International Journal of Engineering & Technology, 7 (3.25) (2018) 175-177

International Journal of Engineering & Technology

Website: www.sciencepubco.com/index.php/IJET

Research paper

Title the Function of Pottery in the Iban Community in Sibu's Longhouse, Sarawak

Fujica Anak Anggo[1]*, Louis Laja[2], Rohana Binti Abu Bakar[3]

[1]*Institute of Design and Innovation, University Malaysia Sarawak*
[2] *Institute of Design and Innovation, University Malaysia Sarawak*
[3] *Institute of Design and Innovation, University Malaysia Sarawak*
**Corresponding author E-mail: fujian_anggo@yahoo.com*

Abstract

Tajau or more commonly known as pot is an inherited heritage for generations by the Iban in Sarawak. It is made of clay and each tajau has its own uniqueness in terms of sculpture, height, size, shape and color. Tajau also become a symbol of wealth in the family. Owners who have a lot tajau number often associated with wealth and generosity of the food especially when tajau filled with rice. Moreover, tajau have a variety of functions in everyday life Iban use. The research is based on the function, beliefs, taboos and other types of tajau.

Keywords: *function; types of tajau; beliefs; symbol*

1. Introduction

Indigenous peoples in Sarawak are indeed rich in cultural and heritage inherited from generation to generation. There are 27 ethnic groups in Sarawak. Each ethnic has different language, culture, heritage and way of life.

Iban communities mostly live in Sungai Saribas, Skrang River, Batang Lupar River and Rajang River. Therefore, they are better known as seafarers or Sea Dayaks.

Among the well-known culture and heritage amongst these communities is the use of tajau. In the course of everyday life, the Iban community has been using the *tajau* since the 9th century. *Tajau* or better known as jars is synonymous among the Iban community. In addition, *tajau* has another term called something.

The uniqueness of heritage and culture in Sarawak is a valuable asset inherited from hereditary ancestors. The uniqueness gives a positive impact on the richness of the ethical community in Malaysia. *Tajau* is one of the heritage and cultural heritage found in Sarawak. *Tajau* is a large jar made of clay (1). The appreciation of the use of *tajau* in the culture of the former Iban community in the land of Sarawak is very clear and gives a deep meaning to the lifestyle practices of the community. This is clearly evident when *tajau* is one of the mandatory collections in every Iban community in Sarawak.

2. Literature Review

In general, the objects that come from clay in the form of pottery and crockery have long been the practice of society in some places in Malaysia. The practice of art has existed since the Neolithic period (2) and is also one of the oldest artistic values in the world after the Stone Age.

Benedict Sandin (3) stated that each room door would have to provide a special shelter to place a *tajau*, a sword (metal tray), a pitcher, ankle, a gong, complete in the yard of their living room. *Tajau* is considered as a symbol of inherited heritage property that has been accumulated from the past generation to the present time. This opinion is also supported by researchers Derek Freeman (4), that "almost every Iban longhouse contains precious old plate and bowl, but it is in a jar (*Tajau*) The most interesting will be taken". Additionally, according to Edward Enggu (5), the highest value raised or acquired by the Iban community is in reference to the three main points, the first of which is courage, both of which are the amount of rice earned, and the third is the *tajau*.

The impact of the use and production of pottery began to spread and absorbed among the natives of Sarawak in the 9th century through the arrival of traders from china who started trading in the waters of Santubong, Sarawak using the exchange system of goods (6). This pottery has received a good response from Sarawak's indigenous people as the fine hand-drawn and beautiful Chinese hands on the surface of the pot have attracted their attention.

3. Methodology / Materials

In this study, the methodology used by the researchers, through qualitative research. The researchers did not use quantitative methods for the study is focused on the collection of data through interviews, observation and documentation.

In 1996, Hashim explained that field work is the pillar of cultural research. Field work is also a cultural researcher personal experience during live together with members of the public to be studied. It is used as a cultural and scientific research studies conducted highly dependent on notes and descriptions that have been collected by researchers. The time factor, the researchers affect the environment and personal experience and it involves almost all life activities of community members surveyed.

Copyright © 2018 Authors. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

The last of the opinion of the reviewer above, then this field study was conducted in March until June 2013. During that period, a field study conducted observations, interviews and any findings will be documented either in the form of notes, pictures or video.

4. Results and Findings

4.1. The Function of Tajau

Tajau provides a variety of functions to the natives of Sarawak. There is no denying that *tajau* is very useful for the lives of Iban society as a place to store goods, food, water and so on. Typically, *tajau* serves as a place to store items for the past and the function starts to change and is rarely used anymore due to modernization of current generations. However, there are still a small number of Iban people in longhouses who still use *tajau* as a place to store goods, food and water.

