



**HAL**  
open science

## Variation as Norm : Names, meanings, and cultural referents in Borneo basketry decoration

Bernard Sellato

► **To cite this version:**

Bernard Sellato. Variation as Norm : Names, meanings, and cultural referents in Borneo basketry decoration. Borneo Research Bulletin, 2017, pp.185-200. <hal-02616706>

**HAL Id: hal-02616706**

**<https://hal.science/hal-02616706v1>**

Submitted on 27 Jun 2020

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



HAL Authorization

## VARIATION AS NORM: NAMES, MEANINGS, AND REFERENTS IN BORNEO BASKETRY DECORATION

Bernard Sellato\*

*Senior researcher (emeritus)*

*Centre Asie du Sud-Est (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique,  
École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales  
& Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales),  
PSL Research University, Paris  
bernard.sellato@wanadoo.fr*

### Abstract

Decoration has long suffered from relative neglect in material culture studies, now more focused on the social and cognitive processes behind the object. It has been regarded either as devoid of meaning, with motif names being simply labels, or as imbued with major socio-cultural and religious significance. This article examines the underlying, potentially complex, relations between a motif, the way it is named, the meaning of this name, and what it denotes, both as an immediate representation and as a vector of metaphorical, symbolic, mythological, or religious referents. It stresses the need to view culture at the local level, as the current product of a given community's unique history of internal evolution and external cultural and social interaction, with high variability among communities. It concludes that a local pool of motifs is the result of an ongoing ad hoc collective bricolage, in which norms, rules, and coherent naming and reference systems remain elusive.

### Introduction

Studies in material culture, and especially technology, underwent a revival of sorts in the 1980s, followed by a shift in focus, based on a view of objects as full-fledged agents with a "social life" of their own (see Appadurai 1986, Gell 1998), toward the social and cognitive processes behind the object (see, e.g., Sillitoe 1998, Sefa Dei et al. 2000, Ellen & Harris 2000, Ingold 2001). In the context of "ethnic" material productions, however, it appears that studies, often remaining at the descriptive stage, have neglected the underlying, potentially complex, relations between a motif or pattern, the way it is named, the meaning of this name, and what it denotes, both as an immediate representation and as a vector of metaphorical, symbolic, mythological, or religious referents.

Regarding Borneo, a lingering – and, conceivably, rather pointless – debate, centered on the textiles of the Iban of Sarawak, has been taking place over the relation between decorative patterns, their names, meanings, and cultural or symbolic referents. But the field of Iban textiles is a very narrow one: a single, though numerous, ethnic group – despite internal variation – and a single medium, textiles, a flat surface with its specific technical constraints. In this paper, I would like to expand this discussion by moving it to

\* The author gratefully acknowledges comments by the editor and referees of this journal.

the field of basketry. Indeed, the decorated plaitwork of Borneo unlocks a much broader field of investigation: firstly, in terms of the wide array of techniques and combinations of techniques used, the variety of forms created, in which tri-dimensionality is prominent, and the range of functions fulfilled, from the most trivial to the highly religious; and secondly, in an island three times the size of the United Kingdom, in terms of the scores of different ethnic groups and cultural contexts examined, which allows for fruitful comparative analyses. In such a field, studies focused on decoration may further our understanding of the questions of names, meanings, and references, as well as of nuance and variability.

### Basketry in Borneo

Basketry, this “humblest of crafts” (Sentance 2001), which “we do not hold in high esteem” (Lévi-Strauss 1993), certainly reaches back in the history of mankind for at least 10,000 years (Adovasio 1977), and probably much longer. In Borneo, it is attested in archaeological layers dating back to a few centuries B.C. (Cameron 2016) – which does not preclude the production of some forms of plaitwork by hunter-gatherer peoples who had lived there from at least 50,000 B.C.

The archaeological literature offers a confusing terminology whereby “basketry” and “matting” are commonly viewed as two subclasses of “textiles,” while ethnographic works widely diverge in their technical definitions of “basketry” – not to mention a rather indiscriminate use of the terms “plaiting” and “weaving.” I adhere here to Adovasio’s 1977 broad definition of basketry, applied to various kinds of items: “in addition to rigid and semi-rigid containers, matting, and bags, it embraces forms such as fish traps, hats, and cradles ...” And I use here “basketry” and “plaitwork” as equivalent, all-encompassing terms to cover various techniques, such as plaiting proper, twining, coiling, braiding, and even those using a frame – but exclusive of cloth weaving. “Southeast Asia,” Ruth Barnes (1993) wrote, “is one of the [world’s] most prolific areas for the production of basketry. Hardly a technique for interlacing fibre in basketry has been invented that is not found in this region, and many areas have developed a particular quality and perfection [...] Yet surprisingly enough, the making of baskets and their function and meaning in Southeast Asian communities have not been given much attention in recent studies.”

