

## COMPARISON BETWEEN THE ARTS OF TERENGGANU MALAY KELARAI AND SARAWAK IBAN KELARAI IN WOVEN MATS

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**Abstract.** *Kelarai* patterns on woven mats are testaments to the handiwork and creativity sparked by the imaginative minds of the local community. Weaving skill is inherited from one generation to another, and it requires one to think creatively to produce different weave pattern designs. *Kelarai* is a geometric pattern design commonly used as a decorative technique on woven mats. Each *kelarai* pattern has its distinct meaning. This comparative study aims to identify the motifs and weave patterns applied on *kelarai* woven mats. It also aims to identify the link between the patterns on the woven mats and the local culture and beliefs. This study applied a combination of literature review and fieldwork methods. Secondary data were obtained through written and pictorial data from various printed sources such as books, journals, newspapers, magazines, catalogues and internet sources. Fieldwork data were obtained through case studies, specifically observations and in-depth interviews. The findings show differences between the art of woven *kelarai* mat in the Malay community in Terengganu and the Iban in Sarawak regarding basic materials, motifs, patterns and colours. Other elements also influence the differences in woven mats, such as culture and beliefs being passed down across generations. The findings of the study found that the main material to produce weave is different due to different geographical factors. The *mengkuang* tree is a wild plant that can easily grow in lowland areas such as by the river in Terengganu. In contrast to the rattan and *bemban* trees that are easy to grow in hilly highlands like in Sarawak. Meanwhile, the motifs and designs of the woven art of the Malay community in Terengganu are influenced by the teachings of Islam. For the Iban community of Sarawak, the motifs and designs of their mats are based on the beliefs of their ancestors. This difference explains the unique identity of Malaysian society. It hopes to introduce the cultural arts of Malaysian society to the outside community.

**Keywords:** *Kelarai, Woven Mats, Malay, Iban.*

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### 1. Introduction

*Kelarai* weaving comprises embroidering or arranging materials to create a pattern design. In this light, *kelarai* means a square woven pattern (Mariam & Marzuki, 2021). *Kelarai* on the woven mat serves as a decorative element that gives an aesthetic effect on the mat's surface. It presents the weaver's expression in highlighting the purpose or meaning the creator wants to convey (Maulin *et al.*, 2019). Most *kelarai* woven mats have several interesting colour pattern arrangements (Ismail, 2013). The use of these colours

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usually correlates with the design of the *kelarai*. Each *kelarai* has its own name according to the culture of its respective community (Zakaria *et al.*, 2018).



**Figure 1.** Kelarai Woven Mats

*Kelarai* mat weaving is a tradition passed through generations. Women in the villages usually produce woven mats. Initially, the *kelarai* woven mats were made for daily use, specifically as padding for sitting and sleeping. Over time, the functions of woven mats became more widespread such as for ornaments and ritual ceremonies based on the local communities' customs and beliefs (Bakar *et al.*, 2019). Initially, girls were taught the technique of weaving *kelarai* from a young age, and these skills are passed down informally from family members. This practice has ensured the younger generation inherits can this art form. Subsequently, women started to make and sell *kelarai* woven mats as a source of income for their families, while the men helped gather the raw materials to make *kelarai* woven mats at home (Saari & Som, 2020). The mat materials are sourced from plants and other resources around their villages, nearby forests, swamps, and coastlines (Ruangrit *et al.*, 2015).

A plural society in Malaysia has led to differences in beliefs, cultures, and customs (Cho, 2016). There are several differences between *kelarai* woven mats produced by the Malay community in Terengganu and *kelarai* woven mats produced by the Iban community in Sarawak, which are:

**Table 1:** Differences Between Kelarai Woven Mats Produced by Terengganu Malay Community and the Iban Community in Sarawak

	Malay Community	Iban Community
Flora	Areca nut ( <i>Tampuk Pinang</i> ) Eight-burst flower ( <i>Pecah Lapan</i> ) Sonneratia flower ( <i>Bunga Berembang</i> ) Gardenia flower ( <i>Bunga Cina</i> ) Magnolia flower ( <i>Bunga Cempaka</i> ) Durio flower ( <i>Bunga Durian</i> ) Mimusops flower ( <i>Bunga Tanjung</i> ) Clove ( <i>Bunga Cengkih</i> ) Tetracera flower ( <i>Bunga Mempelas</i> ) Jasmine flower ( <i>Bunga Melur</i> )	Brinjal flower ( <i>Bunga Terung</i> ) Palm fruit ( <i>Buah Nipah</i> ) Vegetable fern ( <i>Paku-pakis</i> ) Root ( <i>Akar</i> ) Thorn ( <i>Duri</i> ) Rattan leave ( <i>Daun Rotan</i> )

