

Meanings and Symbols in The Decorative Motifs and Patterns of Sinudot and Lapoi of The Kimaragang's Costume

Victor B. Pangayan
School of Arts
Universiti Sains Malaysia
Pulau Pinang, Malaysia
vicktondig@gmail.com

A.S Hardy B. Shafii
School of Arts
Universiti Sains Malaysia
Pulau Pinang, Malaysia
hardy@usm.my

Low Kok On
Unit Penyelidikan Warisan Borneo
Universiti Malaysia Sabah
Kota Kinabalu, Sabah
lowkokon@ums.edu.my

Abstract *Kimaragang* is the typical ethnic group in Kota Marudu, Sabah. The uniqueness and identity of *Kimaragang*'s community can be regarded in terms of their costumes and textiles – as an ideographic symbol of *Kimaragang*'s people. The *Kimaragang* traditional costumes are divided into two, *sinudot* and *lapoi*. The *sinudot* a male costume with a classy appearance and masculine, which reflects an active and heroic characteristic, while *lapoi* worn by women, which indirectly displaying the softness and elegance appearances with the role of symmetry and decorative motif designs. Understanding the *Kimaragang* traditional costumes is important as a mechanism for emphasizing and preserving their own cultural values. This paper will reviews and explains the authenticity of the indigenous motif and design patterns that were woven on *sinudot* and *lapoi* in term of shapes, symbolically designating, and processing techniques applied as the aesthetic characteristics to in-depth perceive the weaving traditions of *Kimaragang*'s with a thorough understanding into the meanings of motifs, patterns and designs in *sinudot* and *lapoi*.

Keywords: *Kimaragang* ethnic, traditional costumes, ethnic identity, *Sinudot*, *Lapoi*, motifs and designs, aesthetic characteristics

INTRODUCTION

Costumes are not only act as a decoration, but nearly connected to the history of human life [1]. Costumes are seen as one of the cultural aspects of a society in a period of time and an artistic symbol and creative expression that illustrates the aesthetic value of an ethnic group as reflects in the *Kimaragang* traditional costumes. The image and structure of *Kimaragang* ethnic costume indirectly reflect their self-identification through visual appearance. As regards to the relationship between art and costumes, this will reveal the nature of *Kimaragang*'s personality and uniqueness. Besides, the understanding of their spiritual traits and social systems in a culturological context also can be shown. As consequent, important aspects such as materials, colours, motifs and patterns of the costumes are seen as the specified scope of *Kimaragang*'s costume and it is important to express the symbolic and reflects the culture of *Kimaragang*. The aim of this paper is to determine the *Kimaragang*'s ethnic philosophy of living which embroidered along with the motives and practices on their traditional costume. Thus, it will reveal a rich discernment of the ethnocultural values of the *Kimaragang* people.

METHODOLOGY

The informations for this paper were gathered from the fieldwork conducted in the vicinity of Tandek situated in the district of Kota Marudu, Sabah. The majority of *Kimaragang*'s people in the district of Kota Marudu reside in the Tandek area [2], [3]. In order to acquire and collect information related to traditional costumes, in-depth interview was conducted in a

natural setting after obtaining the consent of the informant to make face-toface meetings as suggested by Mason [4] and Muthiah [5]. In this field study, elderly people are used as key informants in acquiring and gathering information related to the ornament of *sinudot* and *lapoi*. Unstructured questions were asked regarding the meaning and symbols of the motifs and patterns of the *Kimaragang*'s costume.

THE ORIGIN OF THE NAME "KIMARAGANG"

The origin of the name "*Kimaragang*" is closely related to the name of the textile used to produce their costume in the past. The word "*Kimaragang*" is derived from the root word "*aragang*" which means red. According to Jubin Umbang¹ (63), *Kimaragang*'s ethnic got its name based on the clothes used while attending a festival ceremony [3]. The *Kimaragang* wearing the attire made from the pinakang cloth which was red. The special red colour of the pinakang cloths, has highlighted the *Kimaragang*'s appearance and attract the attention of the crowd from a distance at that time. The people who saw the incident referred to them as "*Ki-maragang*" which meant red people and the name remained until now [2], [3]. The pinakang is a textile made from the *timbagan* (tree bark in *Kimaragang*'s dialect) and according to Panaga Bin Wanian² (70), usually the process of producing the

