

Original Article

The Innovation of Malaysia National Costume at Miss Universe: Memoir Goddess of Kumang

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Abstract: Miss Universe, with a history spanning over 71 years, is regarded as the most prestigious beauty pageant worldwide. It was first held in 1952 and has continued its legacy, playing a crucial role in empowering women in the changing times by Phongpaichit (1989) and Malik et al. (2023). Malaysia has participated in Miss Universe since 1964 and achieved notable success by reaching the top 15 in 1970 by Abdul Hamid et al. (2015). The main objective of this research is to incorporate the Iban folklore figure, Goddess of Kumang, into the idea of Malaysia's national costume for the Miss Universe pageant. The research follows a qualitative approach, focusing on the practice and artistic experimentation to illustrate the representation of the Kumang Goddess in the National Costume, based on Peirce's Theory of Atkin (2010). The data collection process encompasses observation, documentation, and visualization methods to elucidate each step undertaken while producing illustrations. The research outcomes yield numerous fashion illustration concepts centered around the theme of the Kumang Goddess. The significance of this research lies in its endeavor to preserve and introduce a fresh dimension to the fashion industry by incorporating folklore characters as creative inspirations in artistic work.

Keywords: Arts Representation, Goddess of Kumang, National Costume, Miss Universe.



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1. Introduction

The Miss Universe National Costume Competition is a captivating segment of the Miss Universe pageant where contestants from different countries showcase unique and culturally significant costumes that represent their respective nations. This competition allows contestants to celebrate their country's heritage, traditions, and symbols while providing a platform to promote cultural diversity and understanding internationally. The National Costume Show has become a much anticipated and visually spectacular part of the Miss Universe pageant, drawing attention from viewers worldwide. It is a vibrant display of creativity, craftsmanship, and national pride, making it a memorable and exciting aspect of the overall competition. In

this competition, the National Costume Show emerged as a captivating segment highlighting significant cultural themes from the participating countries. Throughout the Miss Universe competition, Malaysia showcased a variety of ideas and themes while presenting its National Costume. For instance, in 2011, Deborah Henry brought forth the theme of Wau Bulan, designed by Amir Luqman. Similarly, in 2018, Jane Teoh portrayed the theme of Perahu Bangau, designed by Salleh Hamid. In 2019, Shewta Shekon graced the stage with the theme "A Peranakan Indulgence," designed by Carvin Ong.

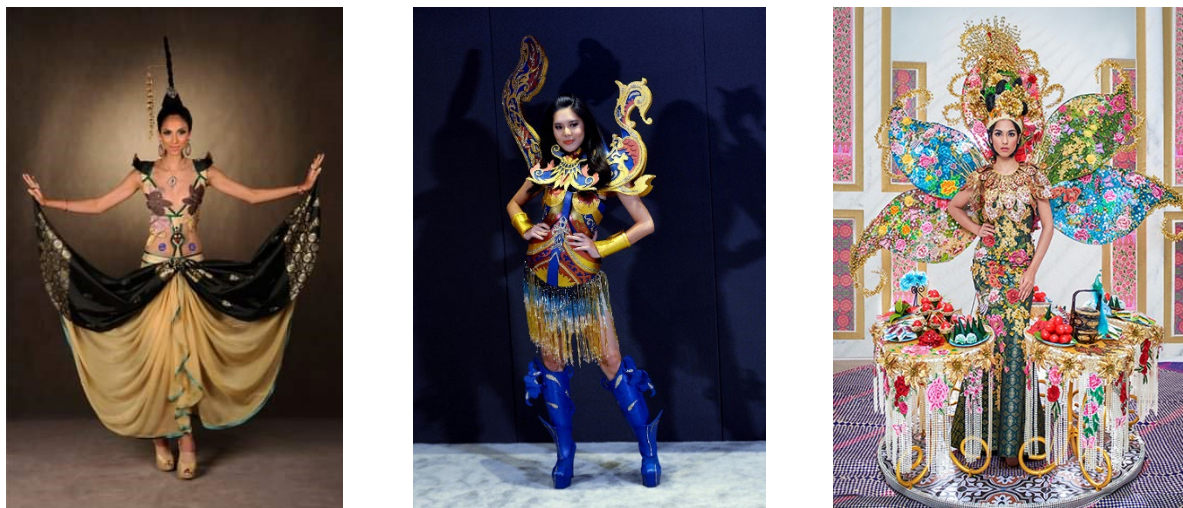


Figure 1. Malaysia Inspired National Costume at Miss Universe Competition (Sources: Google Im-age,2023)

After the formation of Malaysia on 16 September 1963, which resulted from the amalgamation of Tanah Melayu, Sabah, and Sarawak (Azilah Mohamad et al., 2020), the nation became rich with a diverse wealth of culture and art. This amalgamation unified us into one nation. Among the representations of this cultural diversity are three national costumes inspired by Sarawak's culture that have graced the Miss Universe stage. In 1994, Liza Koh, a Miss Universe Malaysia finalist from Kuching Sarawak, showcased the Iban traditional costume, Ngepan Iban, during the Miss Universe pageant. Then, in 2007, Adelaine Chin Ai Nee wore the Urang Ulu costume. Continuing this tradition, in 2014, Sabrina Bennet appeared with the concept of "The Goddess of Kenyalang," designed by Adila Long. Remarkably, no national costume from East Malaysia has been selected for the Miss Universe competition (Suwardi, 2019). Therefore, this research aims to reintroduce artworks from Sarawak in the form of national costumes by highlighting a legendary figure from the Iban community, the Goddess of Kumang, as the central theme. The objective is to revive and celebrate the rich cultural heritage of Sarawak on the prestigious global stage of Miss Universe.

