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THE SHIP & THE TREE

Adat Textiles of South Sumatra

Thomas Murray

A rich textile tradition has existed for many centuries in the Lampung region of southern Sumatra. In this area, where many cross-currents converged and seere absorbed, customary law, or abd, neted as a powerful unifying and constraining force. Traditional iconography remained intact across generations, while a dynamic maritime trade connected Lampung with a cosmopolitan world of ideas and material culture far beyond her borders.

The Lampung district is located on the southernmost tip of Sumatra, one of the world's largest islands. Across the narrow Sunda Strait lies western Java, with white Lampung shares a long history of economic and cultural intercourse.¹

A region of torrid cematorial beat, it is a

A region of terrid equatorial brait, it is a perfect environment for the growing of spices, particularly perper. The in this historically precious commodity led to the creation of an exceptionally rich artistic heritage, It is through these survival products that we may gain insight host Lanquage afair, the artistic heritage, It is through the survival products that we may gain insight host Lanquage afair, the artistic heritage, It is through the survival products that we may gain insight host Lanquage afair, the artistic heritage, It is through the survival products that we may gain insight host Lanquage afair, the artistic heritage, It is through the survival products that we may gain insight host Lanquage afair, the artistic heritage, It is through the survival products the survival survival products that we may gain insight host Lanquage afair, the artistic heritage, It is through the survival products that the survival products th

customary law which regulated all aspects of society under the aegis of ancestral authority. *Adat represents a fusion of ancient Neolithic culture with later Dong son, Indian (Hindu and Buddhist), Chinese, Islamic, and ultimately European influences.

Buddhist), Chinese, Islamic, and ultimately European influences. Textiles played a significant role in adat ceremonies. They



Wedding ceremony in Lampung in the 19th century, with a kayu ara or tree of life (left), made using textiles. Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, Leiden.

were required at lifecrisis transitions such as births, puberty rites, marriages, attaining a rank and funerary rites. These ceremonies often

included the construction of a layar $a\alpha_0$, a tree-like structure from which were superiod bettiles, where rattarn mats and backets (1).² After the passage from one life phase to another the tree would be yelectroped and the goods plumbered by small boys of the zalax, the sub-ami of the greater clan (margai, This re-enacts an Austronessian creation myth of the second millimnium BC, still repeatedthroughout Incloresia, which tells of a tree of life that grossbetween the lower and unner worlds, his destroyed by some



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great cataclysm, with pieces of the tree forming the first humans, rice paddies and water buffaloes. One variation of this myth has it that two birds in the branches bring about this destruction.4

One of the primary cultural expressions of Lampung adat was the pepadon system. This featured potlatch-like feasts of merit', whereby, through ritualised gift exchange, individuals could

advance their social status and acquire titles. Among the Abung, the system granted individuals the right to sit on elevated seats, known as pepadon,3 Such benches have impressive carved back-rests, called sasako, which display powerful iconography, including such themes as paired animal totems and

the tree of life (5),0 The major centres of pasisir (Malay, 'coastal') weaving were at Kalianda and Semaneka Bay, Kalianda is considered a primary source of Lampung adat and although we do not know for certain, we may speculate that the custom of nalepai use and iconography originates there. Among the coastal Paminggir people, the clan chief was permitted to display a palengi, a long (3m),

narrow supplementary weft textile, typically depicting a ship (or ships) with arching curvilinear bow and stern. Trees are an important recurring icon, often appearing to the sides, as well as in the centre, of the ship (2).7 Another form of palepai shows rows of ancestor figures, possibly repre-

senting generations. Tatibin (3) are iconically and proportionally similar to palepai but are smaller (1-1.5 metres). They are associated with the peninsula between Semangka Bay and Kalianda. Collectively

both palengi and tatibin equated with, and substituted for, the penadon 'seat of authority',3

The tampan, structurally related to the palepai but square rather than rectangular, was never more than a metre in size. As this difference suggests, the tampan played a different role in Lampung society. It functioned as a 'token' textile, conveying symbolic meaning, but otherwise serving no practical purpose. Tampan pasisir

(cover, 4) circulated exclusively among the noble class, unlike tampan darat (Malay, 'inland') found in the interior (6), which were used at all levels of society. They can be distinguished from each other by significant stylistic differences, darut being

known for tribal iconography, including trees of life and giant hombills perched on boats. One pasisir genre features very finely woven wayang-style (shadow puppet) narrative scenes, often occurring on ships. Kalianda, also a pasisir community, wove tampan that more

resemble palepai in their graphics." During life-crisis rituals tampan were used in many contexts, including covering offering bowls, wrapping gifts, as seat cushions during weddings and pillow covers

upon which the head of the dead came to rest. The transfer of textiles, a symbolic medium embodying values of both a spiritual and temporal nature, was the nexus of life-crisis ceremonies, whose formal structure was governed by adat.

