

# The Empirical Analysis of *Tengkolok* Malay Heritage

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**Abstract:** The Malay *Tengkolok* has its unique significance as an ancient heritage, and it is essential to safeguard it against the risk of being lost to future generations or going extinct. Despite this, the Malay *Tengkolok* is sometimes worn incorrectly due to confusion over the ideals of art history and current trends. As a result, this research focused on the public's knowledge of the Malay *Tengkolok* and how to better understand the public's role in preserving the heritage of the *Tengkolok* history. To gather data for this research study, we analysed contextual documents, conducted a questionnaire survey with 150 public members, and conducted observations at the National Museum. The findings of this study showed that most participants agreed that the heritage of *Tengkolok* should be honoured by using a new medium. The majority of them chose social media platforms as the ones that could be used to have a more significant impact on honouring *Tengkolok* heritage, as shown by the fact that the study's results and the documentation of this Malay *Tengkolok* could also serve as a means of appreciating the rich legacy that the Malay people have inherited.

**Keywords:** Heritage, history, Malay ethnic, new Media, *Tengkolok*

## Introduction

*Tengkolok* is a traditional Malay headdress for men that originated with the Malay people. Initially, wearing *Tengkolok* consisted of only wrapping the head with a cloth to keep the hair clean. However, the wrapping experienced alteration over time and evolved into an art form and a Malay trademark (Ahmad, 2000). Consequently, donning *Tengkolok* over time could provide insight into the wearer's status, rank, and position. *Tengkolok* is also closely tied to the palace, and heroism is worn when attending official gatherings and customary events (Ahmat, 2012). According to Abdul Manan et al. (2020), the purpose of utilising *Tengkolok* is to differentiate between those who hold the position of royalty and those who hold the status of nobility.

When commoners met the Sultan at the palace, they traditionally wore nothing more than a piece of fabric wrapped around their heads as a *Tengkolok*, which was done to keep their hair out of the way. Soon after the discovery of this wrapping, the people of the palace decided to incorporate the *Tengkolok* into the official wardrobe because of its ability to keep hair neater. *Tengkolok* binders have begun to make many different varieties of unique and attractive *Tengkolok* beginning with that point. Several other names, including *Tanjak*, *Destar*, *Semutar*, and *Bulang Hulu*, also know this, the so-called 'accessory' worn on the head. These names can be distinguished depending on the state, such as *Tanjak* in Selangor and *Tengkolok* in Perak (Aziz, 2009). Though a variety of terminology is used to reflect this Malay identity, it is abundantly evident that the function of the sarong is to cover and protect the head.

*Tengkolok* is a symbol of distinction used by the nobility and royalty. In the past, *Tengkolok* was typically crafted from high-quality, specialised materials like *Songket* textiles. The kain pelangi with the gold dust decoration was used once. Fashion trends are subject to change; however, ordinary materials are used (Ros Mahwati et al., 2019). In recent years, Generation Y men of all ages, especially those in their 20s and 30s, have preferred *Tengkolok* as a fashion trend (Muhamad, 2020). As a result, wearing the *Tengkolok* in modern times is sometimes done incorrectly due to needing clarification on the shape, nature, and name of the accessory. In addition, there needs to be more comprehension of the significance of the proper way to wear this *Tengkolok*, which contributes to misuse and confusion and has contributed to people's need for more curiosity and commitment to immersing themselves in stories plentiful with cultural values, as stated by Faudzi and Rohana (2021).

This study is essential since it will increase awareness of the Malay group in the *Tengkolok* heritage. It is essential to point out that the findings of this study have the potential to contribute to the enhancement of the dignity of not only the Malay heritage but also the *Tengkolok* legacy and other Malay heritages by assisting in the prevention of their loss and extinction for future generations. This study aims to contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8, which focusses on promoting economic growth and decent work. The heritage of *Tengkolok* should be maintained in the same manner as other aspects of Malaysia's heritage to ensure that it is preserved for the advantage of future generations and the tourism industry.

## Literature Review

*Tengkolok* is one of the clothing elements or headdresses for Malay men, and it became part of the daily attire of certain groups in the olden society. *Tengkolok* is a traditional headdress worn by men of Malay descent. According to Mohd Bukhari et al. (2020), a *Tengkolok* is a type of headpiece that can only be created with handicrafts. According to Abdul Manan et al. (2020), *Tengkolok* is one of the components of Malay men's apparel or a headpiece that evolved into an integral feature of the day-to-day attire of specific social groupings in the past. The heritage of *Tengkolok* has become more stunning with time because it is traditionally altered and adapted to reflect the status of the wearer and the events that are taking place. This traditional garb is reserved for important events, such as weddings and the coronation ritual of a king or Sultan, and is worn only in those instances. According to Abdul Manan et al. (2020), the Malay kingdom gave *Tengkolok* the status of a badge when a new monarch or Sultan was crowned. This event occurred in 2020 when the *Tengkolok* was initially introduced. As a result, *Tengkolok* is considered one of the exquisite Malay crafts, classified as a three-dimensional masterpiece, and it is attributed to the *Tengkolok*'s measurements, which encompass length, width, and height, constructed in a three-dimensional structure and occurred at the time when *Tengkolok* was first used in 2020.