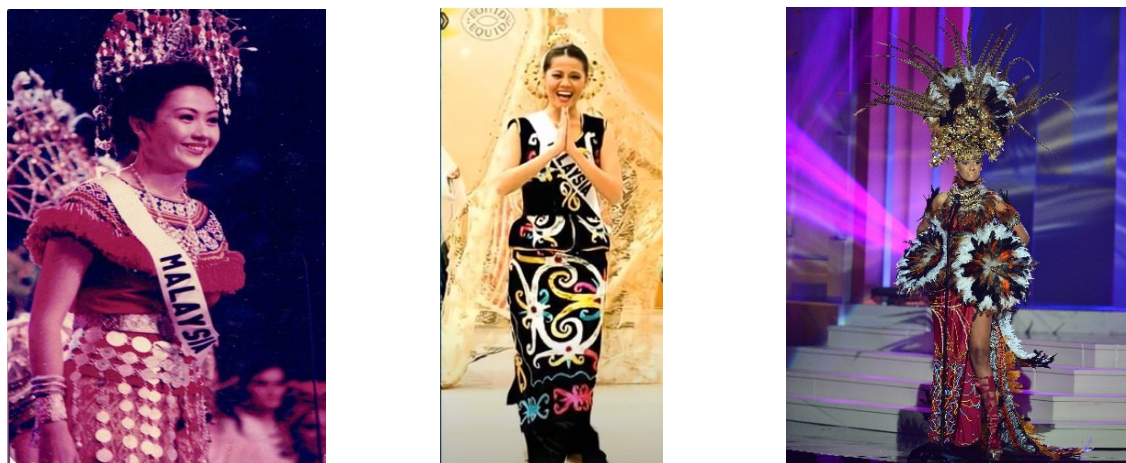


Figure 2. National Costume Inspired by Sarawak Culture (Sources: Google Image, 2023)

Incorporating folklore or cultural characters into fashion is a recurring theme in the fashion industry, and it continues to be explored innovatively. A recent example of this trend can be witnessed in the Haute Couture Fall 2022 fashion show by Balenciaga, where designer Daniel Roseberry skillfully blends heritage and creativity, drawing inspiration from the iconic styles of Haute Couture during the era of Christian Lacroix and Jean Paul Gaultier. Similarly, the Dior 2022 fashion show, curated by designer Maria Garzia Chiuri, also embraces this concept. Chiuri takes inspiration from the works of Olesia Trafymenko, an artist from Ukraine, particularly focusing on her favorite motif, the Tree of Life, which serves as the central theme for the collection. The Tree of Life holds deep cultural significance, symbolizing folklore and hope for life among human beings (Bruce-Mitford, 2019). These instances demonstrate how the fashion world continually draws from folklore and cultural elements to create captivating and meaningful collections.

In modern society, the assimilation of national cultures stands out, each boasting a unique color palette, harmonious forms, and proportions. These national characteristics are preserved by interpreting culture and art's rich experiences and achievements within contemporary design. It is particularly evident in how elements of traditional national dress are transformed to influence clothing designs. The traditional costume is an endless inspiration for fashion collections, with its strong ethnic identity and original components. The cuts, embroidery, decorations, jewelry, and color combinations showcase its various regional traits. Renowned fashion designers like John Galiano and Jean Paul Gaultier creatively interpret folk costumes, infusing new solutions into modern clothing. They skillfully rethink the traditional elements of clothing, satisfying the demand for creative and artistic advancements in fashion design. The method of deconstruction is often utilized in creating author's collections, allowing designers to manipulate forms and challenge conventional clothing modeling techniques freely. This approach allows designers to unleash their creative potential and produce original women's clothing that accentuates the wearer's individuality.

In addition to deconstruction, methods of association and stylization are employed to transform the constructive and decorative characteristics of folk costumes into contemporary fashion models (Gerasymenko et al., 2020). These techniques ensure that folk elements remain relevant and influential in the dynamic world of fashion, showcasing different nations' rich diversity and cultural heritage. The incorporation of historical costume elements into contemporary fashion has become a prevalent practice (Chen, 2011). conducted research on Chinese ethnic costume culture, successfully combining the extraction of costume elements with modern fashion design to achieve both the inheritance and innovation of ethnic costume culture. Additionally, Kuzmichev et al. (2017) pointed out that some fashion designs now draw inspiration and design elements from historical costumes. Zhang (2021) analyzed the application of elements from opera costumes in modern fashion design, creating modern clothes infused with opera elements. This research provides valuable insights and ideas for the potential application of opera elements in contemporary fashion in the future. Moreover, Lee and DeLong introduced the concept of "re-birth design" (Chen, 2011; Lee & DeLong, 2018), adding to the growing body of work that showcases the fusion of historical and modern elements in fashion design.

Malaysia is known for its rich and diverse cultural heritage, with a population comprising various races and religions. Folklore, an integral part of the indigenous communities in Malaysia, serves multiple purposes, such as religious expression, entertainment, moral education, and life guidance. This research focuses on the goddess figure known as the "Goddess of Kumang" from Iban folklore in Sarawak. The Iban community represents the largest ethnic group in Malaysia, with an estimated population of around 809,600 people in 2018, according to statistics from the National Registration Department (2019). Traditionally, the Iban people practice communal living in longhouses and rely mainly on hill paddy cultivation as their primary economic activity. In the past, they were renowned for their bravery and warrior-like characteristics, often engaging in headhunting expeditions across the island of Borneo (Kiyai @ keai & Tugang, 2020)