¹ The late Jubin Bin Umbang (63 years), Village Head, Kg. Togudon, Tandek, Kota Marudu, Sabah. Interviews on: Feb 14, 2012 (Passed away in June 2015)

² The late Panaga Bin Wanian (70 years), Kg. Togudon, Tandek, Kota Marudu, Sabah. Interviews on: Aug 21, 2017 (Passed away in Dec 2017)

Pinakang is carried out in the river basin [3], [6]. In addition, the development and modernization of Kimaragang's ethnic especially after the invention of weaving tools, the use of pinakang cloth gradually replaced with *nawalan* (textiles) cloth. The use of *nawalan* cloth as the main medium in the Kimaragang costume production still practiced until last from 1881 – 1963 after the arrival of Western power in Marudu bay [6], [7].

MONINGKOR (SPINNING) AND MANGAWOL (WEAVING) PROCESSES

Moningkor (spinning) and *mangawol* (weaving) are two chain processes in the making of *pinakang* cloth that has its own artistic values of Kimaragang's weavers (which usually done by women). Their fine craftsmanship will be utilized as the primary material in producing traditional Kimaragang's costume such as *sinudot* and *lapoi* in the past [3]. According to Andima Somonul³ (75), *moningkor* is a verb which refers to the process of producing threads known as *tingingkor*. The spinning of *tingingkor* in the *moningkor* process requires four main equipments as shown in Figure 1, namely: i) *gapas* or cotton are the main ingredients in producing *tingingkor*, ii) *tingkaran* which looks like a top and serves as a motor that pulls and rolls the cotton yarn, iii) *galun* that functions as a base to *tingkaran* which is shaped like a small plate and iv) *rilin do 'kawad* is kind of natural wax which produced by local bees and serves as a compressor so that the yarn becomes more solid and dense. It is also the final finishing for the *tingingkor* (Based on Julia Binti Inatul⁴, 47). *Tiningkor* that are finished and ready to used can be maintained with its basic colour (white) or can be coloured to enhance the artistic value of the *nawalan* produced by the method of soaking and boiling with natural dyes, for example *tingingkor* in black is obtained from the use of specific plant called as *to'om* and red *tingingkor* is made from *sappang* wood [3].

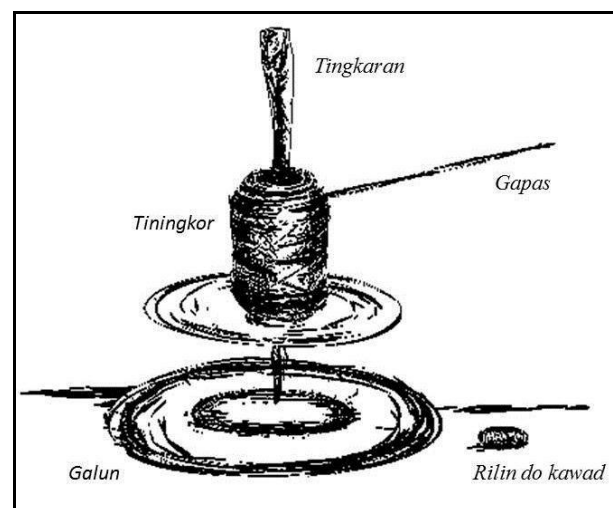


Figure. 1: *Moningkor* Equipments (Source: Researcher's Collection: resketch)

Once the *tingingkor* is sufficient, the level of weaving will be extended away to produce *nawalan* cloth sheet with the weaving machine known as *pangawol* as shown in Figure 2. The Kimaragang traditional loom structure was built based on four specific tools such as: i) *tabit* that works as merging of weave bodies with machines placed in the waist belt of weavers to tighten looms and simplify the process of weaving, ii) *wiwitan* that serves as a weaving needle, iii) *tansad* is a functional wood used to compress thread embroidery, and iv) *lundusan* as a yard divider so that the threads are easy to dig through. The process of *mangawol* and *moningkor* took a long time and tested the patience and rigour of Kimaragang women in producing a ready made sewing *nawalan* cloth and producing *sinudot* and *lapoi* which will usually be presented at ceremonies [6].

