

Nature-Inspired Weaponry and Defence in Indigenous Orang Asli Communities of Malaysia: A Literary Perspective

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.90400525>

Received: 15 April 2025; Accepted: 21 April 2025; Published: 27 May 2025

ABSTRACT

This paper studies weaponry and defense used by Orang Asli leaders and communities based on literary works. The Orang Asli community is a community entity that lives quite isolated and marginalized compared to the rest of the general community. This article will only focus on the weaponry and defenses possessed by the Semai community from the Senoi group and also the Jakun community from the Proto-Malay group. The literary works studied are modern literary works as well as oral literature. The first objective of this study is the form of weapons used in the wars they are involved in, and the second objective is to study the uniqueness of the weapon resources they use. The main issue that this paper wants to explore is how natural resources such as plants, trees, and others have been used as powerful weapons by the Orang Asli in the episodes of war in their literary works. Although the use of sharp weapons still exists, naturally sourced weapons are interesting because they can injure and defeat the enemy. The methodology of the study is qualitative as well as textual analysis. This study's analysis uses local scholars' views on traditional weapons as the basis for discussion. This study is significant because it aims to showcase the uniqueness of the Orang Asli weapons and defenses, which differ from other communities. In conclusion, the Orang Asli community indeed has its own weaponry and defence systems. Their bitter experiences during the era of slavery and the communist occupation have revealed that the Orang Asli community also had their own weapons and defence tools for their survival.

Keywords: Weapons, Indigenous People, Leaders, Literary Work, Nature

INTRODUCTION

The Orang Asli community is a community entity that lives quite isolated and marginalized compared to the rest of the general community. This minority group is often in an environment that is always covered and surrounded by thick wilderness areas and far inland. The Orang Asli are also part of the inhabitants of nature who are familiar with the challenging, cramped living environment and are also always faced with various bitter life challenges. However, their dedication to the environment they have inhabited for so long has made this community more resilient and have high resilience. They do not drift away in destitution but they are able to survive in such an environment.

There are three major groups of Indigenous people in Peninsular Malaysia known as Negrito, Senoi, and Proto-Malay. These three groups are further divided into subtribes. This classification, based on physical appearance, location, and lifestyle, makes their identities more prominent with the unique characteristics of each group.

The Negrito group consists of several tribes of Orang Asli scattered across Peninsular Malaysia. Their livelihood composition exists from the northern part of the Peninsular to beyond the Titiwangsa Range to Kelantan, Terengganu, and Pahang. The Negrito group consists of the Kintak tribe (Perak), Kensiu (Kedah), Jahai (Perak and Kelantan), Mendrik (Kelantan), Bateq (Kelantan, Terengganu, and Pahang), and also the Lanoh tribe in Perak. The areas inhabited by the Negrito group are pretty extensive because they span several states. The Negrito group was also once known as 'Little Negro' (Carey 1976:14) for having a unique and distinctive facial expression.

They look like the faces of the original tribes in New Guinea. Physically, they are short, less than five feet tall and dark-skinned. Negritos also have short, curly hair.

The second group is the Senoi. The Senoi have tribes scattered on the East Coast until entering the central area of Peninsular Malaysia. The Orang Asli tribes from the Senoi group consist of Temiar (Perak, Kelantan and Pahang), Semai (Perak, Pahang and Selangor), and Jah Hut¹ and Che Wong (Pahang). Semok Beri is found in Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang. Mah Meri is found on the coast of the state of Selangor. Therefore, this paper will analyse the oral stories owned by the Jakun community in Kuala Rompin from the Proto Malay group and also the Semai community in Perak from the Senoi group to show the uniqueness of the weaponry and defence they use in war with the enemy.

The third group is the Proto-Malay with several small tribes under it. The first tribe is the Jakun tribe who inhabit the interior and forest areas of the states of Pahang and Johor. The Temuan tribe inhabits the states of Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang and also Johor. The most numerous are in Pahang and Negeri Sembilan. The Temok tribe in Pahang while the Orang Kanak, Laut and Seletar inhabit the coastal areas of Johor in Malaysia.

