

SINIPAK COSTUME OF THE DUSUN TINDAL WOMEN FOLK OF SABAH

Noria ak Tugang

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

Salbiah Kindoyop

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

Junior Kimwah

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

Nurul Aisyah Othman

Universiti Malaysia Sabah

Corresponding Author

tnoria@unimas.my

The *sinipak* traditional costumery is a centuries-old heritage inherited by the *Dusun Tindal* ethnic community located mainly in the flatlands of Kampung Bangkahak, Kampung Tempasuk and Kampung Piasau in the Kota Belud district of Sabah, Malaysia. The designs and accessories exhibited in the *sinipak* costume of the *Dusun Tindal* womenfolk are representative of natural materials and elements integrated with human creativity, and are traditionally perceived as symbols of wealth and social status within the community. Findings of this study were derived from fieldwork data and analysis of the design concepts of the *sinipak* female costumery.

Keywords: *Dusun Tindal*, design, *sinipak*, costume, and accessories

1. INTRODUCTION

An ethnic group or community could be identified through the culture that the people in that grouping practise such as their traditional costumes, dances, and language or dialect spoken. For the *Dusun Tindal*, their traditional costumery is one of the most distinctive and unique attributes of their heritage. These ornate costumes, rich in traditional adornment and steeped in cultural significance, are commonly donned during festivities and important events such as weddings, welcoming of visitors, and other social events.

The Dusun Tindal ethnic has two types of traditional costumes known as *sinipak* and *rinagang*. These two types of costumes were recorded by I.H.N Evans in year 1953 and John White in 1893. Recorded images of both traditional costumes in the form of photographs proved their existence in the history of Dusun Tindal ethnic. Changes in costume designs can also be seen from time to time until today. The *sinipak* costumes are worn by Dusun Tindal ethnic who lived in flat area while the *rinagang* costumes are worn by Dusun Tindal ethnic lived on the hillside.

The focus of this study is the *sinipak* costumes, which have a design dominated in black colour and decorated with red *dastar* [Table 1 (i)]. According to informant 1 (Pahau, personal communication, Feb 4, 2016) due to the time transition, these costumes are decorated by attractive accessories and beads embroidery to make them more attractive [Table 1 (ii)]. Among the transformation are the changes in the size of the embroidery *dastar* fabric, the geometric motifs were embroidered with smaller size and more attractive. Today's costume design is more complex with the use of more comfortable fabrics and the addition of the embroidery motifs to the *sinipak* costume [Table 1 (iii)].

2. BACKGROUND

The traditional costumery of the *Dusun Tindal* consists of the *sinipak*, *rinagang* and *sinuranga*. All three are black in colour and would usually be embellished with colourful embroidery patterns, motifs or decorations. The *sinipak* itself has male and female versions; this study examines specifically the *sinipak* for womenfolk in terms of its functions and accompanying accessories.

3. METHODOLOGY

Photography is used in practice-based research or other research situations or environments for the acquisition of visual data, storage or management of visual

information, analysis of visual data, and the presentation of research findings. Visualisation requires drawing in all forms (for instance objective, analytical, or expressive), diagrams, concept maps or mind maps, flow charts, storyboards, matrices, and network displays by employing colour, tone line, plane, shape, scale, symbol, and so on. The use of metaphors and analogy could also stimulate or assist this visualisation process. The interview method is useful as it presents a key pathway in seeking the particular opinions of others about identified research topics. A purposeful conversation is initiated by the interviewer and focused by him or her on content specified by his research objectives. Data for this study was documented via notes, photography, sketches and voice recorder. This technique enabled the researchers to experience a critical visual understanding of cultural practices based on the interviews and observation.

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 *Sinipak* costumery

The *sinipak* is synonymous to the *Dusun Tindal* of Kota Belud. The uniqueness of *sinipak* lies in the intricate embroidery that forms the motifs and patterns on the costume. These ornate embellishments reflecting elements of nature, culture and traditional life are indicative of the *Dusun Tindal* expertise in traditional costume tailoring and embroidery; in fact, so refined and renowned is this skill that it indirectly offers a lucrative income since a well- made *sinipak* could command a very high price in the open market.

Sinipak-making is a laborious and complicated process that requires expensive materials. This time- factor aspect and the cultural identity value ascribed to the costume render the *sinipak* in its entirety an expensive piece of workmanship often out-of-the economic reach of many people in the community. This has led to a common situation whereby costume makers would often assemble a collection then make these available for short-term rentals for occasions such as weddings and festivals.

