



Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts

**EXPLORATION OF BIDAYUH BASKETRY PLAITING AND
BEADWORK TECHNIQUES TO CREATE CONTEMPORARY
FASHION ACCESSORIES**

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Exploration of Bidayuh Basketry Plaiting and Beadwork Techniques to Create Contemporary Fashion Accessories

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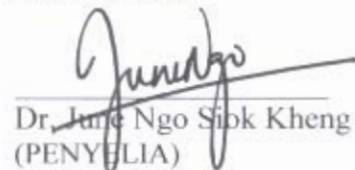
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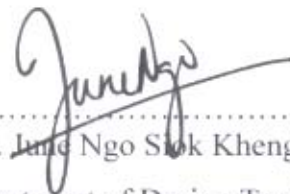
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Declaration

I certify that no part of the research in this participation has been used as material support to a degree or approval of either the university or other higher education institutions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sherlina Niponi', is written above a horizontal dotted line.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the research was to create a range of contemporary fashion accessories utilizing both Bidayuh beadwork and basketry plaiting techniques suitable for today's market. Research was done to identify the types of beads and plaiting materials suitable to be use in designing the final products to keep the identity and value of these Bidayuh handicrafts. The data was collected via two main approaches, the first set involves data collection from selected respondents via interviews and the second set through observations and visuals. Researcher's hypothesis was proven to be right that more numbers of younger generations nowadays are less interested in traditional handicrafts from researcher's data analyzing. The researcher hopes that by doing this research, the younger generations of the Bidayuh community will learn to appreciate the aesthetic beauty of the basketry plaiting and beadwork of their culture and use it with pride.

ABSTRAK

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mewujudkan pelbagai aksesori fesyen kontemporari yang menggabungkan kedua-dua teknik manik Bidayuh dan anyaman bakul yang sesuai untuk pasaran semasa. Penyelidikan telah dijalankan untuk mengenalpasti jenis manik dan bahan anyaman yang sesuai digunakan untuk produk akhir dengan mengekalkan identiti dan nilai kraftangan Bidayuh ini. Data dikumpulkan melalui dua pendekatan utama, set pertama melibatkan pengumpulan data daripada responden yang dipilih melalui temuduga dan set kedua melalui pemerhatian dan visual. Daripada analisa data penyelidik, hipotesis penyelidik telah diterima bahawa lebih banyak bilangan generasi muda masa kini kurang berminat dalam kraftangan tradisional. Pengkaji berharap bahawa dengan melakukan kajian ini, generasi muda masyarakat Bidayuh akan belajar untuk menghargai keindahan estetik anyaman bakul dan manik budaya mereka di samping menggunakannya dengan bangga.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.0 Background



Figure 1.1: Lady doing beadwork

Munan, (2005). pg. 89

“Beadwork is one of the traditional crafts to be discovered in the world, it has undergone a revolution in the past two decades. Creative men and women are interested in its unique qualities of color, light reflection, refraction, and texture to explore its rich possibilities for fine detail and spectacular pattern.” Munan, (2005). pg. 3. Beadwork is described as “material composed or adorned with beads”. Munan, (2005). pg, 20. It is typically constructed of inexpensive micro beads, and it has always been valued for its artistry and craftsmanship. Like any other art form, beadwork is created in aesthetic values of its culture and creator. It reflects a specific time and place. Tribal beadwork rarely serves just as decoration but rather formed an integral part of the culture and rituals for which it was designed. Furthermore, it has frequently been a mark of status, particularly when used in highly stratified societies.