1.1. Who is Dewi Kumang

The Goddess of Kumang holds a legendary status in the traditional literature of the Iban community. She is depicted as a beautiful and kind-hearted woman with exceptional skills in weaving pua kumbu. According to beliefs, she possesses magical powers, capable of healing the sick, aiding experts in craftsmanship, and instilling courage in Iban warriors during times of war (Kiyai @ keai & Tugang, 2020). In the oral tradition of the Iban, Dewi Kumang is revered as a princess who wields significant influence over the life of the community. Her origin is attributed to a village called Gelung Batu Nakong, which is believed to be situated in the sky. She is recognized as the sister of Dewa Tutung and is married to Dewa Keling, residing in Panggau Libau, a sky-dwelling village for Dewa Keling (Ganing & Amat, 2017). Although the

presence of Dewi Kumang and her magical powers may not be visible to the naked eye, she is said to assist fortunate individuals. [Metcalf & Masing \(1998\)](#) note, “Orang panggau only helps a selected few, and when that help is given, it is usually made known to the person concerned in a dream.” It implies that only a chosen few receive her aid, and it is often revealed through dreams to the person in need. Every year, on the 1st of June, the Gawai Dayak festival is joyously celebrated among the Dayak people in Sarawak and Kalimantan. The Gawai ceremony serves as a symbol of gratitude and appreciation to Petara (God) for the successful conclusion of the rice harvest season. During the festival, a Pekit Kumang competition is organized, where a young Iban girl is chosen as the beauty queen. This event is meant to honor and commemorate the significance of Dewi Kumang in the Iban belief system, representing beauty, gentleness, and exceptional skills in weaving cloth ([Kiyai & Anak Tugang, 2021](#)).

2. Materials and Methods

This research adopts a qualitative approach, specifically utilizing the Research on Practices methodology. Data is collected through visual observation of the existing Ngepan Iban and relevant cultural materials that inspire the ideas explored in this study. The study thoroughly documents all the processes involved in creating the national costume, centered around the goddess figure of Kumang. This documentation includes:

2.1. Idea of Visualization

The primary focus in generating innovative ideas lies in the visualization process. To initiate this, the researcher conducts a literature review, delving into previous studies that pertain to the research direction, aiming to gain insights into their culture and identify any research gaps. Following this, group discussions are held to establish the theme and design concept, utilizing mood boards to aid in the process.

2.2. Hardware Development

A hardware circuit was constructed to validate the outcomes obtained through software simulations. The primary and secondary circuits employed in the wireless power transmission hardware are depicted in Figure 3.

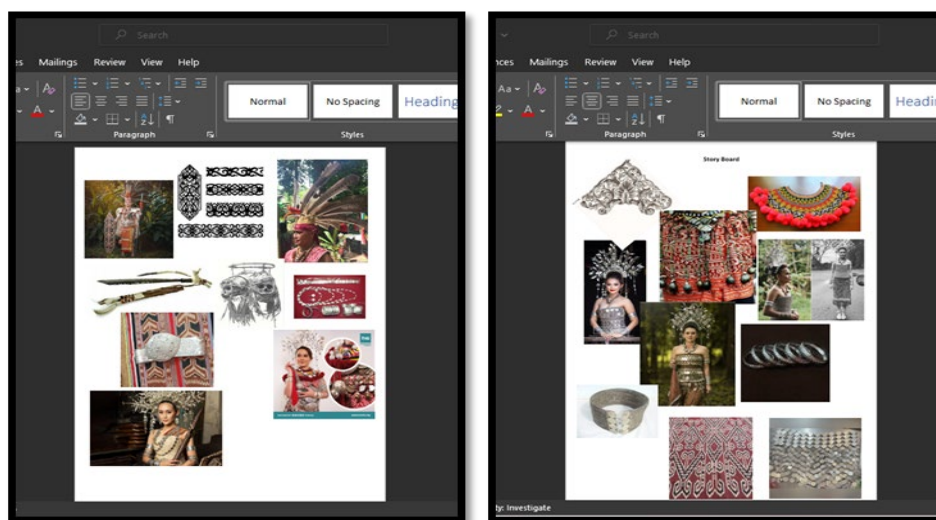


Figure 3. Visual board

The research themes and concepts are introduced using the visual board method, aiming to provide the research group with a comprehensive understanding of synonymous images and visuals in Iban material culture, seeking inspiration. Furthermore, the visual board serves as a guideline for researchers in developing a contemporary portrayal of the character Goddess of Kumang in harmony with the culture and beliefs of the Iban community. The content showcased in the visual board encompasses textiles, various fashion embellishments, motifs, and accessories in traditional Iban attire, forming the core of the concept and design ideas.

2.3. The Sketch Process

Once the design idea is established, the illustration sketch process will be initiated. This phase requires significant time and effort as it involves developing the style and structure of the design, ensuring its alignment with the chosen theme and concept. The sketching also considers the materials used, ensuring they suit Malaysia's culture, climate, and politics. Moreover, appropriate sewing techniques are carefully identified, ensuring that the fashion created is not merely imaginative but practical and relevant.



Figure 4. Sketch proses

The researcher has produced eight sketches, drawing inspiration from the visual board and carefully considering their relevance to the culture of the Iban people. This creative process spanned over two weeks and involved continuous refinement to achieve relevant, realistic, and contemporary ideas while preserving the Iban community's unique identity. The final sketch was selected with great care to ensure its originality, high innovation potential, and potential impact on the contemporary fashion industry in Malaysia and internationally.