Precious items such as jewelry and money are also kept in special special corners. The Tajau will symbolize the wealth and the strength of property in a family (7). Before the currency system has not been so widely used, *tajau* has been a successor to the currency among the Iban people. The practiced tradition has been named as the sharp eye system (8). *Sigi* mentioned in the Iban language means one.

Table 1: The Iban currencies system.

Types of *Tajau*	Value ($)
Sigi Jabir	1.00
Sigi Panding	2.00
Sigi Alas	4.00
Sigi Rusa	8.00
Sigi Menaga	16.00
Sigi Ningka	32.00

The Iban community is so well known for its customary law and the richness of its own tradition. They are required to comply with established laws or regulations to ensure community harmony. Anyone who violates the taboo will be subject to certain penalties. Accordingly, *tajau* serves as a currency and is always used to pay the imposed fines. (9). The value of a tajher will be determined according to the size, type, height, color, shape and engraving on the surface of the *tajau*. Examples of penalties that need to be paid using the title are:i. In the old days, if a hunter killed another man with the intention that unintentionally, the killer was required to pay compensation to the relatives of the deceased to death compensation tajau lives of two valuable old. If failing to pay the penalty, the killer will be handed over to the deceased's family to become their slave. The offspring of the murderer will remain as the family of the deceased unless they release themselves by paying compensation or have been voluntarily freed by the owner.ii. If a man steal things in other people's farms in the middle of the harvest, he will be fined with a *tajau* Jabir priced at $ 1.00, a chicken and a knife.iii. During the Gawai Burong celebration if someone breaks the pillar of the ceremony, the offender will be fined twice harvested, a knife, and a Deer tajau worth $ 8.00 and the offender will have to replace the broken pole immediately.iv. If the deceased was a leader of the Great War, during the ceremony of his death, the heirs or descendants will receive a tajau Menaga worth $ 16.00 as their last respects to him.It can not be denied that the Iban community is so famous for rice cultivation, especially its hill and rice paddy fields. These agricultural activities are the main source of their daily food sources and have long been in existence since the time of their forefathers. No wonder, they measure the wealth, craft and superiority of a family based on the harvest and yield of many paddy crops. During the process of rice harvesting, corners become the most useful object to store the harvest. The bigger or more sharpness lies in their kitchen, symbolizing the wealth and stability of a family in the longhouse (10).

The Gawai Day celebrated on every 1st of June was a gathering organized by the Iban community after the rice harvesting process was completed. The festival was held and celebrated by the Iban community to express their gratitude for the rice harvest they had earned. They will also perform the Ngajat Dance and *air tuak* throughout the event**.**

Tajau played an important role in the production of tufts before the Gawai ceremony. Rice and yeast will be fermented in the *tajau* to produce tufted water. However, there are various methods of use of *tajau* which have been explored by the Iban community, among them as a place to decorate the preserved animal meat (dijeruk) to maintain longer durability and also as a place to decorate fruits like durian to produce tempoyak (11).

According to The Encyclopaedia of Iban Studies, (12) there are 87 types of Gawai ceremonies welcomed by the Iban community. One of them is Gawai *Tajau*. Gawai *Tajau* which is among the six Gawai celebrated massively by the Iban community. Five of them are Gawai Burung or Gawai Kenyalang, Gawai Kelingkang (War festival), Gawai Pangkung Tiang (opening a new home site), Gawai Batu and Gawai Antu. Thus, *tajau* is an important thing in the related rituals such as Petara ritual (God).

Gawai Tajau should be done shortly after a month's return to the longhouse and he has bought a tajau. Gawai Tajau is very important because a tajau Menaga is recognized as equivalent to a human life value. The immigrants will be known as one of the nation's sustenance and Iban who can bring home a servant or a passionate face (the head of the enemy).

4.2. Beliefs

Tajau is also believed to have a strong influence during the ritual of death. The Iban community puts this custom into three stages, namely the stage of death, during the funeral and after death. The Iban community also believes in the afterlife dead mentioned in the Iban language as an intermediary. The Iban community manages the body with great glory by beautifying the body with beauty. The corpse will be decorated with the jewelry belonging to the deceased and will be accompanied by *pemai* (goods brought to the new world) because the tajau is believed to be used by the deceased in life after death.

In addition, *tajau* also serves as a coffin to store dead bones, especially the corpse of the baby who *lulus* (not enough nature or die after birth). Prior to professing Christianity, the Iban community had previously believed in animism and paganism. They use sharp corners as grave markers. *Tajau* will be placed on the head of the deceased after being buried. According to Benedict Sandin (13), after the *tajau* is placed as the marker of the dead, they will build a small hut to cover the part of the grave.