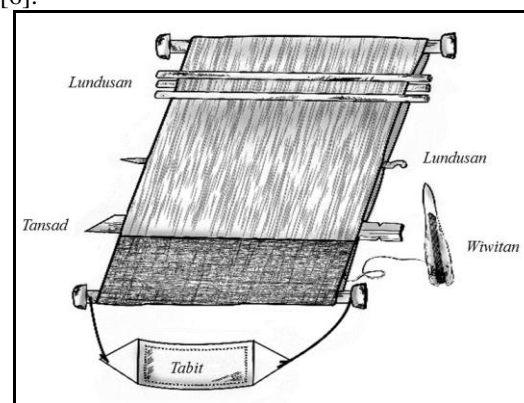


Figure. 2: *Mangawol* Equipment (Source: Researcher's Collection: resketch)

THE STRUCTURE OF SINUDOT COSTUME

Sinudot (men's costumes) consist of a suit that is called a *sinudot* and a pant called *botutus*. *Sinudot* refers to the word "*sudot*" which means "wrinkle" or "have wrinkles" [3]. This wrinkle is usually served as a decoration on the left and right side of the shirt. It is

³ The late Andima Binti Somonul @ Osoi (75 years), Former *Bobolian*, Kg. Tondig, Tandek, Kota Marudu, Sabah. Interviews on: Oct 5, 2012 (Passed away in Feb 2016)

⁴ Julia Binti Inatul (63 years). Dance Trainer and Manufacturer of Traditional Kimaragang Costume. Kg. Salimpodon, Pitas Kota Marudu. Interviews on: Mac, 2012

also serves as a finishing on the waistline. The front side of *sinudot* was tied by zig-zag tie technique using *tingkor*. *Sinudot* will be matched with the *botutus* pants - a dominant pants for Kimaragang men. *Botutus* is a noun derived from the root word "*tutus*" in Kimaragang dialect meaning "narrowed down" - where the *botutus* pants named is based along the pants design that narrows down to the ankle. The *sinudot* shirt and *botutus* pants are fitted with the use of *tagkos* (belts) and *sigar* (headgear) as shown in Figure 3. According to Bunging Turudang⁵ (78), the man's social status amongst the Kimaragang can be seen from the type of *sigar* that is worn either as *sigar do mandal*, *rinogian* or *ginorudaan* when fully dressed a *sinudot*. Each type of *sigar* worn reveals the symbolic status of the wearer such as, *mandal* (black and plain) - *sigar* of common Kimaragang, *rinogiann* (colourful and patterned) - symbolizes the person from the wealthy family or higher classes, and *ginorudaan* (with golden lace) - symbolizes the wearer is an influential leader.



Figure. 3: *Sinudot* Costume (Source: Researcher's Collection)

THE STRUCTURE OF LAPOI COSTUME

In the past, Kimaragang woman wore the *nawalan* cloth by making it as *lapoi* and *tapi'* (a piece of cloth that is worn wrapped around the chest) that became a female traditional costume. *Lapoi* is a cloth-shaped outfit and does not have a latch on the left and right side, and is punched in the centre in order to allow wearer's head entered when wearing the *lapoi* (see Figure 4). On the inside, Kimaragang women wear *tapi'* which act as a covering cloth from the chest to the knees.

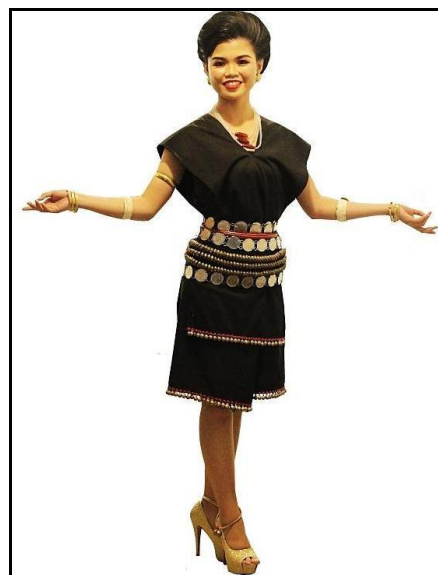


Figure. 4. *Lapoi* Costume (Source: Researcher's Collection)

Each end of *tapi'* and *lapoi* is adorned with a small bell called, *giring* and some of the *lapoi* will be decorated with a bunch of triangular arrangement of colourful cloth called *linongkitan*. At the waist part, it will be paired with *torot* (belt) comprising *taboi toitom* (black belt which are made from rattan), *taboi taragang* (red belt which are made from rattan), *galun* (rectangular silver belt), *sinogoloi* (a belt with an arrangement from bronze ring), *linantakan* (black belt which are made from rattan with silver coating) and *himpogot* (a belt with an arrangement of the British silver coin). According to Juanas Binti Makampung⁶ (64), the significant of *torot* will indicate the wearer marital status such as married or single, and her social status such as wealthy and influential family or an ordinary person.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MOTIF AND PATTERNS OF COSTUMES – SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION

The aesthetic value of Kimaragang traditional costume - *sinudot* and *lapoi* are not merely determined from the fabrics utilized in the yield of costumes, but also on motifs and patterns that decorated on the *sinudot* and *lapoi*. The patterns and motifs found on the *sinudot* and *lapoi* are symbolization of the life philosophy, social system, belief and culture of Kimaragang itself. For men's traditional shirt, *sinudot*, motifs and patterns embroidered on the front of the shirt are shaped with *unduk-unduk* (sea horse), and *limatok* (leech) as shown in Table 1 and 2, while the *kambang siapu* (butterflies) is embroidered on the back of the shirt (see Table 3). Kimaragang emulate the *undukunduk* due to their nature of always bowed his head and interpreted as a metaphor for showing low self-esteem, but having its own unique, unpredictable

⁵ Bunging Bin Turudang (68 years), Kampung Togudon, Tandek, Kota Marudu, Sabah. Interviews on: Aug 21, 2017

⁶ Juanas Binti Makampung (62 years), Kg. Togudon, Tandek, Kota Marudu, Sabah. Interviews on: Aug 21, 2017

strengths, wisdoms and advantages, while *limatok*, seen as an advantages of Kimaragang who can adjust to any situation and continue to survive. Another motif, *kambang siapu*, reflects on Kimaragang's ethnicity that getting public attention because of their good personality and an interesting personality. These three types of motifs have a slightly different appearance of colours and shapes, but still hold the same symbolic meaning. Figure 3 is derived as a clear and easy-to-understand summary of the motifs and patterns found on the *sinudot*.

Table 1: Motifs And Patterns Of Unduk-Unduk (Sea Horse)


<i>Unduk-unduk</i>	
(i)	
Kimaragang's imitated the seahorse, which always bowed its head to show humility, but had its own unpredictable strength, wisdom and advantage.	

Table 2: Motifs And Patterns Of Limatok (Leech)








<i>Limatok</i>	
(i)	(ii)
	
Kimaragang's emulate the rugged and adaptable <i>limatok</i> (leech) in both land and water.	

Table 3: Motifs And Patterns Of Kambang Siapu (Butterflies)

<i>Kambang siapu</i>	
(i)	(ii)
	
(iii)	(iv)
	
(V)	
	
Kimaragang's implies <i>kambang siapu</i> which the glare of its good and attractive personalities.	

All three motifs are not just visually beautiful, but also express the philosophical values of Kimaragang's ethnic life. When analysed, the character of *unduk-unduk* always looked down and clearly reflects the humility value and low self-esteem. For the *limatok* motif, it is symbolic that Kimaragang's is able to adapt to various conditions and life's hardships. The motif of *kambang siapu* on the other hand reveals that the Kimaragang people have their own distinctive advantages and privileges because they are always being the focus of the surrounding community as a special ethnic group. Any symbolism is embroidered on the *nawalan* cloth by using *tinginkor* yarn that has been dyed. An outstanding and supple combination of colours over the *nawalan* surface able to highlight the *undukunduk*, *limatok* and *kambang siapu* patterns on *sinudot*. The combination of colours and patterns on *sinudot* shirts create harmony and indirectly featuring a cheerful appearance and magnificence of the wearer.

As with *sinudot* shirts, *lapoi* dresses are also decorated with hand-made embroidery inspired by nature, such as flowers, paddy, grass and hills. The motifs and patterns composition on the *lapoi* – normally are on the cloth edge such as bottom edge and hemline of the cloth. Motifs and patterns produced by colourful thread embroidery techniques are like *wusak* (flowers), *parai* (paddy), *linontian* (a kind of grass), and *linongkitan* (triangular arrangement) motifs. Embellished embroidery designs the *lapoi* are symbolic and representation of the