Therefore, the *Tengkolok* is one of the Malay crafts, categorised as a three-dimensional work of art, and this is due to the *Tengkolok* design's length, width, and height measurements based on a three-dimensional shape. Rodziah (1981) states that the *Tengkolok* is a branch of art that is considered a Malay handicraft. Moreover, when it comes to folding and decorating a *Tengkolok*, each *Tengkolok* artisan has its own unique method. Every paper folding method has its benefits and characteristics that set it apart. The three-finger folding technique is the first of the fundamental folding methods. Rolling is the second technique to be formed, and the technique of triangular folding is distinct from the previous techniques.

Through this passage, it can be explained that *Tengkolok* is one of Malay's fine arts as the appreciation and sentiment of flora and fauna produce it. It can be illustrated by the name of a *Tengkolok* that consists of flora and fauna terms like the Perak state *Tengkolok* (Salina, 2015) such as *Ayam Patah Kepak* (Chicken with Broken Wing), *Helang Menyusur Angin* (Soaring Eagle), *Anak Gajah Menyusu* (Nursing Elephant Calf), *Balong Ayam* (Rooster's Comb), and *Pucuk Pisang Patah* (Broken Banana Shoot). Thus, through the appreciation and inspiration of nature, *Tengkolok* is an invaluable piece of great art and beauty. By experiencing it through the senses, *Tengkolok*'s unique beauty can be appreciated, reminding us of the power of its creator.

## Methodology

This research employed a quantitative approach for data collection and analysis, utilising a survey questionnaire and observation methods. The survey questionnaire was conducted online to identify Malay knowledge of the heritage of *Tengkolok*. Collected data were obtained through the distribution of questionnaires among 150 Malay virtually using WhatsApp applications and social media, namely Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The participants were selected voluntarily. The questionnaire was divided into two parts, a demographic section and a questionnaire section, which includes the measurement aspects of knowledge and opinions on using new media.

On top of that, an observation of the existing medium used in dignifying the heritage of *Tengkolok* was also conducted. The observation method was conducted in two ways: online and on-site. The on-site observation was conducted at the National Museum in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Observations were carried out regarding the heritage of how *Tengkolok* was displayed and dignified. Further observations were then carried out through the online content of the national museum website to analyse how related digital new media were applied in dignifying the heritage of *Tengkolok*. This strategy will further focus on proposing how a new media can further dignify the *Tengkolok* heritage.

## Results

The main objective of this study is to investigate how the Malay community views *Tengkolok's* history. In order to accomplish the objectives of the research aim, a questionnaire and observation were employed in the study. The questionnaire was distributed to the Malay community across Malaysia. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: basic knowledge about *Tengkolok's* heritage and factors contributing to public awareness. The questionnaire results revealed that most participants had a higher frequency of basic knowledge about the heritage of *Tengkolok*. By referring to Table 1, 77.1% of the participants answered 'Yes', while the other 22.9% answered 'No'.

**Table 1.** Distribution of respondents on their basic knowledge about the heritage of *Tengkolok*

Response	Frequency	Per cent
Yes	116	77.1%
No	34	22.9%

Table 2 below shows that 69 out of 150 respondents (46.3%) knew about the heritage of *Tengkolok* from people and friends, 41 respondents (27.8%) knew it from the internet and social media, 25 respondents (16.7%) knew it from magazines and news, six respondents (3.8%) knew it from Malaysian history and three respondents with 1.9% each knew it from the general knowledge, heir to the family maker of Sultan Pahang's *Tengkolok* and references of Malay heritage activists.

**Table 2.** Distribution of respondents on how they know about the heritage of *Tengkolok*

Response	Frequency	Per cent
People and friends	69	46.3%
Magazine and news	25	16.7%
Internet and social media	41	27.8%
Malaysian history	6	3.8%
General knowledge	3	1.9%
Heir to the family maker of Tengkolok Sultan Pahang	3	1.9%
References of Malay Heritage Activists	3	1.9%

Table 3 shows 72 respondents, with 48.1% replying 'Yes', 47 respondents (31.5%) replying 'No', and 31 respondents 20.4% replying maybe on the *Tengkolok* heritage style.