	Melodorum flower ( <i>Bunga Ator</i> ) Hydrangea flower ( <i>Bunga Gedung</i> ) Wax gourd flower ( <i>Bunga Kunder</i> ) Mangosteen ( <i>Tampuk Manggis</i> ) Bamboo shoot ( <i>Pucuk Rebung</i> )	
Fauna	Elephant head ( <i>Kepala Gajah</i> ) Tiger paws ( <i>Tapak Harimau</i> ) Snail shell ( <i>Buntut Siput</i> ) Flying fox elbow ( <i>Siku Keluang</i> ) Calidris finger ( <i>Jari Kedidi</i> ) Geopelia eye ( <i>Mata Ketitir</i> ) Pigeon eye ( <i>Mata Punai</i> ) Baby fish ( <i>Anak Ikan</i> ) Fishbone ( <i>Tulang Ikan</i> ) Moolgarda Navel ( <i>Pusat Belanak</i> ) Fly's head ( <i>Kepala Lalat</i> ) Grasshopper ( <i>Belalang Cucuk</i> )	Dragon ( <i>Naga</i> ) Snake ( <i>Ular</i> ) Cobra ( <i>Ular Tedung</i> ) Python ( <i>Ular Sawa</i> ) Crocodile ( <i>Buaya</i> ) Ghost Dog ( <i>Anjing Hantu</i> ) Owl ( <i>Burung Hantu</i> ) Eagle ( <i>Burung Helang</i> ) Leech ( <i>Pacat</i> ) Dog ( <i>Anjing</i> )
People/spirit	Miss Kedah ( <i>Cik Kedah</i> ) Mother ( <i>Mak Mek</i> )	Ghost ( <i>Hantu Semangat</i> ) Giant ( <i>Gergasi</i> ) Curse ( <i>Sumpahan/Kelikut Buruk</i> )
Abstract	Rhombus ( <i>Belah Ketupat</i> ) Crazy weave ( <i>Anyaman Gila</i> ) Broken rice ( <i>Beras Patah</i> ) Time out ( <i>Putus Masa</i> ) Unnamed weave ( <i>Tidak Bernama</i> )	Star ( <i>Bintang/Senagir</i> ) Moon ( <i>Bulan/Sebayan</i> ) Tray ( <i>Dulang Selempandai</i> )

In this regard, each community and ethnic group has its own beliefs and practices and distinct way of life. This has led to different understandings and points of view between communities, especially the Malays in Terengganu and the Iban in Sarawak.

The designs of the *kelarai* woven mats produced by Malays in Terengganu are laden with Islamic influences. *Dakwah* (preaching) through the art of pandanus artocarpus *kelarai* woven mats started at the early stages, which involve selecting the best leaves before boiling, colouring, and stroking them to increase their durability. The *kelarai* patterns are also designed based on Islamic teachings (Bembel, 2020). These designs mimic the natural motifs and are styled so that they do not resemble any real appearance of Allah's creations. Furthermore, the woven works are infused with dhikr to Allah so that the work done is not in vain. These practices are embedded in the lives of the past generations and are passed down to the next generation. It reflects that arts and Islam are expressions of nature, life, and humanity (Wildan, 2007). In this regard, Islamic teachings have influenced the thinking and lifestyle of the Malay community in Terengganu and the surrounding region.

The Malay community in Terengganu defers to the Iban community, the largest ethnic group in Sarawak. The culture of the Iban community consists of two aspects, heritage, and inheritance. Heritage refers to traditional skills, beliefs, and aesthetics in the arts culture that the Ibans inherit from *Petara* (God). In comparison, inheritance refers to materials passed on to a family member or individual with blood ties. Thus, the cultural heritage of the Iban community is divided into two: the tangible cultural heritage, which comprises functional artifacts. There are some taboos in using these artifacts according to their ancestors' beliefs. The second is the non-tangible cultural heritage which refers to oral traditions (Keai & Tugang, 2020). The *kelarai* woven mats produced by the Iban community are categorised as tangible heritage that existed hundreds of years ago.



