

Nurturing Nature for Man

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CHAPTER 3

MALAY MIDWIFERY AND PLANT SPECIES IN SOUTHEAST PAHANG

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ABSTRACT

Midwifery is the practice of assisting a woman through childbirth using natural procedures. It was practiced primarily among traditional peoples with limited access to biomedicine. However, today in Malay community, midwifery continues to play an important role and still being practiced as an alternative to biomedicine in providing health care to women and children. In both traditional and modern cultural settings, midwifery is involved with providing health care, during pregnancy, childbirth and postnatal care to both mother and newborn. Most midwifery plant species are wild, but many important species are native to certain location or area. Knowledge about the use of ethno-medicinal resources and the resources themselves appeared to be threatened by rapid changes in traditional lifestyles and cultural practices particularly by the spread of Islam, formal education and emphasis on reliance of modern medical care.

Keywords: Malay, Midwifery, Ethno-Botany, Herbs

INTRODUCTION

Relationship between man and plants had been an interesting discussion and debating ever since the beginning of the man civilization. Nevertheless, plants have plays such an important role in every aspect of human life. From the revealed usage of plants in medicinal field, plants also have its significance in the human built environment (Coe, 2008; Cunningham, 2001). Especially in enhancing the identity of a space and beautify the distinctive landscape. Ethno-botany might be the suitable words to describe the roles of plants in relationship with daily human life and activities. Ford (1978) described that ethno botany is the study of the relationship between humans and plants including the way plants is manipulated for the usage in the human local environment and in the spiritual world of the community. Ethno-botany can be classified into utilitarian, food/ dietary, cosmetic/ dye, medicinal and ritual. The use of plants as ethno-botanical uses such as food, utility and herbal medicine has a long tradition amongst Malay community in Malaysia. It involves a diversity of indigenous knowledge and cultural beliefs and constitutes an important basis for the development of Malay society. Due to rapid changes in socio-economic, environmental and cultural beliefs in Malaysia, the use of ethno-botanical plant species as herbal medicine is in transformation (Hamilton, 1997). Ethno-botany can make a positive contribution to