1.1 Early History of Borneo Beads



Figure 1.2: Beads, tooth and bear claw hat

Munan, (2005). pg. 33

“For centuries, beads have played a vital role in the cultures of various peoples in Borneo especially the Dayak. Beads reached Borneo by means of trade; it was exchanged for jungle produce in the coastal market of Borneo. However, beads were by no means the only trade goods of the period. Most Dayak are aware that beads reach them by way of trade, from “far far away”. Education widens the scope of possible bead sources.” Munan, (2005). pg. 17. As said by a Bidayuh lady who had studied overseas, her valued beads were from Egypt, the sort of thing King Solomon gave to the Queen of Sheba. There are also sources saying that their people make beads with fire and a myth of beads origin told by the late Tuai Rumah Lah Wan. Certain beads are believed to possess spiritual power, and are used in healing rituals and community ceremonies such as weddings and funerals. Other beads indicate the wealth and status of the owner. Several communities in Borneo also fashioned beads into jewellery and garments beads that are prized for their color and beauty.

1.2 The Bidayuh People



*Figure 1.3: Bidayuh housewives
Munan, (2005). pg. 76*

“Bidayuh is the collective name for one of the ethnic groups found in southern Sarawak, on the island of Borneo. The name “Bidayuh” means “inhabitants of land”. Originally from the western part of Borneo, the collective name Land Dayak was first used during the period of Rajah James Brooke, the White Rajah of Sarawak. They live in towns and villages around Kuching and Samarahan areas.” Puah & Chong, (2010). pg. 3. In Sarawak, most of Bidayuh population is found within 40 km of the geographical area known as Greater Kuching, predominantly Bidayuh areas are Lundu, Bau, Penrissen, Padawan, Siburan and Serian district. They are the second largest Dayak ethnic group in Sarawak after the Iban. Unlike the Iban who are expert in weaving, the Bidayuh skills and lifestyle are more to beading and handicraft making such as plaited baskets and mats.

1.3 Introduction to Bidayuh Beadwork



Figure 1.4: Translucent blue and green beads, much valued by the Bidayuh of west Borneo and worn mainly by men.

Munan, (2005), pg. 64

Beads played a vital role in the cultures and lifestyle of the Bidayuh people in Sarawak. They have since long ago been associated with beadwork for adornment as well as ceremonial purposes. Their beads tradition goes back to the very remote past where the variety of beads, the material from which they are made, their colors and value, all make up an aesthetic value of the culture. Bidayuh beadwork and designs serve different purpose and function.

They are used for ritual purposes and for ceremonies, investments, wealth status symbols, fashion purpose, and some for decorations and souvenir items to welcome guest. The Bidayuh people own unique and traditional beading technique are they threaded seed beads on descending strands of fine thread which is done without the use of needles, thread end are waxed to make them stiff and easy to handle.

Some antique Bidayuh beads necklace are made from various materials like woods, animal teeth, shells, glass, and semi-precious stone. They come in different sizes, shapes, and multi colors. Most of the Bidayuh properties such as their necklace, belts, bracelets, armbands, hats and headbands are embellished with beads or made entirely of beads. Government sponsored handicrafts boards encourage the production of beadwork among the Bidayuh community which has resulted in beadworking becoming a very popular part-time occupation for many women in Bidayuh villages and longhouses.

1.4 Introduction to Bidayuh Plaited Basketry Handicraft



*Figure 1.5: Plaited basket from Borneo
Rossbach, (1997). pg. 37*

Plaiting in the Bidayuh community is the process of crossing materials to form a strong form of daily use products such as plaited baskets and mats. Bidayuh people make a living out of their natural surroundings by a rotation of farming, hunting and gathering. So these harvesting baskets are used by the Bidayuh people to carry a variety of produce to the market. Materials used to plait these baskets are usually pliable and durable, such as split Rotan stems, wild pandan, and *bemban* though many have since replaced natural materials with recycled plastic box straps which can withstand rain. These materials are also known as the elements of the plaited basket, possible structure is increased when the elements are fine. And fine elements take more time in their preparation. Basketry plaiting is made by both Bidayuh men and women.

These baskets are equally important to them as they carried all kinds of goods in them. There are few kinds of common baskets used by the Bidayuh people which are “Juwah”, “Tambok”, “Tapan” and “Sajuo”. “Sajuo” is use to carry paddy weighing up to 50 kilograms. Various sizes of baskets are use for various functions. “Tapan” or winnowing tray is an invaluable item in paddy processing used for clearing freshly pounded or milled rice from debris. Large plaited baskets, are use to carry a large interior volume, so they should be made with lightweight materials. A large basket can be quickly created with wider construction of materials.