Undoubtedly this heritage should not be forgotten as long as the artists still practice the arts and possess the required skills.

The use of nature-inspired traditional *kelarai* woven mats has increasingly been forgotten due to modern items such as plastic mats and carpets with more attractive patterns and colours (Saari & Som, 2020). Furthermore, the number of weavers who master the weaving of *kelarai* mats using natural resources is dwindling. As a result, the craft is being threatened with extinction (Jahaya, 2003). Most villagers have now stopped weaving mats, and those with experience in weaving these mats are no longer interested in doing so. In addition, *mengkuang* mats with diverse patterns are no longer used as a spread on the floor but as decorations in luxury hotels or residences. Despite abundant raw resources such as *mengkuang* leaves in villages, they are still not fully exploited by the community. Most individuals skilled in weaving these mats have migrated, passed away, or stopped weaving due to the lack of demand for *mengkuang* products in the market (Ali, 2016). Hence, it is not surprising that the mats are now forgotten, and their use is becoming increasingly rare. It is difficult to find *mengkuang* mats as a spread on the floor or used as welcome mats for guests. Many in the community perceive these mats are only used by poor people. Hence, they are indications of low social status (Jahaya, 2003).

Based on above, many people have very limited knowledge of *kelarai* woven mats in Terengganu Malay and Iban Sarawak. Weaving is now facing a serious extinction problem due to the lack of conservation efforts among the new generation.

## 2. Raws Material of Making *Kelarai* Woven Mats

In Terengganu, *kelarai* woven mats are made from leaves of the *mengkuang* tree or its scientific name *Pandanus artocarpus*. It comes from the *pandanaceae* family, a member of the screwpine (*pandan*) plant family. A *mengkuang* tree can grow to the height of 1-5 meters, and it has dark green leaves with a width of 5-10 centimeters. The leaves are thorny and have a strong spine. The thorns are found at the edges of the leaves and are 1-3 centimeters long. Furthermore, the leaves contain watery white fibers.



**Figure 2.** Cutting Mengkuang Leaf

The first process of making the mats is removing the thorny spines and edges of the cut leaves using a knife. Then, the *mengkuang* leaves are seared by placing them on

embers until they become yellowish. The importance of searing the *mengkuang* leaves is to make the leaves softer, more elastic, resilient, and durable. The seared leaves are then split into several leaf blades using a small knife. After that, the *mengkuang* leaves are dried in the sun for at least an hour to ensure that the leaves are completely dry to ease the process of stripping the leaves.

The next process is to soak the stripped leaf blades in a large container or a jar filled with water for two days and two nights. The soaking water should be changed twice daily to avoid a foul smell and ensure that the leaves' original color (green) is naturally bleached. After soaking, the knot at the cob of the leave blades is taken apart, and they are cleaned and dried. The staining process is performed if the weaver wants a colorful woven *kelarai* design. The left blades can be stained in a traditional or a modern way. The traditional staining method only uses natural ingredients such as turmeric, *mengkudu* leaves, and Indian kesumba fruit. Meanwhile, coloured powders are used in the modern method of staining uses coloring powders.



**Figure 3.** Colored Mengkuang Leaves

In the meantime, Sarawak's Iban community produces mats from plants such as *pandan*, rattan, *senggang*, and *bemban*. *Bemban kelarai* woven mats are the earliest woven mats made by the ancestors of the Ibans (Keai, 2017). This type of mat is also described as one of the most beautiful mats in the world (Durin, 2014). *Bemban*, or its scientific name *Donax grandis*, is usually abundant around swampy areas or riverbanks (Keai, 2021). The production of *bemban kelarai* woven mats is more complicated than *mengkuang kelarai* woven mats. *Bemban* stems for the mats are chosen based on their length. Longer *bemban* stems will produce higher-quality woven mats. The cut *bemban* stems need to be washed to remove the existing dirt. Afterward, the stem is skinned to acquire smaller *bemban* blades.

A *jangat* or a knife blade is used to split the skin from the *bemban* stems. The prepared *bemban* stems are dried until they become white. This process usually takes five days, depending on the weather conditions. After that, the *bemban* stems are retted in the river to soften them. The retting process only takes one day to ensure that the *bemban* stems are flexible enough for the weaving process. The stems are then split using a small knife to obtain a smaller blade. Then the *bemban* stems will be re-dried until it becomes dry and ready to be woven.