However, this article will only focus on the weaponry and defenses possessed by the Semai community from the Senoi group and also the Jakun community from the Proto-Malay group.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses qualitative research methods. This study [obtained](#) primary data through field research methods to collect stories of the Orang Asli and uses novels produced by the Orang Asli authors. Next, the story is analysed to see how leaders and the Orang Asli community use weapons when facing their enemies.

This study does not use a specific theory but uses several scholars from Malaysia who discuss the weapons used by traditional societies in the past, namely A. Samad Ahmad (1987) and Muhammad Yusoff Hashim (1993). The view is analyzed in the literary works of Orang Asli, which involve the use of weapons in episodes of war.

ANALYSIS

Indigenous People in Conflict and War

During the traditional era, the issue of slavery was a practice practiced in the traditional Malay feudal system for a long time. In those days, every Malay chief had servants to do various work. Maxwell (1890:249) claimed that the ownership of enslaved people among dignitaries was said to be a symbol of the dignitaries' power and authority. The number of enslaved people owned by a dignitary would indicate the level or status of his position. It is not strange if it is said that the institution of slavery among the Malays in the feudal era was indeed a standard practice.

Orang Asli is also said to have been insulted so severely by the institution of slavery, starting from the early stages of the process of finding enslaved people again. Endicott (1983:221) explains the activity of capturing Orang Asli in the forests to be enslaved since there is a demand for these enslaved individuals. The activity of hunting and capturing the Orang Asli is an illustration of how tortured and oppressed this community is treated in such a way. The Aborigines could not fight with the people who hunted and captured them. Endicott (1983:221) also said that the activity of catching the Orang Asli was like hunting wild animals in the forest.

The emergency period of 1948-1960 that shackled the entire society in Malaya indeed left a profound impact of suffering on their lives. The presence and emergence of communists, who were said to be forming peace and restoring security, marked the beginning of a new form of suffering after the Japanese occupation. Despite any

¹ The issue of the development of the Jah Hut tribe was also explored in depth by Hood Salleh and Hasan Mat Nor (1984). Their study looked at how the development of the outside community impacted the lives of the Jah Hut tribe

reasons given, the central pillar was that the people of Malaya continuously felt suffering during this emergency period with various forms of oppression and murder.' (Wan Azizah 1976:24).

Due to the pressure from the government from time to time, these terrorists fled far into the jungle. The communist movement eventually became active in the forest and utilized guerrilla attack tactics (Hall 1984:1024), allowing them to also encounter and interact with the communities living in those forests. At this stage, the Orang Asli communities living in the jungles felt the brunt of the hardships of the emergency period. The communists residing in the jungles would, of course, try to exploit the lives of the Orang Asli for the sake of their struggle. Thus, willingly or unwillingly, the Orang Asli faced these communists in the forest. Officially, Carey (1976:305) acknowledged that 'the Orang Asli indeed felt a strong impact during the emergency, which made their lives more bitter and oppressed.'

The suffering of the Orang Asli during the emergency can be seen in various situations. The Orang Asli were exploited for the benefit of the communists in the forest. Carey (1976:306) also claimed 'that the communists living deep in the forest had made the existence of the tiny community a convenience and benefit for them.' The helpless and powerless Orang Asli community could do nothing but wait for the actions of the communist guerrillas. The communists saw the existence of the Orang Asli in the jungles as 'a source of food acquisition and intelligence gathering' (Carey 1976:310).

Miller (1972:132) described a problematic situation for the Orang Asli because the communists had strongly influenced them. The communists successfully controlled the lives and movements of the Orang Asli during the emergency. The terrorists also won the hearts of the Orang Asli by helping them with farming. A record by Abdullah CD (1998:149) further states that 'the communist guerrillas travelling from Pahang to Perak had encountered Orang Asli villages planting corn and millet.' The record indicates that the communists helped the Orang Asli during the harvesting of these crops, which were then handed over to the communists as food supplies. Although the record may be biased towards the communists, the fact that should be acknowledged is that it serves as evidence that the communists had used the Orang Asli as a means to obtain food supplies in the forest. The use of the Orang Asli as a source for obtaining food supplies is relevant when linked to the expertise of the Orang Asli in the wilderness. It would be difficult for the communists if there were no indication from the local people in the forest, such as the Orang Asli. The growing sense of fear, in addition to the inability to fight, has made them only follow orders. Therefore, these experiences reveal the Orang Asli community to tell about weapons, conflict and war through oral stories and modern works that they have inherited since the past.