Indeed, few significant works deal with Southeast Asian basketry: Mason’s major work (1908) on the Malay peninsula, Loebèr (1902) and Jasper and Pimgadie (1912) and, later, Barnes (1993) on the Indonesian archipelago, and Lane (1986) and Capistrano-Baker et al. (1998) on the Philippines. As for Borneo, which arguably is home to the world’s richest, most diverse, sophisticated, and aesthetically appealing plaitwork traditions, the literature only offers brief and scattered notes for the period 1850-1920, hardly a dozen short articles in the 1920s and 1930s, and only two, quite recent, full-size books (Bléhaut 1997, Sellato 2012).

The roots of these traditions and the successive outside influences that shaped them must be viewed in the wider insular Southeast Asian context, and beyond (see Sellato 1989, Bléhaut 1997). Peoples who began settling in Borneo c. 2500 B.C. (Bellwood 1997) – or much earlier – brought with them a so-called “Neolithic Culture,” believed to have emerged around 5000 B.C. in southeastern China (Solheim 2003). Bléhaut stressed



Photo 1. Inside a Dayak farmhouse; note the broad variety of plaited objects (photo: author).

analogies between the arts of Borneo and those of southern China's Dian and Zhou cultures, and of Indochina (Cambodia, Dong Son culture of northern Vietnam) (Bléhaut 1997; see also McBain 1981). Borneo's cultures, and their various plaitwork traditions, later responded to influences from China, India, and Persia and, later still, beginning in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, from the Islamic and Western worlds.

#### **Materials, Functions, Techniques**

This section provides a succinct overall summary of our current knowledge of plaitwork in Borneo, based on several decades of fieldwork.

#### **Materials**

Borneo's humid tropical environment has one of the world's highest levels of plant diversity. Much of the island is (or was) covered with high-canopied forest, as well as with various other ecosystems varying with elevation and soils (see MacKinnon et al. 1996), which offer a great deal of useful plant species: timber for house and boat construction, fiber plants for plaitwork and cloth weaving, and edible, medicinal, or ritual plants.

Prominent among plant families used in plaitwork are Arecaceae (rattans, fan-palms, sago palms), Poaceae/Gramineae (bamboos), Pandanaceae (screw-pines), Cyperaceae (sedges), Zingiberaceae (gingers), as well as Hypoxidaceae, Marantaceae, Gleicheniaceae, and Moraceae. Certain species, such as the *Nypa* palm, serve multiple purposes, from construction materials (thatch) and plaitwork fibers to the production of

Photo 2. A wide sunhat of pandanus with motifs of dragon-dog heads; Aoheng people (photo: author).

sugar and an alcoholic beverage.

The choice of plant species used in crafts rests mostly on practical criteria – their local availability, qualities for a given function (durability and resistance to water and pests), ease of processing (e.g. pliability) – but may also be informed by specific social and ritual requisites or personal tastes. It tends to be enduring, due to in-group transmission of botanical knowledge and processing knowhow, but it remains subject to change through cross-cultural influences and various dynamic processes (see below).

### Functions

While a community's subsistence needs and the availability of resources are key factors governing the functions of plaited crafts, social and ritual functions must also be taken into consideration. Plaitwork artifacts are used in farming, hunting, fishing, and in the household and kitchen (Photo 1), and some are multifunctional. A winnowing tray is commonly used to dry coffee beans, or a fishing basket may also serve to store pieces of clothing (see, e.g., Sellato 2012). Certain types of crafts are produced with various levels of technical complexity, either as basic serviceable objects, or in refined, decorated versions for social display or ritual use (Photo 2).

Ordinary objects, however, may also have a specific role in religious practices. Fishing utensils, such as a fish trap and fish scoop, can be used in rituals to “catch” invisible symbolic riches (Couderc 2012). They may also be diverted from their primary function to become part of the ritual kit. For example, the *garong* baskets of the Iban serve no daily function as containers, but, instead, are used only during the Gawai Antu festival to memorialize the recent dead (Sandin 1963, Sather 2012, Bléhaut 2012).

Roughly put, forms and size are primarily dictated by function. Large flat hats provide better protection against the sun than narrow pointed hats; small baskets tied at the waist are practical for sowing rice, whereas large burden baskets with sturdy shoulder straps and an extra forehead strap are efficient for carrying the harvested rice back to the village. The natural environment is also critical: different forms and sizes of fish traps are built for deep or shallow streams, for still or swift water, for small or big fish.

