


## Economic valuation of Taman Meragun indigenous territory Sekadau regency, West Kalimantan

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<b>Keywords:</b> Dayak Economic Taman Meragun Community Territory Valuation	A well-prepared abstract enables the reader to identify the basic The Indigenous Dayak Taman Meragun Community, located in the village of Meragun, West Kalimantan, possesses deep-rooted cultural traditions and a sustainable existence. The population of the Taman people totals 2,837 individuals living following ancestral cultural practices. This region reflects the ecosystem of the Bornean tropical rainforest, encompassing hills, lowlands, swamps, and rivers. The Indigenous Dayak Taman Meragun Community sustainably utilizes natural resources, engaging in agriculture, gardening, forestry, and fishing activities in the Taman and Entorap Rivers. However, the designation of the area as a Forest Area and the issuance of palm oil plantation permits jeopardize their access to these resources. These people lead lives deeply intertwined with the customs and laws passed down through generations. The customary forest serves as an economic resource and holds spiritual and ecological significance. Economic potential encompasses agriculture, fisheries, livestock, and forest products. Environmental protection is paramount in the utilization of these potentials. In the face of changing times and threats to their ancestral lands, the Indigenous Dayak Taman Meragun Community endeavours to preserve their cultural identity and practices. They strive for legal recognition of their customary territory while balancing economic needs and environmental preservation. This article delves into the profile of the Taman Meragun customary territory, the challenges it faces, and the efforts made to sustain cultural heritage and the Environment
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### INTRODUCTION

The determination of the carrying capacity of forests for various life forms is mostly contingent upon the extent of public awareness on the significance of forests in terms of utilisation and management. Forests serve as a platform for establishing mutual relationships between humans and other living organisms, while also interacting with natural elements that encompass ecological processes and form a cyclical unit capable of sustaining life (Salima, Aprita and Hidayat, 2020).

The Indigenous Dayak Taman Meragun community has deep cultural roots and a sustainable presence in the village of Meragun, Nanga Taman Sub-district, Sekadau Regency, West Kalimantan Province. With a customary territory spanning 22,683 hectares, including 16,293 hectares of customary forest, this area consists of four main hamlets (Dusun Kenamitn Tinggi, Dusun Meragun, Dusun Kelampuk, and Dusun Ladak) and 16 villages, with the village of Meragun as its centre of life .

The population of the Taman people in this region is approximately 2,837 individuals, comprising 1,531 males and 1,306 females, scattered across villages and hamlets in the Village of Meragun. The Taman Meragun way of life has persisted for thousands of years, long before Indonesia's independence, preserving and passing down customary practices, culture, and traditions through generations. This Customary Territory features the characteristics of the Kalimantan tropical rainforest ecosystem, encompassing hills, lowlands, swamps, and riverbanks. The Indigenous Dayak Taman Meragun community has made their customary land a place of living, protecting and sustainably utilizing its natural resources, including fields, gardens, forest products, and fishing from the Taman River and Entorap/Menterap River that flow through this territory (Masiun and Tobing, 2023).

There are four reasons why the economy of indigenous territories is important to discuss. First, the environmentalist perspective looks at the natural resources should not be exploited, because it will change the ecosystem as a whole (Sharip, Suratman and Shaaban, 2016). Second, the developmentalist perspective holds that nature resources must be used and utilized to overcome poverty and improve the welfare of society. The third is the quasi (combined) developmentalist and environmentalist view, in which economic and environmental interests run proportionately (Saragih and Sunito, 2001). Fourth, is the importance of proposing a development model, particularly the economic development of indigenous peoples and local communities based on their local wisdom and resources to prosperous communities (Abafita, Mitiku and Ryang, 2013; Sharip, Suratman and Shaaban, 2016). Local wisdom that grows and develops indigenous peoples' communities is an integral part of the process of managing natural resources in a just and sustainable manner (Yu, Golpira and Khan, 2018). In fact, it is the foundation for conservation of nature (Fisher, Krutilla and Cicchetti, 2013). Culture and local wisdom are important conservation pillars since they are not only integrated with the preservation and conservation of natural resources and the environment, but also directly with the economic life of indigenous.

