

Thee Influence of Environmental Adaptation on Orang Seletar Cultures

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ABSTRACT

Environment strongly influences human life. Environment would determine the form of human culture and has influenced the survival of human life. Orang Seletar, like other people of Orang Laut puts their life in ocean environment that formed a unique culture. Their lifestyle is really different from the people living in mainland. From the ethnoarchaeological fieldwork, it showed that Orang Seletar is a maritime community based on their adaptation to their environment of mangroves, sea shore and sea. This adaptation has influenced their culture and could be seen in their settlement and economic pattern, types of dietary and subsistence, material culture and their belief system. This article will discuss how environment has influenced the culture of Orang Seletar. The discussion consists of the environment adaptation on the types of economic patterns, dietary and subsistence, material culture and their belief system. The research was conducted through archeological surveys, ethnographic fieldwork and data analyses.

Keyword: Environment, adaptation, Orang Seletar, maritime culture.

INTRODUCTION

Orang Seletar is one of the 3 Orang Laut groups in the Malay Peninsula besides Orang Duano and Orang Kanaq. They can be found mostly along Tebrau Straits or Johor Straits and often called as "sea gypsies" in the earlier literature (Carey 1976:277). They are unique compared to other Orang Asli groups because they spend their entire life living in houseboats. With the houseboats, they live and sail in mangroves, sea shores and sea environments along the coast of southern Johor and the islands of Singapore (Mariam 2002:278). Today, they have abandoned their houseboats nomadic life and living sedentary lives along mangrove areas towards sea shore. There are 8 Orang Seletar's settlements in Johor Bahru. They build houses made from mangroves wood on water. This type of house is also known as pile settlements (Plate 1).

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Figure 1: Pile settlements

The Early Orang Seletar

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Orang Seletar could be found in Singapore. In Singapore, they were nomads living in houseboats. They had sailed along mangrove swamps on the river bank areas in northern Singapore. Besides, they also often sailed into the rivers and mangroves swamps in Johor (Mariam 2002:278). Sungai Seletar is situated about 12.8 km from Singapore city (Thomson 1847:342) and was used as their meeting place (Sopher 1954:159). They numbered 200 people living in 40 boats, an average then of 5 persons per boat (Thomson 1847:343). Located nearby Sungai Seletar is an island called Pulau Seletar. Pulau Seletar also was used as their settlements around 1920s (Mariam 2002:279).

In 1819, the Temenggung of Johor brought a number of Orang Seletar from Singapore to cross over Tebrau Straits towards northern Sungai Pulai (Sopher 1954:160). In Sungai Pulai, Orang Seletar built fishing stakes under the batin's direction near the mouth of Sungai Pulai (Sather 1999:15). Then, at the beginning of the twentieth century, around 1930s and 1940s, Orang Seletar moved from Sungai Pulai to Tebrau Straits. There, they fished and bartered their surplus catch for rice, sago and cloth. At that time, Orang Seletar had also worked for the Sultan of Johor by catching fish and crabs in return for cash (Sather 1999:15). The Sultan of Johor had also asked Orang Seletar to establish a permanent base even if they still preferred to remain living on boats (Ariffin 1979:13). This way, Orang Seletar would be more accessible to government control. Therefore, Kuala Redan had been used as a permanent base for these communities since 1948 during the Emergency. Kuala Redan can be regarded as the first sedentary settlement of Orang Seletar. It also can be seen as the beginning of the lifestyle change of the boat nomads to semi nomadic and eventually being sedentary communities that we could be seen today. From Kuala Redan, the settlement subsequently expanded to 8 settlements in Johor.

Until today, it is still difficult to locate the origin of Orang Seletar that is further than the location in Singapore. Most of them only know that they come from Sungai Seletar that is situated in Singapore. There are no oral traditions can be used to explain the early location of their ancestors further than Sungai Seletar. Therefore, it

is difficult to associate these communities with Orang Laut groups that joined Parameswara's journeys from Srivijaya until the establishment of the city of Malacca. Nevertheless, Sopher (1954) tried to correlate these communities with a story of Parameswara's journey. The correlation was made through assumption of the origin of the word Seletar. According to Sopher (1954), the word Seletar is probably derived from the Portugese word; *Celates* and later taken over by the Dutch word; *Selatter* (Sopher 1954:336). However, these 2 words are actually referred to all the nomadic or semi nomadic boat people of the Straits of Malacca and the Riau-Lingga Archipelago. It is not referred to specific tribes. But, there are several similar words used by Orang Seletar and Orang Suku Laut of Riau. For example, the word roof came from pandanus known as *kajang*. Besides, the word *ibul* is also used by both of these communities (Sudarman 1993:331). Other similar word that refers to the same thing is sea cucumber. Orang Seletar call it a *nebi*. Meanwhile Orang Suku Laut of Riau refers to it as a *nabi* (Chou 2010:84). Probably, further comparative research between both communities can be made and then could trace a further location of Orang Seletar than Singapore.