However, even in similar environmental conditions, forms responding to the same function may differ, based on local cultural traditions. Fish scoop baskets, for



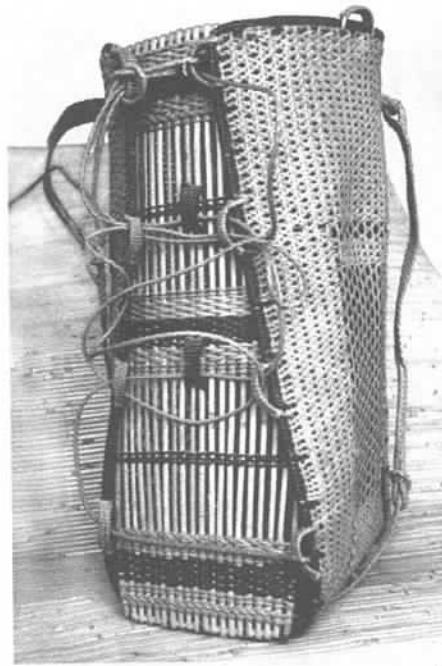


Photo 3. Large burden basket of rattan with shoulder straps (h. 63 cm); Kenyah people (photo: author).

example, come in various shapes, and so do winnowing trays (Sellato 2012). The forms of objects, Ingold (2000) wrote, “grow from the mutual involvement of people and materials in an environment,” the part played by individuals, along with their social and cultural environment, being here decisive (Lemonnier 1993, Sellato 2015).

History, thus, is a critical factor, as it accounts for the evolution of forms through various processes – diffusion, borrowing, adaptation or reinterpretation of borrowed forms, retention or abandonment of old forms, and innovation – all of which are subject to explicit or tacit, collective or individual choices. The assemblage of forms that we

now find in any given village community is the result of the combined effects of these processes over long periods of time, and it should be examined at this local level (see Davy Ball 2009).

### Techniques

Barnes’s (1993) remark about Southeast Asia (see above) largely applies to Borneo, resulting in much variety in the detail of techniques (see Dunsmore 2012). Different techniques, throughout the island, are used to produce similar types of crafts, while the same technique may be applied to a variety of crafts of differing functions, forms, and sizes.

A salient contrast between orthogonal and diagonal (or straight and oblique) plaitwork may point to separate plaiting traditions, as these techniques are found applied either to distinct types of crafts by the same ethno-cultural group or to the same type of craft by different ethno-cultural groups (see Sellato 2012).

Moreover, a single type of object, such as the large burden basket carried with shoulder straps (Photo 3), may involve an impressive array of widely different techniques. Choices of techniques depend not just on the availability of materials and on ethnobotanical knowledge, but also on the transmission of technological knowhow, and they tend to endure, albeit with a certain degree of inclination toward new alternatives.

Knowledge about basketry encompasses three areas: botanical knowledge of plant resources and experience of their uses (see, e.g. Christensen 2012); technical expertise in the processing of fiber and dye plants and of plaitwork techniques (see Ellen 2009, Novellino 2009); and the command of an inventory of decorative motifs and patterns.

Photo 4. Long sitting mat showing separate panels with various geometric patterns; Tingalan (aka Agabag) people (photo: author).



Transmission of knowledge is clearly achieved through word and gesture (see Leroi-Gourhan 1964); but, more often than not, it is based on tacit (or implicit) knowledge, i.e., observing the working procedures of others (see Sigaut 1993, Smith 2003), rather than on explicit knowledge, as an integral part of the learning process.

Transmission of basketry knowledge is both vertical, from parents to children within the household and, more generally,

from one generation to the next within the community, and lateral, through diffusion by contact between communities (see Puri 2013). In the former case, it tends to promote conservative practices, whereas in the latter it inspires change. A new type of craft may be adopted without alteration in technique or form and be used for the same function, or be adapted to different conditions of use, or else undergo changes in function and, eventually, be physically modified, "reinterpreted," to fit such new function (see Sellato 2015). Changes may also result from divergent local practices and aesthetic tastes.

As technical knowledge for the production of a given craft within a community is often resident in the craftspeople's minds, each having his or her own specific criteria, in-group transmission of this knowledge may be achieved without a sample of that craft. In lateral transmission, except in the case of intergroup marriages, for the efficient diffusion of a new type of craft, a material sample or prototype is necessary. Regarding motifs, some groups resort to "samplers," for example, a plaited mat carrying a "catalogue" of motifs, local and imported (Klokke 2012), serving as teaching devices, without which certain motifs may just cease to exist.

### Basketry and Society

Basketry is “containing life,” in the words of F.H. Capistrano-Baker (1998), and this holds true of non-container articles, such as hats or mats. In traditional contexts, plaited articles were mostly meant for local needs – daily use, prestige, or ritual purposes – but some were also bartered away. Expert artisans in the Borneo interior usually were ordinary farmers, although in urban settings they had a more professional standing. Status was gained through expertise, and the best artisans achieved regional fame. Recent years have witnessed the emergence of semi-professional artisans among hinterland people settled in an urban environment, who supply souvenir shops.