Aboriginal Weaponry: Sharp Weapons

Wars in the Malay community have highlighted the use of military equipment and logistics as found in the wars of other nations. However, the traditional Malay war logistics were less sophisticated than modern military equipment. However, despite being equipped with relatively minimal equipment and the available forces capacity, they could still survive and bravely fight in the wars they participated in. According to the view of some researchers, the basic weapons used by the Malays at that time were *keris*, *parang*, *badik*, *lawi ayam*, shield and *sumpit* (Muhammad Yusoff Hashim, 1993:205). Western scholars, Reid (1988: 127) also said that the Malay community in the archipelago once used swords, *kerambit* and spears in previous wars.

However, it should be remembered that even though the Malay weaponry system seems too traditional and conventional, it does not mean that the Malay community is lagging in the weaponry technology of its contemporaries. The Malay community also has firearms and cannons. A. Samad Ahmad (1987) admits that the Malays have known bullets and cannons since ancient times. Arab traders also bring firearms to Malaya. Mahayuddin Haji Yahya (1998:227) once stated that the Malay kingdom of Patani had three large cannons known as *Seri Patani*, *Seri Negeri* and *Mahalela*. Muhammad Yusoff Hashim (1993:205) also lists several types of firearms the Malays use: cannons, *lela*, *rentaka*, *pemuras* and *lotang* (big cannons). Even more unique and special, Malay war equipment included sharp weapons and firearms and involved gongs, tambourines, drums, and *gendang* used as signal tools during their wars.

The Orang Asli community also has weaponry experience similar to that of the Malays. Jakun and Semai's oral

stories depict the use of sharp weapons among the Orang Asli when they were involved in wars and armed conflicts with enemies. In the story 'Pak Sehalus' narrated by Pura Taman from Kuala Rompin Pahang, the use of spears and swords in a war is depicted witnessed by the character Pak Sehalus:

"Suatu hari tu Pak Sehalus pun sampai di tempat lembing bertikam sama lembing, "Hai lembing, berhentilah bertikam sesama sendiri itu. Aku datang ada tujuan. Aku nak naik ke kawasan ini," kata Pak Sehalus. "Baiklah! Silalah naik," kata lembing itu lalu berhenti daripada terus bertikam. Pak Sehalus pun berjalan lagi dan berjumpa pula dengan keris yang sedang bertikam. Pak Sehalus tak ada jalan untuk melalui kawasan itu. Maka diminta kebenaran juga maka Pak Sehalus pun boleh berjalan terus dengan mudah. Berjalan lagi Pak Sehalus sehingga sampailah ke tempat pedang berperang sesama pedang. Bukan saja siang atau malam berperang tapi untuk selama-lamanya. "Hai pedang, berehatlah dulu. Saya nak beri hadiah yang paling istimewa untuk pedang. Hadiah ialah membunuh semua benda hidup di negeri saya itu. Raja sendiri yang ingin memberi hadiah ini kepada awak wahai pedang," kata Pak Sehalus kepada pedang itu. "Raja suruh awak ikut balik bersama saya," kata Pak Sehalus lagi. Maka jawablah pedang itu, "Wah! Pucuk dicita ulam mendatang." (Cerita "Pak Sehalus")

[“One day Pak Sehalus arrived at the place where the javelin was stabbed with the javelin, “Hi javelin, stop stabbing each other. I came with a purpose. I want to go up to this area,” said Pak Sehalus. “Alright! Please go up,” said the javelin and stopped from continuing to stab. Pak Sehalus walked again and met the kris who was stabbing. Pak Sehalus has no way to pass through the area. Accordingly, permission is also requested, then Pak Sehalus can continue to walk easily. Pak Sehalus walked again until he reached the place where the swords fought with each other. Not only day or night of war but for eternity. “Hi sword, rest first. I want to give you the most special gift for the sword. The reward is to kill all living things in my land. The king himself wants to give this gift to you, oh sword,” said Pak Sehalus to the sword. “The king told you to come back with me,” said Pak Sehalus again. Then the sword answered, “Wow! I got something I wanted.” (The “Pak Sehalus” Story)]

Although there are elements of magic behind the sharp weapons, the public can see how these sharp weapons are used among the indigenous people. In this context, sharp weapons are used to kill the enemy to dominate a war and armed conflicts. Pak Sehalus also used the sword as his weapon by inviting the magical sword to be his companion throughout the journey.