Demographic of Orang Seletar

Today, Orang Seletar lives a sedentary lifestyle in 8 settlements in Johor. Most of these settlements can be found along the Tebrau Straits. According to population records of JAKOA (Jabatan Kemajuan Orang Asli), the total populations of Orang Seletar in 2011 are about 1702 and consist of 375 family. From this number, 847 are men and 856 are women. These 8 settlements are Kampung Simpang Arang, Kampung Bakar Batu, Kampung Sungai Temun, Kampung Kuala Masai, Kampung Teluk Jawa, Kampung Pasir Putih, Kampung Teluk Kabong and Kampung Pasir Salam (Table 1).

Table 1: Population of Orang Seletar in Johor (Source: JAKOA 2011)

	Village	Population			Family
		Man	Woman	Total	
1	Simpang Arang	407	272	679	142
2	Bakar Batu	51	86	137	33
3	Sungai Temun	141	166	307	60
4	Kuala Masai	62	83	145	36
5	Teluk Jawa	43	57	100	23
6	Pasir Putih	32	40	72	22
7	Teluk Kabong	47	67	114	29
8	Pasir Salam	64	85	149	30
	Total	847	856	1703	375

Name of Orang Seletar

The word Seletar is believed to come from the name of a river; Sungai Seletar (Thomson 1847:343). Besides, there are other opinions about the origin of the word Seletar. According to Sopher (1954), the name Orang Seletar is derived originally from the Malay term Orang Selat. In his opinion, the term selat formerly did not mean only "straits" but also refers to the adjectival form of *selatan*, it referred specifically to the Straits of Singapore and to the routes of the Riau-Lingga Archipelago (Sopher 1954:326). In this case, name of Orang Seletar is associated with the distribution of these communities within southern Malay Peninsula specifically Singapore.

In Sopher opinions, he also suggests the word *selat* was adopted by Portuguese writer in sixteenth centuries; *Celates* and then this word was later taken by Dutch writers by uses word *Selatter*. He suggests that the modern form Seletar is a more recent Malay version of the Dutch of *Selatter* (Sopher 1954:337). However, it was needed to inform that the word *Celates* and *Selatter* in earlier literature is generally referred to all the nomadic or semi nomadic boat people of the Strait of Malacca and the Riau-Lingga Archipelago. But if the word Seletar is associated with Sungai Seletar, there is a relevant possibility. Sungai Seletar had been occupied by Orang Seletar before they migrated to Johor area. This is not something peculiar because many of the Orang Laut groups owns their tribe's name from the place name they settle down. As the example like Orang Matang who reside in Matang Island, Orang Kallang who reside in Kallang River, Orang Mapur who reside in Mapur Island and Orang Gallang who reside in Gallang Island (Zainal Abidin 1999:128).

Environmental Adaptation of Orang Seletar

Adaptation area of Orang Seletar is oriented by the environments of mangroves, sea shore and sea. This environment strongly influences their life. Living in the mangroves, sea shore and sea has formed the lifestyle and culture that is different from the people living in mainland environment. The differences could be seen in their settlements pattern, diet and subsistence, mode of production, technology and material cultures and belief system. This is because, one of the cultural characteristics is determined by the environmental adaptation. Based on their adaptation to their environments of mangroves, sea shore and sea, Orang Seletar can be categorized as a group that practice maritime culture or seafarer culture. According to Mohd Arof (2009), seafarer culture is a society's lifestyle that is living by fully depending on ocean environment as a life – not only to catch the marine products for dietary purposes but is also regarding the ocean as the world to be explored deeply (Mohd Arof 2009:13). It is showing that Orang Seletar owns a unique culture. It parallels to the definition of culture itself. Culture can be defined as the creation of the identity of community based on norms that had been agreed and practiced entirely by community and in Orang Seletar contexts, their culture identity are based on maritime culture (Mohamad Suhaimi 2013:239).

