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Iban Ritual Fabrics:
their patterns and names

(Part 1)

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PREFACE

The initial incentive for my study of Iban ritual fabrics was their visual appeal. In particular, I was attracted to old coiled patterns. When I learned that it is precisely these patterns that are valued above all others by Iban weavers today, this factor gave an additional impulse to my enquiry. The main study of Iban cloth patterns to date is Alfred Haddon's and Laura Start's *Iban or Sea Dayak fabrics and their patterns: a descriptive catalogue of the Iban fabrics in the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology Cambridge*, first published in 1936, with a second edition in 1982. Haddon focussed on the names of individual motifs. However, during my brief visit to Iban communities in Sarawak in 1986, it became apparent to me that Iban weavers are far more concerned with the names assigned to the entire main pattern, rather than to its components. It was with this important piece of information that I conceived the initial objective of my study: to collect sufficient material for a short and concise catalogue of Iban fabrics, listing the major old patterns and their names.

However, early on it became apparent that this was not going to be an easy task. After documenting some hundred cloths, it seemed that the naming of patterns was largely an individual affair. In order to arrive at a comprehensive overview, what was needed was a systematic recording of a

large number of cloths from different Iban regions. In order to understand the significance of pattern names, a thorough knowledge of Iban mythology was essential. I further came to realise that pattern titles could not be understood outside the context of oral literature. In this respect, I was fortunate in gaining the support of Anthony Richards in 1987 for my research. Richards' *An Iban-English dictionary* (1981) has been an essential reference throughout my study of Iban culture. But it was Richards' translation of a large number of Iban praise names, undertaken in 1989, which proved to be of immeasurable assistance. The relatively small number of these names to which I refer in this thesis hardly does justice to Richards' efforts, and hopefully I shall have the opportunity to list them in more detail in future publications. What is more, while I was in Sarawak, Dr James Masing, himself an Iban, and an acknowledged expert in his people's culture, provided invaluable assistance by transcribing my recordings of praise names. Masing's expertise in oral texts is given full expression in his doctoral thesis, *The coming of the gods: a study of an invocatory chant (timang gawai amat) of the Iban of the Baleh region of Sarawak* (1981); which was supervised by Professor Derek Freeman. I quote his work frequently in my study.

In 1991, I was accepted as a postgraduate student at the Centre for South-East Asian Studies at the University of

Hull, partly on the strength of my report on an Iban weaving ritual, documented in Sarawak in 1988 and published in the *Sarawak Museum Journal* in 1991. I had also presented a brief summary of my findings at the Indonesian Textile Symposium, held in Basel, Switzerland, in the summer of 1991 (published in 1993).

Throughout the period of writing this thesis, I was fortunate that Professor Rodney Needham, with great generosity, took an active interest in my work. His diligence and attention to detail was of inestimable value, particularly when I returned to Sarawak for a brief period in 1993. In the same year I visited Derek and Monica Freeman in Canberra. Access to their notes on weaving, which they had collected during field research from 1949 to 1951, provided much valuable detail and added an important dimension of understanding to my own material gathered almost forty years later.

My time spent in the field comprised short periods of a few weeks to several months at a time, spread over several years from 1986 to 1993. One advantage of these sporadic encounters with the Iban was that I returned to Sarawak on ten or more separate occasions, with time for reflection and reworking of my findings in the intervening periods. In other words, I was able to check and confirm my conclusions as my understanding of the material grew over the years.

In these intermittent excursions into the field, there was one constant element and that was my main informant, Iba anak Temenggong Koh of Entawau, Baleh. Today, it is very rare indeed to find Iban women who are knowledgeable about the names of cloth patterns and the ritual prohibitions which govern weaving. Many longhouses, even entire river systems, may be unable to present a single woman who can discuss such matters with authority. During my research, I was fortunate to meet several such women. Yet none of them equalled Iba's command and depth of knowledge of Iban fabrics, and the major part of the findings presented in this thesis derived from my discussions with her. Sadly, Iba passed away on 15 October 1993.

In my final year of writing up, I happened to meet, on a social occasion, a former student of art history to whom I gave an oral synopsis of my findings. His reaction was quite different from those which I was accustomed to receive from persons familiar with the subject of Indonesian textiles. This conversation encouraged me to read further in art history and to attempt to place my findings within the context of art historical discourse.

