

The Study of Iban Traditional Motifs of Sudan's Ruma Weaving Textile

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ABSTRACT

Iban traditional attire weaving contains a rich history derivative of the cultural identity, beliefs, customs, and traditions of the Iban people. It is considered an important material culture or cultural artifact in Sarawak culture. The social and cultural identity of the Iban people is reflected in their costumes, which symbolize the importance of life via intricate aesthetic ornamentation. The way of living and belief practised by Iban are implicated in the local products, such as the Iban's textile, which is embedded with design motifs inspired by flora, fauna, and animism. The focus of this study is on Iban traditional attire weaving. There were 4 traditional attires used as study material collected from the Sudan Ruma weaving. This study identification of the Iban traditional motif weaving motifs of the weaving motifs of Iban traditional attire by using qualitative methods such as primary and secondary data. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with two experts and specialists. The results indicated different categories of motifs that were closely correlated to the Iban people's philosophy, culture, and beliefs. Most of the Iban traditional attire was decorated with numerous repeated motifs. On this basis, it is hoped that this study could serve as a reference concerning the cultural heritage of Iban traditional attire weaving motifs and recommended that further exploration should be carried out concerning weaving motifs of traditional Iban traditional attire in the Iban community.

Keywords: Iban, Traditional Attire, Cultural Identity, Weaving, Motif



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1 INTRODUCTION

Generally, the Iban populations comprise about 30% of Sarawak's community, and mixed linguistic distinctions depend on languages, cultures, and *Ngepan* (traditional attire). The Europeans defined the indigenous people of Borneo Island as Dayaks. According to Haddon and Start (2011), the word 'Dayak' was likely inspired by the Malay word, Dayak, which means inland. The Iban community in Sarawak is known as Sea Dayak, and the community is the largest group of the native population of Malaysia Borneo (Zhang, W. 2004). Sarawak's Iban groups are spread across the state's many districts. As a result, they developed their brand and have unique *Ngepan* Iban (traditional attire) patterns, which vary based on the region or district of their community.

Looking from the view of their belief, they still hold to their traditional animism belief, which was inherited from one generation to another (Umbat, 1998). The Iban had no faiths before the coming of

Christianity since they were seen practicing their pagan beliefs and fervently believing that their lifestyle was closely tied to cosmology. As once summarized by (Appell, 2001), "The Iban World incorporates both humans and gods and spirits in a relatively seamless fashion, and different aspects of this world are perceived through changing levels of consciousness". The term "life" in the natural world refers to songbirds or portents. As a result, it is not unexpected that environmental assets, including flora and fauna, inspire the Iban weaving pattern. According to the Iban, these themes are imbued with extraordinary cosmological implications. The symbols became an indication, a feature, a metaphor, or symbolic emblems with conceptual connotations that transmit a message about a scenario or an idea to a person in the context of society.

One of the famous traditional textiles in Sarawak is the Iban Pua Kumbu. The Iban people of Sarawak hold Pua *kumbu* in high regard, as stated by Klinsing & Usop (2020). N.Tugang (2014), the Iban people use Pua Kumbu to identify themselves and their culture. Other than Pua kumbu, Pua Karap is the woven textile most readily associated with the Iban. Karap is a technique similar in appearance to the Malay Songket, with a difference in weaving methods. Silver and gold-coloured cotton thread are used in their supplementary weft technique with handwoven with heddles and a backstrap loom.

The focus of this study is on Iban traditional attire weaving. The study of this traditional attire is based on the collections weaved by Sudan Ruma. The study focused on the objective namely, to identify the motifs of Iban traditional attire weaving textile. Among the limitations of this study was the small number of Iban traditional weaving collections from the weaver. This study will also help students and lecturers in carrying out their research about the motif and of the Iban traditional attire weaving from the museums in the future and individuals who are interested in traditional attire, especially related to the motif. Karap technique created only for Ngepan Iban, (traditional attire) such as *Kain Tating/Kain Karap*, *Selampai* (Sash), *Sirat* and *Baju Burong*. The *kain tating/kain Karap* is for women and is stuffed and adorned with silver coins worn as high as the knee. In contrast, the *Selampai* (sash) is worn over the shoulders as a scarf, draped over the whole body, and the jacket t-shirt for men is *Baju Burong*. Below is the picture of *Ngepan Iban*.