Mangrove area is an important area to the survival of Orang Seletar life. Mangrove area consists variety of communities that live around between high tide and low tide area. Along Tebrau Straits, there are many mangrove forest along the sea shore. Mangrove forest exists through the mixture of salted water from the sea and water from rivers that eventually become brackish water. Small particles of soil that are brought by streams from lowland and mainland, then precipitated in river mouth and sea shore, finally being stable and the layer of soils becomes higher. The tide along sea shores would give some spaces to the small particle of soils that come from lowland and mainland by the movement of stream and then it will be precipitated. In the end, the are of sea shores and river mouth would become more stable and then form a new zone called mangrove forest (Abu Bakar 2011:15).

Mangrove area of Malay Peninsula in year 2012 is consists of 98.8 thousand hectares. Of this amount, Johor contributes around 27.5% of mangrove area that is amounted to 27.17 thousand hectares. However, for the last 6 years, the mangrove forest in Johor has been decreased by about 19.67% that is amounted to 33.86 thousand hectares in 2006 (Department of Statistics Malaysia 2013:47).

The temperature of mangrove area is around 20°C (Lokman 1992:36). Its soil consist small dregs of mud that usually appear on river banks, river mouth and delta. Sediments from this area consist of small dregs and mud which accounts for 80% of the total sediment (Lokman 1992:43). Water quality of the mangrove area is murky and dirty. It happens because the tide of the sea carries the sediment to shores.

The main flora of mangrove area is mangrove trees. This flora can live and grow up in the high saltiness. About 50 species of mangrove trees and small tree can be found in the mangrove ecosystem (Lokman 1992:39). Meanwhile along the Tebrau Straits, 32 species of flora have been recorded (Abu Bakar 2011:151). Among them are *Avicennia* and *Sonneratia* species that are regarded as pioneer plants in mangrove area along the sea shores. *Rhizophora* species are available from mangrove forest to rural lowland area where it could be reached by the tides. Meanwhile, *Bruguire* species live in an area where headed to lowland that could be overwhelmed by the tides. Species such as *nipah* (*Nypa fruticans*), *pandan*, *mengkuang* (*Pandanus atrocarpus*) and *nibong* (*Oncosperm tigillarum*) can be found at the upstream area (Lokman 1992:39). *Nipah* can live in the high saltiness areas and also in brackish water area (Abu Bakar 2011:132). Mangrove zone is also the place that contributes sources of foods to several of marine species. Such as some types of algae; *epifit* that can stick to surfaces of trunks and roots of mangrove trees and also microalgae that appear on surfaces of mangrove soils which is as food source to species of fish, shrimps and molluscs (Lokman 1992:39).

Besides, other fauna living in mangrove is gastropod crab. This crab can live in high temperature, dry situations and in abrupt changes of saltiness. Some of the species is *Scylla serrata* which is the main food sources for Orang Seletar. *Scylla serrata* can be found in river bank, river mouth and sea shores. This crab would migrate to river mouth and would move into mangrove during high tide (Lokman 1992:53). Other species of crabs that can be found in mangrove is *Metaplox*, *Ilyoplox* and *Uca*. These crabs live under the mud. Other fauna that can be found in

mangrove area are barnacles, oyster, mollusc and mussels. Molluscs species of mangrove that can be found and can also be eaten are *Crassostrea sp* and *Mytilus smaragdinus*. *Crassostrea sp* are usually attached in groups under the trunks, roots and pneumatophore structure of mangrove trees (Lokman 1992:56). Species of *Mytilus sp* and *Mytilus viridis* can be found on the surface of mangrove tree trunk or attached to the surface of boulders (Lokman 1992:58). Meanwhile for the species of fish that could be entering into mangrove forests zone to find foods and also to find breeding place are species of *Caragidae*, *Clupeidae*, *Lutjanidae*, *Trichiuridae*, *Pomodasyidae*, *Scianenidae*, *Trachysuridae* and *Serranidae*. Species of fish that can commonly be found in mangrove zone are species of *Liza Mugil*, *Epinephelus*, *Lutjanus*, *Megalops*, *Lates*, *Centropomus*, *Arius* and *Tachysurus*.

There are mutual contacts between Orang Seletar, flora, fauna and mangrove forest. Mangrove forest has many functions in natural ecosystem. It serves as a wall between the sea and the land. It is important to stabilize the environment along the coastal line of the sea shore. It works as a blockade for sea shore area from the huge wave which is usually used by Orang Seletar as their settlements. In addition, mangrove forest also functioned to obstruct serious coastal erosion. Besides, mangrove forest also contributes a variety species of fauna. Fauna like crabs, shrimp and fish needs mangrove forest to get food, searching for breeding place and sanctuary by moving into mangrove zone during the high tide. Other importance of mangrove forest is to transmit waste from plants to sea shore through high tide. Mangroves area also received resources that brought by tides into mangrove area. Fauna like shrimps that live in mangrove area would migrating into seas to searching for breeding places that are situated some kilometers from sea shores. It shows that mangrove forest is important ecosystems for humans especially for the people living at these environments like Orang Seletar.