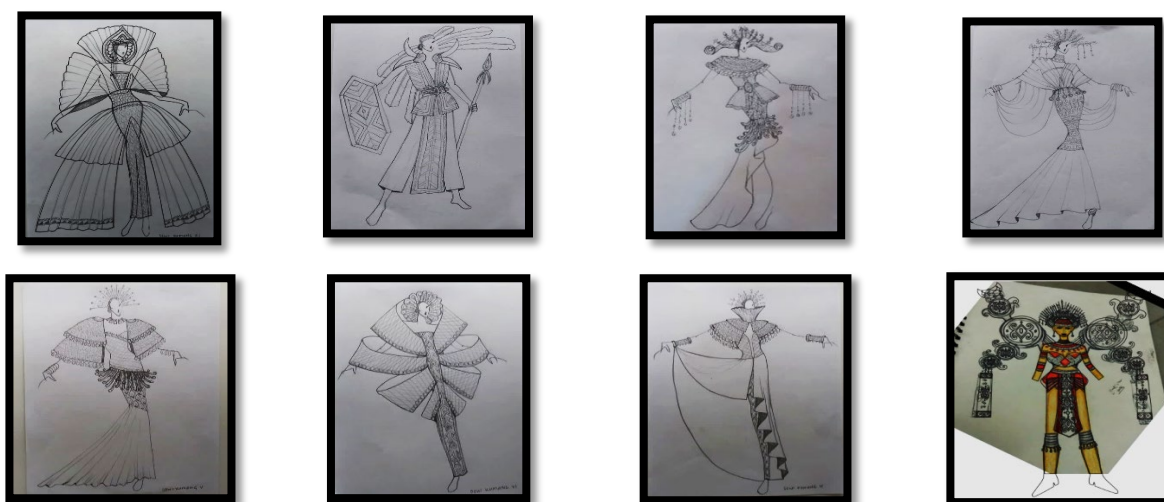


Figure 5. The early sketches



Figure 6. The final illustration

After carefully reviewing the eight preliminary sketches, the process of choosing illustrations for the final design was undertaken. This selection process involved revisiting the objectives of the chosen themes and concepts established during the visualization phase. As a result, the ultimate sketch that emerged from this selection process is named the "Memoir Goddess of Kumang."

2.4. Outline Trace Technique

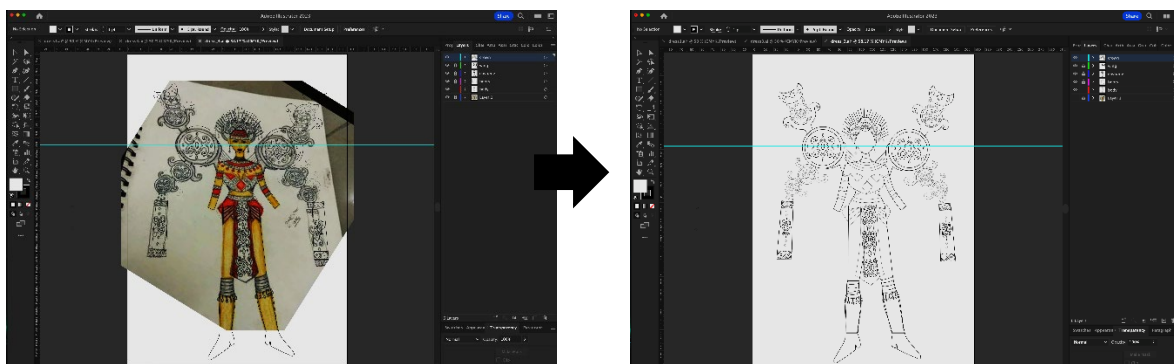


Figure 7. Outline Technique

The pencil sketch of The Charm of the Goddess of Kumang will be scanned in PDF format (Portable Document Format) to be easily traced using the outline technique on computer software. The Outline Trace Technique is used in various fields, such as art, design, and image processing, to convert a continuous-tone image into a simplified outline or silhouette representation. It involves extracting an image's essential edges or contours while discarding fine details and variations in shading or color. Here is the process:

1. **Image Selection:** Choose the image you want to convert into an outline. It could be a photograph, a digital image, or a scanned drawing.
2. **Image Preparation:** If necessary, perform any necessary adjustments or preprocessing on the image. This may include cropping, resizing, or enhancing the image to achieve the desired result.
3. **Edge Detection:** Apply an edge detection algorithm to the image. Edge detection algorithms aim to identify the significant changes in pixel intensity corresponding to the edges or boundaries of objects within the image. Common edge detection algorithms include the Canny edge detector, Sobel operator, or Laplacian of Gaussian.
4. **Thresholding:** Once the edges are detected, apply a thresholding operation to convert the gray-scale image into a binary image. This step involves setting a threshold value to classify pixels as either foreground (part of the edges) or background.

5. **Post-processing:** Perform any necessary post-processing steps to clean up the extracted edges. This may involve applying morphological operations like dilation or erosion to remove noise or smooth the edges.
6. **Optional Styling:** Depending on the desired outcome, you may choose to add additional stylistic elements to the outline. This could include adjusting the line thickness, applying filters, or adding artistic effects to enhance the visual appeal.
7. **Output:** Once the outline tracing is complete, you can save or export the resulting image in the desired format. The final output will be a simplified representation of the original image, consisting of the essential edges or contours.

2.5. Manipulation of images using Adobe Photoshop

Adobe Photoshop is a widely used software program developed by Adobe Inc. It is primarily used for editing and manipulating digital images but also has many other features for graphic design, illustration, and photo retouching. Photoshop provides advanced tools and techniques for professionals and enthusiasts to enhance and transform images, including adjusting colors, cropping, resizing, removing unwanted objects, adding text, applying filters and effects, and much more. Manipulating images using Adobe Photoshop involves various techniques to alter, enhance, or transform images according to your desired outcome. The illustration that has been outlined will be digitally designed using image manipulation techniques in Adobe Photoshop. This technique is design experimentation on sketches that have been traced using outlines by combining images that have been selected based on Iban culture. The image is obtained from the website and adapted to see the appropriateness of the material, concept, overall style, and realistic background as determined during the visualization process.