At weddings, for example, bride-givers and bride-takers offered corresponding gifts of a female or male nature. Symbolised (and partially realised) by weavings and weapons, cloth and steel, this theme can be traced to the earliest of creation myths. Among the Serawai in Sumatra, for instance, the bringing together of spear and tampan at the time of marriage created a tree of life; upon their separation the tree was destroyed but the husband and wife were united and the clans joined, forming an extended lineage. 10

The most prestigious gift involved the pairing of a tampan with

19th century. Private collection.

3. Top left: Tatibin, Semangka Bay Peninsula, 19th century. 0.39 x 0.89m (2'11" x 1'31/2"). Private collection.

4. Top right: Tampan pasisir, Kalianda, 19th century. 0.36 x 0.91m (2'10" x 3'0"). Note the union of trees and curling bow and stern elements, Private collection.

5. Centre: Pepadon 'seat of authority', showing a mountain/ tree motif, Abung people, 19th century. Private collection. HALI-101



2. Left: Palenai, single red ship with trees of life, Kalianda,



6. Tampan darat, Lampung interior, 19th century. 0.47 x 0.46m (1'6'/2" x 1'6"). Philip Dedrick Collection.



7. Lampit, rattan ritual mat, Lampung, 19th century, 0.84 x 0.94m (2'9" x 3'1"). Private collection.

8. Bird-headed ancestor figures on a boat, after a bronze drum, Dong son culture, Vietnam, ca. 100 BC - 200 AD, After F.A. Wagner, Indonesia, the Art of an Island Group, London 1959.



a woven rattan mat (tikar), especially a lamoit (7) distinguished by iconography of boats and trees burned into the rattan with hot pokers. This custom is very similar to one found among the Tai peoples of Thailand and Laos and bespeaks an early, unified Southeast Asian culture with a common origin,11

Tampan, palepai and tatibin were woven from handspun cotton, and sometimes locally produced silk. Metal-wrapped yarns, mirrored glass, and flat foil strips were often incorporated. Yarns were mainly dved red-brown with mengkudu root (morinda citrifolia), red with kaju sepang (caesalpinia sapan I.), vellow with turmeric (curcuma domestica) and blue with indigo (indigofera), Other possible colour sources have been described in the literature, 12

Tampan and palepai structure has been described as "continuous and discontinuous supplementary wefts in a plain weave foundation". In this woven structure pattern and colour changes may be manipulated by altering the floating wests which are tacked to a plainweave background. The width of tampan and palepai was dictated by the arm-length distance required for the weaver to insert wefts in the selvedge, 13 A back-strap loom with a discontinuous warp required the use of a fine-toothed reed to help separate warp varus. This technical advance offered many advantages over earlier 'continuous warp' back-strap looms found elsewhere in tribal Indonesia.11

With new technology, no doubt, came new iconography. It is important to note, however, that despite the new loom, iconography of a more archaic tradition persisted. The conservative nature of ancestor worship explains the existence of archaic customs and symbols in Lampung textiles.15

EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

It is believed that an Austronesian expansion occurred sometime between 4000 and 2000 BC. Settlers from south China travelled by boat and arrived in south Sumatra, bringing with them a stone tool-using tradition, the custom of erecting stone monuments and a creation myth featuring the tree of life. Since then, many other influences have enriched the art and culture of south Sumatra. During the subsequent Bronze Age, the Dong son culture, first

discovered in Vietnam, was grafted onto the existing Megalithic society. The strikingly graphic curvilinear decorative elements which appear on tampan and palepai depictions of both ships and trees of life have been attributed by many to this source. Bird-headed ancestor figures on boats (8) are found as design elements on bronze ritual drums dating 200 BC to 100 AD that have strong affinities with Lampung textile iconography.10