Besides spears and swords, kris are used in wars in indigenous oral stories. The story 'Golden Chain' shows that the kris is depicted as a magical and sacred weapon. Just as the Malay community celebrates the Taming Sari Kris, the Small Protected Bongsu Kris is also depicted in such a way. The power and efficacy of the kris also reflect the greatness of its owner, the character Rantai Emas, who is travelling to track his enemies:

"Jika panas matahari, panas lagi Keris Kecil Lindung Bongsu itu. Kepanasan keris itu telah membakar ayam itik dan kebun dusun. Itulah keris Lindung Bongsu. Maka Rantai Emas pun menarik keris kecil dari rusuk kirinya. Tertarik saja keris itu, hijau mengalun, hijau mempedu keris kecil itu. Sama besar keris itu dengan daun padi. Keris Rantai Emas boleh pulihkan kembali kebun dusun dan ayam itik yang terbakar tadi. Sejuk dingin keris kecil Rantai Emas itu. Berkatalah Rantai Emas, "Wahai keris! Sejak sekian lama engkau dijaga elok menyantap benda makan yang baik-baik, mahukah kali ini engkau menyantap darah manusia?" "Baiklah!" Jawab keris itu." (Cerita "Rantai Emas")

[“If the sun is hot, the Kecil Lindung Bongsu Kris will be hot again. The heat of the kris has burned chickens, ducks and hamlet gardens. That's the Lindung Bongsu Kris. So, the Golden Chain pulled a small dagger from his left rib. Just interested in the kris, green is rolling, green is pegging the small kris. The kris is as big as a rice leaf. The Golden Chain Kris can restore the orchard and the duck that was burned earlier. Cool the little Golden Chain kris. The Golden Chain said, “Oh keris! For a long time you have been well cared for eating good food, will you eat human blood this time?” “Alright!” Answer the kris.” (The “Golden Chain” Story)]

The Kecil Lindung Bongsu Kris is said to be able to kill and restore burned areas and damaged livestock. Based on this Jakun oral story, the kris is indeed considered important and has the power to defeat enemies. In this context, the Orang Asli weapons are not much different from those of the Malay community in ancient times.

Pride in the kris weapon is also shared in the oral stories of the Semai community in Perak, which were collected by Juli Edo (1992). In the story 'Sangkil', the kris was used to kill a commander who had persecuted the Orang Asli. Moreover, the kris used was not an ordinary kris but said to be a hereditary Pukal Kris from the Sultan Perak:

Akhirnya baginda mengarahkan Kundangnya yang bernama Selamat untuk membunuh Panglima Hamid dengan menggunakan keris pukal yang menjadi warisan Sultan-sultan Perak. Baginda yakin bahawa keris itu sajalah yang dapat membunuh Panglima Hamid yang kebal itu. (Cerita "Sangkil")

[Finally, he instructed his Kundang, named Selamat to kill Commander Hamid using a bulk kris that was inherited by the Sultans of Perak. He was sure that the kris was the only one that could kill the invulnerable Commander Hamid. (The "Sangkil" Story)]

Although in this episode, the kris is depicted as not being owned by the Orang Asli, the Orang Asli warriors considered the pukal kris as their lifesaver. Also, they ended the threat from Panglima Hamid, who was greedy enough to make the Orang Asli enslaved people. According to the Scholars' views, the society in the archipelago, especially in ancient times, regarded iron Weapons such as the kris, spear, machete, and sword as their primary self-defence weapons even though at the same time firearms and cannons were already in use.

