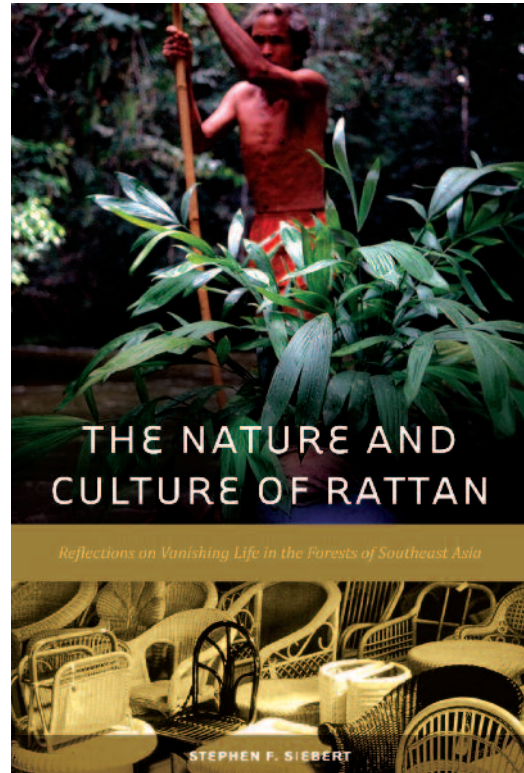


Palm Literature

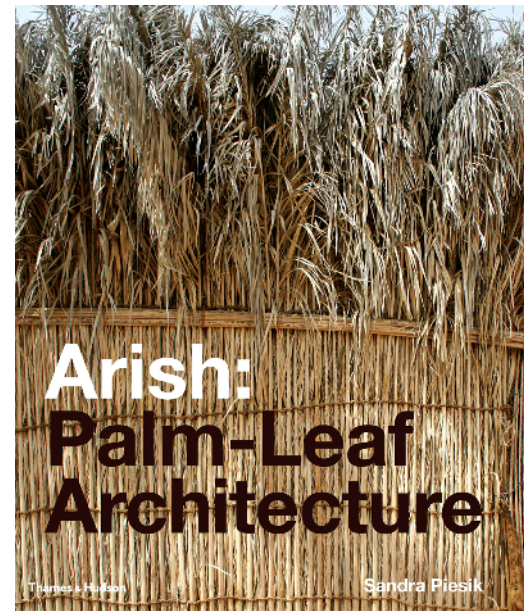
THE NATURE AND CULTURE OF RATTAN: REFLECTIONS ON VANISHING LIFE IN THE FORESTS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA – Stephen F. Siebert. University of Hawai'i Press. 2012. ISBN 978-0-8248-3536-1. Price US\$40.00. Hardcover. 145 pages, 26 illustrations.

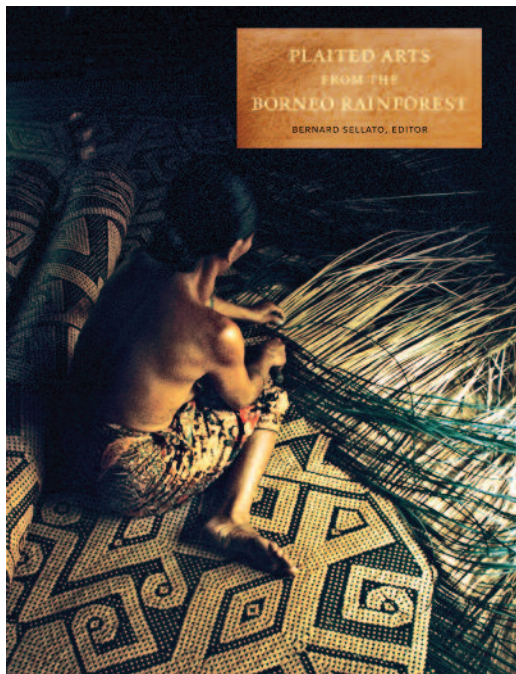
Stephen Siebert, who, along with his wife Jill Belsky, has unrivalled knowledge of the sociology of rattan harvesting communities in the southeast Asian region, has written a very personal book, describing how rattan impinges on society. His book provides a brief account of the natural history of rattans, historical and current uses of rattan, indigenous management systems for rattan, the trail of cane from the forest through to the finished furniture item, before providing a case study of a rattan harvesting village in Sulawesi. Sustainability and rattan cultivation are discussed. Finally Siebert muses on the links of rattan with religion and family planning and the future prospects for rattan. This is a very personal account of rattan; it reads well and is often thought provoking.