Artistic conventions and cosmological constructs of a Hindu/ Buddhist character were integrated into the pre-existing animist belief system during the period of what is now termed the Indo-Javanese civilisation, which includes the Srivijavan kingdom of Sumatra, A tree of life featured prominently in Indian scriptures and myth, and was frequently seen in surviving stone architectural bas-reliefs at temple sites, 17 Significant trade by sea was carried in large ships, as seen in a famous representation at the 8th-9th century Buddhist temple complex at Borobudur. 18 At this point, the ancestor boat iconography which had

social significance. Lampung's proximity to Java assured another strong current of influence which had multiple implications for tampan. This was the adoption of the wayang shadow-puppet theatre, with its profile portraval of human forms

rather than the frontal depiction of ancestors

Age took on enriched



associated with the Austronesian motif group, seen consistently in tampan darat of the interior. This is not to say that the wayang style is necessarily later than the frontal style. Although shadow puppets an most often associated with the Hindu epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the tradition is probably much older, dating to pre-Arvan tribal culture.19 It should be noted that a device used in the puppet theatre to announce the opening and closing of acts was named after its iconography: gunungan (the mountain) and kakayon (the tree), whose significance with respect to

tampan is discussed below.

The Chinese too have a long mercantile history on the Indonesian passisir. Their endless knot and floral configurations, incorporated into Lampung textiles, were copied from

imported trade porcelain.
The influence of Islam since the religion's arrival in the region some four hundred years ago has been largely limited to the coast; "This was a function of economic trading zones, the ship once again being the vehicle for the transmission of a new elizion. The tree of life also occurs in

an Islamic context. One example can be seen in the triangular border device known as trampal, woven by the strictly devout people of Aceh in north Sumatra. In addition, the role of Muslim traders in the transport of foreign trade goods (and ideas), such as immorted Indian trade cloth, cannot be overemblassised.

imported Indian trate etori, cannot be overempnassect.

The impact of trading patterns on taste is evident in palampore, mordant resist textiles created for the European trade on the Coronandel Coast of India. A favourite subject is a tree with years blossoms emerging from a mountain of recks 'Qi.''s Some of



the textiles, which are a class of chintz, found their way to the south Sumatran market, where they were exchanged for pepper and exhibited at feasts of merit. The tree of life's return to Lampung in this form could only underscore the potency and universality of the subject.

SHIP & TREE TYPOLOGIES Kalianda (and neighbouring Jahung) were known for Ted ship 'ionography, which appeared in tampan (4) and palepai (2, 10). The double red ship may express the duality of the cosmos, whereas the extremely rare single red ship may be interpreted as a resolution of that duality, appropria at a the toccasion of a marriage.²²

ate at the occasion of a marriage.²²
The most frequently published type of blue ship pulepui is associated type of blue ship pulepui is associated with Kota Agung in the Semangka Bay region (11). The pulepui in (12) and (13) are also from Semangka Bay, but seem to have stronger graphic resonances with those of Kadianda, the boats being filter arbier Published and the Semangka Bay. Puninsala, whose boat-style tuttlind (3), have a greater stylistic affinity

9. Above: Palampore, Coromandel Coast, India, Jate 17th-early 18th century. Private collection.

10. Below: Palepai, double red ship, Kalianda, 19th century, 0.81 x 3.40m (2'8" x 11'0"), Private collection.

11. Bottom: Palepai, single blue ship, Kota Agung, 19th century, 0.56 x 2.69m (1'10" x 8'10"). Private collection,





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12. Top: Palepai, double blue ship, Semangka Bay, 19th century, 0.56 x 2.67m (1'10" x 8'9"), Bruce Parsons & Lourdes Neugart Collection.

 Above: Palepai, single blue ship, showing strong stylistic affinity with the single red ship palepai. Semangka Bay, 19th century. Private collection.

with the Kota Agung type of blue ship palepai,

with the Rotal signify type of nine ship parepair.