To summarize, I began my field research with the objective of identifying the principal 'original' Iban fabric patterns, linked with a largely unfocussed interest in the 'meaning' of pattern names. I was led further into the subject by the complexities of the material at hand. As a

result, this study is primarily ethnographic. The documentation of patterns and names comprises the core of the thesis. The art historical perspective of the study is superimposed on the ethnographic data, rather than it shaping decisively my empirical material.

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I thank Emeritus Professor Derek Freeman and his wife Monica Freeman for giving me access to their fieldnotes and

for their hospitality. I am very grateful to Professor Freeman for seeing me at a time when he was occupied with other work, for I benefitted greatly from his remarks and observations. In particular, I thank him for giving me permission to quote from his notes and I am grateful to Monica Freeman for allowing me to include some of her drawings in this thesis. Professor Freeman also graciously arranged for my affiliation as a Visiting Fellow at the Research School of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University during my stay in Canberra; I also thank the staff and members at the School for assistance extended to me during my stay.

I am indebted to Dr Julian Davison for introducing me to the work of Needham, Tambiah and other anthropologists; their work had a significant influence on my subsequent approach to the data. I gained great advantage from many stimulating discussions with Dr Davison for which I would like to express my appreciation. I am especially grateful to Anthony Richards for his translations of Iban pattern names and for our many conversations and exchanges of letters which added invaluable information on a wide range of details of Iban culture. I also thank Anthony and his wife Daphne for their kind hospitality during my visits to Cambridge. I further thank Dr James Masing for giving so freely of his time. His deep knowledge of Iban culture was an invaluable asset in gaining an understanding of particu-

larly difficult concepts. I thank Dr Michael Heppell for allowing me to quote from his unpublished paper. I am indebted to Dr Cornelia Vogelsanger for encouraging me to proceed with the study of Iban fabrics and for her subsequent advice and useful criticism.

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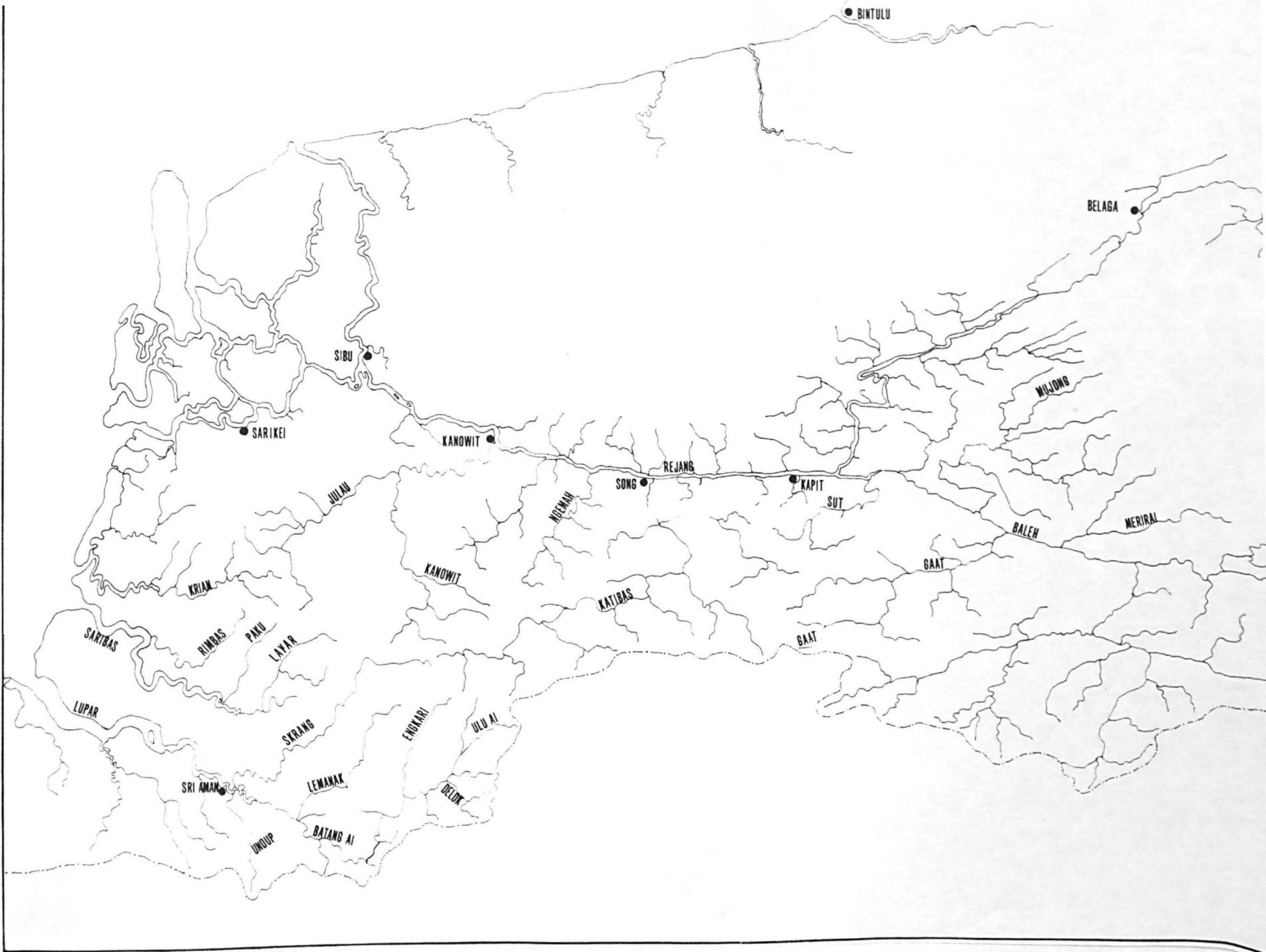
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Sketch map of Iban settlement areas in Sarawak