Figure 1: Ngepan Iban (Iban Traditional Attire)

(Source: Unit Promosi, Inovasi Dan Media [Online image]. (2010). Blogger.)

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Iban Weaving Textile

A study conducted by Gregory Kiyai, et al., (2020) also stated there are four forms of *pua* in Iban culture, namely *pua kebat*, *pua sungkit*, *pua pilik*, and *pua karap*. This *pua* is distinct in terms of its kind and identity based on the type of material used and the production method used. The *pua kumbu* is the Iban tradition's most revered and essential relic. It is an early weaving Iban women created and dates back many centuries. The data are collected via qualitative via interview and observation. Gregory Kiyai, et al. found that explains the classification of artefacts that are found in

the Iban community in Sarawak. In addition, its able to act to preserve cultural artefacts that are iconic to the Iban community so that they do not become obsolete. Iban community so that it does not become obsolete by the times.

According to Semiarto A. Purwanto et al. (2018), women in the Iban society especially have a place for themselves in weaving. Women greatly regard skilled individuals, while weaving is still a part of *adat* the intellect they attribute to *panggau* (heaven), a celestial creature. The method applies in the study is in-depth interview techniques to the heads of women's weaving groups, weavers, and community leaders. The research found that as a product of cultural processes, the survival of the Iban *pua kumbu* is colored by and related to many factors and interests.

2.1 Motif in Iban Weaving Textile

Iban Textile (2018, pg. 1) by Chelum A. et al., the Iban traditional textiles are beautifully decorated with motifs created through the environment where the Iban lives. Animals, reptiles, and plants inspired some motifs. Traditional beliefs inspire some motifs, so those motifs have ethics, such as taboos. The textiles which have motifs with taboos the one that is made for ritual purposes, such as “Pua Kumbu”. According to (Gavin, 1991), the Iban believe that *Kumang* visits Iban women in their dreams, instructing them on how to weave specific patterns and motifs. To grant the aspirations of the inhabitants of *Panggau Libau*, the Iban lady selected by *Kumang* in the dream must carry out a *Ngar* ritual.

Truna et al. (2022) realized that all Pua Kumbu patterns bear at least one of the seventeen crystallographic groups. Most of the Pua Kumbu motifs are symmetrical, and those motifs are mathematically identified as a design. They focused on conducting a symmetry analysis of those patterns in the Pua Kumbu that revealed limited designs or repeating patterns originating from fundamental units or motifs. Local flora and fauna are the motifs of the Pua Kumbu, with the human motif being the most expensive. The Ibans also take cues from animals, plants, and other items significant to their daily lives when creating Pua Kumbu designs and patterns. The design elements of the Pua Kumbu are notable for their intricacy and abstractness. The everyday lives of the Iban people and the natural world might be sources of inspiration for their works (Jehom, 2016).

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The design of this study used a qualitative approach. The data was collected through observation, interviews, video recordings, and visual photos during fieldwork sessions. This method will find the motifs in Sudan Ruma's weaving. The research approaches for this project are informed by the evolution of art and design disciplines. They are used in harmony to assist with decision-making. Through primary and secondary qualitative analysis, data were collected using field research. The primary data was collected through interviews and observing the collection of Iban traditional weaver. In contrast, the secondary data was gathered from different sources, information collected through books, journals, websites, and articles. The methodologies that will be developed to solve the problem statement and construct research objectives are outlined in this section. The research design will be used as a guideline to conduct this study. A total of two people were interviewed. Two of them are Iban traditional weavers.