Figure 8. Manipulation image using Adobe Photoshop

Adobe Photoshop is a powerful software used for image editing and manipulation. Here's a general overview of how the researcher manipulated images using Adobe Photoshop to create the Goddess of Kumang overall look:

1. **Opening an image:** Launch Adobe Photoshop and open the image you want to manipulate by going to File > Open or using the shortcut Ctrl + O (Cmd + O on Mac).
2. **Working with Layers:** Layers are fundamental in Photoshop manipulation. They allow you to separate different image elements and make individual adjustments without affecting the original image. To create a new layer, go to Layer > New > Layer or use the shortcut Shift + Ctrl + N (Shift + Cmd + N on Mac).
3. **Selection Tools:** Use selection tools to isolate specific areas of the image that you want to manipulate. Popular selection tools include the Marquee, Lasso, Magic Wand, and Quick Selection tools. Select the desired tool from the toolbar and drag it around the area you want to select.
4. **Transformation Tools:** Photoshop provides various transformation tools to manipulate selected areas. These tools include Scale, Rotate, Skew, Distort, Perspective, and Warp. To access these tools, go to Edit > Transform or use the shortcut Ctrl + T (Cmd + T on Mac) while the selection is active.
5. **Adjustment Layers:** Adjustment layers allow you to make non-destructive edits to your image. They provide a range of adjustments such as brightness, contrast, color balance, hue/saturation,

- levels, curves, and more. To add an adjustment layer, click on the "Create new fill or adjustment layer" icon at the bottom of the Layers panel and select the desired adjustment.
6. **Filters and Effects:** Photoshop offers a wide array of filters and effects that can be applied to the entire image or selected areas. You can find these options under the Filter menu. Popular effects include Blur, Sharpen, Distort, Stylize, and Render. Experiment with different filters to achieve the desired look.
 7. **Retouching Tools:** Photoshop provides retouching tools to enhance or modify specific areas of the image. These tools include the Spot Healing Brush, Clone Stamp, Healing Brush, and Content-Aware Fill. Select the desired tool from the toolbar and apply it to the areas you want to retouch.
 8. **Layers Masks:** Layer masks allow you to hide or reveal parts of a layer without permanently deleting pixels. They are useful for creating seamless blends, adjustments, and composites. To add a layer mask, select the layer you want to mask and click on the Layer Mask icon at the bottom of the Layers panel.
 9. **Saving and Exporting:** Once you are satisfied with your image manipulation, save your work by going to File > Save or use the shortcut Ctrl + S (Cmd + S on Mac). If you want to export the image for web or specific purposes, go to File > Export > Export As or use the shortcut Ctrl + Shift + E (Cmd + Shift + E on Mac).

2.6. Theory of Research

This research is grounded in [Atkin \(2010\)](#), also known as semiotics or semiotic theory, developed by the American philosopher and logician Charles Sanders Peirce during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Peirce's theory presents a comprehensive framework for comprehending the functioning of signs and the production of meaning. According to Peirce, a sign can be any entity that represents something else in some capacity or aspect. These signs are not confined to physical objects but can also encompass words, gestures, sounds, and other forms of representation. Peirce categorized signs into three trichotomies based on their relationships: the sign itself (representamen), the object it represents (object), and the interpretant, which denotes the understanding or meaning derived from the sign. Additionally, Peirce identified three types of signs, or semiotic relations, that explain how signs are related to their objects.

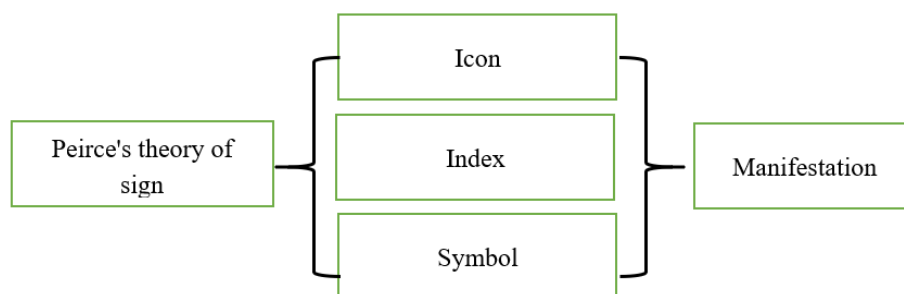


Figure 9. Peirce's theory of sign

Source: [Atkin \(2010\)](#)

1. **Icon:** An icon is a sign that represents its object by virtue of similarity or resemblance. It has some inherent similarity or analogy to the object it signifies.
2. **Index:** An index is a sign that represents its object by virtue of a direct connection or correlation. It is physically or causally linked to its object.
3. **Symbol:** A symbol is a sign that represents its object by convention or agreement. Symbols have an arbitrary or conventional relationship with their objects, established by a social or cultural context.

3. Results and Discussion

The design concept for the attire, Goddess of Kumang, draws inspiration from a reimagining of her persona as illustrated in Iban's literary works, encompassing both traditional tales and poetic expressions. The characterization of the Goddess of Kumang will be classified based on the themes that have been identified. To underscore the importance of the Goddess of Kumang within Iban culture, the fashion design proposed in this study will integrate the fundamental components of the Iban Ngepan style. Moreover, this

design will also consider the textile features, accessories, and embellishments that are commonly utilized by the contemporary Iban community in their Ngepan ensembles.