**Figure 4.** Cutting Bemban Stems

On the other hand, the Iban community prefers to produce rattan *kelarai* woven mats. The rattan is more durable, easy to stain, and very comfortable to use (Omar *et al.*, 2016). Sarawak has the highest species of rattan, and 107 types of rattans are found around the state (Samejima, 2020). Rattan belongs to the Palmae family and is classified under the largest group of Calamoideae subfamilies. There are 13 rattan genera in the world, Calamus, Calospatha, Ceratolobus, Daemonorops, Eremospatha, Korthalsia, Laccosperma, Myrialepis, Oncocalamus, Plectocomia, Plectocomiopsis, Pogonotium, and Retispatha. The Iban community commonly used the Sega rattan, or its scientific name, *Calamus caesius*, to make *kelarai* mats.



**Figure 5.** Harvesting rattan

The best selection of rattans should be done to ensure the durability of the *kelarai* woven mat. Only straight rattans are cut to the required length. Then, the outer skin is removed by pulling and bending the rattan cane against another rod. The prepared rattan canes are cleaned and dried. A completely dry rattan will change color from green to white. After that, canes are split and thinned. The thin canes need to be flattened before staining. The canes are stained by boiling them rattan in a pot containing a mixture of natural ingredients. For instance, black soil is boiled with *kenidai* leaves to obtain a black colour, while the flattened canes are boiled with the rattan fruit to get a red colour before weaving.



### 3. Research Objectives

- i. To examine the raw materials for producing and designing between Terengganu Malay *kelarai* and Sarawak Iban *kelarai* in woven mats.
- ii. To compare the motif designs between Terengganu Malay *kelarai* and Sarawak Iban *kelarai* in woven mats.

### 4. Methodology

This study is a qualitative study where data were collected through the interviews and library research method. Below is a further explanation of methods used in the collection of study data.

#### A. Primary Data

- i. Observation and documentation on the production of woven mats to examine the raw materials for producing and designing between Terengganu Malay *kelarai* and Sarawak Iban *kelarai* in woven mats.
- ii. The researchers interviewed local weavers with ten years of experience who are still actively carrying out mat weaving activities. It aims to compare the motif designs between Terengganu Malay *kelarai* and Sarawak Iban *kelarai* in woven mats.

#### B. Secondary Data

- i. Library research was conducted by reviewing past works such as books, newspapers, journals, theses and encyclopedias to support the primary data obtained.
- ii. Through the previous article will be used for reference of the comparative study of woven mats between Terengganu Malay *kelarai* and Sarawak Iban *kelarai*

#### **Research Design**

Once the study design is determined, the study method should be identified to continue the qualitative study (Creswell, 2009). Othman Talib (2019) states that there are several key methods in qualitative studies such as ethnography, phenomenology, case studies and narrative. In this study researchers have chosen a case study as a research method. A case study describes in depth and detail the relevance of a phenomenon, event, individual, program, activity or process (Zainal, 2007). The case studied is usually something unique and specific. It is also rare and attracts attention.

#### **Case Study**

Case studies are the most appropriate way to extract information and clearly verify data. It is a systematic method of collecting information. It aims to study the behavior of an individual, social conditions, objects, activities or events (Zainal, 2007). The scope in case studies is focused on small social units such as individuals, groups or communities. In this study, the researchers conducted interviews with a group of local weavers in Terengganu and Sarawak directly and indirectly. It aims to find out the differences in basic materials and *kelarai* in woven mats (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

### **Observation**

This method is required in the process of collecting information related to the *kelarai* woven of Malay mats in Terengganu and Iban in Sarawak to ensure the authenticity of the information collected. The observation method is divided into two, namely direct observation and observation through participants (Jasmi, 2012). In this study, the researchers selected the observation method directly. The benefit of direct observation is to provide a deeper understanding of the study. This is because the researchers can be directly involved. The researchers made video, photography and audio recordings as evidence to the research activities.

### **Interviews**

Interview is a method of obtaining information and facts through the respondent (Hamzah, 2004). The researcher should record every information obtained from the respondent. Through this method, the researchers were able to learn and understand the comparative studies between *kelarai* woven mats produced by the Malay community in Terengganu and *kelarai* woven mats produced by the Iban community in Sarawak perfectly. The researchers applied a descriptive interview method to respondents. Descriptive inquiries will provide comfort and convenience to local weavers to inform independently about the issue of the study. Each document obtained such as video, image, audio and notes will be analyzed by the researcher. It was intended to check the validity and accuracy of the study findings.