Nature as a Source of Weapons and Defense

Although the use of iron weapons was parallel between the Orang Asli and the Malays in oral stories, there were unique characteristics in the weaponry of the Orang Asli because their weapons were sourced from their natural environment. They could make bamboo, wood, and betel leaves into defence weapons. The Orang Asli community had a very close relationship with their natural surroundings. Most of their settlements were established in forested areas. In the context of the Jakun community settlement in Kuala Rompin, for example, Kampung Sungai Mok is about 40km from Kuala Rompin town (see Mohamad Luthfi Abdul Rahman, 2014). The journey to their village also had to pass through palm oil plantation routes across FELDA Selendang and then enter the forest area to reach the Jakun community houses. The same situation could be seen in the Semai community settlements in Kuala Dipang, Perak. Kampung Sungai Kapur, also known as Kampung Per by the Semai community, is located within the forest reserve of the Forestry Department. Kampung Dipang is also located within the forest and is nearly 2km from Kampung Sahum, inhabited by the Malay community (Juli Edo, 1990).

The indigenous (Orang Asli) people will become familiar with their natural surroundings in such a life. They will make their natural surroundings a source of life, such as food, medicine, and economic activities, through the sale of forest produce, agriculture, and also the making of weapons. Ramle Abdullah et al. (2014:119) once described that 'the biological diversity of the forest is believed to be a supernatural gift for human convenience and harmony'. In a more general view, Muhammad Haji Salleh (2010) also once expressed the closeness of humans with nature in general. Among other things, he said mountains, jungles, and rivers surround the people in Malaysia. When they face and enjoy the beauty of nature, then inspiration and ideas will arise...'. This view is also quite relevant to the indigenous people, who were inspired by nature to create weapons and build their defence systems.

Before examining the weapons of the Orang Asli more deeply based on their oral stories, the most essential weapon of the Orang Asli derived from nature is the blowpipe. This weapon is made of bamboo, and its poison is made from tree sap. Although in the Jakun and Semai oral stories, the blowpipe is not depicted as the primary weapon in their wars, it is their most famous hunting weapon. One of the oral stories collected by Juli Edo (1990) also illustrates the use of the blowpipe for hunting purposes:

Pada suatu hari, dia bercadang untuk pergi menyumpit jauh dari biasa. Lantas dia meminta kebenaran dari emaknya, "Mak...saya mahu pergi menyumpit, hari ini saya nak pergi jauh sikit, mungkin saya akan balik petang." (Cerita "Pet")

[One day, he plans to go narrowing away from the ordinary. Then he asked for permission from his mother, "Mom... I want to go hunting, today I want to go a little farther, maybe I'll come back in the afternoon." (The

“Pet” Story]]

This oral story provides a glimpse into the Orang Asli community’s real life, which uses the blowpipe for hunting purposes. This practice was carried out in ancient times and is still used today as they seek sustenance and food sources from the forest. That is why some researchers describe the blowpipe as a ‘mandatory’ weapon for the Orang Asli community to hunt and also defend themselves for a long time (Hamid Mohd Isa, 2014). In addition, a special unit of the Orang Asli police known as the ‘Senoi Praq’ also uses the blowpipe as their team logo. Natural-based weapons have a place within the Orang Asli community and are even held in high regard by its members.



Fig. 1 Logo of the Orang Asli Special Police Unit - Senoi Praq

Source: <https://www.orangperak.com/senoi-praaq>

Apart from weapons made of bamboo, oral stories of the Semai community also depict the use of wood trees as their defence when facing the enemy. In the story ‘Sangkil’, a group of people is involved in hunting the Orang Asli to be enslaved. The chief/leader of the Semai community tried his best to save his followers from being captured by the hunting group. Then came a time when the Semai chief could sense the enemy’s plan to attack his village. With minimal strength, the chief and the villagers used wooden stakes and traps to defend themselves:

Mereka mendaki sebuah bukit yang berlereng curam, menebang pokok-pokok dan membuat sebatang jalan yang bersih ke kawasan itu dan di kiri kanan jalan itu, telah dipasang dengan ranjau. Pokok-pokok besar yang telah ditebang itu dipotong pendek-pendek dan diletakkan menghala ke jalan yang dibina...orang-orang Asli yang sedang bersewang itu menggolekkan batang-batang kayu yang telah dipotong itu. Dalam kejadian ini ramai pengikut Panglima Hamid telah terkorban. (Cerita “Sangkil”)

[They climbed a steeply sloped hill, cut down trees and made a clean road to the area and on the left and right of the road, was lined with mines. The large trees that had been cut down were cut short and placed towards the road that was built...The Asli people who were fighting were rolling the logs that had been cut. In this incident, many followers of Commander Hamid were killed. (The “Sangkil” Story)]

‘Sangkil’ story clearly shows that the Semai OrangAsli community utilised the natural resources in their surroundings for their defence and indirectly as deadly weapons against those who threatened their safety. The logs that were cut to the width of the road also show the wisdom of this community in arranging its defence strategy. The traps made from wood or bamboo sharpened to a point were also highly effective deadly traps when they faced the enemy at that time.