Figure 10. Memoir Goddess of Kumang

The artwork originates from the concept of the Memoir Goddess of Kumang. This creative depiction takes its cues from the persona depicted in the Iban people's folk stories. The idea is translated into the artistic rendition, utilizing the Avant Garde style to portray the Kumang Goddess as a warrior. This embodiment presents her as a resilient, bold, and graceful woman, revealing her gentle aspects. This representation of women as warriors holds significance in today's context as it signifies parity between genders and underscores their adeptness in navigating the challenges of the contemporary era. Furthermore, it captures the contemporary and competitive essence of female leadership in the 21st century. The empowerment of indigenous women refers to the deliberate and comprehensive efforts to enhance the social, economic, political, and cultural status of women belonging to indigenous or native communities. This empowerment seeks to address the historically marginalized position of indigenous women by providing them with the tools, resources, and opportunities to exercise their rights, make decisions, and actively participate in various aspects of their societies. Empowering Iban women in Sarawak involves a multifaceted approach that addresses their economic, political, social, and cultural well-being. Here are some manifestations of the contribution to the empowerment of Iban women:



Figure 11. Empowerment of Iban Women

1. **Education and Skill Development:** Provide access to quality education and skill development programs for Iban girls and women. This can include vocational training, literacy programs,

- and business, agriculture, and technology courses, enabling them to secure better job opportunities and contribute to their families and communities.
2. **Economic Opportunities:** Create income-generating opportunities for Iban women through entrepreneurship, cooperatives, and microfinance initiatives. Support the development of women-led businesses and provide training in financial management, marketing, and business planning.
 3. **Land and Resource Rights:** Advocate for and protect Iban women's rights to land and natural resources, especially given the cultural significance of land ownership within Iban communities. Ensure that women have equal access to land tenure, inheritance, and decision-making related to land use.
 4. **Political Participation:** Encourage and support Iban women's involvement in local governance, community leadership, and political representation. Offer leadership, advocacy, and public speaking training to equip them with the skills needed to make their voices heard.
 5. **Health and Well-being:** Improve access to healthcare services and information for Iban women. Address maternal health issues, provide reproductive health education, and create awareness about gender-specific health concerns.
 6. **Gender Equality and Awareness:** Promote awareness about gender equality and challenge harmful gender norms and stereotypes within Iban communities. Work with community leaders, elders, and men to foster a more inclusive and respectful environment for women.
 7. **Cultural Preservation:** Recognize and celebrate the cultural heritage of Iban women. Support efforts to preserve traditional knowledge, crafts, and practices. Empower women to take on roles as cultural custodians and educators within their communities.
 8. **Legal Awareness and Advocacy:** Enhance Iban women's understanding of their legal rights and avenues for seeking justice. Provide legal aid services and advocacy support to address issues such as domestic violence, land disputes, and discrimination.

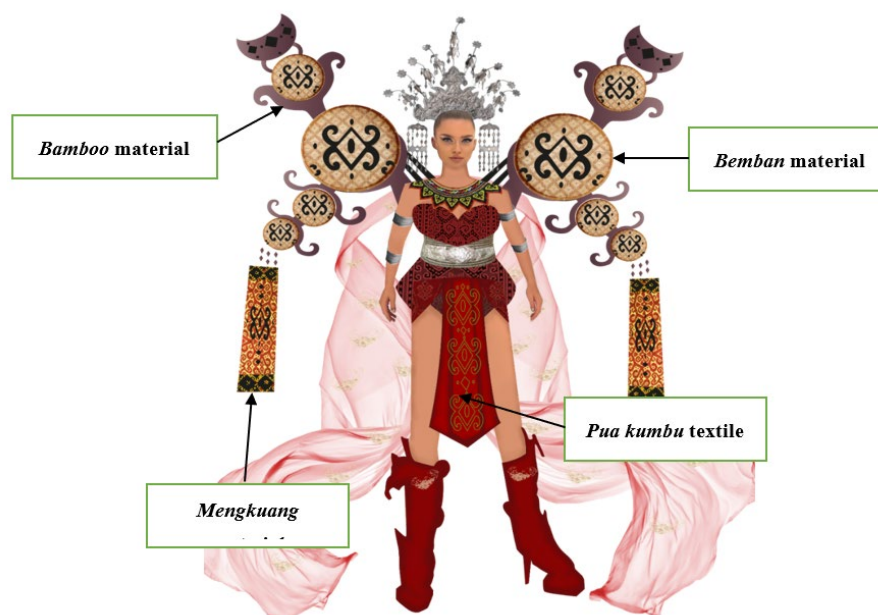


Figure 12. Memoir Goddess of Kumang

3.1. The Arts and Representation

Representational art encompasses various subjects, ranging from real-life elements like landscapes, objects, and individuals (Marriott, 2019). These artistic ideas draw inspiration from contemporary fashion adaptation and Avant-Garde styles. They are examined through the perspective of Representation Theory, in which each design component carries its significance and symbolism. Instead of relying solely on emotion, art is defined by its link to human perception, serving as a conduit for expressing manifestations, ideologies, cultures, and beliefs. The portrayal of design within this fashion wing embodies notions of freedom, bravery, and seriousness. Over time, indigenous women in the Malay Archipelago, including Iban women,

have encountered various forms of subjugation that have deprived them of their rightful entitlements. These include constraints on education, impartial trials, societal bias, and submission to a male-dominated social framework that governs their lives, marriages, and familial roles.

They additionally confront difficulties related to sexual harassment and domestic abuse. [Abdullah \(2013\)](#) attributes the historical curtailment of indigenous women's rights to the sway of the feudal system. This conventional monarchical structure exclusively concentrated political, social, and economic authority in the hands of men. The motif found in Pua Kumbu is a design believed to have been unveiled to the Iban people through divine visions from gods and goddesses. In this specific pattern, the Pua Kumbu is enriched with the Buah Aji Bangkit motif, signifying the God of Keling, and the Nabau motif, embodying power and blessings as a large snake. In Iban mythology, the "Nabau" is a powerful and mystical serpent or dragon often associated with bodies of water, especially rivers. The Iban people are indigenous to Borneo, particularly in Sarawak, Malaysia, and Kalimantan, Indonesia. The Nabau holds significant cultural and spiritual importance within their folklore.