**Table 3.** Distribution of respondents are influenced by the *Tengkolok* heritage style.

Response	Frequency	Per cent
Yes	72	48.1%
No	47	31.5%
Maybe	31	20.4%

Table 4 shows 105 respondents out of 150 (70.3%) are influenced by the traditional Malay dress, 20 respondents (13.5%) are influenced by the groom's dress, 20 respondents with 13.5% are influenced by Modern *Baju Melayu*, and five respondents (2.7%) are influenced by the royal family dress.

**Table 4.** Distribution of respondents on dress fashion from today's *Tengkolok* heritage, which can influence them

Response	Frequency	Per cent
The Royal Family	5	2.7%
Traditional Malay Dress	105	70.3%
The Groom's Dress	20	13.5%
Modern Baju Melayu	20	13.5%

Table 5 shows 125 respondents out of 150, with 83.8% answering 'Yes', 20 13.5% answering 'No', and only five respondents with 2.7% answering 'Maybe'.

**Table 5.** Distribution of respondents if they wear a *Tengkolok* on a particular day to dignify the traditional heritage

Response	Frequency	Per cent
Yes	125	83.8%
No	20	13.5%
Maybe	5	2.7%

Moreover, the results also established that most respondents agree that *Tengkolok's* heritage can be dignified using new technology and media. In Table 6, the results indicate that 137 respondents out of 150 (91.7%) answering 'Yes', and the other 13 respondents (8.3%) answering 'Maybe'. No respondents answered 'No'.

**Table 6.** The distribution of respondents agrees that *Tengkolok's* heritage can be dignified through the use of new technology and media today

Response	Frequency	Per cent
Yes	137	91.7%
No	-	-
Maybe	13	8.3%

The results revealed impressive outcomes when it came to identifying appropriate technologies and new media that can significantly contribute to the dignification of *Tengkolok* heritage. Table 7 displays the social media platforms selected by 135 respondents, who scored 83.3%, as suitable technologies and new media that can contribute significantly to the dignification of *Tengkolok's* heritage. Conversely, 94 respondents (63.9%) chose video sharing platforms, 54 (36.1%) chose vlogs, 46 (30.6%) chose online newspapers, and 37 (25%) chose online forums. The same percentage selected virtual and augmented reality, with 37 (25%) and 33 (22.2%) choosing blogs.

**Table 7.** Distribution of respondents on the selection of suitable technologies and new media that can be used and have a more significant impact on dignifying the heritage of *Tengkolok*

Response	Frequency	Per cent
Blogs	33	22.2%
Online forums	37	25%
Online newspaper	46	30.6%
Social media platforms	125	83.3%
Video sharing platforms	94	63.9%
Virtual and augmented reality	37	25%
Vlogs	54	36.1%

In conclusion, the results obtained through the questionnaire survey have achieved the first research objective: to identify the Malay knowledge level in dignifying the heritage of *Tengkolok*. The data collected from the questionnaire will be discussed further in the discussion section.

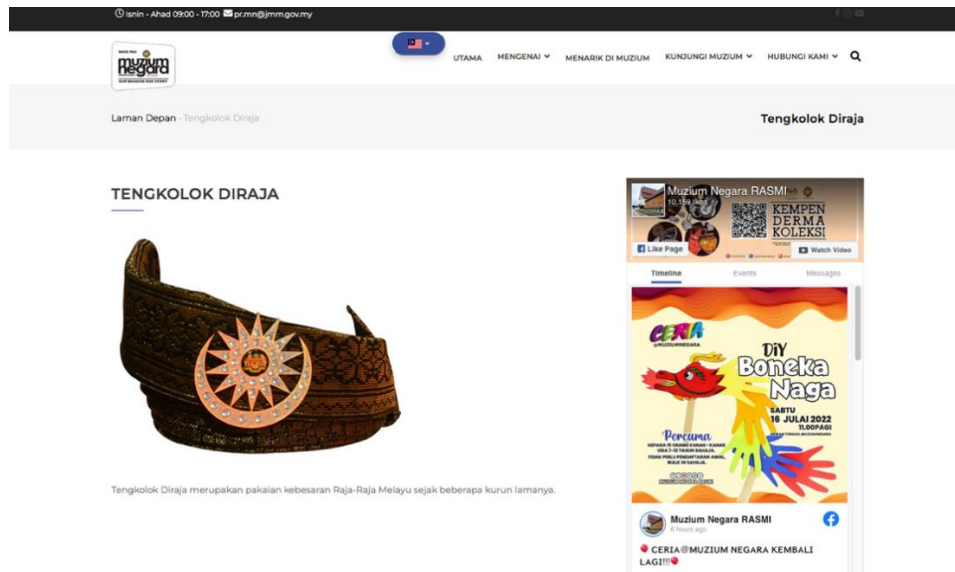
The data collection continues using the following method to achieve the second research objective; to observe the existing medium used in dignifying *Tengkolok's* heritage. The first result of on-site observation is below.