One form of the tree of life from Kalianda (2) displays geometric branches which have been interpreted by many authors as a stacked ship's schemata.² (Id categories and names used here are anecotaal and are not intended to reflect Lampang use). The basement of the trees at both ends of the authoria have provoked

comparisons with rampal (with possible tree of life associations) and in the end bodiece of many textiles other than trampar and parleyal. The 'stacked ship' style, also found in tempor 1.65, is emissioned of 'resonable from the bones of itually screen in villages throughout tribal Indonesia 1.55. A curtainor of this mail specific buffals, seen in villages throughout tribal Indonesia 1.55. A curtainor of this mail 50 is a question of baddle red ship eights and commonly appears as a device separating double ships, and in their red pands 1.55.

The form of the tree of life that intuitively suggests the greatest age may be termed 'archaic-natural'. It often appears on the single red ship polapsia from Kalianda (14). Alternatively, this may be the most recent style, on account of its fully articulated artistic expression."

What may be called the 'Christmas tree' style occurs as a





15. Left: Sacrificial buffalo born tree of life, East Timor. Photograph after R. Cinatti, Motivos Artisticos Timorenses e a sua Integração, Lisbon 1987.

16. Below: Tampan, 'stacked ship' tree, Kalianda, 19th century. 0.43m (1'5") square. Note the phallic form 'penetrating' the cosmos. Private collection

decorative element on palepai from Semangka Bay. Gittinger has noted that this form of tree always rises from a boat and only birds appear in its limbs.25 This is true when the tree appears as palepai border elements (17), but when it arises from the centre of the

ship's deck, ancestor figures may appear in the branches (12). The 'stacked ship' seen in Kalianda is also found in Semangka. Bay (12, 13). Tatibin from this area present a very simple treatment of the tree, with some references to the boat element, the 'minimal' tree of life (3). Kalianda produced many tampan with the tree of life motif. They are characterised by a rectilinear treatment of curves, like that often associated with Dong son

period decorative elements. Tampan pasisir of the

unavang-style type occasionally show tree structures of a very different character to those described above (cover). Gittinger refers to them as "floral configurations of ornate linear plants". They often appear as part of the background to a wedding scene taking place on the deck of a ship.20

Trees of life appear in a variety of forms in tampan darat. The example in (6) follows coastal models more closely than most. Gittinger has named this variation the "tree with bowed limbs". They always feature pairs of

birds in the branches,2 A word of caution: it is important to note that cloth migrated over time, Due to the gift exchange of textiles during marriage rituals, we cannot be certain that where a weaving was found is where it was made. Any attribution of type to geographic location must therefore be broadly interpreted.

14. Left: Palenai fragment, 'archaic-natural' tree, Kalianda, 19th century. Private collection.

CONCLUSION The literature on the subject includes a number of significant theories regarding ships and trees. Earlier this century, Schnitger equated palepai with the pepadon seat of authority,20 while Steinmann wrote of the boat as the "ship of the dead", following the model of the Egyptian myth.29 More recent researchers - Gittinger, Holmgren and Spertus, and Maxwell,30 see a "life boat" that earries one safely through life-crisis transitions. Gittinger suggests that the great difference between the red ship and the blue ship palepai is due to independent development. She feels that the blue ship is a true boat, while the red one





17. Palepai fragment, 'Christmas tree' style, Semangka Bay, 19th century. Private collection.

originally depicted a bird with out-spread wines. which over time came to resemble a ship. Holmgren and Spertus propose that the classic Kalianda tampan (4) may be a Lampung interpretation of gunungan/kakayon. the highly symbolic shadow puppet theatre device. They further suggest that the wavangstyle pasisir tampan is akin to the early narrative scroll paintings known as wavang beber.

varyung belor. Tree iconography was interpreted by Steinmann as a comit tree and by Hoop? as the sacred by Hoop? as the sacred the order to the tree of the trials village. Gittinger is more specific, stating that the tree is the kays ora (1), a ritual construet present at life transition extensories, the construction extensories of the transition extensories. Others, including Taylor and Aragon, have interpreted the tree as stacked ships, or buffalo horn.

accumulations.
In interpreting the tampun passisir, Holmgren and Spertus consider the

"linear plant" ree found on the upper deck (seen to the right on the cover illustration), to be of particular importance. They marshal evidence comparing it to the Borneo Ngudju Dayak tree of life (sunggaran), whose name is derived from the words for 'kill and 'killing place'. These apparent opposites refer to the polarity of creation and destruction. A second tree can be seen to occupy the space

between two men and under a roof.

