



Città di Lugano

Museo
delle Culture

Sapuyung. Ngaju large ceremonial hats



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Content



Indu Sabaru. Desa Pendatenggareng
Baru, Katingan River, 2011

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The fieldwork



2001-2010
9 fieldwork stays

Ngaju people
Katingan and Samba River areas
Southern Borneo
Kalimantan Tengah, Indonesia

In collaboration with Paolo Maiullari

Interviews with 4 pisor (priests) from
Katingan River region, and 6 weavers
from Katingan (4) and Samba (2) River
regions

Starting from 2007 until 2010, the
fieldwork has been part of the current
activities of the Museo delle Culture of
Lugano. The final outcome was the
Sapuyung exhibition in Lugano (2011-
2012) and the related book.



The fieldwork



Katingan River and Samba River





Indang Kaneo. Desa Tewang
Rangkang, Katingan River, 2006



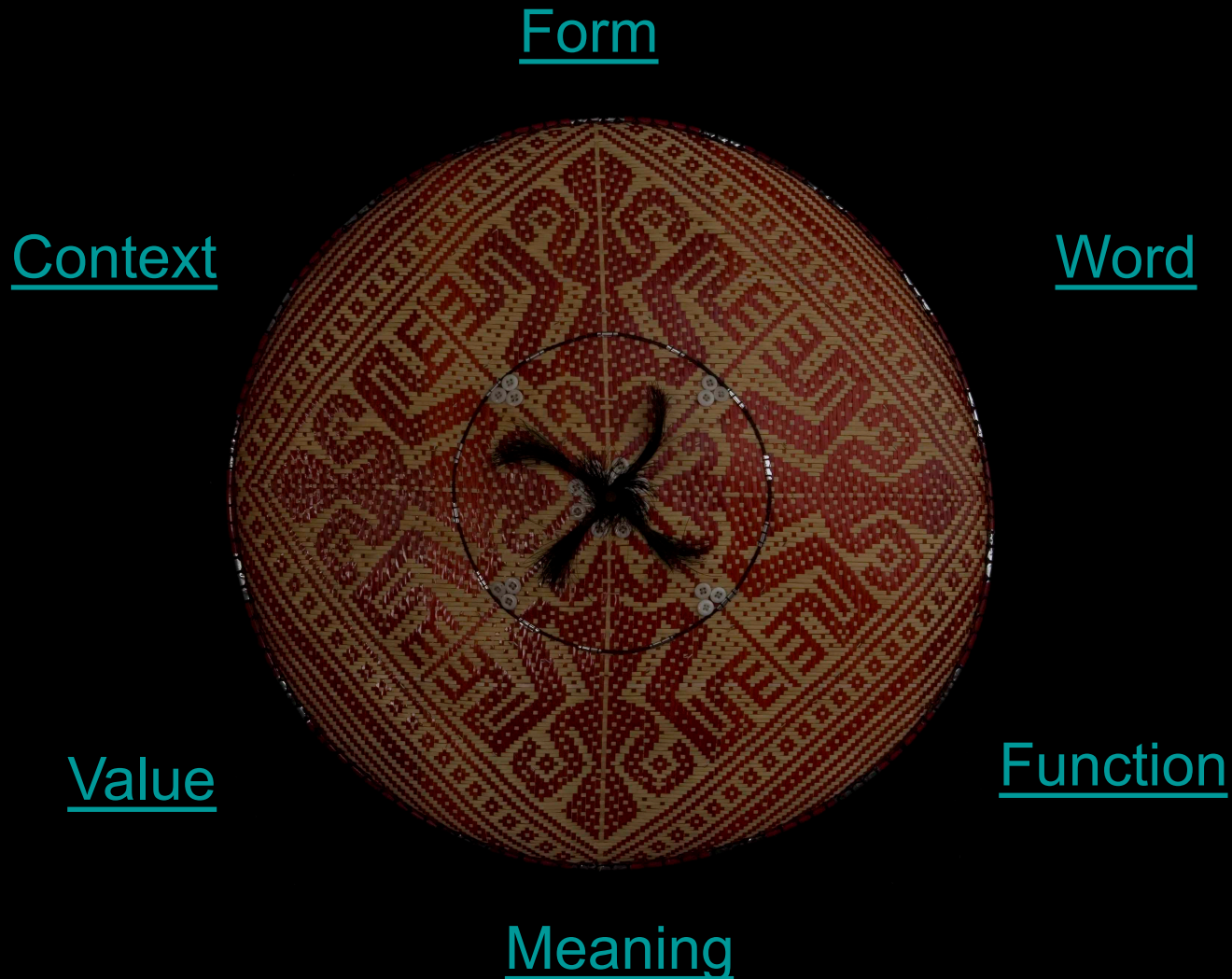
Indang Kasumba. Desa Tumbang
Tarusan, Katingan River, 2010