Mangrove not only contributes to a variety of food sources consisting of fish, shrimp, mollusc and crabs from nearby the coastal zone, birds eggs, honey and fruit of the mangrove zone, but they also contribute to other needs. For example, mangrove forest also contributes to the needs of timber resources required by Orang Seletar to build houses, fishing stakes and firewood. Mangrove tree are the important source of house construction to raise the pole of houses over the water surface. Mangroves trees are suitable for use as a house pole in mangroves and coastal environment because it does not easily decompose in the water. The mangrove tree that commonly available is species of *Avicennia*, *Sonneratia*, *Rhizophora* and *Bruguiera*.

Mode of Production

The influences of environmental adaptation also can be seen through the types of dietary and subsistence that consumed by Orang Seletar. Most of dietary is based on marine sources which consists types of fish, crustaceans and molluscs. About 106 species of fish, 9 species of crabs, 25 species of shrimps and 21 species of molluscs has been recorded which is the main dietary of Orang Seletar.

From a mode of production perspectives, generally Orang Seletar depends entirely on maritime sources for their survival. By using the boat, they catch and collect marine products in the mangroves, sea shore and seas. In Skeat and Blagden (1966) record, Orang Seletar sailed using 6 meter long boat into mangroves to gather marine products and then sail to sea shores. After they finished exploring that particular mangroves and sea shore, they will move to other areas to find something for their dietary and subsistence (Skeat and Blagden 1966:198). As Orang Seletar's lifestyle changed, the fishing method also changed. Today, they had left their houseboats lifestyle, which means they no need to sleep, eat and cook on the boat during fishing anymore. Most of the houseboats today have been replaced by motor boats. After a day at sea, usually they will return to their settlements.

Fishing area is divided into 2 areas. The first area is sea shores and the second one is open seas. Fishing at sea shores, they use a method known as *empang rantau*. *Empang rantau* is a fishing method using stretched net that is tied at several of mangrove sticks. It is installed in a long row of 200-300 meters long. Net is usually installed about 200 meters away from the sea shore. It is installed during the low tide and will be left there. During high tides, the fish will move towards the sea shore and then get trapped in the net. But if neap-tide happens, *empang rantau* can't be used because there is the least difference between high and low water. This situation usually occurs 2 times in a month, between 15th and 30th day of the month (Interview: Entel B. Burok, Kampung Pasir Putih, 28 April 2011).

Beside *empang rantau*, they are also using diving method to catch fish (Plate 2). This method usually used during high tides because at the times, fish from the sea are moving towards the sea shores. During diving, they bring along a spear or harpoon to catch the fish under the water. Diving method is also applied to gather the sea cucumber along the island coastlines. They dived into the water to bring the sea cucumber up to the surface (Interview: Khairul B. Salim, Kampung Sungai Temun, 19 December 2011).



Figure 2: Fishing by diving method

Although, today Orang Seletar have left houseboats lifestyle, some of them are still involve in catching and gathering marine sources in long period of time and distance. This activity is known as *berlarkin*. It usually involves the elementary family or is called *seuma*, literally “the people of one house”. As *berlarkin* will require them to live on the boats for a long time and distance, all the necessity would be done on their boat. They will eat, cook and sleep in the boat. To shelter from the dew and rains of the night and heat of the day, they put a roof or is called *pekajang* on their boat. Their boat also has a crock as a container to fill the water for cooking and drinking. They get the fresh water from the river and the rainwater (Interview: Entel B. Burok, Kampung Pasir Putih, 28 April 2011). This activity resembles their former lifestyle which occupied the nomadic houseboats (Plate 3).