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the ritual fabrics of the Iban of Sarawak. The emphasis is on the names of patterns, the different ways in which these names are used and their referents in an Iban context.

To introduce the subject, I discuss some theoretical problems with regard to the function of names, and provide a brief historical background to the geographical areas in which I conducted my field research; I then give a time-frame for the study and outline my methodology. In chapter 2, I survey the ritual function of cloth; in the next chapter, I describe the ritual prohibitions in effect during the production of patterned textiles; chapters 4 and 5 concern the function of names as titles and as labels respectively; Haddon's interpretation of the Iban material is discussed in chapter 6, and an attempt is made to place his interpretations in the context of other theories of the origins of art; in chapter 7, my findings are viewed in the context of the debate regarding the form and content of decorative art; next, I address the issue of the relations between the ritual efficacy of cloths and the patterns depicted on them; I conclude with a re-examination of previous perspectives on weaving and its relation to female prestige, and its association, in turn, with the parallel

structure of male status and headhunting.

This study is concerned with cloths patterned by the ikat technique which involves resist dyeing the warp threads, rather than the weft, in order to create a pattern prior to weaving. Ikatting, or *kebat* in Iban (active verb form: *ngebat*), is the principal technique employed by the Iban for patterning cloth. Large cloths are called *pua' kumbu'* (with a glottal stop after both words; glottal stops are generally not included in written Iban and therefore will be omitted henceforth); *pua* means 'cover' or 'blanket', *be-pua* is to 'be covered with a blanket' (Richards 1981:287). *Kumbu* also means 'cover', but here refers to the process of ikatting when the warp is 'covered', or wrapped, to resist successive dye baths and thus to create the pattern (Richards 1981:170). *Pua kumbu* therefore refers to a 'blanket', made by the ikat technique. The Iban also produce smaller cloths used as skirts by the women on ritual occasions. These are called *kain kebat*, a 'cloth' or 'skirt' (*kain*) with patterns produced by the ikat method (*kebat*). Other techniques employed by the Iban are *sungkit*, the wrapping of the warp with coloured threads (discussed in appendix B); others are *pilih* and *songket*, both of which involve the use of a supplementary weft; neither are as important as ikatting and are not discussed in this thesis.

Iban patterned fabrics are mentioned in a number of general

publications on Indonesian textiles (Gittinger 1979; Fraser-Lu 1988; Maxwell 1990). To varying degrees, all these accounts are based on the information provided by Haddon and Start (1936 and 1982). Although, on occasion, Haddon's interpretation of Iban patterns is met with scepticism (Gittinger 1979:221), the assumption that designs constitute a readable iconographic language is commonly accepted. In contrast, from my field data, I cannot confirm the existence of a code of readable meanings. I maintain that traditional Iban patterns are not 'encoded' with meanings, as has been reported from other cultures (Morphy 1991:6); nor do Iban designs contain a language-like system of communication (see Forge 1979:281).

