

# THE DESIGN ELEMENTS OF THE JATTI MIRIEK'S HEADDRESSES IN MIRI, SARAWAK

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## ABSTRACT

JattiMiriek is a minority ethnic group from Miri, Sarawak. This article intends to discuss the principle of design elements of JattiMiriek's headdresses. Their traditional clothing is to match with distinctive headdresses and other accessories. The headdresses worn by the male and female of the JattiMiriek are called *tekulok* and *sikong*, respectively. The design and method of wearing these headdresses are unique, and this heritage needs to be inherited and preserved. Nevertheless, specific research on JattiMiriek headdresses had never been conducted and sources for reference are minimal. Therefore, this research aims to document the uniqueness of the *tekulok* and *sikong*; unravel the historic and aesthetic values of the JattiMiriek headdresses. This study used a qualitative method such as field study, interview, and observation conducted in Miri, Sarawak. Data analysis is based on six elements: the design, form, fabric materials, colours, motifs, and accessories of the headdresses. The finding revealed that the distinctive design features of the headdresses are meant for different purposes and symbols. In conclusion, the JattiMiriek wears their costume that manifests their identity and heritage. It is hoped that the finding from this study will make other people appreciate more about the JattiMiriek ethnic group.

**Keywords:** JattiMiriek, material culture, headdresses, traditional clothes, heritage

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Sarawak is known for its diverse culture and multi-ethnicity. This diversity is reflected in many arts and heritage, including traditional indigenous clothing. Traditional clothing is shaped and characterized by the local culture and each has its own meaning (Williams, 2000). In order to understand the JattiMiriek culture, it is important to learn their traditional costumes. Nevertheless, the studies of these people are still sparse; making the documentation to refer as references is very limited (PJMM Committee members, 2020). This article describes the role and function of headdresses in the JattiMiriek culture and reveals the symbolic meaning of the aesthetic elements of traditional costume complementary accessory.

The JattiMiriek is a minority ethnic, believed to be the earliest community living in Miri, a northern part of Sarawak, since the 16th century (Yakup, 2009). (Refer to map in Figure 1). JattiMiriek, with most of them, resided in Miri. Before many of them converted to Islam, JattiMiriek practised animism. Their main socio-economic activities were hunting (*ha'ang/nyammeng, ngawu, mepet*), fishing (*mekat*) and farming (*babun*). From the personal communication with some members of Persatuan JattiMiriek Miri (PJMM) in September 2020, LikohMiriek, Padang Likud, Sungai Taniku, Sungai Maloie, Sungai Adong Kecil dan Besar, Sungai Miri (Miriek) were among the early settlements of JattiMiriek. The tombs found along Sungai Adong Kecil and Besar, Sungai Miri (Miriek), Bukit Kanada, and Pantai Tanjong Lobang were evidence of their early existence in Miri.

Today, majority of the JattiMiriek people are found in Bakam, Siwa Jaya, Luak, Raan, Lambir, Lopeng (Luifeng), Kampung Wireless, Pujut Tanjung Batu (Unan), Pujut Adong (Unan Adong), Kuala Baram and Pengkalan Lutong. They are also found in Bekenu, Niah, Bakong dan Marudi and outside Miri, including Belait and Tutong in Brunei. According to Persatuan JattiMiriek Miri article 15/82 (Sarawak), more than 15,000 JattiMiriek in Sarawak and Brunei are estimated. At present, JattiMiriek has been assimilated in and Malay primarily due to mixed marriages.

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Figure 1 Map of Sarawak

## 2. BACKGROUND

### 2.1. JattiMiriek Culture and Heritage

The JattiMiriek people have gone through assimilation, whereby they are a group of differing ethnic heritage have absorbed into the dominant culture of the Malay society. However, although assimilation did happen, the JattiMiriek still continue and maintain their ancestors’ culture and heritage ultimately, including language, food, and aesthetic preferences.

One of the JattiMiriek unique cultures and heritage is wearing headdresses to complement their traditional costume. The headdresses for the men is called *tekulok*, while the headdresses for the women is called *sikong*. In the past, headdresses were worn by the JattiMirieks as a sunhat in the farm, but now, the JattiMiriek community wearing headdresses when attending ceremonial events and special occasions (Nashila, J., Faridah, S., & Yakup, M. R., 2019). In addition, the *tekulok* and *sikong* are also worn for dancing and music performances. This situation shows that the JattiMiriek still practices this particular traditional culture as one of their continuous effort to preserve the heritage and culture they possess so that the younger generations will continuously inherit and appreciate it.

However, detailed studies on these unique headdresses wearing among the JattiMiriek people are minimal and well-documented. Therefore, in this work, the details mentioned above regarding *tekulok* and *sikong* are obtained and documented, which can be used as a source of reference for the community interested in the specific design and background of these headdresses.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

This study was based on a qualitative approach and applied a variety of methods and tools to collect data including interviews, visual analysis and observation from fieldwork. The interview session was held with some of the prominent PJMM committee members who are also JattiMiriek people. Table 1 shows a list of the respondents, and Figure 2 shows photos of the interview session. Interviews were conducted in groups and the information on each respondent is verified instantly. The interview questions are designed to elucidate key aspects of *tekulok* and *sikong*’s history, their roles and functions, and the evolution of these JattiMiriek’ traditional clothing complementary accessories.

Table 1 Details of Respondents

No	Respondent	Gender	Position
1	KK Usman bin Suleiman	Male	Deputy President
2	Puan Rosiah Hj Ali	Female	Vice President
3	Puan Noor HazwanibtMohdHusli	Female	Honorary secretary
4	HjUjut bin Rahman	Male	Information Officer
5	PuanHajjah binti Junaidi	Female	Committee Member