On the other hand, the oral stories of the Jakun community feature weapons and defences sourced from nature, namely betel leaves. Betel is depicted as a weapon and a mystical defence system for the orang asli when facing the enemy. Betel is shown to have various functions for self-defence and weaken the enemy. The use of betel in the mystical aspect was once discussed by Wan Faizah Wan Yusoff (2014) when she stated that ‘betel is not just an opener of conversation and a symbol of propriety but is also used in traditional medicine, rituals, and relationships with spirits.’

In the story titled ‘Pak Sehalus,’ betel is said to be able to function as ‘self-protection when in a dangerous area. Pak Sehalus is in an area filled with wild animals. However, by scattering crushed betel leaves around him, the wild animals do not disturb him, and he can pass through the area safely:

Setelah beberapa lama berjalan, Pak Sehalus mula mendengar suara yang pelik-pelik dan menakutkan. Bunyi suara anak harimau yang garang. Binatang itu boleh cium apa sahaja bau, termasuk bau manusia. Pak Sehalus berhenti dan makan sirih sekapur dua. Lepas sembur sepah sirih itu ke kiri dan ke kanan, barulah Pak Sehalus berjalan semula. (Cerita “Pak Sehalus”)

[After walking for a long time, Pak Sehalus began to hear strange and frightening sounds. The sound of a fierce tiger calf. The animal can smell anything smell, including the smell of humans. Pak Sehalus stopped and ate betel nut for two. After spraying the betel nut to the left and right, Pak Sehalus walked again. (The “Pak Sehalus” Story)]

This scene shows how the use of betel leaves is said to be able to protect the character from being attacked by wild animals. Although its function is mystical, it remains one of the defence systems of the Orang Asli community, especially when they enter the forest, which is always filled with wild and venomous animals.

Betel leaves are also used as a ‘spirit restorer’ for those who have fought with enemies. In a war, tension and pressure will certainly occur when the enemy strengthens or more comrades fall. Moreover, some warriors may have sustained injuries and fatigue after battle. The function of betel leaves as a spirit restorer aligns quite well with the beliefs of the Malay community. Wan Faizah Wan Yusof (2014), a scholar from the Centre for Health Sciences Studies, USM Kubang Kerian Campus, revealed that:

The use of betel leaf in Malay society as a protector or even a comforter, for example, is closely related to the beliefs and efforts of the Malay community to restore, protect or strengthen the spirit believed to be present in every Malay person.

The story ‘Rantai Emas’, narrated by Pura Taman from Kuala Rompin, Pahang, told of the effectiveness of this betel leaf in restoring the spirit of a warrior who had just finished a war. In the story, Rantai Emas, a hero who had finished fighting, experienced a loss of spirit and various injuries. However, after he ate betel leaf, he slept soundly, and upon waking, his spirit was restored, and his injuries healed.

The oral stories of the Jakun also tell of betel leaf that can be used as ‘poison’ to weaken the opponent during the war. This poison was used by the son of Raja Dewa Sakti when attacking Rantai Emas. The betel leaf scraps scattered by the prince became a deadly poison:

Kerana dendam yang tak sudah itu, mereka masih tak puas hati kerana gagal membunuh seorang Rantai Emas. Mereka dengki dengan apa yang dimiliki Rantai Emas. Maka bersiaplah anak-anak Raja Dewa Sakti. Cakup badan hilang di mata, bertenung jauh melambung tinggi. Jatuh tak jatuh di hujung laman istana Rantai Emas. Masing-masing makan sirih pinang, ambil sepah sirih dibuang. Jadilah racun yang paling kuat. Ditabur. Jadi lemahlah Rantai Emas dan isteri-isterinya itu. Tak sedar apapun yang berlaku. Mereka jadi seperti tertidur lama. (Cerita “Rantai Emas”)