Haddon's approach, as outlined in his *Evolution in Art* (1895), was based on the assumption of a stable relation between forms and their meaning or significance. This premise was part of an evolutionary paradigm, based on 'realist-degenerationist' theories (for details, see Thorsen 1977:107-112; Gerbrands 1957:35). The assumption was that all designs start as realistic depictions of nature and gradually, during their evolution, degenerate into simplified forms (Haddon 1895:7,313). For the Iban material, Haddon could thus explain why motifs called 'deer', 'hawk' and so on, do not resemble these creatures (1982:xv).

The evolutionary paradigm was then challenged by Boas

(1896,1927) and his followers, notably Kroeber (1900,1902), and replaced with a diffusionist paradigm. With regard to decorative art, they adopted a largely historical approach. Meaning was recognized as being conventional and subject to regional or even personal interpretations. Thus, Kroeber found that for the decorative art of the Arapaho, 'The symbols described cannot be read. One may guess the meaning of another's design; but he may also fail to understand it, or misinterpret it' (1900:86; taken from Thoresen 1971:18). Kroeber concluded that, 'It thus appears that there is no fixed system of symbolism in Arapaho decorative art. Any interpretation of a figure is personal. Often the interpretation is arbitrary' (1902:144; taken from Thoresen 1971:19).

However, even when similar forms are variously interpreted as 'men, bear-feet, leaves, and frogs; or, again, dragonflies, stars, bear-feet, and clouds and stars' (Kroeber 1902:98; taken from Thoresen 1971:19), the designs in question apparently are interpreted by the Arapaho themselves as representing, or depicting, these objects. In contrast, in the Iban case, we cannot make similar assumptions. Designs which are called 'deer' or 'hawk' do not necessarily depict, or represent, these animals. Often, as Iban informants point out, the name is 'just the name' (*nama aja*), and no depiction is involved (*nadai gambar*). Therefore, to provide a fuller understanding of Iban per-

ceptions, it is necessary to conduct a detailed examination of the nature of the connection between name and pattern.

From the outset, we are faced with a dilemma: the Iban language has no copula (cf. Levy-Bruhl 1975:72-3). However, in commentaries on Iban cloth, it is common to read that a motif 'represents' rice grains, husking boxes and so on (Haddon 1936; Maxwell 1990:238). Presumably, the authors have thus translated the English copula 'is' from Iban, assuming mistakenly that it is expressed in their language. In order to avoid a similar error in the following theoretical exercise, I shall start by using Waismann's preliminary definition of names, which postulates that 'A name is a word, a linguistic symbol, that is explained by means of an ostensive definition' (1965:195).

We may imagine a situation in which we endeavour to teach a basic English vocabulary to a foreigner, by pointing at objects, while uttering the respective English word, such as 'table', 'chair', 'cow', 'horse', and so on. We may then switch to a situation in which the objects thus referred to are not there in front of us, but pictured in a book. On this occasion, it is quite likely that we shall still say, 'table', 'chair' and so on, while pointing at the image in the book, even though, to be exact, we should be saying, 'picture'.

This may seem a somewhat pedantic exercise. However, just

how badly things can go wrong in a field situation is shown by Stevens's 'flower theory', which he formulated in connection with Semang comb patterns (Skeat and Blagden 1906:I,395-492). Apparently Stevens was unaware that the Malay word *bunga*, or 'flower', has the secondary meaning of 'pattern', and therefore, as Skeat and Blagden point out, rather ungraciously, Stevens 'was, most unfortunately, started upon the wrong tack from the very outset' (1906:I,398).

In the Iban case, then, I propose the following. If, while pointing at a pattern with a questioning expression, the Iban informant says, 'hawk' or 'deer' and so on, the first and most important question should be, 'Is it a picture (*gambar*) of a hawk or deer?'. This is particularly appropriate since Iban designs do not appear to be pictures of hawk and deer.

There are a number of other diverse occasions which call for the use of names. Watching a horse or boat race presents no problem since we can observe the action. However, listening to such a race on the radio, or reading about it in a newspaper will be of little use without the means to distinguish between contestants. Horses and boats are named in order to distinguish one from the other. Names here serve as a reference system. As Waisman explains, 'No one would think of naming objects unless he intended to

talk about the things by means of the names, or to deal with them in his thoughts by these means' (1965:198). By the same reasoning, we do not distinguish between individual poultry, or assign names to pigs raised for slaughter.