Kimaragang's philosophy of life itself. *Parai* motifs that are composed and spotted on *lapoi* illustrate Kimaragang's life closer to rice cultivation. The *wusak* motifs show the beauty and softness of Kimaragang ethnic women, while *linontian* motifs delineate Kimaragang's women are grateful and persevering in pursuing a job. According to Rondikum Binti Yangan⁷ (79), the *linongkitan* motif (a continuing triangular arrangement) which describes hills and mountains as to denote the experience and knowledge or *rinea'at*⁸ owned by a woman. All these motifs are styled and embroidered according to the size of the pattern and the suitability of the motif that fills a certain space on *lapoi*. The motifs layout and placement on *lapoi* not only produce a harmonious and beautiful *lapoi*, but as well creating an art full of meanings and symbols based on the Kimaragang's philosophy. Table 4, 5, 6 and 7 present a clear delineation of the *wusak* (flowers), *parai* (paddy), *linontian* (a kind of grass), and *linongkitan* (triangular arrangement) motifs respectively were expressing the meaning of *lapoi* dresses.

⁷ Rondikum Binti Yangan (79 Years), *Bobolian*, Kg. Nolutan, Tandek, Kota Marudu, Sabah. Interview on June 6, 2017.

⁸ Traditional poems memorized by the *bobolian* or *bolungkitas*, also known as *rinait* by other Sabah natives [3], [8].

Table 4: Motifs And Patterns Of *Wusak* (Flowers)




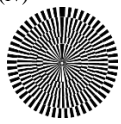
<i>Wusak</i>			
(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)
			
The <i>Wusak</i> Motifs and patterns that portray the characteristics of gentleness and beauty of Kimaragang women.			

Table 5: Motifs And Patterns Of *Parai* (Paddy)

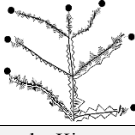
<i>Parai</i>
(i)

<i>Parai</i> motif that portray the Kimaragang's life close to rice cultivation.

Table 6: Motifs And Patterns Of *Linontian* (A Kind Of Grass)

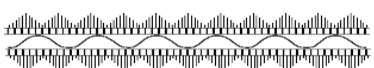
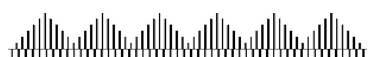
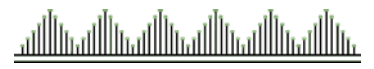

<i>Linontian</i>
(i)

(ii)

(iii)

<i>Linontian</i> (a kind of grass) that symbolized Kimaragang women's staunch and persistent spirits in pursuing their job.

Table 7: Motifs And Patterns Of *Linongkitan* (Triangular Arrangement)

<i>Linongkitan</i>
(i)

<i>Linongkitan</i> motif (a continuing triangular arrangement) reveals the wearer who is skilful in the knowledge of <i>rine'et</i> .

Based on the above discussion, the motif and pattern structures that decorated on the *sinudot* and *lapoi* not only meets the principles of balance, harmony and unity, but they also blended the culture and philosophy of the Kimaragang people. For Kimaragang, they are proud of wearing *sinudot* (men) and *lapoi* (women) because they are attractive and beautiful. Indirectly, the Kimaragang play a role as an ambassador who exhibit their culture and philosophy through motifs and patterns that are embroidered on their traditional costumes. Unfortunately, such valuable tradition is faded with modernization and is being forgotten by the young generation nowadays.

CONCLUSION

Kimaragang traditional costumes made from the weaving of textiles, cloth patterns, colours and motifs of its own in regard reflects the ethnic individuality, cultures and traditional knowledge as part of their historical roots. The traditional costumes can be reckoned as an artwork with the allure presentation and composition motifs and patterns along the textile that responding to audience appreciation known as aesthetics. Each motif and pattern reveals the implied meaning and philosophy of life of the Kimaragang. Thus, understanding and knowledge of the traditional costume in terms of appearance and motif designs are essential and account as cultural treasure that should be carefully guarded by the present generation of Kimaragang's in order such vital information not be lost along with the passing of elderly Kimaragang's future.

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LIST OF INFORMANTS

No	Name	Age	Sex	Occupation
1	Rondikum Binti Yangang	79	Female	<i>Bobolian</i> (ritual specialist)
2	Andima Binti Somonul @ Osoi	75	Female	Former <i>Bobolian</i> (ritual specialist)

3	Jubin Bin Uambang	63	Male	Village Head
4	Panaga Bin Wanian	70	Male	-
5	Julia Binti Inatul	57	Female	Dance Trainer and Manufacturer of Traditional Kimaragang Costume.
6	Bunging Bin Turudang (68 Tahun	68	Male	-
7	Juanas Binti Makampung	62	Female	-