4 FINDINGS

The study's findings are summarized and presented in the form of tables. Furthermore, the results are examined in order to clarify the responses to the study questions. The basic data comes from the gathering of five Sudan Ruma weaving collections. The study question of identifying the motif of Iban traditional weaving was solved. The information was gathered from both primary and secondary sources, including interviews, observations, the Internet, and printed materials such as books, papers, and journals. A list of informants associated with this research is provided below.









Table 1 List of Informant

Name	Gender	Position	Contribution
Interviewee 1	Female	Iban traditional attire weaving expert	Identify the motif
Interviewee 1	Male	Iban traditional attire weaving expert	Identify the motif

Table 2 collection of Iban traditional attire from the Sudan Ruma
(Source: Picture by author)

Traditional Attire	Description
	Object: Skirt for Women (<i>Kain Karap/Kain Tating</i>) Weight: Unknown Dimension: 81cm x 83cm Design: A gold thread embossed with patterns
	Object: Sash for Women (<i>Selampai</i>) Weight: Unknown Dimension: 200cm x 15cm Design: A gold thread embossed with patterns
	Object: Jacket for men (<i>Baju Burung</i>) Weight: Unknown Dimension: 67cm x 53cm Design: A silver thread embossed with patterns
	Object: Sirat for men Weight: Unknown Dimension: 65cm x 55cm Design: A silver thread embossed with patterns

Table 3 describe the motif and subject matters of the Iban traditional attire

Traditional Attire	Motif	Subject Matters
		<p>a) Anthropomorph (<i>Engkeramba</i>)</p> 
		<p>b) Fern Leaves (<i>Paku Kelindu/ Kelindang</i>)</p>  <p>c) Caterpillar Eye (<i>Mata Ulat</i>)</p>  <p>d) Fern Leaves (<i>Paku Kemiding</i>)</p> 










Traditional Attire	Motif	Subject Matters
		e) <i>Buah Pedada/Lelambak</i> 
		f) Brinjal Flower <i>(Bungai Terung)</i> 
		g) Hornbill Casque <i>(Takong Kenyalang)</i> 
		h) Bamboo Shoot <i>(Sirap Mawang/Tubu)</i> 

Table 4 describe the motif and subject matters of the Iban traditional attire













Traditional Attire	Motif	Subject Matters
		Dove Eye (<i>Mata Puna</i>) 
		Rhomb (<i>Buah Empit</i>) 
		Rattan Leaves (<i>Daun Rutan/Daun Wi</i>) 
		Bamboo Shoot (<i>Sirap Mawang/Tubu</i>) 
		Ghosttiger (<i>Remaung</i>) 

Table 5 describe the motif and subject matters of the Iban traditional attire








Traditional Attire	Motif	Subject Matters
		a) Rhomb (<i>Buah Empit</i>) 
		b) Fern Leaves (<i>Paku Kemiding</i>) 
		c) <i>Kayu Tugal</i> 
		d) Leech (<i>Lemetak/Lintah</i>) 

Table 6 Motifs and Categorisation of the Iban traditional attire

Traditional Attire	Motifs and Categories			
	Flora	Fauna	Still Life	Cosmos
<i>Kain Karap/Kain Tating</i>	a. Fern Leaf (<i>Paku Kelindu/Kelindang</i>) b. Fern Leaf (<i>Paku Kemiding</i>) c. <i>Buah Pedada/Lelambak</i> d. Brinjal Flower (<i>Bungai Terung</i>) e. Bamboo Shoot (<i>Sirap Mawang/Tubu</i>)	a. Caterpillar Eye (<i>Mata Ulat</i>) b. Hornbill Casque (<i>Takong Kenyalang</i>)		a. Anthro-po-morphs (<i>Engkeramba</i>)
Sash (<i>Selampai</i>)	a. Rhomb (<i>BuahEmpit</i>) b. Rattan leaves (<i>Daun Rutan/Daun Wi</i>) c. Bamboo Shoot (<i>Sirap Mawang/Tubu</i>)	a. Dove Eye (<i>Mata Puna</i>)	-	-
<i>Baju Burung</i>	-	-	-	a. Ghostiger (<i>Remaung</i>)
<i>Sirat</i>	a. Rhomb (<i>Buah Empit</i>) b. Fern Leaves (<i>Paku Kemiding</i>)	a. Leech (<i>Lemetak/Lintah</i>)	a. <i>Kayu Tugal</i>	