Forms of division of labor pertain to plaitwork, focusing primarily on techniques: objects or parts of objects made by orthogonal and hexagonal plaiting are often produced by men, while fine decorated diagonal plaiting is mostly made by women. But criteria of function (and physical strength) also are relevant: fish traps, heavy-duty baskets, and coarse drying mats are made (and used or carried) by men, and kitchen implements by women. These practices, however, vary widely with ethno-cultural groups, or even within a group. Moreover, not anyone may manufacture any kind of plaited work, and craft making may be governed by a set of obligations or taboos. Taboos focusing on age and gender often apply to decorated crafts, since certain powerful patterns entailing heavy spiritual risk can only be created by experienced and/or senior persons.

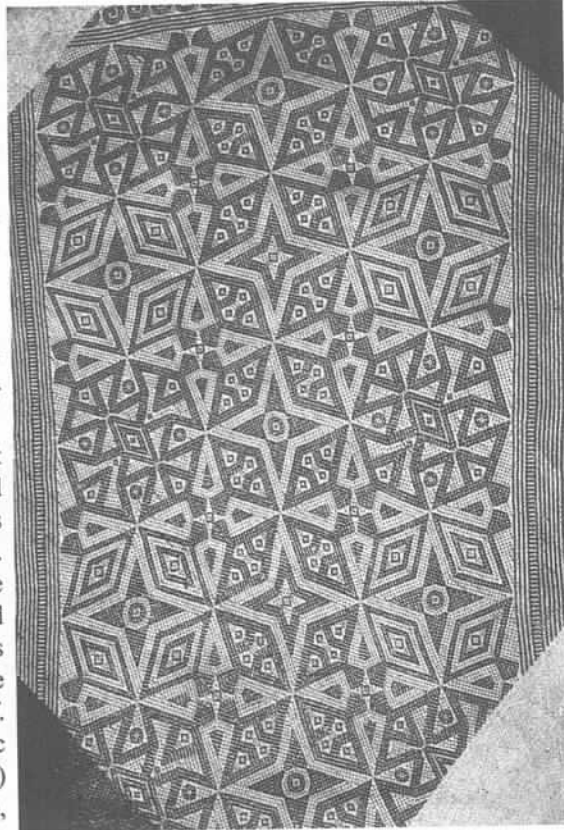
Local taxonomies of basketry, often related to the division of labor, are based on a combination of criteria of form, function, material, and technique. For example, from a standard “design-type,” the large sunhat (*cahung*), the Aoheng provide a finer designation by a second-order term identifying the material (*cahung da'a*, “sunhat of pandanus”), the presence of decoration (*cahung karung*, “sunhat with pattern”; see Photo 2), the wearer’s gender (*cahung laki*, “sunhat for men”), or specific function (*cahung adet*, “sunhat for rituals”; Sellato 2012).

### Motif, Name, Meaning

A vast variety of plaitwork motifs and patterns is found in Borneo, as shown by inventories gathered by researchers (see, e.g., Woolley 1929, 1932, Tillema 1930, Klausen 1957, Maiullari 2011, Klokke 2012; see also Van der Hoop 1949). Reflecting a contrast noted in certain vernacular categories e.g., Bléhaut 2012), I here call “motif” a minimal or simple decorative unit, and “pattern” a large-sized, intricate motif or an elaboration by repetition or combination of one or more motifs, in a linear or bi-dimensional way (Photo 4). Complex patterns, as bi-dimensional compositions of one or more simpler patterns, may be very elaborate (Photo 5).

The most basic, usually geometric motifs, made of only a few fiber strands (“dove’s eye,” “hook,” “triangle”), occur everywhere in Borneo, as elsewhere in the world. More intricate motifs, as well as patterns, often occur in diverse forms, varying with ethno-cultural groups and their respective specific styles, through simplification, expansion, stylization or reinterpretation (Sellato 1989, Bléhaut 1997). Beyond basic motifs, decoration is the product of a group’s singular history, allowing for the development of distinctive regional or “ethnic” styles, which actually are even more distinctive in

Photo 5. An elaborate sleeping mat of rattan combining octagonal and star patterns (l. 195 cm); Punan Lisum people (photo: G. Perret, by permission). This particular Punan group, the Lisum, plait mats starting from a corner, with all black or all white rattan strands (instead of alternating white and black strands); so, they end up with all-black and all-white corners.



other media less constrained by technique, such as sculpture or mural painting.

Researchers have found that the names of basketry motifs and patterns vary widely with groups and even within the same group. Names are usually taken from the surrounding nature, manufactured articles, or the names of persons or ethnic groups thought to have created or introduced a motif. While the names for some basic motifs ("dove's eye" or "hook") are the same throughout Borneo, for others, just as basic, they differ.