ARISH: PALM-LEAF ARCHITECTURE – Sandra Piesik. Thames & Hudson Publishers, London. 2012. ISBN 978-0-500-34280-0. Price: £28.00. Hardcover. 192 pages, 295 photographs.

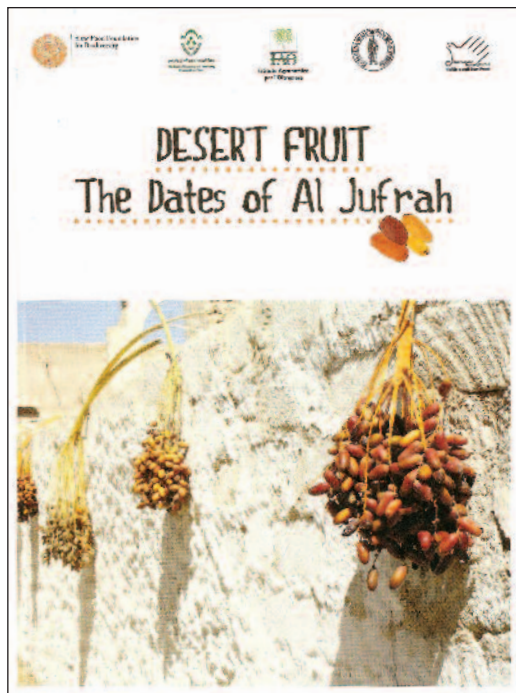
This lavishly illustrated book describes the traditional uses of the leaves of date palms in the construction of houses to provide shelter from the extreme climate of the Arabian Peninsula. Photographs of Dubai in 1950 reproduced in the book show a small fishing community of palm leaf houses, an extraordinary contrast to the present day metropolis of extravagant modern architecture. The book celebrates this unique indigenous building and craft tradition and makes some suggestions how this building material may still have a role to play in modern Arabia.





PLAITED ARTS FROM THE BORNEAN RAINFOREST – Bernard Sellato (ed.). The Lontar Foundation (Jakarta) and Nias Press (Copenhagen). 2012. ISBN 978-87-7694-074-4. Price US\$70.00. Hardcover. 534 pages, 1200 illustrations.

This multi-author, large-format book with copious photographs records the amazing variety of plaited artefacts from Borneo, a very large proportion of which are made of rattan, either whole or split. This is a glorious celebration of how rattan, bamboo, *Donax*, sedge and other plants are used for the everyday necessities of the traditional peoples of Borneo. There are brief accounts of the sources of the material for plaiting (the botany of Bornean basketry), but the main bulk of the book concerns the ways in which the material is used, from mats to everyday carrying baskets, from intricate receptacles for storing the ingredients for betel chewing to ceremonial matting, baskets and hats. Artefacts are discussed region by region, ethnic group by ethnic group. One can only marvel sadly at the use of plastic to substitute rattan where that has become scarce, the plastic baskets mimicking the intricate designs of the rattan work. A gorgeous, sumptuous book, anyone interested in Borneo, rattans or handicrafts will be beguiled by the astonishing diversity of handicrafts illustrated.



DESERT FRUIT: THE DATES OF AL JUFAH – Marta Mancini (ed.). Istituto Agronomico per l'Oltremare, Firenze. 2010. No ISBN number. Price unknown. 65 pages and accompanying DVD.

This small, well-illustrated book provides an account of the dates and date groves of Al Jufrah in central Libya. It discusses date diversity and the astonishingly rich culture of the people whose lives depend on the date palm. Sponsored by The Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, the Italian Overseas Agronomic Institute and other agencies, the publication is a popular synopsis of continuing projects in Libya aimed at the promotion of the heritage of date cultivation. Inside the back cover is a DVD containing a pleasing film all about Libyan dates.

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