Table 1: Images of *Sinipak* Costumery

<p>i. <i>Sinipak</i> in 1938</p>	<p>This image recorded in 1938 by I.H.N. Evans shows the wedding costume finery of Gintuak (left) from the <i>Dusun Tindal</i> of Kg. Kadamaian with his wife (right), a <i>Dusun Tobilung</i> from Kg. Toburon.</p> <p>The groom donned accessories such as the <i>sigar</i> (headgear), <i>tinggot</i> (belt), and <i>lolopot</i> (mantle). The</p>
---	---




	<p><i>betewi</i> buttons decorated the chest and sleeve areas of the <i>sinipak</i>.</p>
<p>ii. Sinipak in 1990</p> 	<p>Black colour material coupled with a red mantle were predominant in the original <i>sinipak</i> costume. However, with the advent of time and due to a clash of culture, the costume gradually evolved into a form of costumery complemented with accessories and bead embroidery.</p>
<p>iii. Sinipak in 2016</p> 	<p>The <i>sinipak</i> textile, original produced using traditional methods, were often long lasting. Traditional fabric makers however are no longer found.</p> <p>The modern version of the <i>sinipak</i> base fabric is black velvet textile since this material is easy to find and commercially available. The beads and <i>betewi</i> buttons are embroidered or sewn at the chest and sleeve areas. The <i>linangkit</i> is also embroidered on the sleeves just before the folding part of the elbow. The accessory usage however remains unchanged, the only difference being these are now mostly mass- produced ornaments and no longer the authentic hand-wrought versions of the olden days.</p>

Table 1 (i-iii) show images of the *sinipak* costume as worn by wedding couples over three different time periods. From the three pictures, it is clear that the *sinipak* has evolved over time in terms of design and accessories with the most obvious change being the addition of bead embroidery and *linangkit* motifs. However, these additions or changes in design are still incorporated with reference to the original design of the *Dusun Tindal* costumery.

4.2 Decorations on *sinipak* for women

The complete ensemble of the *sinipak* costume and accessories for *Dusun Tindal* women consists of eleven elements namely *lolopot*, *kuapu*, *sinipak*, *saring*, *pirok*, *solindang*, *tinggot*, *baratina*, *babagas*, *gonob* and *lungkaki*. The accessories worn by

the womenfolk are more elaborate as compared to the version for men although both share similarities in design, colour, decoration, and bead motif embroidery. According to an informant, the wearing of the *sinipak* during traditional ceremonies and social events is an integral aspect of the *Dusun Tindal* culture. In marriage ceremonies for instance, the wedding parties from both groom and bride sides as well as festivity dancers are required to be dressed in the *sinipak*. For the bride and groom, the *sinipak* has to be in its entire or complete set. The wearing of this costume is intended to make the couple look resplendent and regal, and simultaneously add to the richness and significance of the marriage event.

