

Ethnobotany and traditional knowledge studies in Sabah (1980s-2020)

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to briefly communicate ethnobotany and traditional knowledge studies in Sabah, Malaysia, with highlights on the effort of ethnobotanical research during its prime in 1980's until 2020. Previous ethnobotany studies in Sabah were experiencing a great inclination toward medicinal plants. The ethnobotany studies in Sabah were continued by many other researchers who had recorded ethnobotanical resources on medicinal plants and other useful plants utilised by various ethnic groups from many localities. Towards the year 2020, natural product chemistry, ethnopharmacology, and plant extract bioactivity research are often incorporated in ethnobotany and traditional knowledge studies. Despite the survey works on ethnobotany in Sabah have been rigorous for the past 30 years, there are still gaps in the knowledge that shall be satisfied with a sufficient scientific approach. This is due to Sabah being made of many indigenous ethnics and sub-ethnics, and every ethnic has unique ethnobotanical knowledge. The lack of specific and focused ethnobotanical work leads to the underutilisation of indigenous plant resources in Sabah. Further scientific research can be carried out to scientifically validate the traditional claims on the benefit of the botanical resources of Sabah.