairy fruits, *rambutans*. Oh! These were strange things for me. I didn't like *durians* and *cempedaks*, but *rambutans* were sweet. To see and experience these were interesting and exciting. I had never been to a tropical plantation before. Now I was in one of them. I knew now how a tropical plantation was like. It was really wonderful!

Researcher : What will be your next destination?

Caucasian guest : Taman Negara.

Researcher : Thank you for your time and cooperation. Hoped your stay here really would be, other than interesting and exciting, most rewarding and fruitful, but of course, not a fruitful of thorns.

Caucasian guest : You are welcome. Nice talking to you.

I have also talked briefly and informally to a few other Western tourists who visited Tekam Plantation Resort. At Taman Rekreasi Kampung Guntung Luar, Setiu, there was no interview made with the tourists for they were not there at the time of my visit. I have recorded the responses of my interviews with the visitors at the former place. To a question "What things were of great interest to you here", the responses were: "very excited to see a tropical plantation which was unlike ours", "to see tropical trees and fruits", "to experience Malaysian agricultural landscape", and "to learn of different varieties of plants found here". From the above, there is obviously a hidden urge and interest to look for things that are different, unusual and strange found in a remote foreign land. Exoticism, therefore, seems to have drawn them to these places.

The object of exoticism that has been the focus of the Western guests who have visited the above agrotourism sites is the tropical agricultural landscape, which comprises of such elements as tropical crops and plants, fauna and people. Though set in the plantation environment, it is nevertheless natural and authentic for it is not 'created' for show to the visitors, unlike the agricultural parks at Bukit Cerakah, Shah Alam and in Kuantan. Its rustic atmosphere which is distinctive, different and alien from the Western counterparts gives a unique air of unfamiliar romance, experience and adventure to the European guests. The exotic quality of a tropical agricultural landscape would further be enhanced if the Western tourists have heard and seen certain species of tropical fauna and flora before visiting the sites as the interviews above have clearly indicated. It would arouse a deeper interest, amusement, excitement, romance and adventure among them.

The people who make up an important part of the agricultural landscape at Tekam Plantation Resort, in particular, are not exotic in terms of their appearance and culture, for they, to a large extent, have been shaped by modernisation. But the peculiar and unfamiliar behaviours of the *durian* lovers while they were on the farm are certainly an amusing, exciting and interesting sight for the Western people to watch. Such a display of love for the thorny fruits are looked upon by them as strange and unusual, and perhaps could be seen and experienced only among Malaysians in the rural settings.

In short, the sort of exoticism portrayed at Tekam Resort and Kampung Guntung Luar is the rustic tropical agricultural landscape with vast greenery and tranquil atmosphere where a unique method of harvesting *durian* fruits together with the strange behaviours of *durian* lovers could be an exciting panorama to observe during the fruit seasons. Although the tropical agricultural plantations such as at Tekam Plantation Resort and Kampung Guntung Luar are modern in outlook, there are certain aspects which are peculiar, distinctive and unique to Malaysia and perhaps to Southern Thailand and Sumatra, Indonesia as well. The methods of harvesting the fruits of oil palm and extracting the latex from the rubber trees are traditional and non-Western, and have been little influenced by mechanisation. These aspects, thought not explicitly revealed in the interviews above, are nevertheless elements of exoticism which could be found in the Malaysian rubber or oil palm agricultural systems.

This study has also implicitly indicated that the Malaysian agricultural sites have the potential to be marketed to the Caucasian tourists because these rural-economic locations have certain intrinsic exotic qualities which are of interest to them. Exoticism could be engineered as has been done in Thailand and Borneo through information flows. This means that certain elements of exoticism of the above places, or any of such places, could be carefully and imaginatively selected to be projected and promoted in the promotional and marketing brochure. This way the Caucasian visitors will be directed to look for elements of exoticism that has been blown-up in the literature. From the discussion above, among the exotic local colours for these places, especially the Tekam Resort, are: "green and tranquil tropical agricultural landscape", "thorny fruits with strong, distinctive smell", "small, rounded, hairy fruits with sugary taste", "peculiar and fascinating behaviours of *durian* lovers", "skillful Malaysians who can break open the husks of sharply-pointed thorny *durian* fruits without hurting their fingers and hands", "traditional techniques of harvesting oil palm fruits and tapping rubber latex".

Again, the above information, though inconclusive, do tell us about the type of tourists visiting such places. Cohen (1974), who isolates leisure as "the sole purpose of the trip of a tourist" (Dankers 1991), gives four typologies of tourists as follow: 1) the organised mass tourists who buy a package tour, stay exclusively in the tourist environment which is similar to their home country and whose itinerary of their trip is fixed in advance; 2) the individual mass tourists who make major arrangement of their trip through a tourist agency, but have a certain amount of control over his time and itinerary; 3) the explorers, who make their own arrangements of their trip, try to venture out of their environmental

bubble and to associate with the people they visit, but they still stay in comfortable accommodation and use reliable means of transportation, and 4) the drifters who stay away from tourist establishments and the beaten tracks.

Based on Cohen's typology, it seems there are two types of tourists who visit the aforementioned places. They are the explorers and the individual mass tourists who would perhaps also visit other agrotourism centres. They are drawn to the exotic aspects of the places and stay there for a very brief moment.

CONCLUSION

This study supports earlier assertion that foreign tourists like to see the Malaysian agricultural life, activities and crops. They are attracted to the exotic dimensions of our agricultural landscape. As they have noted, our trees, crops and fruits are different from theirs. This arouses interest, curiosity and excitement in them. Though some of them have heard and seen our plants on TV and read about them in the literature, the Western visitors want to see them in an actual tropical plantation setting. Thus, from a business point of view, the exotic aspects of our agricultural system may be exploited to be the focus of a marketing strategy; and obviously these have the attraction to pull the post-industrial tourists, particularly the individual mass and exploring types to our agrotourism establishments. Nevertheless, one dimension which could be a subject of future research is how to encourage them to spend more nights in such places so that they can contribute more significantly to the local economy and farmers. As has been said earlier, one of the major concerns of rapid growth of tourism in this country is that it does not benefit the agricultural sector in a significant way.

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