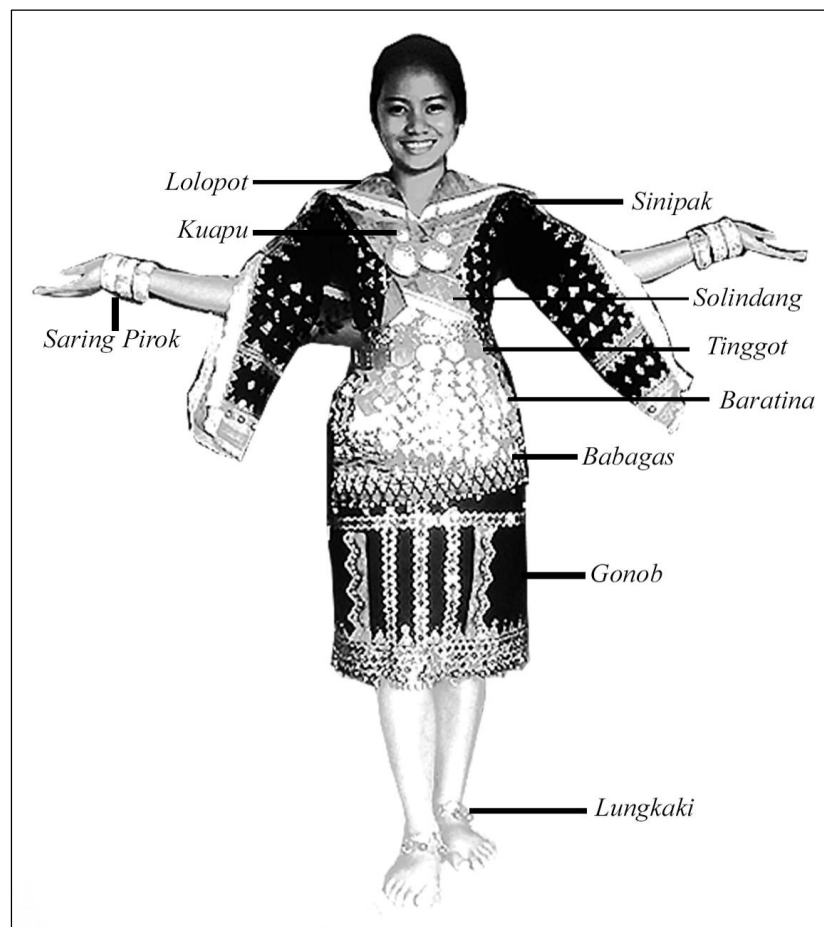








Figure 1: Pictorial Description of *Sinipak* for Women

Table 2: Complete *sinipak* costumery for women

<p>(1) Sinipak</p>  <p>The long sleeve black cloth is of <i>baldu</i> (velvet) material. The elbow area has the colours red, yellow and green. The upper part of the sleeve is decorated with <i>linangkit</i> motif golden lace. Golden <i>betawi</i> buttons adorn the front part and along the elbow area of the <i>sinipak</i>.</p>	<p>(2) Gonob</p>  <p>The knee-length black skirt is embroidered with threads in the colour red, yellow, white, and green. The embroidery patterns are in zig-zag formation with <i>linangkit</i> motifs. Golden colour lace is embroidered in upright and horizontal lines on the skirt front.</p>
<p>(3) Lolopot</p>  <p>The mantle is folded sideways onto the chest and tied at the waist. Red colour thread is woven alongside motifs in geometrical shapes such as triangles and squares.</p>	<p>(4) Solindang</p>  <p>This is black in colour and embellished with gold coloured beads with geometrical motif decorations.</p>
<p>(5) Sunduk</p>  <p>On this black cloth embroidered with red and yellow coloured threads, beads are arranged in horizontal and vertical positions.</p>	<p>(6) Kuapu</p>  <p>This is a spherical shaped silver tobacco case worn necklace-style. Two or three pieces would be put on by the wearer at any one time. The engraved motifs are usually floral.</p>






<p>(7) Baratina</p>  <p>The belt is made from silver- coloured metal and arranged like chains.</p>	<p>(8) Saring pirok</p>  <p>The silver bangles are made in triangular and round shapes with patterns engraved onto the outer face.</p>
<p>(9) Tinggot</p>  <p>Made of silver coins (Hong Kong dollar coins showing the relief of the Dutch Queen Wilhemina) forged together, the belt is worn below the <i>baratina</i>. The number of belts adorning the wearer reflects his wealth or social status; the more strands there are, the richer his family background or the higher his social standing.</p>	
<p>(10) Babagas</p>  <p>A woven bead arrangement specifically to 'sit' on the hip area. At six inches wide, the bead hip adornment is understandably heavy.</p>	
<p>(11) Lungkaki</p>  <p>The foot bangles are silver in colour with similar engraved motifs as those on the <i>saring pirok</i>.</p>	

Table 2 presents the complete *sinipak* costumery for *Dusun Tindal* womenfolk. The wearing of the *sinipak* is layered with a shirt and skirt known as *sinipak* and *gonob*. The *lolopot*, *kuapu*, *saring pirok*, *solindang*, *tinggot*, *baratina*, *babagas* and *lungkaki* accessories are ornamental decorations that complement and complete the *sinipak* costume for *Dusun Tindal* womenfolk.