Figure 3: Houseboat of Orang Seletar (Source: Arrifin Norpiah 1979)

Besides catching fish, Orang Seletar also collects other marine products such as species of shrimps, molluscs and crabs. Crab collecting in mangrove area is popular work among Orang Seletar. Species of crab that is collected by Orang Seletar is *ketam bangkang*, *ketam nipah* (*Scylla serrate*), *ketam okob*, *ketam neh*, *ketam tomok* and *ketam batu* (*Scylla olivacea*). *Ketam bangkang* is the most popular species that is collected by Orang Seletar because of its high price and demand in local market. Crab collecting is done during low tides by groups of men and women. Collectors are dispersed over a shallow area. To catch the mangrove crab like *ketam bangkang*, they must know how to identify the crab's hole first. Then the collectors use a tool known as *pengait ketam* to bring out the crabs. Meanwhile for *ketam batu* (*Scylla olivacea*), its hole usually can be found at the bottom of a mangrove tree. Its hole can reach 1 meter depth in from the surface. One hole it occupied by one crab. The hole size is about 15-20 cm long. To catch the *ketam batu*, collectors put *pengait ketam* into the hole, then pull it out to bring up the crabs out (Interview: Tiwang B Tawang, Kampung Simpang Arang, 2 May 2011).

While the molluscs are usually collected along the sea shore and mangrove areas. They usually collect the molluscs by hand but for some of the molluscs, they used some simple tools. For the molluscs like *ibau* and *kucci* (*Mytilidae sp.*), they use a small tool to collect it, known as *kait ibau* and *kait kucci*. Meanwhile for molluscs like *semobak*, *musel*, *siput boongan* (*Murex tribulus*), *tiram* (*Crassostrea sp.*), *siput mata merah*, *siput kokoh* (*Nerita sp.*), *kerang* (*Anadara granosa*) and *lala*

(*Cryptomya elliptica*), they just collect it by hand during the low tide (Interview: Jahan B. Tom, Kampung Sungai Temun, 21 December 2011). Cockle /*Kerang* and *lala* usually breed around Julai till October. In Johor, the highest *kerang* population could be found in Mei till September (Lokman 1992:340). Meanwhile for molluscs like *siput gonggong* (*Laevistrombus canarium*), *kupang* (*Perna viridis*), and *puting beliung* (*Pinnidae sp.*), they applied diving method to collect it at the edge of the mangroves and along the island shoreline. In the Tebrau Straits, mussel/*kupang* populations could be found all year especially in February-Mei and October-November (Lokman 1992:299). Mussel/*Kupang* is a marine products living by attaching themselves to the substratum like boulders and wooden sticks. To collect it, divers will dive into the water and bring it up to surface (Interview: Jahan B. Tom, Kampung Sungai Temun, 21 December 2011).

Orang Seletar occasionally hunt wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) and mousedeer (*Muntiacus muntjac*) in the forest and oil palm plantation close to their settlements (Plate 4). Pigs are hunted with dogs and spears (Interview: Suti B. Akon, Kampung Pasir Salam, 12 April 2011). For mousedeer, the Orang Seletar have developed a unique hunting technique. Like ordinary fishing, they use hooks and lines, but in this case, they bait the hooks with jackfruit (*Artocarpus heterophyllus*) (Sather 1999:20).



Figure 4: Hunting wild boar (*Sus scrofa*)

In early stages, Orang Seletar don't seem to have any interest, knowledge and experience on agriculture (Ariffin 1979:28). Therefore, they don't know how to cultivate the land. This is not something peculiar because other groups of Orang Laut are also not interested to be involved in cultivating the land. Therefore, in the past, Orang Laut sees rice and opium as a luxury thing (Skeat and Blagden 1966:134). To obtain the rice, sago and cloth, they usually will trade with their marine products.

Material Cultures

Cultures are divided into 2 categories; material culture and non-material culture. Non-material culture is an abstract culture that comprises of belief systems, custom and law system (Shamsul Amri 2007:14). Meanwhile material culture is a concrete culture which comprises of material and equipment that is used by some community. It includes domestic tools, production tools and ritual tools. Domestic tools are tools that are used for economic purposes like tools for hunting and gathering and agricultural implements and fishing tools (Wazir dan Razha 2001:33). According to Hamid (2011), musical instruments, ornament tools and ritual tools can also be categorized as material culture.

Boats are the most important material culture in Orang Seletar life. In the past, boats were not only used as transport but also as their home. However today, mostly the function of houseboats had been replaced by motor boats. The traditional boat of Orang Seletar can be divided into 3 types; *Pauk Pocai*, *Pauk Yao* and *Pauk Jolo*. *Pauk* is a term of Orang Seletar that refers to the word boat (Interview: Jahan B. Tom, Kampung Sungai Temun, 21 December 2011). *Pauk Pocai* is the largest traditional houseboats. This boat measurement is 8 meters long and 2 meters wide. It can occupy by 8-10 people.