Nonetheless, one could argue that, for purposes of distinguishing between things, numbers would do just as well. And, in fact, in situations when large collections of people are subsumed in an institutional setting, such as prisoners or soldiers, they are often referred to by numbers. In the case of persons, names, rather than numbers, are used as a sign of respect. We do not refer to a friend or family member by numbers. People are referred to by proper names which may become so closely associated with the person as to form a kind of unit. Finally, names, or titles rather, are used to distinguish between levels of rank and social position.

Returning to Iban patterns, names are assigned to them for all the reasons just discussed. A motif may be called 'hawk', but this does not mean that it is a picture, or a representation of a hawk. The name may be assigned as a means of distinguishing one kind of motif from another. In other contexts, names are given as a sign of respect, to indicate the importance of a particular pattern. In this case, names function like the proper names of persons. The pattern and name form a unit. Finally, names are used as titles in order to distinguish levels of rank. A pattern's

rank indicates its level of ritual efficacy and power.

Location

The location for fieldwork in Sarawak was determined by the occurrence of two distinct types of *pua* cloth which are characteristic of two areas: the Baleh and the Saribas (see map). In order to understand some of the reasons for these differences, we must explore the historical background of these areas (cf. Richards 1967, 1968).

According to Iban oral history, their ancestors came into Sarawak in a series of migrations from the Kapuas river in what is today Kalimantan, or Indonesian Borneo; these movements commenced about fifteen generations ago (Sandin 1967a:1), in the sixteenth or possibly the seventeenth century (Freeman 1981:5; Pringle 1970:39). The Iban entered what is now Sarawak by way of the Kumpang valley and settled in the main Batang Ai river from whence they spread to the Undup, Ulu Ai, Lemanak and Skrang (Jensen 1966:3-4). During the next five generations, they spread into the Saribas area, driving out or absorbing the existing population of forest hunter-gatherers, predominantly Bukitan and Seru, who did not yet cultivate rice on a regular basis (Pringle 1970:39). At this time, the migrants were not known as 'Iban', a term which has only become fully accept-

ed in the second half of the twentieth century; instead they referred to themselves as *Dayak*, or *Daya'*, meaning 'up-country', or 'inland' people (Richards 1981:70).

From the first decades of the nineteenth century onwards, another Iban migration took place from the Ulu Ai back to the Kapuas and across the watershed into the headwaters of the Katibas (Freeman 1970:132-3). By 1862, when Charles Brooke, who was to become the Second 'White' Rajah of Sarawak, travelled down the river, Iban settlers were well-established, and were beginning to emerge into the main Rejang river (Freeman 1970:132-3). Soon after, they spread to the Baleh, which at the time was only sparsely populated by forest nomads such as the Ukit and Bukitan who, as in the Saribas, were gradually absorbed or displaced by the advancing Iban (Pringle 1970:255).

Well beyond effective Government control, Baleh settlers resumed raiding and headhunting against neighbouring groups, including the culturally different Kayan and Kenyah populations of the upper Rejang, and of the Mahakam across the border in Dutch territory. Such transgressions were curtailed by a number of punitive expeditions organised by the Brooke Raj, and the Baleh was subsequently closed for settlement until the area was officially opened to Iban pioneers in 1922 under close Government supervision (Freeman 1970:134-142; Pringle 1970:254-263).

Several significant conclusions can be drawn from the different histories of the Baleh and Saribas. Unlike the stratified societies of some of their neighbours, such as the Kayan and Kenyah, the Iban have an egalitarian social structure. The basic social and jural unit of an Iban longhouse community is the *bilik* family, usually comprising a three generation domestic family living in a defined apartment (*bilik*) in the longhouse. The *bilik* family is an autonomous unit and not subject to any higher authority in the form of institutionalized hereditary leadership or chiefship. Social order is maintained by *adat*, a form of customary law and moral code, which regulates behaviour among longhouse members. Status differentiation and the rise to positions of power within the community are the result of personal achievement, rather than inherited rank. One means of acquiring personal prestige was by the pioneering of new land, and the felling of primary jungle for the cultivation of hill rice, the main Iban staple. Traditionally the ownership of land was held by the family of the man who first felled the primary forest; this right could then be passed on to one's descendants (Freeman 1970:143). Those individuals who excelled at opening tracts of forest were able to gain an advantaged position for their descendants by providing them with rights of cultivation in perpetuity. But once a community ceased to advance into virgin forest, this means of acquiring prestige and wealth was no longer available. In virtually all areas of

the Saribas, virgin forest was exhausted at the beginning of the nineteenth century (Gather 1990:19), whereas in the Baleh pioneers were claiming primary forest well into the first half of the twentieth century.