Pisor Dimar T. Bahat. Desa Buntut
Bali, Katingan River, 2009



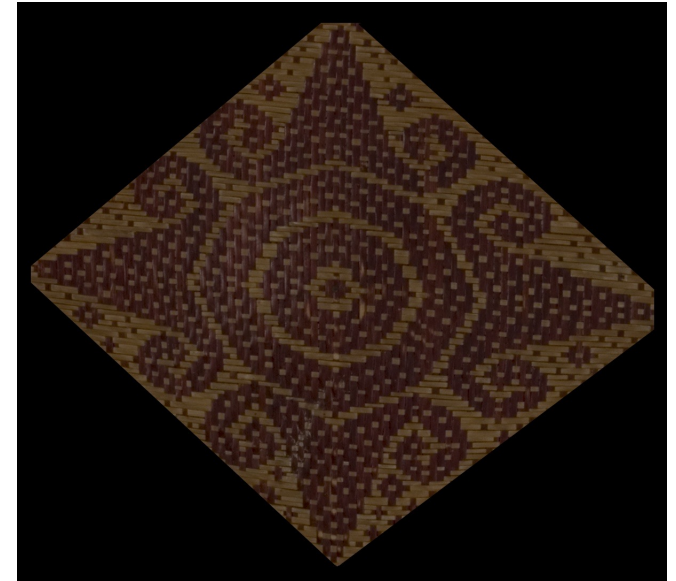
The knowledge of Sapuyung ceremonial hats



Examples



Liau haguti. Souls while helping each other getting rid of fleas. It's the most important pattern symbolising the integration of the soul into the ancestral community.



Matan andau. Representation of the sun, the emblem of the supreme divinity.



Examples



Tinggang. Representation of the hornbill, sacred bird related to the prosperity on Earth.



Hornbill. *Source: Tim Lamang.*



Examples



Tambarirang. Representation of an immortal being with human origins, which act as the guardian spirit of the deceased.



Putak hanyut. Representation of a river's foam, as created from the intense flowing of the river. A simile associates the foam with prosperity, 'may your life be prosperous, as the foamy river'.



Katingan River Area: Styles & Materials

Middle Katingan
Ngaju Katingan
Sapuyung daré

Middle Samba
Ngaju Samba
Tanggoi daré

Upper Samba
Ngaju Samba
Tanggoi daré

Upper Katingan
Ot Danum Sahie
Tako/tokoy daré



Simmetrical

Simmetrical and circular

Simmetrical and
circular; almost only
great pattern
Rattan (Ot Danum)

No particular
simmetries
More like a mat
Bamboo

[illegible]

Form



- Circular hat, with a border at the sides, slightly cone shaped, with cap;
- Woven from narrow bamboo strips (1-2 mm);
- Display a large number of red symmetrical patterns (*daren*) on the upper surface
- Main motifs in the near centre depicts divinities, myths and plants;
- Secondary motifs, located around the main ones, depicts elements of the environment and of Ngaju material culture
- Decorated with human hair, buttons;
- Sizes: various, diameter 42-45 cm; 52-55 cm; 62-64 cm; height 12-17 cm



The Word

Sapuyung is a Ngaju Katingan term which means «large hat»



Sapuyung daré. Large hats decorated with red motives (daren), worn during specific ceremonies.

