

Eco-Tourism Crafts Products of Temiar

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Abstract

The handicrafts of the Temiar combine hand skills, creativity and local knowledge to create a unique and beautiful work that has its own function in community life. It has a long history, and its cultural values are closely related to religion, daily norms and mythology of a society. This art treasure has started opening opportunities for the country's eco-tourism industry. Previous studies conducted by several scholars have proven that eco-tourism activities for the Orang Asli community can improve the community's socioeconomic status. This study uses qualitative research methods with an ethnographic approach to achieve the objectives set. An ethnographic approach is used because this study requires direct research from informants. This study will identify various Temiar handicrafts that serve as eco-tourism products in the local area.

Keywords: Handicrafts, Eco-Tourism Products, Temiar

Introduction

The Orang Asli are an indigenous minority in Malaysia located across Peninsular Malaysia, excluding Penang and Perlis. Orang Asli tribes have the most significant populations in Pahang, Perak, Selangor, and Kelantan. According to sources from the *Jabatan Kemajuan Orang Asli* (JAKOA) in 2022, around 209,575 Orang Asli were reported in Malaysia. Pahang has the largest Orang Asli population with 78,615 people, followed by Perak with 61,225, Selangor with 20,961, and Kelantan with 17,487.

The study focused on the Temiar of the Senoi residing in the Kuala Betis resettlement plan (RPS) in Kelantan. RPS Kuala Betis is situated approximately 30 kilometres from Gua Musang town. The Temiar is the largest Orang Asli in Kelantan, consisting of 15,237 individuals out of a total Orang Asli population of 17,487 (JAKOA, 2022). The total number of Orang Asli in Kelantan is as per the table below.

Table 1

Orang Asli populations in Kelantan state

No.	The tribes	Total
1.	Jakun	37
2.	Temuan	36
3.	Bateq	789
4.	Jahai	715
5.	Kensiu	4
6.	Kintak	1
7.	Mendriq	523
8.	Jahut	1
9.	Mahmeri	3
10.	Semai	134
11.	Semoq beri	7
12.	Temiar	15,237
Total		17,487

Source: *Jabatan Kemajuan Orang Asli (JAKOA) (2022)*

This study focuses on the traditional handicrafts of the Orang Asli community that have become part of the local eco-tourism products. The involvement of indigenous people in the eco-tourism sector is nothing new in this country. Distinctive indigenous handicrafts have created opportunities for local eco-tourism activities. For example, Orang Asli of the Jah Hut community are famous for their delicate carvings, symbolising their belief in the supernatural. Skills and knowledge in this craft are inherited from previous generations. Within the Jah Hut community, indigenous knowledge pertains to the forest environment, while each crafted item serves specific purposes and fulfils needs in their daily lives. In the past, the crafts were primarily used for traditional medical purposes, and rituals were performed in the Jah Hut community. However, now, the artworks have been commercialised for decorative use due to modern demands (Nor, 2016).

This study will investigate handicrafts that serve as eco-tourism products, focusing on the Temiar in Kelantan. They are renowned for creating craft products from rattan, roots, bamboo, and other natural materials. Handicrafts made from natural resources are a crucial product that drives development in the eco-tourism sector for indigenous communities. Researchers selected handicrafts of the Temiar in Kelantan due to their traditional cultural significance and potential as a representation of artistic heritage within the community culture and development in the aspect of eco-tourism for the Orang Asli in Malaysia. Researchers will identify various types of Temiar tribe handicrafts that are popular locally as eco-tourism products.

Methodology and Scope of the Study

This study uses qualitative research methods with an ethnographic approach to accomplish the established objectives. An ethnographic approach is used because this study requires direct research from informants. The primary method used to collect data is through opt-in observation, observation, and interviews. Secondary data collection involves studying documents like previous research, journals, books and others. The collected primary and secondary data are analysed to understand the issue being studied comprehensively. NVivo

software is utilised for data analysis, encompassing transcription, data organisation, conditioning, theme and coding, triangulation, and reporting. The study aims to identify the handicrafts created by the Temiar that are utilised as products for eco-tourism in the local region. The fieldwork was conducted with artisans, community members, leaders, and agencies involved. The focus of the study was limited to the Temiar in RPS Kuala Betis, Kelantan. The study area was chosen due to the high concentration of the Kelantan Temiar tribe's population and the continued practice of handicrafts by the local community.

Crafts of the Temiar Tribe

Humans aim to improve their lives by fulfilling all their daily requirements. People employ creativity to develop tools or solutions that can enhance everyday life, with variations in implementation, but the goal remains the same. During the initial phases, people significantly adapted to their natural environment and gained knowledge from observing nature. Various tools and equipment are obtained from the environment to fulfil everyday requirements (Hafis, 2015; Sahar, 2020; Asmawi, 2018). Humanity's connection and reliance on nature have created a standard mandating mutual respect. This relationship establishes a framework for beliefs and behaviours within human society. Anthropologists study the physical traits and cultural behaviours of human beings, which are influenced by human evolution and societal requirements for survival. This condition is controlled by the resident's environment and the historical progression of life (Phenix, 1964).