The triangle motif is variously called "bamboo shoot," "areca palm bud," "blade point," "thorn of the durian fruit," or "bat's elbow." Among apparently figurative motifs, close variants of the motif commonly called "person" may be found under the names "bat," "falcon," and "blades."

Does the name, then, precede the pattern by intent, we may ask (after Bléhaut 1997), or the other way around, by coincidence, due to a post facto resemblance with a particular form? The answer certainly is not straightforward. Mashman (2012) reports that among the Kelabit the motif or pattern "does not represent the object after which it is named," and the people themselves state that "the motifs have no meaning." Among Orang Ulu communities, "many motifs have lost their names completely" and are now viewed as "nothing more than decoration" (Davy Ball 2009).

It would seem, therefore, that in the cases above the relation between a motif and the name (if any) by which it is called is inconsistent and irrelevant, and that we should view the names of basketry motifs and patterns as just a set of "labels" forming a mnemonic device. Such mnemonic devices could vary from one ethnic group, or from one village, to the next. A "label," J.-F. Bléhaut remarked (pers. comm. 2010), is what would remain after everything else about a pattern had been forgotten.



Photo 6. Ritual rattan mat with the tree of life pattern, referring to the myth of creation of the world (l. 200 cm); Ngaju people (photo: G. Perret, by permission).

### Representation and Symbolic Value

Several researchers have stressed both their own perception of the importance of a motif's name for an understanding of its meaning and symbolic weight, and their frustration at being unable to interpret motifs through their names: "Enquiries as to the meaning of names [...] were often fruitless" (Woolley 1929). Sometimes, a motif or pattern is found with a story, albeit mundane and possibly post facto, linked to its name: the "mad pattern" of the Murut of Sabah is said to represent the track of a

woman who wandered in the forest till she lost her mind (Woolley 1929).

However, a far cry from the mundane, certain plaited artifacts – mats, hats, baskets – carry whole pictorial narratives about mythical heroes, spirits, and gods, with profound social and ritual significance. Such patterns certainly possess marked symbolic value, since these artifacts are created for ritual reasons, and are in use or in attendance during religious festivals (Photo 6) (see, e.g., Maiullari (2011) and Klokke (2012) for the Ngaju; Couderc 2012 for the Uut Danum (or Ot Danum); Sellato (2012) for the Kenyah and the Aoheng).

Moreover, as mentioned above, creating patterns referring to divinities, spirits, or head trophies entails spiritual risk for the maker. Among the Rejang, a plaitress may become blind (Swayne 1933); and an Aoheng tattooer demands a ritual payment to fortify his/her soul and defuse this risk. Clearly, therefore, some patterns have not just an explicit meaning but also a high spiritual potency, if only for the caution exerted in creating them.

Certain trivial artifacts, distinct from spiritually heavily laden artifacts featuring in religious festivals, are perplexing. Why do people travelling in the forest bother to carve a tiny stylized dragon motif on a coarse bamboo spoon or delousing blade, to be soon discarded after use? There is no formal ritual context here, and apparently no taboo involved or spiritual risk incurred, but this certainly is more than mere ornament. It is

suggested that it amounts to a minor ritual act: by carving a dragon motif, a man invokes the dragon goddess, possibly creating in the process a dragon spirit, and placing the artifact (and himself? and his action?) under the protection of this goddess.

Ritual caution, mandatory in creating a spiritually powerful pattern, is also required with its name, hence the use of a milder substitute, such as "dog" for "dragon," "lizard" for "crocodile" – in exactly the same way that strict Christians avoid uttering the name of God in mundane contexts. As informants may be wary of uttering sacred names and revealing to outsiders the meanings of patterns, this common use of substitute names and alternative explanations certainly accounts in part for the inconsistency and confusion in pattern names and meanings noted by authors.

Beyond a pattern's name, we should therefore look at concealed cultural referents. Among the Kayan and related groups, the "dog," "deer," and "water buffalo" are avatars of the dragon goddess, and such patterns all refer to the underworld, that is to water, land fertility, female fecundity, and the community's overall prosperity (Sellato 1989, 2012). Even simpler motifs may obscure spiritual concerns. Among the Iban, various leaf or flower motifs all refer to the concept of "fragrance," associated with headhunting and head trophies, which bring about fertility (Bléhaut 1997); and the occurrence of a very basic motif, the "full moon" (a simple circle), conceptually associated with a nubile woman, on wedding baskets is unlikely to be coincidental (Bléhaut, pers. comm., 2010).