However, challenges arose when the government designated a portion of the Taman Meragun Customary Territory as a Forest Area with protected forest status and granted a palm oil plantation permit. This status jeopardizes the Indigenous community's access to the natural resources they have traditionally managed and utilized sustainably. The original extent of the Taman Meragun Customary Territory, which was 22,683 hectares, has been reduced to approximately 1,398.12 hectares after deducting the area designated as protected forest and the palm oil plantation permit.

The Indigenous Dayak Taman Meragun community lives a daily life closely tied to the customary practices and laws inherited through generations. Various customary rules and

norms regulate behaviour, human relationships, and the connection between humans and the surrounding Environment. The customary forest holds significant importance in their lives, serving as an economic resource and carrying spiritual and ecological meanings (Tuah, 2021).

The economic potential of the Taman Meragun Customary Territory is substantial, including agriculture, fishing, livestock, and forest resources. The community can manage various income-related commodities, such as forest products, food crops, and other natural products. However, sustainable management and environmental protection remain primary concerns in harnessing this potential. Amidst changing times and threats to their customary territory, the Indigenous Dayak Taman Meragun community strives to preserve their cultural identity and customary practices. They are working to attain legal recognition for their customary territory and maintain a balance between economic needs and environmental sustainability.

## METHODS

In data and information collection, the researcher has integrated three distinct yet complementary methods, observation, interviews, and participatory approaches, to engage with the Taman Meragun indigenous community in the region. Firstly, the observation method allows the researcher to directly observe the physical conditions and Environment of the Taman Meragun indigenous territory. Through observation, the researcher can gather data about land use, ecosystem diversity, natural conditions, and daily activities within the area. Observation also enables the researcher to understand how the indigenous community interacts with their Environment, including the traditional practices still in place (Ciesielska, Boström and Öhlander, 2018).

Secondly, the interview method allows the researcher to communicate directly with Taman Meragun indigenous community members. During interviews, the researcher can pose in-depth questions about cultural aspects, customs, natural resource management, and the impact of environmental changes on their lives. Interviews also allow the researcher to comprehend individual viewpoints, experiences, and perceptions in greater depth, which may not always be expressed solely through observation (Alshenqeeti, 2014).

Thirdly, the participatory method involves actively involving the Taman Meragun indigenous community in the research process. The researcher collaborates with the indigenous community to plan, collect, and analyze data. Through group discussions or participatory meetings, the researcher can listen to various perspectives and knowledge held by community members. This approach empowers the indigenous community to act as partners in the research process, ultimately enhancing the quality and relevance of the research outcomes (Beazley and Ennew, 2006). By combining these three methods, the researcher can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the Taman Meragun indigenous territory, the indigenous community's culture, traditional practices, natural resource management, and the challenges they face. The integration of observation, interviews, and participatory approaches enables the researcher to approach the research

holistically and in-depth, while obtaining a more complete perspective from the community under study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Indigenous Dayak Taman Meragun Community is located in the village of Meragun, Nanga Taman Sub-district, Sekadau Regency, West Kalimantan Province. Their customary territory covers an area of 22,683 hectares, including customary forests spanning 16,293 hectares. This territory comprises 4 hamlets (Dusun Kenamitn Tinggi', Dusun Meragun, Dusun Kelampuk, and Dusun Ladak) and 16 Kampokng.

The Taman Meragun customary territory within Nanga Taman Sub-district consists of 1 village (Meragun Village), 4 hamlets, and 16 Kampokng. These hamlets and Kampokng are as follows: (1) Dusun Kenamitn Tinggi, covering an area of 1,131 hectares, includes Kampokng Kenamitn Tinggi, Kampokng Mungguk Agur, and Kampokng Dondakng. (2) Dusun Meragun, covering an area of 5,130 hectares, includes Kampokng Meragun. (3) Dusun Kelampuk, covering an area of 4,711 hectares, includes Kampokng Nyauk, Kelampuk, Keboik, Kempait, Sangke Ilik, Sangke, S Kelilit, and Entajam. (4) Dusun Ladak, covering an area of 11,711 hectares, includes Kampokng Ladak, Kampokng Moran, Kampokng Merindong, and Kampokng Tompas.