The Orang Asli people possess expertise in creating handicrafts for various purposes, such as personal adornments, hunting tools, daily hardware and so on. Natural materials are utilised in crafting items like *raga galas*, mats, baskets, bracelets, *tempok*, *sumpit*, *bubu*, and more. Handicrafts produced are not only used for daily use but some crafts are believed to be able to protect against interference from evil spirits or disasters (Mastura & Norini, 2018).

Handicrafts were originally created to fulfil the needs of daily life. Handicrafts encompass household hardware items like cooking utensils, food and drink containers, food preparation tools, mats, and baskets. Tools for self-sufficiency or economic generation include *sumpit*, *damak* tubes, animal snares, traps, pickaxes, and so on. Musical instruments include *chentong*, *kereb*, and others. Some types of personal ornaments such as chains, bracelets and rings. *Tempok* is another example of equipment used during ritual ceremonies. However, in parallel with the development of the eco-tourism industry in the Orang Asli community, the function of each craft produced has changed. This is because the traditional crafts of the Orang Asli have begun to be commercialised to tourists as ornament or to use in daily life. Siti et al., (2015), in her study also stated that the development in ethnic eco-tourism activities not only provides an opportunity for tourists to see the culture and way of life of the Orang Asli but also offers traditional handicrafts such as hardware, clothing, hunting tools and so on. Various types of handicrafts serve as eco-tourism products is as stated.

1) *Aleg/ aga' = Raga galas*



Figure 1: *Raga galas* made of *mengkuang* leaves

Figure 2: *Raga galas* made of rattan

Figure 3: *Raga galas* made of *mengkuang* leaves

Source: Fieldwork (2023)

Aleg/ aga' is made of *mengkuang* leaves (*sekek/ sekek mabek*) or rattan. Furthermore, rattan is utilised as a rope for securing the *raga galas*. The *raga galas* strap is made from *gelapo* tree bark (*nanak cok*). This equipment is used daily for storing food supplies, carrying forest or crop products like tapioca and so on.

2) *Bubu luu = Lukah*



Figure 4: *Lukah* in small size



Figure 5: *Lukah* in large size

Source: Fieldwork (2023)

Bubu luu has only one *cempok*. It is made of bamboo or *bertam (beltob)* and tied with rattan. It is used to catch fish in the river, and its size depends on the suitability of the river conditions. However, *bubu luu* which is sold to tourists for ornament purposes is made in a smaller size compared to its original size.

3) *Bubu = Lukah/ lukah pinggang*



Figure 6: Small-sized *lukah*



Figure 7: Big-sized *lukah*

Source: Fieldwork (2023)

Bubu has two *cempok* on the inside. This item is made from the same material as *bubu luu* which is made of bamboo or *bertam (beltob)* and the binding made from rattan. It is helpful for fishing in rivers, and its size depends on the area of the river. However, for ornament purposes will be made in a smaller size.

4) *Bubu ken* = *Bubu bulat*



Figure 8: *Bubu ken* in small size



Figure 9: *Bubu ken* in big size

Source: Fieldwork (2023)

Bubu ken is also made of bamboo or *bertam* (*beltob*) and ties using rattan. *Bubu ken* is utilised to catch fish in the river, and its size depends on the conditions of the river area. For ornament purposes, it will be made in a smaller size by customer requests.

5) *Tempok*



Figure 10: *Tempok* with decoration of plastic flowers and leaves



Figure 11: *Tempok* of *bunga mas* motif



Figure 12: *Tempok* without decoration

Source: Fieldwork (2023)

Tempok is a head ornament made from *mengkuang* leaves, *palas*, *nibong*, *tenamu*, or coconut leaves. *Tempok* is used during dark *sewang* rituals or *sewang* offerings. In addition, *tempok* is also used during festivals and significant occasions like rice or fruit harvests and can also be used daily as a symbol of Orang Asli culture. *Tempok* sold as a handicraft is decorated with patterned woven and *mengkuang* leaves that are dyed to enhance the design with additional patterns and colours. Plastic flower and leaf decorations are utilised to ensure long-lasting durability.

6) *Tenwar* = *Selimpang*



Figure 13: *Tenwar* with decorative plastic flowers and leaves

Source: Fieldwork (2023)

Tenwar or *selimpang* is made from *mengkuang* leaves, *palas*, *nibong*, *tenamu*, or coconut leaves. The *tenwar* is worn across the shoulders and around the waist and is decorated with flowers and leaves for added aesthetic appeal. Its use is the same as *tempok*,

during the dark *sewang* rituals, *sewang* offerings, and the day of celebration in conjunction with the rice harvest season and forest products. It can also be used daily as a symbol of indigenous culture. Decoration on the traditional *tenwar* of the Orang Asli is using real flowers. Still, for the purpose of selling to tourists, the decoration is replaced with plastic flowers to ensure it can last longer.