## **5. Result and Discussion**

Overall, *kelarai* mat weaving is an example of a community's production of artifacts society to fulfil their basic needs (Arifin, 2017). As the woven mats are produced according to individual artistic capabilities and skills (Anderson, 2021), the idea and appearance of these artifacts tend to change according to the needs and wants of the community members over time. Furthermore, these artifacts' designs vary due to experience, adaptation, and environment (Kiyai *et al.*, 2020).




The researchers found that the raw materials for producing and designing the *kelarai* woven mats between Terengganu Malays and Iban Sarawak were different. These differences are influenced by physical environments such as terrain, drainage, soil and climate. Environmental factors are the reason local weavers have used the surrounding resources in making mats. In Terengganu, the *mengkuang* tree grows abundantly and is easily available, while in Sarawak, *bemban* and rattan plants are easier to obtain.

The topography in Terengganu is relatively flat which is located on the coastline and swamp making *mengkuang* easy to plant (Muzathik *et al.*, 2009). In Sarawak, about 70% of its land area consists of hills (Abdullah, 2016). These rugged terrain conditions are considered unsuitable for agricultural purposes. Finally wild plants like *bemban* and rattan are easy to grow.







In addition, the researchers also found differences in patterns motifs design in the *kelarai* woven mats of the Terengganu Malay community and the Iban community in Sarawak. This difference is due to the existence of different religions, beliefs, cultures and customs. Uniquely, this distinction has created the identity of the *kelarai* woven mats.



**Table 2.** Raw Materials for Kelarai woven Mats produced by Terengganu Malay Community and Sarawak Iban Community

Raw Materials		
Terengganu	Sarawak	
		
Pandaninus artocapus	Donax grandis	Calamus caesius







**Table 3.** Differences Between Pattern Motifs Design on Kelarai Woven Mats Produced by Terengganu Malay Community and The Iban Community in Sarawak

Pattern Motifs Design on <i>Kelarai</i> Woven Mats			
			
<b>Malay Community</b>	Gardenia flower plants ( <i>Bunga Cina</i> )	Snail shell ( <i>Buntut Siput</i> )	Fly's head ( <i>Kepala Lalat</i> )
			
<b>Iban Community</b>	Spirit realm ( <i>Bulan Sebayau</i> )	Eagle ( <i>Lang/ Burung Helang</i> )	Dragon ( <i>Naga</i> )

Research by Ibrahim (2013) showed that the Iban woven motif was inherited by generations of ancestors. Local weavers produce motifs and patterns based on elements that are seen, used and practiced in their daily lives.

However, the motif designs of the *kelarai* woven mats produced by the Terengganu Malay community have several similarities with those produced by the Sarawak Iban community. These similarities include that both mats have traditional patterns based on plants and small animals. This pattern design was found on mats produced by the previous generation who started mat weaving *kelarai* in Terengganu in 1957 (Perbadanan Kemajuan Kraftangan Malaysia, 1980).

**Table 4.** Similarities Between Kelarai Woven Mats Produced by The Malay Community in Terengganu and Iban Community in Sarawak

Kelarai Woven Mats			
Pattern Design			
Origin motif			
	Eight-bursts flower ( <i>Bunga Pecah Lapan</i> )	Bamboo shoot ( <i>Pucuk Rebung</i> )	Fly's head ( <i>Kepala Lalat</i> )

The eight-bursts flower motif found in the *kelarai* woven arts of the Malay community is a herbaceous plant. It refers to *Cosmos caudatus* H.B.K (*Ulam Raja*). They serve this plant as a side dish to eat with rice (Mariam & Marzuki, 2021). Besides, another benefit of this plant is for medicine. For example, to treat blood flow problems, toxicity in the body, loss of appetite and fever. Malays cultivated this plant as a home landscape plant. According to Puan Anginan, the shape of the flower has influenced the woven motives of the Malay community. Through their creativity, they have made styling the shape of the plant according to their own taste.

