

**THE ETHNOBOTANY OF THE *SEMELAI* COMMUNITY AT
TASEK BERA, PAHANG, MALAYSIA:
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH FOR RE-SETTLEMENT**

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THESIS SUMMARY

Plants and environment play important roles in the Semelai's living culture. This association and dependency upon plants and other natural resources, however, is deteriorating due to the depletion of these resources. Fieldwork was conducted in Tasek Bera, Pahang, Malaysia, with the objective of interrogating the ethnobotany of the Semelai, an Indigenous community locally known as Orang Asli Semelai who have lived within these wetlands territories for more than 600 years. The Tasek Bera is being one of RAMSAR's internationally protected and monitored habitats and contributes to the significance of this Indigenous community being studied. Participant observation, in order to have in-depth understanding, was carried out where a selection of respondents was questioned about their knowledge and expertise. This ethnographic research was directed at investigating and evaluating Indigenous knowledge and environmental heritage which started within the ambit of ethnobotany. This thesis offers insights to the reader from a multi-disciplinary perspective that engages in a wide body of interdisciplinary works including sociology, landscape planning, architecture, anthropology, ethnobotany and ethnology. Taking ethnology to its most general definition, the sub-discipline refers to investigation of the socio-cultural distinctiveness of a community. This thesis investigates the associations and inter-relationships of this particular Indigenous society with their environment to determine their decision-making processes and rationale that characterises their culture. This thesis explores how Indigenous knowledge, perceptions, values and activities that are embedded in the ethnology of the Semelai can and should be incorporated into present Indigenous settlement design and planning in order to sustain this Indigenous group's intrinsic values. Spatial mobility among the Semelai is of interest in ethnological study, as this process is related to transformations of the landscape and the environment. The novel approaches used in this study could be used in future landscape methodological studies and analysis about human culture. They however require an in-depth understanding of the people who are using the space rather than what designers and planners think that they should have. It is therefore hoped that insights from this dissertation may inform agencies involved in the planning and development policies of Malaysia and may also to offer a valuable window into the world of the Semelai's ethnology.

Keywords:

Semelai, Orang Asli, Malaysia, ethnology, ethnographic, settlement planning, Indigenous knowledge,

DECLARATION

NAME: SAPURA MOHAMAD

PROGRAM: PHD IN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

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