However, the foremost means by which males achieved prestige in Iban society was by participating in headhunting raids against enemies. In the Saribas, headhunting was curtailed as early as the 1850s when the area (and the people referred to as Sea-Dayak at the time) was brought under the control of the First White Rajah, James Brooke (Freeman 1981:8). From then onwards, the practice was tolerated among the pacified communities only as a consequence of using them as mercenaries in Government-sponsored punitive expeditions against upriver rebels. In the Baleh, by contrast, headhunting in the form of forays against enemy groups, was still practised as recently as seventy years ago; and today older women still proudly recall their fathers' exploits.

To a certain degree, the early loss of the traditional means of acquiring prestige in the Saribas led to the established gradations of wealth and prestige becoming 'fixed'. Today, prominent Saribas Iban tend to claim descent from famous warrior heroes, such as Linggir Mali Lebu and Dana Bayang, who were active before the 1850s (Pringle 1970:56; Sandin 1967b:77,78,105). In addition, by the mid-eighteenth century Saribas Iban had come into regular contact with

coastal Malays and in due course were influenced by the values of 'a highly stratified social order in which there was an incessant concern with genealogically-defined rank and honorific titles' (Freeman 1981:5). After the Iban defeat at Beting Marau in 1849 and their subsequent submission to the Brooke Raj, the Saribas came under the influence of Christian missions and schools, followed by the introduction of cash crops (Freeman 1981:8,9; Pringle 1970: 199-209). The Baleh area, by contrast, did not experience similar developments until after the Second World War.

The above is an extremely condensed and simplified review of the history of these two areas, but it should suffice to help account for the differences in the development of weaving.

Saribas

Since the Saribas became accessible to foreign trade early on, commercial thread and dyes were available before the turn of the century. Being much finer than the home-spun variety, commercial thread facilitated the precision and detail for which Saribas cloth is renowned. Aniline dyes were used to add colourful bands to vertical borders and these are a distinctive feature of Saribas *pua*. The stripes developed into a clearly defined system for indicating

rank. Reliance on commercial thread eventually had significant consequences. By the time the effects of the Second World War reached Sarawak and the supply of thread dried up, Saribas weavers would not or could not revert to the tedious task of growing and spinning their own cotton. As a result, weaving ceased almost entirely and was not resumed when thread became available again after the war.

This development is confirmed by the types of cloth which are kept in Saribas longhouses today. Most of these fabrics were produced in the 1920s when many Saribas Iban families grew wealthy from rubber cultivation (Pringle 1970:204-5). Many families have held onto heirlooms precisely because no new cloths were being produced after the war. It is only recently that the weaving of ikatted cloth has been resumed in some longhouses, encouraged by Government-sponsored agencies. Most women, however, if they weave at all, make sashes and headscarves in a supplementary weft technique called *songket*, using gold and silver thread in the Malay fashion.

Apart from the practical reason for the cessation of weaving, there is another, less obvious one. Weaving is generally cited as the women's main means to achieve status and, as such, is often directly equated with the male prestige sphere of headhunting. The most important of all Iban rituals, *gawai burong* (or *gawai amat*) were held in celebration of successful headhunters. These *gawai* focussed

on the bards' invocatory chants inviting the Iban high god of war, *Lang Singalang Burong*, to attend the rites held in his honour. Headhunting, in its traditional form, had ceased in the Saribas by the 1850s, and the associated *gawai* slowly lost their cultural relevance; they were eventually superseded by *gawai antu*, the festival of the dead (Uchibori 1983:98; Masing 1981:50-1). Since the most important of ikatted cloths were made specifically for use in *gawai burong*, the demise of headhunting rituals removed the very incentive for making such cloths.

