



The Iban Traditional Religion: *Miring*

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to discuss about the offering ceremony, which is one of the traditional cultures performed by the Iban in Sarawak. *Miring* is performed to give honor to their Gods (*Petara*), Holy Spirit (*Orang Panggau & Bunsu Antu*) and souls of their dead ancestors (*Petara Aki-Ini*) whom they invited to their various festivals. If the supernatural is not fed, they will not obtain the necessary kindness in which will cause disaster. The arrival of Christianity led to the fact that almost all the Iban left their pagan religion. At the same time, the Iban community today is less aware of the offering ceremony procedure. Fieldwork was carried out at several locations in Saratok, Betong, Sarawak. The data are collected through participant observation technique and through face-to-face interview with the informants. The interviewed informants were selected based on their expertise in the origins, customs and cultures of the Iban community. Results show that not all of the Iban perform the *miring* ceremony. Lack of ritual specialists and conversion to Christianity among the Iban are the causes of this ritual to be less performed. The Iban community today faces many challenges in maintaining and practicing the traditions inherited by their ancestors. Even though there are changes and differences of *miring* performed by the Iban community in Sarawak, their aims and needs remained the same, and that is to beg for the gods' protection and avoid unwanted or bad things to happen.

Keywords: *Ritual, miring, Iban, Culture, Changes*

INTRODUCTION

Historically, the Iban originated from Kalimantan, Indonesia. Among the famous legends and history of ethnic inclusion is initially they entered through the Batang Ai, Kapuas, namely the Sarawak-Kalimantan border. Dayak Iban initial displacement is scattered in the North part of Lupar and Saribas River. Their displacement has occurred since the 19th century on the Hulu Batang Lupar through the Kalimantan border leading to the Rejang. Sri Aman has the biggest Iban settlements followed by Kapit, Kalaka (Saratok), Mukah, Miri, Betong, Baram, Song and Sarikei. Most of the Iban have converted to Christian. Although many have converted to Christian, they still maintain a traditional and spiritual ceremony such as "*Sandau Hari*", "*Gawai Batu*", "*Gawai Burong*", and "*Gawai Antu*". This ceremony is still practiced among the Iban. Among the types of *Gawai* that are celebrated by the Iban community is *Gawai Dayak*, *Gawai Burong*, *Gawai Antu*, *Gawai Tuah*, *Gawai Betambah Bulu* and *Gawai Batu*. *Gawai Dayak* is celebrated on 1st June every year, while *Gawai Burong*, is held to worship *Singalang Burong* as a God of war. *Gawai Mangkung Tiang* is held when the villagers had just moved into a new longhouse. *Gawai Kenyalang* is held to mark the success of a person in his life. *Gawai Betambah Bulu* is celebrated by the Iban who had travelled far and gained success.