## Discussion

Motifs and patterns, then, are of several types, and generalizations about them should be carefully avoided. Some are geometric decoration devoid of meaning or otherwise "irrelevant," featuring on daily-use objects (or as borders or fill-ins on more ritually oriented artifacts), and others refer to prominent powerful, even dangerous, symbols, created only on critical ritual artifacts. Others still, or maybe the same, are found partaking in casual personal ritual performances that, we may surmise, allow people to surround themselves with images to protect humans and the human sphere from potentially hostile spiritual entities. It is important to take into account a decorated object's context of production, as well as its function. Place and time also are of the essence (see below).

Let us examine the motif-name-meaning-referent chain connection. Some motifs have a name while some do not (see above), but having a name does not necessarily imply having a cultural referent. For example, though I have never heard that the common "dove's eye" motif has one, the variously named triangle motif sometimes does, referring to fertility. Through time and the vicissitudes of its voyage, a motif may have remained associated with its name or been renamed. Its name may or may not still carry a meaning and/or symbolic value within a community; and these may have remained linked to a given cultural referent or been reinterpreted.

A motif's cultural referent and symbolic value may vary with ethno-cultural groups and the types of artifacts carrying it. The "torso" or "person" motif, which the Aoheng routinely plait into drawstring baskets, occurs among the Ngaju on ceremonial hats, under the name of "augury bird," referring to a female celestial omen-bearing spirit. The "dog" motif of the same Aoheng baskets (Photo 7), whether or not it refers there to the



Photo 7. An old drawstring basket with rows of dog motifs (h. 35 cm); upper Mahakam river area (photo: G. Perret, by permission).

underworld dragon goddess, occurs on Ngaju ritual hats as the “golden goat,” carried down to this earth by a mythological celestial ancestor (Maiullari 2011). Likewise, the motif of the squatting anthropomorphic figure with raised arms certainly does not carry the same symbolic value on a sleeping mat or ordinary basket as it does on a ritual hat or a baby carrier (Sellato 2012, 2017).

Whatever the ultimate origin of a motif or pattern, and whether it belongs to an old common pool or was developed in a given community, the chain connection, for each motif, has undergone alteration through space and time, in the course of a generally complex cultural history. Indeed, linguistic and cultural features, or basketry forms, techniques, and functions (see above), may circulate independently; likewise, motifs, their names, and their meaning and cultural referents do not necessarily travel together.

In a given community, a pool of decorative motifs, along with their names, meanings, and cultural referents, is constantly subjected to dynamic processes of change and, at the same time, tends to integrate its constitutive elements into a somewhat coherent whole, a forever incipient “system.” In such a pool, there probably are a few resilient motifs, among which powerful ones (gods or named spirits, crocodile, tiger, dragon, hornbill, head trophy) tend to endure through time along with their names and cultural referents. But scores of other motifs are subject to such a broad variation in names that their cultural referents might not be crucial to the community. Even powerful motifs, however, are subject to name transpositions relative to taboos (see above). And local craftspeople’s idiosyncratic decorative innovations may arise associated with new names, and even whole new stories.

At any point in time, therefore, like culture as a whole (see, e.g., Boas 1955) or any subfield thereof, a local pool of motifs is the outcome of an ongoing ad hoc collective bricolage:<sup>1</sup> the current end product of a given community’s unique history

<sup>1</sup> *Bricolage* is used here to refer to processes similar to that of the “savage mind” handling myths (Lévi-Strauss, 1966; see also later uses by Derrida (1978) about discourse and Jacob (1986) about biology; and the related concept of “kludge,” <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/kludge>).

of internal development and external cultural and social interaction.<sup>2</sup> In such a pool, a hierarchy of sorts among motifs and patterns in terms of their resistance to time and influences might be discerned, from the critically powerful to the casually relevant to the purely ornamental. In any event, while researchers often anticipate coherent systems of naming and reference, as well as rules or norms, regarding motifs in plaitwork or other techniques, these remain elusive. Impermanence and adjustment are intrinsic features of human societies, so variability is an intrinsic feature of cultures – and of resources of motifs and patterns.

### References

Adovasio, J.M.

- 1977 *Basketry Technology: A Guide to Identification and Analysis*, Chicago: Aldine, Aldine Manuals on Archeology.

Appadurai, Arjun, ed.

- 1986 *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, London and New York: Cambridge University Press.

Barnes, Ruth

- 1993 South-East Asian Basketry, *Journal of Museum Ethnography* 4: 83-102.

Bellwood, Peter

- 1997 *Prehistory of the Indo-Malaysian Archipelago*, rev. ed., Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. [First ed. 1985, Sydney: Academic Press.]

Bléhaut, Jean-François

- 1997 *Iban Baskets*, Kuching: Sarawak Literary Society.  
2012 Iban Baskets: Their Production and Functions, In: B. Sellato, ed., *Plaited Arts from the Borneo Rainforest*, pp.104-119.

