

# TRANSLATING NIFITALI-TALI JEWELRY MAKING TECHNIQUES FROM NIAS TO CONTEMPORARY JEWELRY DESIGN

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## Abstract:

The rich cultural heritage of Indonesia is a valuable source of inspiration. One of the valuable Indonesian heritages is the Nifitali - tali jewelry from the Nias island of West Sumatra. This study will go over how to use this resource in jewelry design. The process of making Nifitali-tali jewelry is unique because it cannot be seen in any other traditional Indonesian jewelry making techniques, but as society changes, the craftsmen who were able to make it are no longer there because the jewelry has not been used for a long time. As a result, we take a material exploration approach, attempting to deliberately experiment with different ways to recreate the nifitali-tali jewelry making technique. After achieving a working prototype, we create jewelry designs that represent the culture and story of the Nias People, which is the head-hunting customs. Finally, the study proposes contemporary jewelry design inspired by the Nias people's unique customs. The design process demonstrated in the study provide an insight on how product designers can be inspired by local cultures and translate them into value that creates strong product identity in the global market.

**Keywords:** cultural product design, material exploration, jewelry design

## 1. Introduction

From prehistoric times to the present, jewelry has played an important part in the realm of fashion and in human existence in general [1]. It is not only used as an adornment, but also plays a significant role in Indonesian traditional life and culture. Indonesia offers a wide range of jewelry-making skills, each with its own distinct identity [2]. Some of them are similar. For example, manufacturing procedures in different regions are distinct, and those techniques can only be found in particular areas. Nias, for example, has nifitali-tali.

Nifitali-tali is based on the Kalibubu necklace, which is a gold necklace worn by warriors and headhunters/chieftains in Nias. The term rope in nifitali-tali refers to the method of production, which is a gold wire treated in the manner of a rope. The nifitali-tali manufacturing techniques can only be found in jewelry. Male warriors of high social position wear the Nifitali-tali. The greater the necklace, the higher their social standing [3].

Nifitali-tali jewelry is designed to protect the neck during battle, and headhunting ceremonies and traditions are no longer practiced since the arrival of Christianity because they are contradictory to the rules taught and deemed harsh [4]. Another reason is that because the jewelry employs a gold base material with a huge amount of gold, the cost of manufacture is also quite high, thus no one creates this jewelry anymore because it is no longer needed and there is no demand. The method of manufacturing nifitali-tali-tali is increasingly becoming obsolete.

Many revolutionary metalworks currently exist in this modern day, derived from traditional jewelry technique, but the nifitali-tali creating technique is remained untouchable, and few people know and have perfected the technology. The author sees this an opportunity to create nifitali-tali approaches that can be used in contemporary jewelry creation. so that Niftali – tali can be preserved to contemporary society. Hence, we raise the research question of: How might we recreate niftali – niftali jewelry making with modern technique?

## 2. Method

The research is qualitative exploratory research design, because we attempt to study research questions that have not before been thoroughly investigated [5]. The design process begins with developing and exploring the nifitali-tali technique; after authors have achieved satisfactory results and have mastered the techniques, the next step is to create a jewelry design inspired by the Nias people's culture or story, so that jewelry can look alive and strongly reflect Nias culture. Secondary data was gathered through literature searches in journals and books, as well as other credible sources, whilst primary data was gathered through experiments, interviews, and questionnaires.



## 3. Result and Discussion

### Questionnaire

According to the results of questionnaires distributed to target consumers, most respondents wear jewelry in their daily activities as well as on special occasions. They normally spend between Rp 1,000,000 and Rp 2,500,000 on jewelry, and the most worn jewelry is necklaces and bracelets. Most respondents also believed that they could express themselves through the jewelry they wore and were willing to try out new and risky jewelry. The unusual and daring jewelry chosen is an ear cuff and a brooch, and their preferred materials are silver and a semiprecious stone.

### Experiment to recreate Niftali – tali

Table 1 Spiral experiment result

No.	Spiral	Description	Strength	Weakness
1		0,8 brass wire made into spiral manually.	Suitable for a smaller jewelry making	It is to thin so there is gap
2		2mm copper twisted wire made into spiral with base.	Spiral is strong and did not have a gap	Only suitable for bigger jewelry making









3		2mm copper wire made into spiral with base	The spiral came out looking neat.	Thicker wire is needed to make the spiral more stable.
4		2mm copper wire made into spiral with base and by hand in the larger part		Spiral that was made by hand manually came out not looking neat
5		Spiral with base. tied from smaller to bigger to smaller section	Can be made with just 1 wire.	From the bigger section to smaller section the spiral became a mess.
6		2mm copper wire made into spiral with base, making it into two part and assembled in the middle		Extra step to Connect the two part into one
7		Twisted wire spiral made with base attach.	Looking clean, dense, and more stable shape.	
8		Twisted wire that has been flattened.	Spiral can be denser.	Have a less texture and volume.

Table 2 Base Experiment

No.	Mal/Base	Outcome	Description	Strength	Weakness
1			A ball base made into spiral with one wire	The shape is stable	From the bigger section to smaller section the spiral became a mess.