Daré means “woven” and refers to woven objects representing motifs (**daren**) on the upper surface involves the use of a specific technique in which red and natural bamboo strips are interlaced.



Sapuyung ladang. Large hats used for working in the fields to protect the head from the sun and the rain.



Sapuyung metò. Large ceremonial hats partially decorated with red motives





Daren

Sandah (1915-2010).
Desa Buntut Bali,
Katingan River, 2007

- *Sapuyung daré* and *metò* reserved for ceremonial use are made exclusively by a small number of women considered by the Ngaju to be “master weavers”;
- These women are heirs to an ancient tradition handed down to only the best weaver within a family line;
- From the age of 13; Learning by observation;
- Triangular and rectangular mats represents a certain number of pattern (**daren**) reproduced on the *sapuyung daré* or *metò*.



The main functions



Protection

The *sapuyung daré* is believed to close the fontanel of the skull which is considered the door of the soul and of the vital force of human beings. By closing the fontanel, the ceremonial *sapuyung* protects its spiritual principles from evil forces during the interaction with the celestial world.





Establishing of ties

1. Ideologically

Ties between the people and the Upper world through the iconography depicted on the upper surface. The Upper world is the dwelling place of the soul, where every Ngaju has to return to live a prosperous life among the ancestral community.

2. Socially

Ties between communities (see later *potong pantan*)





Indicating the divine presence

The *sapuyung* indicates the presence of the major divinities within the ceremony. The hat is placed on the *axis mundi* (*pasar sababulu petak*), which is conceived literally as a “living room” for the divinities participating into the ceremonies.

Decorating

By decorating the ceremonial infrastructure, it acts as a precious jewellery used by the divinities during the ceremony.



The Meaning



Sapuyung displayed on the main wall of two Ngaju katingan houses

The expressive content of a *sapuyung* is given by concrete elements:

- **bamboo** → myth related to a **protective function** (Hardeland, 1859:387; *indu Sabaru*)
- **jarenang** → colour of the “**water of life**”(red), symbol of prosperity
- Abstract elements (techniques or anthropological, historical, aesthetic, documentary, economic and social elements that characterize the *sapuyung*):
- **the main decorations** of the *sapuyung* are associated with **life**, **prosperity**, and the place of origin of the Ngaju, which is believed to be the **Upper world**.
- **prestige** → the *sapuyung* itself is considered as an **exclusive** good belonging to a family. The ownership of one or more *sapuyung* highlights **prestige**.



The Values



The importance attributed to the *sapuyung daré* on the basis of individual or cultural criteria of evaluation may involve one or more elements of the local ideological system (economic value, symbolic value, identifying value)

Sapuyung daré/metò values:

skills of the weaver → motives, symmetry of the decorations, diameter, strength, use of *jarenang* or synthetic red colour, buttons, time of production of the weaving.

economic value → *daré/metò*, buttons, size

ideological value → related to the important ceremonies

documentary value → myths, identity



The Context



Tiwah. The secondary burial ceremony
Axis-mundi: *pasar sababulu petak/sangkaraya*
and *pasar sababulu eka tanduk nayu*;
Sapundu: protects the family during the pali
period.

Nahunan. Introductory ceremony of the newborn into the community and into the elements of the world (*daren hawun hakayao*, the “battling clouds”)

Semenget. Ritual aimed at fortifying the ‘vital force’.

Mambuhul balaku untung. Prosperity and longevity ritual, concluding all ceremonies of the Ngaju tradition.



Potong pantan. The establishing of
boundaries between communities.