The second type of boat is the *Pauk Yao* (Figure 5). This boat is also known as *Perahu Kajang*. It is second largest traditional houseboats of Orang Seletar. This boat has a roof which is used as a shelter from the dew and rains of the night and heat of the day. This roof is made from *mengkuang* leaf or *pandan* leaf and tied by the rattan. It is also called *pekajang*. The size of this boat is 7.3 meters long. It can occupy by 5-6 people. Both of these houseboats made from *Meranti* wood (*Shorea spp.*) and *Seraya* wood (*Shorea curtisii*). The last boat is *Pauk Jolo* (Plate 5). This boat is made from a tree trunk which is drilled through the middle. The size of this boat is 5.3 meters x 1 meter (Interview: Jahan B. Tom, Kampung Sungai Temun, 21 December 2011).

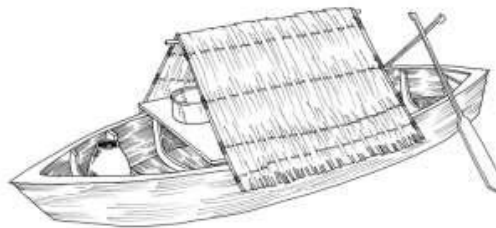


Figure 5: *Pauk Yao* also known as *Perahu Kajang*
(Illustrated by Nik Ashri B. Nik Harun)



Figure 6: *Pauk Jolo*

Production tools of Orang Seletar for catching and gathering marine products consists of fish spears, harpoon, *kait kucci*, *kait ibau*, *kait ketam*, *bento ketam*, *bubu buluh*, *empang rantau*, *sodong udang*, *sauk udang*, *kail* and *ambor*.

Fish spear is a tool which is usually used in catching fish by diving method (Figure 2). It consists of 2 main parts; a shaft and pointed head. The head is made from single iron blade which needs to be sharpened and shaped until sharp. And it also can be shaped like arrows. Meanwhile a shaft is made from wooden sticks which can't sink in the water. This wood is called *kayu mang* (Interview: Khairul B. Salim, Kampung Sungai Temun, 19 December 2011). The length of the shaft is about 135-140 cm. The bark needs to be removed by a knife. Then, the spike would be fastened to the shaft using a nylon string. In the past, they used rattan instead of nylon string.



Figure 7: Fish spear (Illustrated by Nik Ashri B. Nik Harun)

According to Chou (2010), a *seligi* is the prototype of all spears that is used today by Orang Suku Laut of Riau. *Seligi* is made from simple wooden lances with 2 spikes as the head (Chou 2010:146). Orang Laut of Riau also used a harpoon, also known as *serampang 5 mata* as their common tool to catch small and medium sized fish. *Serampang 5 mata* comprised of 5 spikes attached to the shaft known as *gagang* (Chou 2010:94). The shaft is made from bamboo. For a larger catch such as the sea cow and turtle, they use *tempuling* (Chou 2010:94).

There are 2 types of Orang Seletar harpoon which are *serampang 2 mata* (Figure 8) and *serampang 3 mata* (Figure 9). The process to make harpoon is almost similar with fish spear. To make *serampang 2 mata*, 2 sticks of iron are needed and it needs to be shaped until it is sharp. After that, it is fastened to a handle using rattan. Meanwhile for *serampang 3 mata*, it needs 3 iron sticks shaped

like arrows. A handle is usually made from the *kayu mang* which can't sink in the water.



Figure 8: *Serampang 2 mata* (Illustrated by Nik Ashri B. Nik Harun)



Figure 9: *Serampang 3 mata* (Illustrated by Nik Ashri B. Nik Harun)

Kait kucci is a small and simple tool that is used to catch molluscs known as *kucci*. *Kucci* usually occupies around mud areas. *Kait kucci* comprises an iron that is shaped like a hook and is attached to its handle. Meanwhile *kait ibau*, is used to collect to mollusc known as *ibau* (Figure 10). It is made from a branch of a mangrove tree that has a shape like a T shape.



Figure 10: *Kait ibau* (Illustrated by Nik Ashri B. Nik Harun)

Pengait ketam is used to collect crab at the mangrove area (Figure 11). It comprises of iron hook and a handle. The hook looks like a L shape. That hook is attached to the handle and tied by rattan.



Figure 11 : *Pengait ketam* (Illustrated by Nik Ashri B. Nik Harun)

Bento ketam is a tool that comprises of a square net made from rough thread (Figure 12). Its size is about ½ meter. The net needs to string at the corner of 4 sticks of rattans or bamboos. *Bento ketam* is weighed down by sinkers attached at the corners of the netting.



Figure 12: *Bento ketam* (Illustrated by Nik Ashri B. Nik Harun)

Bubu buluh is used to catch fish (Figure 13). It is made from bamboo and tied by rattan.