A tumpon passior in the Holmgren and Spertus Collection
shous an alternative ivonography, "with a small female figure,
probably a young gif, substituted for the tree between the men.

The tree/female association refers to refully. Finally, they suggest that the boat represents the 'ship of state' with depictions of
a chief and other robodes, the clan, vaniros, musiciara and so on.

Turning to the novel iconography of the tree separating two ships (42), we see actual human figures stemming from one artatemated stacked ship tree. I would suggest that we have been been supported by the state of the state of the state of the state leaves the 'stacked shippfulfulle hours,' mentioned above. It seems clear that this diagram evokes generations of clan ancestors, going back to the time of creation. It may well be that in former times this particular association was so strong that it sprang to mind when the Tomingel' tween closed at the multi-subneed

Throughout the process of examining these tampan and palepai, a thought-provoking issue has kept recurring if passis weavers were capable of depicting a ship with such accuracy (cover),



18. Tampan, Kalianda, 19th century, 0.52 x 0.48m (1°8 $^{\prime}l_z$ " x 1°7"). Curvilinear designs are commonly associated with Dong son influence. Private collection.



why the serolling finial elements observed on the how and stern of palepai ships? Many authors have written about the way in which the tree of life is constructed, discussing the boats that make up its branches. In the example shown here, the branches of the tree of life are interpreted as an ancestral genealogy, Clearly it is possible for the Paminggir psyche to hold at least two symbolic perceptions simultaneously.

Abandoning all caution, I propose hypothetically deconstructing the ship. If the decks of the ship are removed, the arching elements of the bow and stern come together in a manner strongly reminiscent of the tree of life. Compare the line classing; 20) with 22 and 19), assuming this is no entirelence, we may reverse the process and, in pulling apart the tree, a schematic diagram of the upper, middle and lower words is revealed symbolically in the boat architecture. We observe the realms of humans, birts and animals. This is consistent with the Austranesian creation myth which refers to the tearing apart of the tree of life. More than the "ship of state," we see here a possible schemata of creation and the cosmos.

19. Above: Tampan, Kalianda, 19th century, 0.48m (1'7") square. Private collection.

 Right: Schematic drawings of the ship (see fig. 2) and the 'collapsed' ship or tree of life (see fig. 19).





APPENDIX



See note 61, (Fig. 22)

Carpets' and the Arshabil Stories', paper presented at the Bil ECOC, Philladelphia 1996, Frieda Kay Fall's Eldelingship's in Berdon's Stood, The Acadest Carpens, Midbas, 1973, pp.41-7, cites 127 references, and several authorparett publications can be added to this bil.

62. See note 52 above.
63. Whereabouts unknown. Provenance Yerkes Collection, New York: Seth M. Milliam, New York: Published: Manufaul 1900, 01 XE AAA 1910.



Floral arabisque carpet with spadeand-carinoche border design, Eddhan (2), contral Persis, Inte 16th or carly 17th century, 1.83 x 3.48n (60° x 11°3'). Whereaboute unknown. Paintins, Afrey Manford 1910, 16.XI.

61. Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of Earlly Grane Challbourne, Provenance Verbe Collection, New York, Earlly Grane Challbourne, Chronya Published, Art 1900, desired, is 224 (84,100). The attribution of this curpet is laused on the judgment of Chusles E. Williams who imported it in 1900, doscribed it no a user carpet, and

Alberte Zei, Lejujai, 1993, fig.53. Williams in Book, 25 March 1910. Williams in Book, 25 March 1910. As Milla, See New York, an. 61.311, Gill of Joseph V. McMallan, Processarer Stefams Badinis, Ploorers, vedeo Gillectian, New York, Hischard T., Canne, Chienga & Hyamirk, M. York, Joseph V. M. Walliam, New York, Joseph V. M. Walliam, New York, Deskinder J. A.M. 1910, criscal) for 222 (85, 2000; Parks-Bernet Galleries, New York, 25, 200 Joseph Rev. 1916, 2000 June & Calleries, New York, 25, 200 June &

1905. p. 15. [Burnet & Buller, 1977, attas.].
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Otivital Carpets, Joss of Asia, XVIII. 1996, p. 74, fig. 42. 67, The Tours, Lordon, II April 1910. Charles F. Williams agreed wholeheastedly with The Time: assessment, Williams to Hode, 13 April 1910. Archide Bode. 61, In November 1996 dellaws, DeLawar.