[Because of the unending grudge, they are still not satisfied because they failed to kill a Golden Chain. They were envious of what the Golden Chain had. Then get ready, the sons of the King of the Magic Gods. Body coverage is lost in the eyes, staring far soars. It fell at the end of the Golden Chain palace grounds. Each eats betel nut, takes a betel nut and is thrown away. Be the most powerful poison. Sown. So weak is the Golden Chain and its wives. Unaware of what happened. They became like they were asleep for a long time. (The “Golden Chain” Story)]

In this story, it can be seen that betel leaves are not only used as a healer but also as a source of poison to weaken the opponent. Mystical and magical elements are used in the betel leaves to make them a deadly weapon. In contrast to the story of ‘Mamak Batin’, betel leaves are portrayed as a tool to free oneself from the supernatural shackles of the enemy. In other words, betel leaves can be used to weaken the magic sent by the enemy. An

incident occurred when Mamak Batin and his followers were about to leave their village after the war. Unfortunately, their boat could not sail out of the village area. Finally, betel was used, and they managed to escape:

Makan sirih pinang, lalu Engkanak tadi tabor sepah dalam sungai, maka meluncurlah semua perahu meninggalkan Kampung Sungai Tang Batang Ai. Perahu mudik setanjung dua tiga. (Cerita “Mamak Batin”)

[Eating betel nuts, then Engkanak was tabor sepah in the river, then all the boats left Kampung Sungai Tang Batang Ai. The boat went home to two or three acres. (The “Mamak Batin” Story)]

Apart from functioning to weaken the enemy’s supernatural powers, betel is also said to be able to be worshipped and enchanted to be transformed into another weapon. Although it may seem somewhat supernatural, it is symbolic of the beliefs of ancient societies, especially the orang asli, who highly believed in magical powers and the assistance of their ancestors in their self-defence against enemies. In this oral story, it is told that they used worshipped betel that was transformed into a small cannon to kill the enemies:

Lalu dimakan sirih sekapur dua dan ditepuk-tepuk maka keluarlah meriam kecil. Lalu diletakkan di tingkap panjang. Di tingkap panjang itulah Engkanak Pulau Dusun tala meriam itu ke kapal tujuh biji di pengkalan Lubok Besar. Apabila ditembak meriam itu oleh Engkanak Pulau Dusun itu, habis hancur tujuh kapal itu. Semua orang Engkanak Kota Batu dan Engkanak Batu Bara terjun berenang ke dalam sungai. Basah kuyup. (Cerita “Mamak Batin”).

[Then he ate betel nuts in two and patted them and then a small cannon came out. Then it is placed on a long window. It was in that long window that Engkanak Pulau Dusun set the cannon on a seven-piece ship at the base of Lubok Besar. When the cannon was fired by the Engkanak Pulau Dusun, the seven ships were destroyed. All the people of Engkanak Kota Batu and Engkanak Batu Bara jumped into the river. Drenched soaked. (The “Mamak Batin” Story).]

Mystical weapons like this are usually challenging to see in the real world or physically. However, such weapons symbolise the warfare skills that use incantations to defeat enemies. Indeed, it was practised in the Indigenous tradition and practised by the Malay, Javanese, and others in the wars they participated in.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Orang Asli community indeed has its own weaponry and defence systems. Their bitter experiences during the era of slavery and the communist occupation have revealed that the Orang Asli community also had their own weapons and defence tools for their survival. However, due to their minimal weaponry capabilities, they had to utilise the natural environment as a source of weapons. Whether weapons were physical or mystical, they have exhibited the uniqueness of the Orang Asli, who are familiar with nature and closely side by side with the belief in the spirits of their ancestors to this day. This study of weapons and defense systems does not only look at the context of Orang Asli life, but it can also be highlighted in a broader context.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This article was prepared as part of the grant research project “Pembinaan Model Kepimpinan Orang Semai Berdasarkan Teks Fiksyen Pengarang Tempatan” (*Building a Leadership Model for Semai People Based on Fiction Texts by Local Authors*) - FRGS/1/2022/SSI0/USM/02/9

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