Figure 13: Nabau Motive in Pua Kumbu

The Nabau is often depicted as a guardian spirit of the rivers and is believed to possess supernatural powers. It is revered as a deity that controls the waterways and can bring blessings and curses to those interacting with it. The Nabau is seen as having the ability to shape-shift between its serpent form and a human form, making it even more mysterious and powerful. The Iban people have a deep respect for the Nabau, and various customs, rituals, and taboos are associated with it. Some beliefs suggest that encounters with the Nabau can lead to prosperity if respected but could result in misfortune if its rules are violated. The concept of the Nabau reflects the Iban's close relationship with their natural surroundings, particularly the rivers that are vital to their way of life. The mythical creature serves as a reminder of the interconnectedness between humans and nature and the need to maintain a harmonious balance.

In Iban culture, "sacred motive" might refer to traditional motifs, designs, or symbols with significant cultural and spiritual meanings. The Iban people, also known as Sea Dayaks, are an indigenous group from the island of Borneo, primarily residing in the Malaysian state of Sarawak and the Indonesian province of West Kalimantan. They have a rich cultural heritage with intricate art, rituals, and belief systems. The traditional art of the Iban people often features intricate motifs deeply rooted in their spiritual beliefs, myths, and legends. These motifs can be found in various forms of artistic expression, such as weaving, tattoos, woodcarving, and beadwork. Each motif carries a unique meaning and might represent aspects of their worldview, cultural history, or connections to nature and the supernatural. It's important to note that Iban culture is diverse and complex, and the meanings behind specific motifs might vary among different communities or individuals. These motifs are part of the broader cultural tapestry that makes up the Iban identity and provide insights into their history, beliefs, and way of life.

3.2. Materials

The Iban woven textile, known as Pua Kumbu, takes center stage in this design, showcasing its vibrant palette that frequently integrates primary shades like yellow, red, black, and white. The creation of Pua Kumbu follows a traditional local approach, progressing through multiple phases. The outset entails collecting forest plants that form the fundamental constituents for crafting Pua Kumbu.



Figure 14. Pua Kumbu

The Iban community places profound cultural and ceremonial importance on these textiles. Pua Kumbu textiles serve many functions, including being used as ceremonial wraps and attire and being present during significant events like weddings. The intricate patterns that embellish these textiles frequently showcase customary symbols and motifs, conveying the Iban people's vital narratives, myths, or spiritual convictions. Crafting Pua Kumbu textiles requires considerable expertise, a legacy transmitted across generations, underscoring the indispensable role of weavers in safeguarding this age-old art form and its cultural significance. In the contemporary context, Pua Kumbu textiles are treasured by the Iban people and recognized as valuable works of art esteemed by individuals worldwide. Their beauty and cultural significance transcend borders and make them cherished pieces appreciated by people from diverse backgrounds. The Iban community in Borneo perceives the environment not merely as a source of sustenance but as an integral part of their cultural identity and imagery. Forests, rivers, mountains, and plants hold unique meanings and representations in the community's understanding. They view the environment as a living spirit capable of helping, caring, and protecting against potential dangers. Using materials sourced from Borneo's nature, such as mengkuang and bemban leaves, symbolizes the Iban people's connection to their environment and finds frequent application in creating cultural artifacts. These leaves, often mentioned in the literature of the Goddess Kumang, hold particular significance as they are utilized in various ceremonies and rituals, including the making of patterned mats.

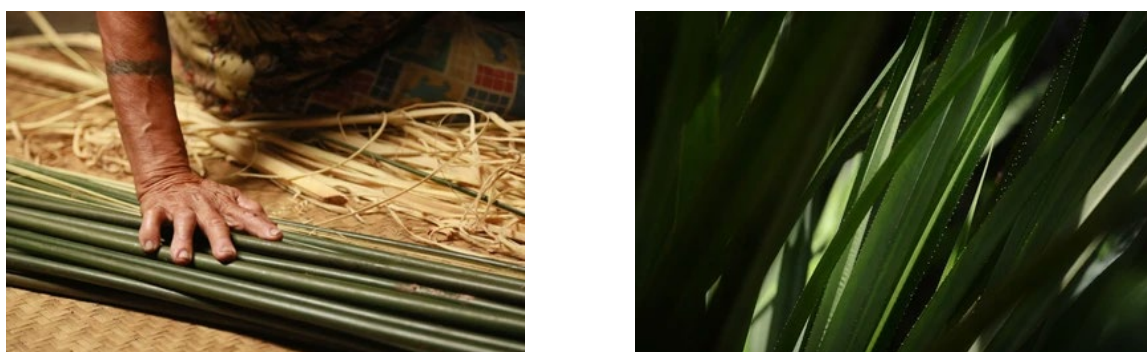


Figure 15: Bemban leaves & Mengkuang leaves

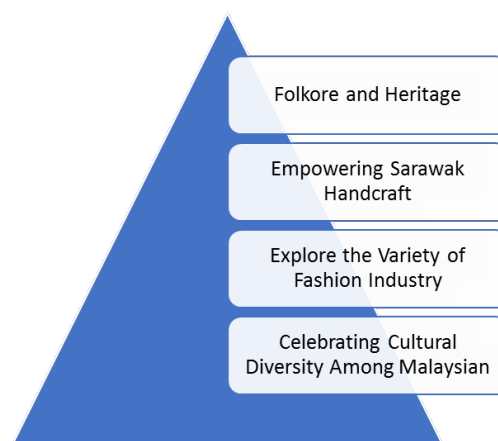
This design incorporates natural materials like bamboo, mengkuang (*Pandanus amaryllifolius*), and bemban (*Donax grandis*) as supplementary materials. This choice aligns with the population's demographics, as they continue to value forest resources as essential for their livelihood and spiritual beliefs. The relationship between nature and the Iban people is deeply profound and integral to their cultural

identity. Nature holds immense significance in their lives, including spirituality, subsistence, social structure, and traditions. Here's an exploration of the multifaceted relationship between the Iban people and nature. Traditional Iban beliefs are deeply rooted in animism, where nature is seen as inhabited by spirits. Every element of the natural world, from rivers and mountains to animals and plants, is believed to have its spirit. The Iban people connect closely with these spirits, seeking harmony to ensure protection, prosperity, and well-being. Rituals and ceremonies often involve offerings and prayers to these spirits.