As of September 2022, the population of the Taman people residing in the Taman Meragun customary territory is 2,837 people, distributed among the villages and hamlets within Meragun Village. The Taman Dayak community has inhabited, protected, and utilized their customary territory for sustenance for thousands of years, even before Indonesia's independence.

The presence of the Taman people around Meragun Village has deep historical roots. The Taman people's traditional forest, known as hutan adat, is closely tied to their customs and culture. They use specific terms to refer to different parts of the forest, such as Kampokng Pulo, Kampokng Tua, Temawakng (Tua), Gupokng Buah, Rima', and others, reflecting the purposes of these areas.

In 2020, the Taman Meragun customary territory covered 22,683 hectares, with well-defined boundaries. These boundaries are marked by coordinates, wooden stakes, markers, natural landmarks like rivers, hillsides, and bamboo clusters. These boundaries are recognized through customary agreement by the Taman Meragun community and neighboring villages.

Since 2014, due to the impact of Government Regulation No. SK-733/Menhut-II/2014 regarding Forest and Marine Conservation Areas in West Kalimantan Province, the Taman Meragun customary territory was designated as a Forest Area, with protected forest covering 16,727 hectares and a Limited Production Forest (APL) covering 5,956 hectares. Within the APL area, there is an oil palm plantation operated by PT. Sumatera Makmur Lestari (SML) covering 2,755 hectares.

This status of the forest area and the granted permits threaten the Taman Adat community's access to their living space and resources. After accounting for protected

forest and APL areas, the remaining Taman Meragun customary territory is only 1,398.12 hectares out of the original 22,683 hectares.

The Taman Meragun customary territory is situated within the tropical rainforest ecosystem of Kalimantan, dominated by hills, lowlands, swamps, and riverbanks. The natural forest provides various resources, both wood and non-wood, including traditional crops like rubber, tengkawang, jengkol, durian, and other fruits. The rivers Taman and Entorap/Menterap, flowing through Taman Meragun, are home to freshwater fish, particularly the sought-after somah fish.

The Taman Adat community in Meragun Village adheres to their customary traditions and laws, which have been passed down through generations, forming unwritten common knowledge. Various customs and practices govern their lives, such as adat basa (social norms), marriage customs, extramarital affairs, birth out of wedlock (adat kampakng), theft, pati boli (customs related to unfortunate events), forgiveness customs, defamation customs, and more. Customary sanctions and fines play a role in maintaining community harmony and balance with nature. These sanctions are not meant solely as retribution but also as a means to restore equilibrium in nature and human relations.

The Taman Meragun customary territory holds vast economic potential, including productive farmlands, forest resources, and rubber tapping. The terrain's hilly contours provide abundant freshwater resources, suitable for fisheries and paddy fields. The territory also contributes to the local water supply and micro-hydroelectric power generation. The Taman Adat community manages their customary territory through consensus-based decision-making, respecting each area's designated function. The resources are used communally rather than privately owned. The valuation technique for the natural resources within the Taman Meragun customary territory employs a market-based approach. The value of the forest's oxygen production is estimated based on the amount of vegetation, yielding a substantial economic value (Setiawan *et al.*, 2021).

In conclusion, the Taman Meragun customary territory possesses significant historical, cultural, and economic value. Sustainable management is crucial to preserving these resources for future generations. The economic valuation of customary forests extends beyond visible and tangible elements that can be quantified and traded as commodities. It also encompasses intangible aspects and entities that hold intrinsic value, such as spirituality, art, culture, tradition, the generation of oxygen, and its role as a fundamental pillar of environmental sustainability (Raihan, 2023).

Consequently, it is imperative that the Taman Meragun customary territory is safeguarded and nurtured, not only by its local inhabitants but also by the State and the global community. This recognition of its value going beyond economic considerations emphasizes the collective responsibility to protect and conserve this priceless asset.

While economic values may diminish over time, the comprehensive value of all elements within the Taman Meragun customary territory remains crucial for its perpetuity and sustainability. Understanding the enduring significance of these factors underscores their irreplaceable role in maintaining the delicate balance of the ecosystem and ensuring the well-being of current and future generations (Desing *et al.*, 2020).