The bamboo shoot motif is also prominent on *kelarai* woven mats of both Malay and Iban communities. This motif is used as a homage to the great benefits of bamboo in human lives. Bamboos are the main material for house construction, kitchen utensils, hunting equipment, musical instruments, agriculture, and food. The significance of bamboo is highlighted in the Malay proverbs, for instance, ‘*bend a bamboo when it is still a shoot is possible using its shoot*’ (*melentur buluh biarlah daripada rebungunya*). It is known that bamboo is very firm in its texture but the shoots are flexible. Obviously, bamboo or bamboo shoots have a lot of value. In fact, this reflects human life where bamboo is likened to an adult while the shoots are children. It proves that children can be educated at a young age so that they will become better people in the future. The benefits of bamboo are so valuable to human life that they influence their philosophy of life either consciously or unconsciously.

The motifs of small insects such as the fly's head, known as *Kepala Lalat*. This motif is mimic the flies shape which has one eye in the middle. For the Malay and Iban communities, the similarity of this motif is in the design and name, as these insects are usually alight on food. Usually, the ancients imitated the elements that were around them as pattern design motifs. Furthermore, these weavers are mothers who spend a lot of time in the kitchen. They observe the shape of the fly's head and work it out in geometric shapes. This creativity is the result of imitating the original idea to equalize the original insect form.

The motifs used in *kelarai* woven art produced by the Terengganu Malay community are inspired by the surrounding environment. Such elements involve plants, animals, human names, and abstract patterns (Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, 1995). *Kelarai Bunga Cina* is named after the Gardenia flower plants, *Kelarai Buntut Siput* resembles the shape and pattern of a snail shell, while the *Kelarai Kepala Lalat* is inspired by the shape of a fly's head. The creativity of the previous generation in mimicking and embedding nature into motifs is a unique artwork. This uniqueness shapes the identity of each society that needs to be preserved.

The motifs used in *kelarai* woven mats produced by the Sarawak Iban community also have their own identity. According to the informant, Embak ak Sang (an Iban weaver, Betong Division, Sarawak), the Iban Saribas community believes in life after death, referred to as '*Menua Sebayan*' (Durin, 2009). It refers to the placement of the spirits of the deceased. They believe there are moons and stars that are 'realms' or 'worlds' for deceased spirits to settle. The universe in this 'world' is more beautiful and stunning. Thus, the motifs of the moon are used to depict the celestial beauty in the spirit realm according to their beliefs. Moreover, dreaming of seeing the moon means that one's child will succeed in their studies, get a good job or get a promotion or salary.

The *lang* motif is inspired by an eagle or an owl. In the Iban community, *Lang* is a bird symbolising the God of war known as *Aki Lang Sengalang* Bird. According to the information, the motif was named after eagle species around the area: *Lang Besugu*, *Lang Ngindang*, *Lang Antu* and others. The design of the eagle and owl motifs is larger and with claws. Hence, this motive is dangerous because it features sharp nails, and skilled weavers can only weave it. Those weaving the eagle or owl motif should possess the '*Enda Layu*' medicine (a type of medicine in the Iban animism community) to prevent them from being disturbed by the spirit of the bird used in the motif (Durin, 2014).

Another informant, Lemambang Sigon ak Jembu (expert on the animism belief of the Iban community), stated that in the old days, the Iban community would worship *Aki Lang Sengalang* bird when they wanted to fight against their enemies. The ritual is intended to seek blessing and gain extraordinary power. They believe God receives their act of worship if eagles are flying around the area where the ritual is being performed. Furthermore, according to Sigon ak Jembu, another Iban belief is that the sound of an eagle or owl at night is a bad omen and usually a sign of the death of someone from the community.

Another motif is the dragon, originally inspired by ancient legends and myths. Dragon motifs are also likened to snake motifs as they share the same features as being legless, a long and scaly body, a tail, and a large head. The dragon is considered a powerful, courageous supernatural animal and has the power to help man. The gods and goddesses sent the dragon to help humans live in peace and harmony. The use of dragon motifs on the woven mats is intended to gain energy and power and to seek protection from evil forces and calamities.

Second, each *kelarai* woven mat has its motif pattern, representing the identity of a specific community, specifically their beliefs, culture, and customs. The design of these woven motifs is a testament to these communities' different beliefs and cultural practices. For the Muslim majority Malay community in Terengganu, Islamic teaching impacts the design motifs of their *kelarai* woven mats. Usually, the motifs used by the Terengganu Malay community are based on plants, human names, animals, and abstract patterns, while animal motifs are translated into interesting symmetrical forms. Only some animal features are replicated and used as motif pattern designs on the mats.