In addition, the Iban community loves hunting in the jungle. However, if the hunters were shot dead because they were thought to be hunters, then the hunter was obliged to apologize to the family member of the victim who had been killed and had to pay the value of life using the sum of the number of heads that the family demanded.

Thus, tajau also serves as a wage to manang (shamans) and lemambang (poets) during certain ritual ceremonies. For example, when performing a sloping ceremony, manang will look into the liver of pigs to see if the sick person can be cured. So the hearts of pigs will be split and read by manang. If the pig's liver shows a good sign, the patient will recover. If instead, a pig will be sacrificed to get a good share. In addition, at the Gawai Antu ceremony, tajau was a reward for heroes who drink (drink) ai jalung and ai buluh as a sign of victory.

4.3. Types of Tajau

Tajau have various sizes and heights. There are 12 types of Tajau that have a high aesthetic value in Iban society:

i. Tajau Menaga
ii. Tajau Guchi (the smallest and for the purpose of charm).

iii. Tajau Alas.
iv. Tajau Sergiu.
v. Tajau Ningka Petanda.
vi. Tajau Jabir.
vii. Tajau Menukul.
viii. Tajau Panding.
ix. Tajau Rusa.
x. Tajau Singaraja.
xi. Tajau Salang-salang.
xii. Tajau Kelawah Indu benda (legend).



Figure 1: The height and size of *tajau*.



Figure 2: *Tajau Jabir.*



Figure 3 : *Tajau Menaga.*



Figure 4: *Tajau Sergiu.*

5. Conclusion

Overall, the benefits of custom and tradition *tajau* in the Iban community in Sarawak is very interesting and has its own uniqueness. *Tajau* presence in cyberspace Iban in Sarawak have been strengthening their culture and traditions and the role *tajau* distinguish among the Iban of Sarawak with other communities in Malaysia. *Tajau* in the culture of Iban society in Sarawak is a symbol of heritage and culture that should be maintained and up-held by the current generation. This is so as to ensure the benefits can be utilized and emulated by future generations of heirs.

Tajau role in the Iban community in Sarawak is fading now because modernization younger generations. A wide range of facilities and technologies today have dimmed the sharpening function in their daily lives. Various elements of beliefs and customs which require the role of *tajau*, especially in the customs of the deaths are also being abandoned by the Iban people in Sarawak. Most of the people are now more adamant to religious practices because of the influence of religious pluralism found on the marriage process and so on. The enhancement of science and the ingenuity of mind is growing and today's society which is more rational and logical.

However, the role of *tajau* should not be forgotten because *tajau* is a symbol of the unity of the other communities in Sarawak because *tajau* has a thousand meanings and stories that have been worked on from previous ancestors. *Tajau* tells the meaning of history and identity to present and future generations to be proud and more loving the uniqueness of their own culture. Various steps should be taken to ensure that the functions of the *tajau* are not forgotten in the history of the society before the society today.

References

[1] Kamus Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka. (2008). Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
[2] Ali, Z. (1989). Seni dan Seniman. Kuala Lumpur. Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
[3] Benedict Sandin. (1980). The Living Legends: Borneans Telling Their Tales.Malaysia: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka Malaysia Cawangan Sarawak, Kementerian Pelajaran.
[4] Freeman, Derek. (1957).The Family System of the Iban of Borneo. Australia: Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Australian National University.
[5] Enggu, Edward. (1964). Pengap gawai tajau: Lemambang luat ak jabu: Borneo Literature Bureau.
[6] Tugang, N. (2004). Tembikar dalam Budaya Iban di Sarawak.. Kuala Lumpur: Universiti Malaya Kuala Lumpur.
[7] Vinson, Sutlive (et al.). (2001). The Encyclopaedia of Iban Studies. Sarawak, Malaysia : Tun Jugah Foundation.
[8] Haas, J. (1990). The Anthropology of War. New York: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge.
[9] Gavin, T. (2004). Iban Ritual Textile. The Natherlands: KITLV Press.
[10] Sutlive, V. H. (2001). The Encyclopaedia of Iban Studies O-Z. Borneo: Tun Jugah Foundation.
[11] Kamus Dewan Edisi Keempat. (2005). Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
[12] Sutlive, V. H. (2001). The Encyclopaedia of Iban Studies O-Z. Borneo: Tun Jugah Foundation.
[13] Benedict Sandin. (1976). Iban Way of Life: A Translation from Tusun Pendiau.Kuching : Borneo Literature Bureau.