

**UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA**

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
*BENGGUNG* IN THE CONTEXT OF  
MALAY CULTURE**

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## ABSTRACT

*Bengkung* and *ikat pinggang* are Malay practices in the belly binding method. The problem with the research is that most researchers only provided a broad overview of *bengkung* and did not go into specific depth about the design and its details. There is a gap in the categorization of *bengkung* as well. Another problem being addressed regarding *bengkung* is its neglect as a Malay tradition because it lacks written documentation. The aim of this research is to document the development of *bengkung* design in the context of Malay culture. The research objectives are to identify the design of *bengkung*, categorize the type of *bengkung* used, and determine the uniqueness of *bengkung* practice in the context of Malay culture. This research emphasizes on the *bengkung* design and style in the Malay culture. The methodology of this research is a qualitative research, which is a descriptive approach and observation of *bengkung* made based on the theory of style by Meyer Schapiro. The primary data of this research study are photo images and samples of the *bengkung* design. In this research, an interview was conducted with an expert in the field of midwifery, as well as with a specialist in Malay clothing, to identify and describe the history and design of the *bengkung*, as well as its types, patterns, materials, design details, and functions of the *bengkung* using the narrative approach. Data analysis involved three components of the theory of style, which are form, element, and expression. The finding of this research is based on the *bengkung* design and style of *bengkung* from the year 1950 until the year 2000 in which the design is produced or used. The research discovered that the many varieties of *bengkung* may be divided into three categories: *bengkung* for health, *bengkung* for beauty, and *bengkung* and *ikat pinggang* as complementary accessories in Malay clothing. The uniqueness of practicing the *bengkung* is different based on the categorization and function of *bengkung*. Our beliefs and positivity toward wearing *bengkung* help in making the *bengkung* more valuable and effective. Furthermore, the research provides sufficient information about the design and function of the *bengkung* as part of the culture, and as a reference and guideline for scholars, future researchers, educators, health services, midwives, and practitioners. The knowledge of *bengkung* practice will motivate future generations to be more appreciative of cultural heritage and hence, encourage the preservation of culture and practice.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

In this introduction chapter, the researcher will explain the background of the study in this section, as well as identify the gap in the research and outline a strategic plan on how the study is carried out. In addition, the researcher gives an overview of the research on *bengkung* to the Malay culture as well as to future generations.

### 1.1 Research Background

The Malays in the Archipelago were rich in culture and tradition. Customs such as marriage, childbirth, confinement, and piercing are amongst a few of the traditions inherited from generation to generation in Malay culture. Referring to Syed Alwi Sheikh Al-Hadi (1986), these were the traditions of Malay customs in the past, practiced since a few hundred years ago. The Malays are very strongly bound by customs and traditions passed down from generation to generation (Mohd. Koharuddin Mohd. Bawi, 2005). These customs were inherited so that they remain a stake in Malay culture and memorable throughout all time. Today, as seen in the Malay community, the Malays still practice their traditional customs but in lesser way.

In the customs of the Malay culture, wearing *bengkung* was a classic practice that had long been adopted and inherited by communities in the Malay Archipelago. This practice played an important role in favor of health and beauty aspects (Anisah Barakbah, 2007; Sharifah Umi Kelesum, 2009). In the history of Malay costumes, Siti Zainon (2006) stated that *bengkung* was an important complementary accessory in the full set of Malay men's traditional attire during the Malacca Sultanate in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

On the other hand, *bengkung* was also used as a belly binder for Malay women's costumes. *Bengkung* was a practice of tying a long strip of cloth around the abdomen such as during the postpartum recovery period, as well as when wearing specific traditional costumes, such as *pakaian adat* and *kebaya* (Siti Zainon, 2006). The objective of wearing *bengkung* during the postpartum was to provide a strong support to the abdomen or womb after childbirth.

*Bengkung* can also be found as a complementary accessory for *pakaian adat*