In the meantime, the motifs used on *kelarai* woven mats produced by the Iban community are inspired by cosmology and traditional beliefs. They develop ideas based on their observations of the surrounding nature and are linked to worship rituals. Two categories of motifs stand out from the mats produced by the Iban community in Sarawak, which are zoomorphic and anthropomorphic (Klinsing & Usop, 2020). The zoomorphic motifs refer to animal motifs. The Ibans usually used strong animals that are believed to have extraordinary power. Among them are dragons, crocodiles, and lizards.

Meanwhile, anthropomorphic motifs refer to the shape of a figure. Based on the Iban beliefs, there are two forms of figures-human and supernatural (ghost/spirit). According to Anna Durin, the Iban community believes that the dream of a person who sleeps on a mat woven with traditional motives holds important messages. In this light, the motives on the Iban *kelarai* woven mat are used to symbolically convey warnings, reminders, and advice and show one's social status in the community. Every motif design on Iban woven mat has its role and function in their lives.

## 6. Conclusion

In conclusion, Malaysia's diverse community has produced various unique art forms, including the *kelarai* woven mats. This is because mats produced by these two communities have their own unique identity (Salingaros, 2018). The design of the *kelarai* woven mats produced by the Iban community influenced of animism (Keai, 2019). All elements such as flora, fauna, people and abstracts must have a spirit and soul. Spirit is something eternal and indestructible. Although the soul is associated with the existence of supernatural beings that cannot see with the naked eye. These supernatural creatures or ghosts are believed to have extraordinary powers that can protect their lives.

While the *kelarai* mats produced by the Malay community in Terengganu reflect the Islamic religion and belief (Hussin, 2004). According to Abd. Rasid Ismail (2014), the artistic motifs of the Malay community must have a natural environment of the Malays. This is because Malay artists are inspired by the environment to produce *kelarai* woven mats. Their close relationship with nature enhances creativity and can produce quality art. The choice of flora motifs must have benefits from the aspects of beauty, fragrance and usefulness to humans. Usually, these plants are planted or grow naturally around the houses of the Malays. The selection of flora motifs can explain the Malay community's understanding of the function of the surrounding plants.

The motifs of the fauna are also part of the *kelarai* woven mat pattern of the Malay community. The function of fauna motif to emulate the good qualities that animals possess such as brave, strong and protective (Mohamad & Kiram, 2004). The Malay community appreciates this good character for practice in their lives. For example, tigers, elephants, birds, fish and so on.

While the use of the person's name as a *kelarai* motif to appreciate the individual who has created the weave pattern. For example, Miss *Kedah* has produced her own woven pattern. The motif of Miss *Kedah* has been expanded to several new names including Miss *Kedah Berakar* and Miss *Kedah Ketapan* (Taufik et al., 2022).

Next is an abstract motif that is a new idea that is still influenced by nature. This is because abstract motifs consist of flora and fauna. Then these motives turned into new ideas according to the creativity of the weaver until the creation of more relevant abstract motifs (Abdullah et al., 2019).



This shows that culture and religion shape a community's identity (Abdulla, 2018). Furthermore, the subtlety of *kelarai* woven art makes it a unique and meaningful artifact. At the same time, the ideas sparked from the weaver's inspiration and dreams weaver during the production of woven mats have made the mat more valuable.

Therefore, this study is expected to benefit various parties (Halim & Mat, 2010). First, to help local entrepreneurs promote woven motifs based on their respective cultures. Indirectly, it can improve the socioeconomics of the community in rural areas. The government needs to support *kelarai* mat weavers by helping them to market these mats worldwide. Secondly, contribute to national income through the cultural and tourism sectors. Handicraft items such as woven mats with various motif designs can attract outside tourists to make them as collections or souvenirs. Agencies in the tourism, hospitality, and industry section also need to work together to promote these mats as suitable for use throughout the ages. Thirdly, help researchers who have an interest in this field to learn and understand more deeply. This research is a proactive effort to preserve and maintain the motives of weaving mats as a cultural identity in Malaysia for the future.

Undoubtedly, the *kelarai* woven mats faced various challenges from cultural assimilation and globalization changes. However, we must ensure the *kelarai* woven mats preserved so that these heritage art artifacts are not forgotten from time to time. We need to expose the younger generation to this art heritage so that they can appreciate their ancestors' heritage. Therefore, all related parties should be more involved directly or indirectly and be more aggressive in preserving this art through writing books, exhibitions, competitions, courses, or seminars. It is hoped that this study will open our eyes and encourage appreciation for this invaluable work of art.

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