**Fig. 1.** A captured image of *Tengkolok Diraja* at the National Museum's gallery (Authors' Image Collection)

Fig. 1 shows eight types of *Tengkolok Diraja* worn by Malaysian monarchs and Malay Sultanates. Through the use of shape, colour, pattern, and fabric, each *Tengkolok* conveys a distinct symbol of its wearer's social status. The on-site observation shows that the heritage of *Tengkolok* can only be seen by visiting the National Museum. The *Tengkolok* exhibition section has only one section in the gallery, and there needs to be more emphasis on the origins and use of *Tengkolok* and any media used to dignify the heritage of *Tengkolok*.

Referring to the official website of the National Museum (Fig. 2), one can see only one of the *Tengkolok Diraja* with a short description. This online observation yields much underemphasised information on *Tengkolok* heritage. In addition, no further information or visuals can be used to dignify the heritage of *Tengkolok*. Thus, with all the results from the observation obtained, we have achieved the second research objective: to analyse the existing medium used in dignifying the heritage of *Tengkolok*. The data collected from the observation results will be further discussed in the discussion section.



**Fig. 2.** A screenshot image of the National Museum's official website

## Discussion

Results from the survey highlighted that 77.1% of Malay respondents are well aware of the heritage of *Tengkolok*. An average of 46.3% of the Malay knew about the heritage of the *Tengkolok* from people and friends, with an average of 48.1% of the Malay are being influenced by the *Tengkolok* heritage style. In terms of heritage style, the traditional Malay dress significantly influenced 70.3% of the Malay ethnic group.

Furthermore, a high average of 83.3% of the Malay would like to wear a *Tengkolok* on a particular day to dignify their traditional heritage. A significant percentage of 91.7% of respondents further agreed that the heritage of the *Tengkolok* can be dignified using the new medium. Finally, the majority, 83.3%, views social media as a new medium that can significantly impact the dignification of *Tengkolok* heritage. Respondents from the Malay community agreed that the new media could do so.

In addition, the observation results indicate that neither the on-site visit to the National Museum nor the official website adequately honours the heritage of *Tengkolok*. No other medium is used to demonstrate the significance of this *Tengkolok* heritage and how it is preserved and protected against loss and extinction for future generations. Moreover, the objective is to fulfill the unachievable part of Sustainable Development Goal 8, which pertains to decent work and economic growth. Thus, this study suggested that it is essential to have new prevention approaches for the *Tengkolok* heritage. The heritage of *Tengkolok* should be maintained in the same manner as other aspects of Malaysia's heritage to ensure that it is preserved for the advantage of future generations and the tourism industry.

## Conclusion

*Tengkolok* is a treasured heritage of the ancient Malay royal legacy. It is of high value and must be preserved by the Malay ethnicity to endure forever as the Malay heritage. Therefore, the Malays must have knowledge and comprehension of the *Tengkolok* heritage. The findings from the data analysis will serve as evidence for this study's proposal for a new medium to increase the Malay ethnic group's knowledge and comprehension of the *Tengkolok* heritage. This study was conducted to determine the level of knowledge within Malay towards *Tengkolok* heritage, and the findings from this study not only established the level of understanding but also the potential medium to increase the level of knowledge and understanding of the Malay ethnicity in order to honour *Tengkolok* heritage.

With the significant increase in new media technology such as social media, interactive mobile apps, and others, these applications and platforms have the potential to grow and, indirectly, will be

able to give more exposure to various age groups of social media users who are not only focused on the Malay ethnicity but all social media users, both local and abroad. Through these, contents that can be shared on social media may highlight the origins and history of *Tengkolok* in the Malay Kingdoms as one of the ways to apply the understanding and knowledge of the Malay ethnic group itself and other social media users. The accurate content shared will enhance the value of *Tengkolok* heritage in a way that dignifies it and further raises the name of the Malays in the world.

### Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the research findings, this study suggests that future researchers should consider the preservation of *Tengkolok* as one of the Malay heritages. Considering that the current immersive technology for the preservation work is most encouraged, future studies could be conducted from the perspective of others, such as the reliability of the *Tengkolok* heritage towards current immersive technology. In addition, in a philosophical study on the design of *Tengkolok*, future research could be done by documenting the relationship between the aesthetic value of *Tengkolok* and meaning in such a way that the invaluable Malay craftsmanship is kept alive and not lost in the modernisation of fashion.

### Co-Author Contribution

The authors confirmed that there is no conflict of interest in this article. Author 1 carried out the fieldwork. Author 3 prepared the literature review. Author 2 wrote the research methodology, and Author 4 did the statistical analysis and interpretation of the results.

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