7) *Jet* = Pickaxe



Figure 14: Pickaxe
Source: Fieldwork (2023)

The 'axle' part of the pickaxe is made of *cemperai* wood. The pickaxe works like an axe, used for cutting wood and cutting down trees with a diameter of less than 200 cm. Pickaxe replicas are made as ornaments for eco-tourism products and are usually placed on bamboo frames.

8) *Apok* = Bag



Figure 15: *Apok* with *bunga camas* motif
Source: Fieldwork (2023)

The item is crafted from *mengkuang* leaves and features a *camas* flower motif. *Mengkuang* leaves are dyed to create exciting patterns. Typically, the indigenous Temiar tribe uses *apok* for storing items like tobacco.

9) *Apeel* = Mat



Figure 16: *Tepas kelapa* motif



Figure 17: *Senlup* flower motif



Figure 18: *Ranjut* flower motif



Figure 19: *Mata ulat* motif

Source: Fieldwork (2023)

It is made from dyed *mengkuang* leaves. These woven mats are made in different sizes and motifs. It is used in the community's daily life as a seat mat, wedding mat, or special seat when paying intentions or wishes for the indigenous community. In addition, some use it as a cloth base when dressing corpses. However, for ornaments by tourists, woven mats are made in small sizes with motifs and colours that are more attractive.

10) *Chenus* = Wristband



Figure 20: Wristband



Figure 21: Wristband

Source: Fieldwork (2023)

Wristbands are made from rattan of different types. Different rattan is used to add patterns and colours to the wristbands. The colour of the rattan is natural without mixing with any dyes. Both women and men can wear this wristband.

11) Ring



Figure 22: Rings

Source: Fieldwork (2023)

Rings are crafted from many varieties of rattan. Various varieties of rattan are chosen for their distinct colours to create captivating designs. This jewellery can be worn by women as well as men.

12) *Aleg* = Storage container



Figure 23: Storage container



Figure 24: Storage container

Source: Fieldwork (2023)

They are made from *mengkuang* leaves and rattan. The *mengkuang* leaves are coloured, while the woven rattan forms a pattern on the container to beautify the craft further. This container stores items such as cassava, jewellery, and so on as appropriate.

13) *Chentong*



Figure 25: *Chentong*
Source: Fieldwork (2023)

Made of bamboo of different types and sizes to get diverse sounds. Used as a musical instrument in performances or as entertainment alone.

14) *Belau = Sumpit*



Figure 26: *Sumpit*
Source: Fieldwork (2023)

They are made of lightweight, long-branched bamboo and thorn bamboo. Apart from bamboo, *penaga* wood and mangosteen wood are used to make *sumpit*. Most *sumpit* are commonly adorned with carvings inspired by floral motifs such as flowers, leaves and bamboo shoots. *Sumpit* were used as weapons for hunting. Commercialised *sumpit* are made on request, either long *sumpit* or short *sumpit*. This is usually only used as an ornament by tourists. This craft is one of the indigenous community's identity icons.

15) *Leg = Damak tube*



Figure 27: *Damak tube*
Source: Fieldwork (2023)

The *damak* tube is built of short-stemmed bamboo with a substantially hollow interior. It is embellished with motif of nature. It is used to lay resin and is used in conjunction with *the sumpit*.

Conclusion

Handicrafts of the indigenous community as eco-tourism products can foster sustainable development in the nation's indigenous areas. Advocating for traditional indigenous

handicrafts can help maintain cultural heritage and support sustainable and eco-friendly economic development. Utilising natural resources to create traditional handicrafts has been a consistent practice from ancient times to the present showcasing the culture's distinctiveness and continued reliance on nature. Within the realm of eco-tourism, this object is not just a memento but a symbol conveying the significance of environmental care and respect.

This study aligns with the theory of cultural ecology, which examines the interactions between persons and cultures within the environment and how these interactions influence identity formation. Indigenous handicrafts exemplify the direct representation of this connection. Utilising natural resources in crafting showcases the indigenous culture and demonstrates a firm reliance on nature. This is in line with the principles of cultural ecology theory, which highlights the significance of preserving nature in shaping and sustaining human culture.

The contribution of this study is to promote indigenous handicrafts as eco-tourism items that can enhance the distinctiveness of traditional culture and history while reinforcing the importance of environmental sustainability. This is a practical demonstration of applying the cultural ecology theory to commercial and tourism practices to promote nature sustainability and cultural preservation in synchronization with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

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