(1970), 1900cm, 2000 in 1970; und, with dellation in the Grant Department, General Condens, 9 February 1970, 2000; Lordon, 9 February 1970, and the American Art Stress, 1 December 1979, Yerker paid about 88 D100 for the Artabil couped in 1972. Translated into 1996 terms, that is waser than 8 L5 million (1996). 95. New York Town, 29 March 1946; Ava-Vant Builly February, 3 April 1910.

THE SHIP & THE TREE

Veknowledgments
My thanks to Robert Holmgress and
white Spertne, Maniebelle Girlagers,
fire van Hout, Booseasy Loft, Bobert
Rengtoon, Stein Keene and the HALI
schiterial department for their contribution
we cross are since. This article is
dedicated to the memory of the late
Frant Lakere, Switzerland.

1900, p.130.

Throughout Indocessia all aspects of life and relation to the spirit worlds-were regulared by adat. Devision on a training and the spirit worlds were regulared by adat. Devision on a training work, ealer ofers to an ouncient indigenous concept of veomic convertence. The making of right, or the securing of size passage when the securing of size passage when he is seen a hield, palesty, marriage and doubt, all invoked patterns of prescribed behaviour and these. Natural disas-behaviour and these.

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 For a more developed discussion of Juriu area, see Matthe-left S. Giftinger.
 A Study of Skipa Cloths of South Sanatus — Their Design and Uniger. Deviced discontain (augusthilodd). Colombia University, New York 1972, p.156.
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a less syncetic form of Islam further decouraged feats of merit.

6. Helen L Jessup, Court Arts of Audionesis, New York 1990, p.260, offers a discussion on the proposion, i iconography (including the tree of

If f., and its relationship to megalith found closelver in Summer.
7. Gittinger 1972, op.cit, pp.154-57.
If J.M. Schriger, Fargaster Kingdeen in Sonerre (1979), reprinted Oxford 1989, fart identified the relationship between pepudon and palyon.
9. Hedragers & Sperins 1909, op.cit,

p.57, and R.J. Helengren & A.E. Spertus, Early Indonesian Textiler, New York 1989, p.72.
10. M.S. Gittinger, Spleedid Syndols – Textiles and Duddier in Indonesia, Washington IC 1979, p.35.
11. There exists a striking similarity in

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 For further information on Lampung dives see Gittinger opacit. 1972.
 pp.030-02, and Fairconnier, specit. p. 13. For a thorough analysis of structure, see Gittinger opacit. 1972, pp.75-00
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or iconic formatting.

16. This connection is especially clear in the iconography of initiation sarongs from Lampang, known as Japin.

17. See B. Kempers, Ascient Indonesian

(bird spicits) at Lars-Djongg 18, Ibid., pl.TR, showing a great relief at Borebacker. 19, See C. Holt, Art in Indonesia

Continuities and Change, Misso NY. 1997, pp. 128-131; W. H. Rossers, Penpt, the Calmard Here, A. Stractan Sody of Medigen in Jane, The Hugger 1999, pp. 52-23; and Hongson & Sperms 1900, opents, p. 157. 28, B. 1532; Marlian Hussandin, the first Marlon solitas of the West Jaron state of Harbers, is recorded

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Cologne 1991. 22. Holmgren & Sperius sp.cit., 1969, p.16. 23. Gittinger op.cit., 1972, p.154; Taylor

& Aragon, operia, p.132.
24. Presonal communication, Robert J.
Helingren, 1996.
25. Giringre operia, 1972, p.155.
26. Bids, p.158.
27. Bids, p.96. A welsted example appearant of 12. administrated by Mattickelle.

Giffinger in Taking Parlang area, Randing Agung. 28, Schnitger, upcit. 29, A. Steinmann, The Ship of the Dead in the Teatile Art of Indonesia.

(1940), Cata Briton, S.; Basel 1965; 30, H. Massell, Ternier of Sacheur Asia, Melbourne 1990. 31, A.N.J. van der Hoop, Indonesiae Ornanestal Besign, Banding 1949. 32, Helington & Spertus 1989, pl.30.