

The Magical Hands of the East Coast Malays: Threat or Treat?

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ABSTRACT

The research attempts to address the issues on the existing situation on indigenous knowledge among the Malay communities, taking into example in both cases of keris making and boat-building in Kelantan and Terengganu. Once a flourishing trade, traditional boat-making and repair work is facing serious problems with regards to its sustainability. Foreign craftsmen from Thailand are flooding the job-market in Kelantan and Terengganu. Likewise, the keris-making craftsmen are finding it hard to get a committed apprentice for their trade. The research ascertained that the mechanism of indigenous knowledge transfer within the community is defective that it failed to be fully utilised to improve their quality of life. In addition, the state, agencies and interest groups do not possess explicit roles in order to build the indigenous knowledge for sustainable livelihood of the indigenous community. Given the complex challenges facing the craftsmen, the research concluded that there exist huge impediments to knowledge sharing and utilization resulting in limited opportunity for the members of the indigenous community to ascend into the economic mainstream and improve the quality of their lives. Indigenous knowledge of these aesthetical crafts is under severe threat of extinction.

Keyword: Indigenous knowledge, sustainable livelihood, Malay traditional culture, heritage, Malay crafts.