Boas, Franz

- 1955 *Primitive Art*, New York: Dover; London: Williams & Norgate. [First publ. 1927, Oslo: Aschehoug & Co., Instituttet for sammenlignende kulturforskning.]

Cameron, Judith

- 2016 Archaeological Textiles from the Niah Caves, In: G. Barker & L. Farr, eds, *Archaeological investigations in the Niah Caves, Sarawak*, Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, McDonald Institute Monographs, *The Archaeology of the Niah Caves, Sarawak, Vol. 2*, pp. 345-361.

Capistrano-Baker, F.H.

- 1998 Containing Life: Philippine Basketry Traditions on the Cordillera, In:

---

<sup>2</sup> As Ingold (2000) wrote, the artisan “weaves the world” in everything s/he does, and by doing so s/he “makes culture.” Quite possibly, s/he also contributes to “making human nature” (Sainsbury Centre, 2011).

- F.H. Capistrano-Baker et al. eds, *Basketry of the Luzon Cordillera, Philippines*, pp.13-31.
- Capistrano-Baker, F.H., A.S. Bacdayan, B.L. Milgram, and R.W. Hamilton, eds.  
1998 *Basketry of the Luzon Cordillera, Philippines*, Los Angeles: UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History.
- Christensen, Hanne  
2012 Fiber and dye plants in two longhouse communities, In: B. Sellato, ed., *Plaited Arts from the Borneo Rainforest*, pp. 40–53.
- Couderc, Pascal  
2012 Cultural and Literary Aspects of Uut Danum Patterned Plaiting, In: B. Sellato, ed., *Plaited Arts from the Borneo Rainforest*, pp.294-312.
- Davy Ball, Marieanne  
2009 *Betek, Tali ngan Atap*, Knots, String and Blades: Production and Use of Organic Utility Objects by the Orang Ulu of Sarawak, Ph.D. thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of Durham.
- Derrida, Jacques  
1978 Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences, In: *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp.278-294.
- Dunsmore, Susi  
2012 Traditional Basketwork Techniques in Borneo, In: B. Sellato, ed., *Plaited Arts from the Borneo Rainforest*, pp.54-78.
- Ellen, Roy  
2009 A modular approach to understanding the transmission of technical knowledge: Nuaulu basket-making from Seram, eastern Indonesia, *Journal of Material Culture*, 14 (2), 243-277.
- Ellen, Roy, and H. Harris  
2000 Introduction, In: R. Ellen, P. Parkes, and A. Bicker, eds., *Indigenous Environmental Knowledge and Its Transformations: Critical Anthropological Perspectives*, [n.p.]: OPA [Overseas Publishers Association], pp.1-34. <http://ebooks.ebookmall.com/ebook/272945-ebook.htm>.
- Gell, Alfred  
1998 *Art and Agency: An anthropological theory*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Ingold, Tim  
2000 *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*, London and New York: Routledge.  
2001 Beyond Art and Technology: The Anthropology of Skill, In: M.B. Schiffer, ed., *Anthropological Perspectives on Technology*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, pp.17-32.

- Jacob, François  
1986 *Le Jeu des possibles*, Paris: LGF, Livre de Poche.
- Jasper, J.E., and Mas Pirngadie  
1912 *De Inlandsche Kuntsnijverheid in Nederlandsch Indië, deel i, Het Vlechtwerk*, 's-Gravenhage: Mouton & Co.
- Klausen, Arne Martin  
1957 Basket-Work Ornamentation among the Dayaks, in *Studies Honouring the Centennial of the Universitetets Etnografiske Museum, Oslo, 1857-1957*, vol. 3, Oslo: Universitetets Etnografiske Museum.
- Klokke, Arnoud H.  
2012 Plaited Motifs of the Ngaju Dayak Plaited, In: B. Sellato, ed., *Plaited Arts from the Borneo Rainforest*, pp.358-363.
- Lane, Robert F.  
1986 *Philippine Basketry. An Appreciation*, Manila: Bookmark.
- Lemonnier, Pierre, ed.  
1993 *Technological Choices: Transformation in Material Cultures since the Neolithic*, London: Routledge.
- Leroi-Gourhan, André  
1964 *Le Geste et la parole: Technique et langage*, Paris: Albin Michel.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude  
1966 *The Savage Mind*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press; London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson. [First publ. 1962, *La Pensée sauvage*, Paris: Plon.]  
1993 *Regarder écouter lire*, Paris: Plon.
- Loebèr, J.A., Jr.  
1902 *Het Vlechtwerk in den Indischen Archipel. Uitgegeven bij gelegenheid der tentoonstelling van de vereeniging "Oost en west," Augustus 1902*, 's-Gravenhage: H. Kleinmann & Co.
- MacKinnon, Kathy, Gusti Hatta, Hakimah Halim, and Arthur Mangalik  
1996 *The Ecology of Kalimantan: Indonesian Borneo*, Singapore: Periplus, The Ecology of Indonesia Series, vol. 3.
- Maiullari, Paolo, ed.  
2011 *Sapuyung. Cappelli cerimoniali del Borneo*, Milan: Mazotta, and Lugano: Museo delle Culture.
- Mashman, V.  
2012 The Baskets of the Kelabit at Long Peluan and Their Neighbors, In: B. Sellato, ed., *Plaited Arts from the Borneo Rainforest*, pp.176-191.
- Mason, Otis T.  
1908 Vocabulary of Malaysian Basketwork: A Study in the W.L. Abbott Collections, *Proceedings of the United States National Museum* 35:1-51.