Figure 13: *Bubu buluh* (Illustrated by Nik Ashri B. Nik Harun)

To catch fish at sea shores, Orang Seletar usually use a method known as *empang rantau* (Figure 14). It is made from a net that is used along the sea shores. The size of net is about 4 meters wide and 0.9 meter long. The net will be attached to several of wooden sticks made from *nibong*, *bakau* or bamboo and then erected on the land (Interview: Entel B. Burok, Kampung Pasir Putih, 13 April 2011).

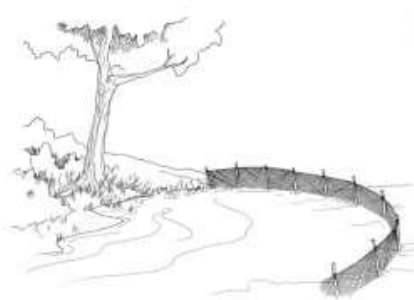


Figure 14: *Empang rantau* (Illustrated by Nik Ashri B. Nik Harun)

Kail is made from a wooden or bamboo stick. It has a hook tied at the edge of fishing line. Meanwhile an *ambor* is a simple tool for catching fish. It comprises of a can or bottle, a hook and fishing line. A roll of fishing line would be wound up on a can or a bottle. And the hook is tied at the end of fishing line.

To catch shrimps, there are 2 tools used by Orang Seletar; *sodong udang* and *sauk udang*. *Sodong udang* made by attaching a net to 2 bamboos or wooden pole and can be operated by only one individual. This tool is used along the sea shore at shallow water (Interview: Del B. Jatoh, Kampung Teluk Jawa, 17 April 2011). Meanwhile *sauk udang* consist s of 2 parts which is a net and a handle. The frame of a net is made from rattan meanwhile the net is made from rough thread. The handle is made from wood or bamboo. It's usually applied by using a boat.

For the hunting tools especially to hunt wild boars, Orang Seletar uses spear also known as *pancak isuum*. Formerly, the spear is made from wood known as *kayu bais*. *Kayu bais* has very thick and strong trunk. Orang Seletar believes that *kayu bais* is possessed by some spirit. Therefore, they must ask for the permission first before it cuts off the tree to get the wood (Interview: Entel B. Burok, Kampung Pasir Putih, 28 April 2011).

To make an *ibul* spear, the bark is removed by a knife. Then, the wood is put near on open fire to get a straight and strong stick. After that, the ends of the wood need to be sharpened until it looks like an arrow shape. However, due to the difficulty to find *kayu bais* nowadays, Orang Seletar usually replace it by using *nibong* wood.

To make spear from *nibong* wood, its trunk needs to be cut off into 2 by using a hammer and chisel. The bark needs to be removed by using a knife. The ends of wood needs to be sharpen until it looks like an arrow shape.

There are several types of spears from *nibong*. The differences are determined by the shape and the quantity of spikes. *Tombak* (Figure 15) comprises one spike, *wit* (Figure 16) which is also known as *pancak 3 mata* has 3 spikes and *tembung* (Figure 17) has 2 spikes. The size of *tombak* is about 217 cm long and 3 cm wide, *wit* is 211 cm long and 3 cm wide and *tembung* is 118 cm long and 4 cm wide.



Figure 15: *Tombak* (Illustrated by Nik Ashri B. Nik Harun)



Figure 16: *Wit* (Illustrated by Nik Ashri B. Nik Harun)



Figure 17: *Tembung* (Illustrated by Nik Ashri B. Nik Harun)

Next, material culture is an ornament tools that consists of seashell necklaces, seashell bracelets, seashell earrings, headbands, *selempang* and the waistband. Orang Seletar uses seashell as the raw source in the making of a seashell necklaces, seashell bracelet and seashell earring. It's commonly used by dancers (Interview: Leiti Bt Akon, Kampung Sungai Temun, 8 December 2011). Nylon string is used to attach the shells by putting it through hole that has been drilled on the seashells. For necklaces, a big seashell is usually used as a locket. But sometimes, they also use a tusk of wild boar as a locket (Figure 18). Each of the necklaces have around 20-25 seashells.



Figure 18: Seashell necklaces (Illustrated by Nik Ashri B. Nik Harun)

Method of production of earring is quite simple (Figure 19). A big seashell would be attached to a small iron that has a shape like a small hook by using strings which have length of 1 cm.