In the pie chart below, the circle shows the categories of motifs that were found on the Sudan Ruma weaving. From the findings that were discussed in table 3 until 6, the flora category shows the highest percentage of 58.8%, which were identified from the selected samples. This is to indicate that flora ornamentations are highly sought-after patterns as they are relatively easy to weave. Even though the fauna category displays a percentage of 23.5%, it implies that fauna is still predominantly preferable as weaver emulate the natural settings in proximity to weaving textile. Meanwhile, the still life 5.9% and cosmos category consists of 11.8%, which is a motif of different classifications to adapt to Iban weaving textile.

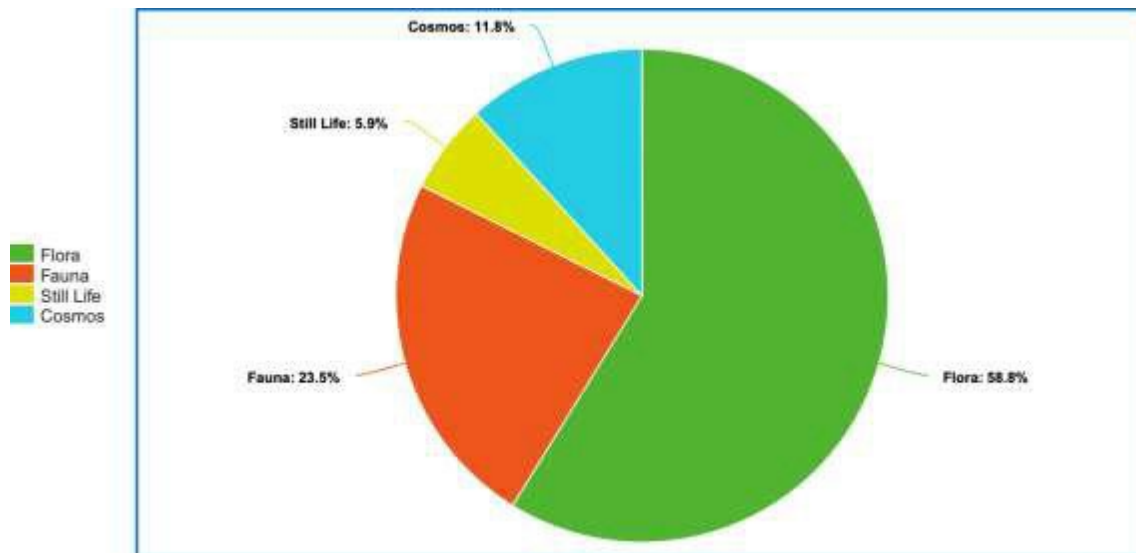


Figure 7 Pie chart of motif categories

5 CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the five pieces of traditional attire presented different categories of motifs, which consisted of flora, fauna, cosmos, and still life motif. As a result, weaving by Sudan Ruma has implicitly shaped the minds of the Iban community. For us to truly understand the visual qualities of weaving motifs, it is equivalently imperative to take other aspects relevant to the weavings into account as well. Weaving began initially with inspiration derived from nature up to the point in which stylists are also involved in the Iban community. Not only does the weaving signify the weaver's creativity and aesthetic beauty, but they also represent the identity and philosophy of the Iban heritage, which they have carried on from one generation to another. Furthermore, they could arrange more field trips for students who wish to study more in-depth the tangible cultural heritage of weaving motifs and Iban traditional costumes in Sarawak.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Each author contribution equally in this research.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest that occurred during the process of writing this paper.

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