- McBain, Audrey  
1981 Shang and Chou Influences Observed in the Ethnic Art of Borneo, *Brunei Museum Journal* 5 (1):19-32.
- Novellino, Dario  
2009 From Museum Collections to Field Research. An ethnographic account of Batak basket-weaving knowledge, Palawan island, Philippines, *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 37 (108): 203-224.
- Puri, R.K.  
2013 Transmitting Penan basketry knowledge and practice, In: R.F. Ellen, S. Johns, & S. Lycett, eds, *Understanding cultural transmission: a critical anthropological synthesis*, Oxford: Berghahn, pp. 440-501.
- Sainsbury Centre  
2011 *Basketry. Making Human Nature*, exhibition booklet, 8 Feb. – 22 May 2011, Norwich: Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts (<http://www.basketry.ac.uk>).
- Sandin, B.  
1963 Garong Baskets, *Sarawak Museum Journal*, XI (21-24): 320-326.
- Sather, C.  
2012 Recalling the dead, revering the ancestors: Multiple forms of ancestorship in Saribas Iban society, In: P. Couderc & K. Sillander (eds), *Ancestors in Borneo societies. Death, transformation, and social immortality*, Copenhagen: NIAS Press, pp. 114-52.
- Sefa Dei, G.J., B.L. Hall, and D.G. Rosenberg, eds  
2000 *Indigenous Knowledges in Global Contexts*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Sellato, B.  
1989 *Hornbill and Dragon (Naga dan Burung Enggang): Kalimantan, Sarawak, Sabah, Brunei*, Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur: Elf Aquitaine. [Second ed., *Hornbill and Dragon: Arts and Culture of Borneo*, Singapore: Sun Tree, 1992.]  
2015 Crafts, culture and economics between resilience and instability: Borrowing from and trading to farmers among Borneo's nomads, *Hunter-Gatherer Research*, 1 (2): 157-195.  
2017 Material Culture Studies and Ethnocultural Identity, In: Victor T. King, Zawawi Ibrahim, & Noor Hasharina Hassan, eds, *Borneo Studies in History, Society and Culture*, Bandar Seri Begawan: Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Institute of Asian Studies, & Singapore: Springer Publications, IAS Asia in Transition Series, No. 4, pp. 57-78.
- Sellato, B., ed.  
2012 *Plaited Arts from the Borneo Rainforest*, Jakarta: The Lontar Foundation; Singapore: NUS Press; Copenhagen: Nordic Institute for Asian Studies Press, NIAS Studies in Asian Topics # 48; Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

- Sentance, Bryan  
2001 *Basketry: A World Guide to Traditional Techniques*, London: Thames & Hudson.
- Sigaut, F.  
1993 Learning, Teaching and Apprenticeship, *New Literary History* 24 (1): 105-114.
- Sillitoe, P.  
1998 The Development of Indigenous Knowledge, *Current Anthropology* 39 (2):223-252.
- Smith, M.K.  
2003 Communities of Practice, In: *The Encyclopaedia of Informal Education* ([http://www.infed.org/biblio/communities\\_of\\_practice.htm](http://www.infed.org/biblio/communities_of_practice.htm)).
- Solheim, Wilhelm G., II  
2003 Southeast Asian Earthenware Pottery and Its Spread, In: John Miksic, ed., *Earthenware in Southeast Asia*, Singapore: Singapore University Press, pp.1-21.
- Swayne, J.C.  
1933 Rejang Baskets from Sarawak, *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 11 (2):185-189.
- Tillema, H.F.  
1930 Vlechtindustrie op Borneo, *Eigen Haard* 56 (26): 604-609.
- Van der Hoop, A.N.J. Th. à Th.  
1949 *Indonesische Siermotiven. Ragam-ragam Perhiasan Indonesia. Indonesian Ornamental Design*, Batavia: Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen.
- Woolley, G.C.  
1929 Some Notes on Murut Basket Work and Patterns, *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 7: 291-302 and plates.  
1932 I. Murut Basket Work" and "II. Murut Basket Work," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 10 (1): 23-26, 27-29, plates.