Figure 19: Earring seashell (Illustrated by Nik Ashri B. Nik Harun)

A headband also known as *tanjak*, *selempang* and waistband is usually used by Orang Seletar when they have some guest during dancing ceremony. The headband is used by Orang Seletar community. But there are differences between headbands used by the head of the community from the rest of the community (Figure 20). For the head of community, the size of a headband is larger and higher than a headband used by the common people. It shows the credibility and integrity

as a leader in the community (Interview: Salim B. Palon, Kampung Sungai Temun, 13 December 2011). A headband, *selampang* and waistband is commonly worn by dancers. Its raw material is from *mengkuang* leaf, *pandan* leaf and *nipah* leaf.



Figure 20: Headband known as *tanjak* for batin (Illustrated by Nik Ashri B. Nik Harun)

Belief System

From the belief system perspective, environmental adaptation also influences the form of Orang Seletar belief system. This can be seen in their spiritual concept that has associated with their environment. It can also be seen that their belief system involves taboo, shamanism, ritual rite and so on that has reflected the environment adapted by them.

In belief systems, Orang Seletar believed in a god known as *Tuhan Tinggi* (High God). *Tuhan Tinggi* is said to be the creator of the world (Ariffin 1979:35). They also belief in spirit. The spirits comprises of good spirits and bad spirits. Good spirits are believed to protect the people and said to be in close contact with *Tuhan Tinggi*. The good spirits are also known as *Hantu Laut*. *Hantu Laut* comprises 3 types of spirits that are *Serampai*, *Hawa* and *Siti Hawa*. *Serampai* is regarded as father spirit. Meanwhile *Hawa* is regarded as mother spirit and *Siti Hawa* as daughter spirit (Interview: Entel B. Burok, Kampung Pasir Putih, 28 April 2011).

Serampai spirit is located at the open sea about 48 km from sea shores. Meanwhile *Hawa* spirit is located in areas between open seas and sea shores, about 16 km from sea shores and *Siti Hawa* spirit is located along sea shores (Interview: Entel B. Burok, Kampung Pasir Putih, 28 April 2011). Therefore, for anyone who wanted any aid or help, they should call for help based on right location and spirits. In the Orang Seletar ritual known as *kenduik moyang*, they also present some meal to *Hantu Laut* as a symbolic for their respect (Figure 21). It's done by putting the meals on water.



Figure 21: Ritual rite known as *kenduik moyang*

In burial practices, there are differences between Orang Seletar, which adapted their life in ocean environment, with people living in mainland environment. It could be traced to the concepts of burial goods. Instead of food, drinks and cloth, burial goods of Orang Seletar consists of fish catching tools like fish spear, harpoon, fish nets and also hunting tools like a spear, adze and knife which these things is suitable to use on their environmental adaptation. They believe, these burial goods would be used by the dead in their next life. There is a record saying that formerly, the fragment of boats has been used as a coffin for the dead body (Sather 1999:18).

It is also the same in shamanism practices. Shaman in Orang Seletar culture is to cure the physical and soul disease. Almost all of the spells that is used by shaman in healing is has correlations with sea environments. Healing also involves the help of *Serampai* spirits. For Orang Seletar, their life is fully depending on their environment that adapted by them. Therefore, no one can take anything from the nature without permission of spirits. Nature does not to belong to anyone except the god. Therefore, when they go to sea for catching marine products, they will ask for permission from the *Hantu Laut* which is regarded as the guardian of the sea (Interview: Lam B. Kipat, Kampung Sungai Temun, 15 December 2011).

Based on the spells of Orang Seletar, it shows that the function has correlations with the environments of seas. Some of the spells is to avoid the rain from falling down, spell to cure the poison of *ikan duri* (*Arius spp*), *ikan pari* (*Aetomylaeuss spp*), *ikan sembilang* (*Plotosus canius*) and spell to cure the disease caused by the bad spirit known as *makhluk tali aus*. By their experiences in facing all of this, they need something to solve the problem and they use the shamanism.

CONCLUSION

Adaptation pattern of sea shores, sea and mangrove determine and influence the mode of production, types of dietary that depend on marine sources. It is also used as raw material in making the material culture such as domestic, production and ritual tools and burial goods.

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The research shows that maritime community has a belief system that has correlation with the environments of sea. It can be understood through the belief in spirit which it names, spirit structure, function, taboo, ritual rite, spells and shamanism and so on.

Ethnographic study on Orang Seletar could help to give visualization on the technology and material culture people whose adaptation is to the sea, sea shore and mangrove environment. The research shows that the community owns a simple technology and material culture but efficient to catch fish, gather marine products, hunting the wild animals and function as a domestic, economic and ritual tools.

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