4.3 SINIPAK DESIGN

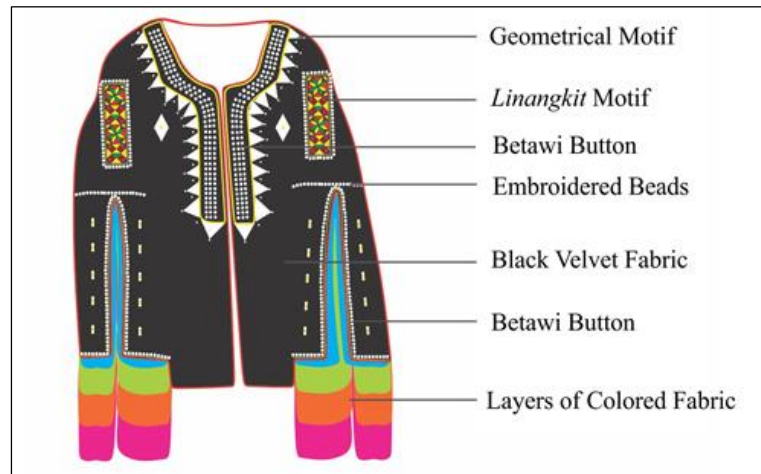


Figure 2: Sinipak costume

The *sinipak* costume for men and women share similarities in terms of design and motif. The colourful laces arranged in layers on the sleeve cut out is dominant in the overall outlook. The *betewi* buttons located at the chest and elbow area have a unique design and reflect the identity of the *sinipak*. Silver beads are embroidered in a triangular shape on the chest area and behind the *sinipak*. The *linangkit* embroidery on both upper arm area of the costume represents the status of the individual with the choice of embroidery colour and number of colour representative of his or her status symbol - the more colours there are, the higher that person or his family's standing in the community.

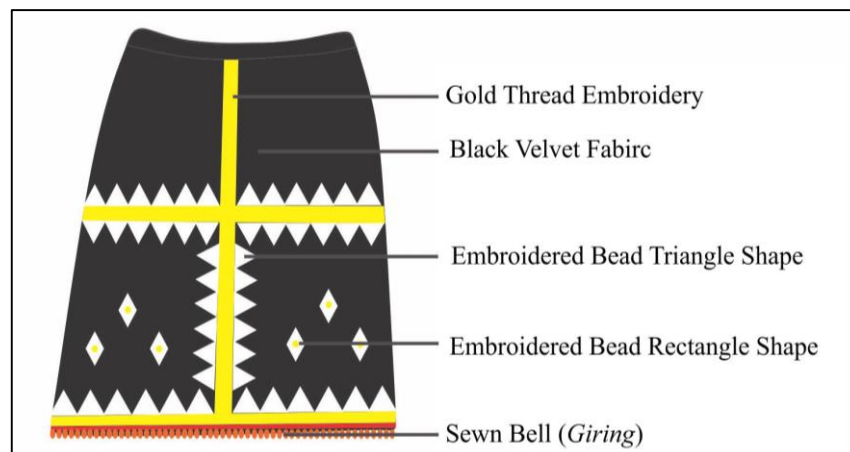


Figure 3: Gonob

The *sinipak* for womenfolk is worn together with the *gonob* made of matching black fabric. The *gonob* skirt is traditionally knee-length and embellished with thread embroidery and red, yellow and silver beads. A string of bells is placed at the hem of the *gonob*; any movement would cause the bells to jingle and indirectly announce or signify to the audience the presence of a woman.

The significance of the *sinipak* costume in the *Dusun Tindal* culture is deeply entrenched. Every object represents a specific meaning, and these are translated into the embroidery motifs. The bright colour choices are influenced by the ethnic artwork of the Bajau people, another native grouping predominant in the Kota Belud district. According to an informant, the original *sinipak* costume was black and decorated with *betewi* buttons, gold color lace and with three layers of vibrant coloured fabrics. This has since evolved to include colour schemes reminiscent of the costumery of the Bajau people, due perhaps to the two cultures being within close proximity to one another and exposed to elements of cultural integration or 'sharing of culture'.

5. CONCLUSION

The *Dusun Tindal sinipak* costume is a cultural heritage that imparts significant pride of association for members of the community. The distinct uniqueness of the *sinipak* costume, portrayed through its fashion, design and accessories, projects the traditions and artistic skills of the *Dusun Tindal* of Kota Belud. Further studies on the *sinipak* from the historical, cultural and economic perspectives are recommended so as to ensure this rich cultural tradition could be documented and preserved for the benefit of future generations.

REFERENCES

1. Evans, I.H.N. (1953). *The Religion of the Tempasuk Dusun of North Borneo*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2. Whitehead, John. (1893). *Exploration of Mount Kina Balu, North Borneo (1860-1899)*. London: Gurney and Jackson.

Informants

1. Meso Biddin, 46 years old, Kampung Bangkahak Kota Belud. Maker and keeper of traditional costume *sinipak*. Interview on 31st May 2017.
2. N. Ading Bin Pahau, 57 years old, Kampung Tempasuk Kota Belud. Maker and keeper of traditional costume *sinipak*. Interview on 4th February 2016.

3. Rappah Bulleh, 51 years old, Kampung Bangkahak Kota Belud. Maker and keeper of traditional costume sinipak. Interview on 31st May 2017.
4. Siap Binti Guladi, 80 years old, Kampung Piasau Kota Belud. Maker and keeper of traditional costume sinipak. Interview on 8th July 2016.
5. Sulia Kubud, 49 years old, Kampung Bangkahak Kota Belud. Maker and keeper of traditional costume sinipak. Interview on 31st May 2017.