

TRADITIONAL PARANG DESIGNS AND CARVINGS IN BORNEO

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ABSTRACT

The ancient inherited art of carving skills on the traditional machete or *parang* (in Malay Language) has been well preserved until today. In order to produce a high quality design and carving of a *parang*, it requires a creative and highly skilled blacksmith. Patience is the utmost virtue that the blacksmith needs to possess in order to ensure the completed engraving of the *parang* is accurate. Nadzarul Amir Zainal Alam (2008) said that a thorough wood selection process is emphasized in order to produce a beautiful and high quality hilt of the *parang*. Based on a research by Mohd Nurazwan Augustine (2012), the carving technique of the *parang* is divided into two types namely carved carving and fine carving. The objectives of this study are to study on the carvings design for *parang* in Borneo, to make a comparison of carved motifs on the hilts and sheath of *parang* and to generate empirical data on the design of traditional *parang*. The results can also be used as guidelines to improve the local arts and culture of the local community and hence become an important product for commercialization.

Keywords: Parang Borneo, Parang Design, Parang Carving, Arts and Cultural

1. INTRODUCTION

Borneo is a rich and multicultural archipelago in the South East Asian region. Malaysia consists of over 80 ethnicities that spread over Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak. There are 32 ethnics in Sabah that consist of Kadazandusun, Murut, Bajau and so on. Meanwhile in Sarawak, there are 28 ethnicities with the largest ethnicity is Iban, followed by the Chinese, Malays, Bidayuh, Melanau and Orang Ulu. The Borneo region includes Sabah, Sarawak and Kalimantan, which is rich in various types of carvings with unique elements due to the different tribal tribes that exist in areas such as Dayak, which make their home in the archipelago, in the deep forests, and Dayaks on the shore (Anonim, 2007) including in Brunei. The communities in Borneo are well known for their original engraving arts which symbolize distinct ethnic elements and identities such as the traditional *Parang Ilang* that is synonymous with the Iban ethnic and *Parang Pakayun* for Muru tribes (Jeniri Amir, 2015). This research is focused on the design and art of carving hilts and sheaths of the traditional *parang* in Borneo. Parang; carved hilts and sheath; has its own taboo and is often included and associated with ritual and magical element (Heidi, 1989)

Among weapons classed by Malays as *parang* pride of place must go to the *p.ilang* (or *ihlang*) used by the Sea Dayaks of Sarawak. It is a heavy cutlass, in shape more like a broadsword than a true *parang*, equally effective as a chopper, slashing implement or club. It is a form of *kelewang* without the notch, having a straight or slightly concave cutting edge. The *parang ilang* is said to have been originally made by the Kayans. It was the principal