1.5 Bidayuh Basic Basket Construction Techniques

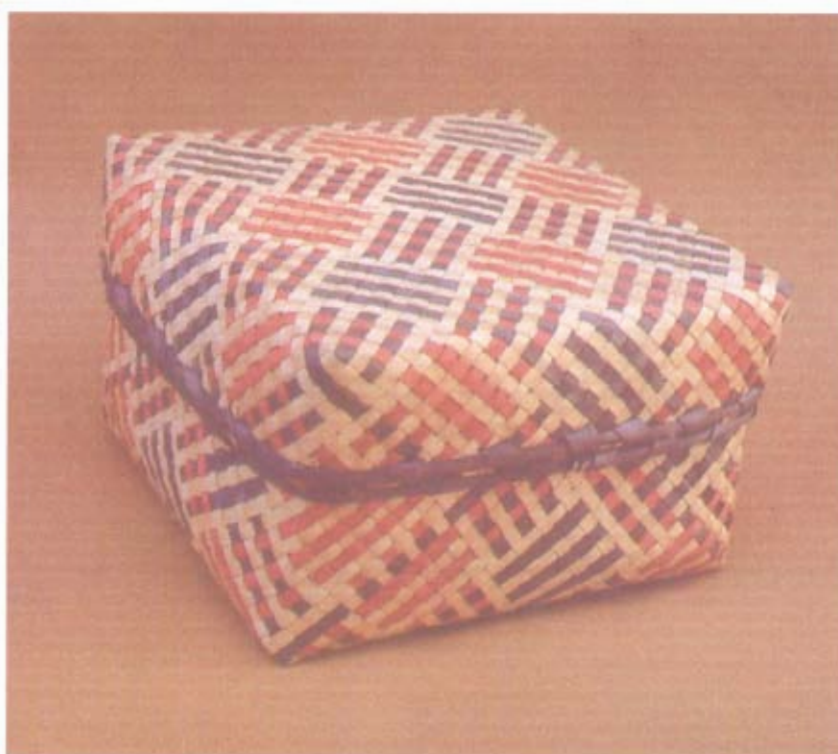


Figure 1.6: Plaited basket from Borneo

Rosbach, (1997). pg. 37

Bidayuh plaited baskets are created with variations of four basic basket construction techniques. These techniques are known as coiling, twining, weaving and plaiting.

Coiling



Figure 1.7: Spiral coiling technique from bottom of a basket

Coiling technique is usually used to form the bottom of a Bidayuh basket. To begin with, a '+' shaped of rod structure was form, and a flexible element with a shape of a thin cylinder is used to bundle spiraling around the '+' shape strands or rods to create coils. Different size of element explains the size of coiled Bidayuh basket's bottom.

Twining



Figure 1.8: Twining technique

In this technique, two or more flexible elements are used to encircle another base element. Pairing is done when two materials placed horizontally are used. When three or more elements are twisted it is called waling. A basic way to describe this technique is flexible materials are used to wrap across a warp. This technique is usually use by the Bidayuh people to make fish trap basket.

Weaving



Figure 1.9: Weaving technique of over under

Like any other weaving technique, woven Bidayuh baskets also have two sets of weaving elements namely weft and warp. A more rigid material that spokes forms a warp and pliable materials which are woven in and out form a weft. This technique is widely use by the Bidayuh people to make school bag baskets, spoon baskets and picnic baskets.

Plaiting



Figure 1.10: Plaiting with identical material

Plaiting is the weaving together of elements. Plaiting can either be in diagonal or horizontal and vertical orientation. Plaiting can be open checker work or closed work. Open checker work basket is used by the Bidayuh people to store objects like cigarette, betel leaves, betel nuts and fruits. Whereas, close checker work basket is used for making handbags and mats.