1. Historically, the Iban people have relied on subsistence agriculture for their livelihoods. They practice shifting cultivation, or "swidden farming," which involves clearing and cultivating a piece of land for a few years before moving to a new area. This cyclical process allows the land to regenerate naturally. This agricultural practice demonstrates their understanding of the need for sustainability and their dependence on nature's cycles.
2. The forests hold immense cultural value for the Iban people. Beyond providing resources like timber, food, and medicinal plants, the forests are also places of cultural identity, gathering, and ritual activities. The Iban have a deep knowledge of the forests and their biodiversity, passed down through generations, shaping their interactions with the land.
3. Nature is a constant source of inspiration for Iban's traditional arts and crafts. Their intricate weaving, intricate beadwork, and detailed carvings often feature motifs and designs inspired by animals, plants, and natural patterns. These creations serve as functional items and artistic expressions of their relationship with the natural world.
4. Iban oral traditions are replete with stories, myths, and legends that incorporate elements of nature. These stories entertain and educate listeners about the balance and interconnectedness of the natural world. They often contain moral lessons about respecting nature and living harmoniously.

3.3. Potential and Significance

The potential and significance of this project can be categorized into four key areas. All four of these elements are important factors and potential sources of competitiveness in providing benefits to cultural sustainability, economic well-being to craft entrepreneurs, and conducive development to players in Malaysia's textile and fashion industry in general.



Firstly, it involves the preservation of the Pua Kumbu, an Iban woven fabric, and the cultural significance of the Folklore Goddess of Kumang among the Iban people. Preserving folklore through fashion design is a creative and meaningful way to celebrate and honor cultural heritage. Folklore encompasses the stories, traditions, and customs of a particular community or culture, and fashion can be a powerful medium to convey these elements. This attire represents how the Iban people in Sarawak narrate and immerse themselves in the beauty of the deities they worship and how they translate this through an oral tradition to ensure it continues to live on in the collective memory of their society. The story that is not only about the Goddess of Kumang alone, but the power and sacredness of the 'pua kumbu' that are legendary in their culture is an essential thread to be preserved in this study to appreciate the historical masterpiece of textile art. It also aims to support Sarawak's handicraft entrepreneurs in expanding their businesses into more contemporary handicraft markets.

This study also emphasizes the development and expansion of the handicraft industry in Sarawak, rather than solely focusing on conservative sales for souvenir purposes to tourists visiting Sarawak.

However, these handicrafts can be elevated to become a jewelry commodity for fashion accessories based on ethnic and contemporary modern designs. It has the potential to be a significant driver in introducing and promoting Sarawak's handicrafts to a more global level. Thirdly, it seeks to invigorate the Malaysian fashion industry by showcasing the talents of young designers, especially students in higher learning institutions, allowing them to explore diverse fashion genres and remain competitive. Reviving and invigorating the Malaysian fashion industry based on ethnic concepts has significant potential. Malaysia is a diverse nation with a rich cultural heritage, comprising various ethnic groups such as Malay, Chinese, Indian, and indigenous peoples.

Leveraging this cultural diversity can result in a unique and vibrant scene that appeals to Malaysians and the international market. Lastly, the project aims to foster a spirit of unity within Malaysia's multi-racial society by celebrating cultural diversity through the medium of the fashion industry. Celebrating cultural diversity through the medium of the fashion industry is a powerful and meaningful way to promote inclusivity, break down stereotypes, and foster cross-cultural understanding. Fashion designers can draw inspiration from different cultures while respecting their traditions and symbols. Designers can create unique and beautiful pieces that celebrate cultural diversity by incorporating elements from various cultures into their designs. Engage with local communities and cultural organizations to learn and understand the significance of various fashion traditions. It can lead to more respectful and informed approaches to incorporating cultural elements into designs.

4. Conclusions

In recent years, there has been a rising trend known as folklore fashion, which involves seamlessly merging the time-honored narratives, customs, and beliefs of different cultures with contemporary clothing styles. Folklore encompasses the cultural stories, traditions, and rituals handed down through generations. Fashion designers have found inspiration in these tales and symbols, using them to craft one-of-a-kind and captivating clothing designs. This article aims to delve into the historical background and impact of folklore on fashion, explore the recurring themes of folklore in the fashion industry, analyze how folklore fashion has influenced society, and offer advice on incorporating folklore elements into your style. By embracing folklore fashion, we can celebrate cultural diversity's richness and safeguard traditional practices while pioneering fresh and captivating fashion trends. In folklore-inspired fashion, infusing designs with symbolic motifs and patterns drawn from myths and legends becomes crucial in imbuing the creations with richness and significance. When these symbols are skillfully interwoven into clothing, designers craft items that captivate the eye while bearing profound cultural meaning.

Folklore fashion allows designers to celebrate cultural diversity by drawing inspiration from various myths and legends. This approach results in unique collections that showcase the richness of human imagination and promote cultural awareness. Memoir Goddess of Kumang plays an important role in preserving cultural heritage and promoting cultural diversity in the Iban community in Sarawak. By wearing traditional dresses, people can connect with their cultural roots, support local craftsmanship, and celebrate their cultural heritage. The Memoir Goddess of Kumang innovation idea enables designers to create clothing with a deeper meaning through the integration of symbolic motifs and patterns. These garments captivate the eye and connect the wearer to the diverse cultural heritage from which they originate, fostering a sense of appreciation and pride in our shared Iban culture and heritage.

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