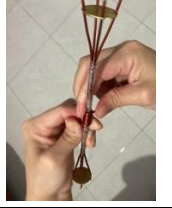




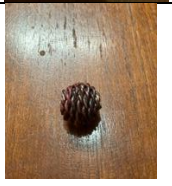




2			Base wire that has a drastically changing form	The wire Set apart in the middle	
3			Wood base to shape the design		Wood base is visible.
4			Base with two parts enlarge, that is made with wire and metal plate	Adding design.	Difficult to make the shape stable
5			Base that's enlarge in the two end.	Can be made by using only one wire	
6			A ball base with two parts of twisted wire that attach in the middle.	Spiral. came out neatly and the shape is stable	
7			From the ball base made onto a bead	Can be made into a different variation	

Table 3 Spiral End Experiment

No.	Spiral End	Description	Strength	Weakness
1		A ball added to the end of the spiral.	looked neat, this can be an alternative to add some design.	

2		End of the spiral wrap with a metal plate.	Much easier step.	It doesn't look neat.
3		End of the spiral hammered until it's flatten.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>changing the style</li> <li>limitation in design</li> <li>the end of the spiral not as dense the rest.</li> </ul>
4		Soldered with base then file it to make it neat.		Doesn't change the design.

### Jewelry Concept design

Table 4 illustrates all the design elements that are elaborated in the jewelry design.

Table 4 Concept Design

<b>Outer</b> Physical element	<b>Middle</b> Function element	<b>Inner</b> Symbolic element
<i>Textured</i> Texture can be obtained from one of the main elements of nifitali-tali, which is twisted wire. Texture can be made depending on the type of twisted wire used.	They serve as the main point of the design that gives the jewelry a unique feeling.	Only men of high status can wear the necklace. Therefore, the necklace can be a symbol of power and position.
<i>Hint of color (red)</i>	Both gave the jewelry a personality and deepened the concept that wanted to be conveyed through it.	For nias people, red color is a color that symbolizes blood which means unity and courage and symbolizes the bloodshed that occurs in headhunter rituals.
Pig's teeth		Pig teeth are believed to provide strength and protection, and also one of the essential essences and emblems the head-hunting rituals.
<i>Soft lines</i>	To maintain one of the characteristics from nifitali-tali and pigs teeth	To give a soft feeling so that the jewelry can have a mix emotion

After doing series of experimentation. We decide to design Men's jewelry. It is developed in a contemporary manner to fit into the current fashion trend, allowing young people to appreciate the jewelry. Jewelry will have a more explorative design to stay up with the current fashion trend. In terms of shape and color, the design is designed to tell a tale about the head-hunting ritual, so that the design has a strong nuance that may portray the head-hunting ritual. The jewelry target market is a male aged 22 to 35 years (young adult) with a strong interest in the world of fashion, a distinct fashion sense (open-minded in the world of

fashion), and a preference for products "that contain a tradition/goods with a story (jewelry that has an emotional approach).

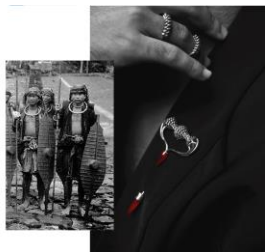
Given that this niftali- niftali has been forgotten by many Nias people who are unaware of its existence and the craftsmen who can manufacture it, it may also be claimed that it is no longer present. Because nifitali-tali was traditionally manufactured by hand, mastering it required specific skills and patience. As a result, the approach is being refined so that it can be identified more easily. In addition to improving the manufacturing procedure, design changes are created to keep the aesthetic from becoming boring.

The jewelry also includes the concept of a headhunting ceremony to represent the dark side of one Nias custom, namely headhunting. The goal of remembering the culture that once existed, for better or worse, has become a part of Nias society. In addition to presenting stories, the practice represents the transformation of Nias, which was originally devoid of mankind. With the integration of religion (Christianity) and its principles, changes can be made. Additional techniques and concepts are applied to modern style jewelry in order to have a design that follows the fashion industry's trend, so that jewelry can be appreciated by many people, particularly young people, and compete in the fashion market.

The prototypes

**PROTOTYPE.**

The design of the brooch is inspired by a spear used in head hunting. It represents power.



**PROTOTYPE.**

The necklace inspired the shape of the earcuff. It symbolizes the sense of accomplishment that men feel as they acquire manhood.



**PROTOTYPE.**

Niftali – tali beads combined with chain to modernize the look of niftali – niftali.



Figure 1 Niftali – Niftali Contemporary Jewelry Collection

## 5. Conclusion

Nifitali-tali jewelry from Nias is an authentic Indonesian jewelry that must be preserved. The author sees great potential in the jewelry, but Nifitali-Tali is no longer available. It cannot be made because the artisans who could do so are no longer alive. This is because the head hunting rituals are no longer practiced, so the jewelry has not been worn in a long time. Furthermore, to create niftali – tali jewelry it requires special skills that took a long time to master.

The author suggests a solution to the problems. The solution is to create a contemporary jewelry design based on the story of head hunting. The design that able to tell the story of nifitali-tali, a head-hunting ceremony, as well as demonstrate Nifitali-rope technique. The

solution to the production technique is that previously freehand jewelry is now formed using a base in the shape of a desired pattern. The method is carried out by testing to determine the best basis for producing the simplest and neatest results that form a tight spiral, allowing the manufacturing process to be completed without the assistance of an expert. We contend that the nifitali-tali design and its history have the potential to reintroduce meaningful stories into our culture.

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