In the past, the evaluation of economic value within a customary territory often revolved around tangible resources such as timber, minerals, plantations, and forest products. These elements, visible and quantifiable, dominated discussions of economic worth. However, a shift in perspective has occurred (Asiama *et al.*, 2018). Beyond these material aspects, a more comprehensive valuation of the customary forest area has emerged. This new outlook recognizes that economic value extends beyond the immediate and palpable commodities (Rezekiah, Ruslan and Kadir, 2022). Intangible aspects, such as spiritual significance, cultural heritage, traditional practices, and even the vital role of the forest in providing oxygen and sustaining the environment, have gained prominence (Lenzerini, 2011). This transformation in economic valuation signifies a deeper understanding of the multifaceted contributions of a customary territory, encompassing not only economic benefits but also the intricate web of interconnected values that nurture the well-being of both the community and the environment (Nijkamp, 2012).

The lens through which a customary forest area is perceived has significantly evolved, thanks to the enlightening research conducted in the Taman Meragun customary territory. This comprehensive study has unveiled a perspective that diverges from conventional notions. Instead of solely concentrating on the economic gains derived from the land, this research underscores the broader significance of these territories (Bai and Li, 2023). The new found understanding acknowledges the intricate interplay between tangible and intangible components. It recognizes that a customary territory isn't just a repository of economic resources; it's a living entity that holds cultural heritage, traditional wisdom, spiritual connectivity, and ecological balance (Williams, 2023). This perspective shift signifies a paradigmatic leap from the past and marks a profound recognition of the intricate tapestry of values woven within a customary forest area.

As this fresh perspective gains ground, it becomes increasingly evident that the responsibility of safeguarding Taman Meragun customary territory transcends the boundaries of local residents and nearby communities. The significance revealed through this research resonates globally and underscores a shared duty. The custodianship of these territories extends beyond individual landholders to encompass the collective guardianship of both the State and the global community (Bataille *et al.*, 2021). Economic valuations may fluctuate and exhaust themselves over time, yet the enduring worth of everything encapsulated within the Taman Meragun customary territory remains timeless. The imperative now lies in recognizing and preserving the cumulative value of these territories, not merely for economic gain (Du, Zhao and Fu, 2020), but for their perpetual and sustainable contributions. In doing so, we honor the past, nurture the present, and safeguard the future – a responsibility that knows no boundaries and speaks to the heart of stewardship for generations to come.

## CONCLUSION

The Indigenous Dayak Taman Meragun Community, residing within the village of Meragun in Nanga Taman Sub-district, Sekadau Regency, West Kalimantan Province, occupies a customary territory spanning 22,683 hectares, inclusive of 16,293 hectares of customary

forests. This expansive territory encompasses 4 hamlets (Dusun Kenamitn Tingi', Dusun Meragun, Dusun Kelampuk, and Dusun Ladak) and 16 Kampokng. Meragun Village, the core of this community, is home to a population of 2,837 Taman people, who have cherished and sustained their ancestral land for centuries. The historical roots of the Taman people in Meragun Village run deep, intricately linked to their traditional forest known as hutan adat. Within this forest, unique areas like Kampokng Pulo, Kampokng Tua, Temawakng (Tua), Gupokng Buah, Rima', and more serve distinct purposes and mirror the richness of their customs and culture. However, the evolving landscape has brought challenges, notably due to governmental designations like Forest and Marine Conservation Areas. These designations have transformed parts of the customary territory into protected forests and Limited Production Forests, with an oil palm plantation further reducing the land's extent. Despite these challenges, the economic potential of the Taman Meragun customary territory remains substantial. It is a source of diverse resources, ranging from traditional crops to freshwater fisheries and hydroelectric power generation. The valuation of these resources employs a comprehensive market-based approach, recognizing not only tangible commodities but also the intangible value of oxygen production and ecological sustainability. The Taman Meragun customary territory holds profound historical, cultural, and economic significance. Its sustainable management is paramount for the well-being of both present and future generations. This perspective on economic valuation transcends the tangible and quantifiable, encompassing spiritual, cultural, and environmental dimensions. As such, it becomes imperative for not only local residents but also the State and the global community to champion the preservation and protection of this invaluable asset. This expanded viewpoint recognizes the perpetual importance of these territories, beyond the fleeting fluctuations of economic values. By safeguarding the collective value of the Taman Meragun customary territory, we honor traditions, nourish the present, and ensure a sustainable legacy for generations to come.

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