With the loss of weaving traditions in the Saribas, much vital information has also been lost. The few women alive today who have actually made an ikatted textile in their life-time, did so before the war. In other words they were in their teens at the time and could not then mature as weavers. The majority of Saribas women have never produced an ikat cloth themselves and, therefore, by their own admission, are often 'unable to match the pattern and name' of the cloths in their family's possession. One woman (whom I did not meet) put this quite bluntly, and her statement was often repeated by others; she said 'We have never made these patterns ourselves, so how can you expect us to know their names?'. As a result, my fieldwork in the Saribas area was often rather frustrating.

However, there is a positive dimension to my Saribas re-

search. Some Saribas patterns are, in some respects, 'frozen' in a nineteenth century time-frame. The last wave of new development occurred in the 1920s and these modern patterns are easily distinguished from the earlier, more archaic ones. It is these earlier patterns which allow us to recognize old as against new styles of pattern names and means of rank differentiation.

Baleh

Unlike in the Saribas, commercial thread did not become available in the Baleh until much later and, during the Second World War, women continued to cultivate their own cotton. As a result, weaving has continued uninterrupted to this day and the traditional means of producing thread and dyeing cloth are remembered and, on occasion, still practised. Most importantly, the significance and context of old pattern titles are remembered. It is for this reason that most of my information was obtained in the Baleh area.

Above all, the traditional counterpoint to weaving, head-hunting, continued in the Baleh well into this century. In addition, the *gawai* celebrating success in warfare have not lost their cultural relevance but have been adapted to accommodate modern values. As Masing notes, the associated chants, with their maledictions, are still performed by the bards as they were in the active days of headhunting

(1981:476-7). However, Masing also points out that the objective of the *gawai* has changed, and today the hornbill effigy, a central element of the rite, is sent off to seek riches, wealth and prosperity in far-off lands, rather than to attack and weaken the enemy as in the past (1981:480).

Important traditional Baleh cloth patterns which take their imagery from headhunting, similarly retain their validity. While the titles of traditional patterns tend to refer to the capture of trophy heads, modern ones may refer to the capture of pearls; or, alternatively, the trophy head itself may be seen as a synonym for riches and prosperity.

Thus, the development of weaving in the Baleh has differed from the Saribas: it has evolved and adapted to modern times. Whereas in the Saribas weaving stopped altogether some time ago, in the Baleh it is still practised, albeit with modern materials. Today, most cloths are made from store-bought thread and coloured with commercial dyes. Traditional coil patterns have given way to figurative ones. Master weavers are accorded public recognition at weaving competitions and some longhouse communities produce cloths for the tourist market. This situation in which old and new patterns and practices exist side-by-side is not without its problems for the researcher in defining a time-frame for the study.

Time-frame

The focus of my study is on the traditional, or 'original' (*asal*) Iban patterns which are esteemed above all others by Baleh and Saribas women alike. The exact time or period when these patterns were first conceived can no longer be determined. The oldest extant examples, which can be dated with some degree of certainty, were probably made no earlier than 1850. At that time, headhunting was the most dominant cultural institution of the Iban, and therefore it is this period which is most relevant for my study. For this reason I shall make use of the ethnographic present almost throughout this thesis when referring to the practice of headhunting, although it has long since disappeared as a political or cultural practice.

However, this time-frame poses a problem with regard to the translation of Iban terms and concepts into English and the use of interpreters or translators. Many Iban women today who learned to speak English in school are only in their twenties or thirties. To them, headhunting is an anachronism and an embarrassing one at that. Older women, who may proudly recall the glories of former headhunting exploits, are reluctant to discuss such events in the presence of younger women, for fear of exposing themselves to ridicule. In addition, the metaphors used in pattern titles to refer to headhunting are not familiar to the younger generation. The daughter of one informant, a school teacher, whom I

engaged on occasion when interviewing her mother, would often burst into laughter, or decline her assistance altogether, claiming that she did not know the meaning of the words her mother and I were using. It is for this reason that I had no choice but to conduct most interviews without a translator.

In many anthropological accounts, one is left wondering how the information was extracted by the ethnographer. As far as I am aware, Freeman is exceptional in stating that his enquiries were conducted in the vernacular (1981:3-4). I never had the luxury of an uninterrupted long residence in the field, which is necessary to devote sufficient time to learning the language properly. As a result, my spoken Iban is far from fluent. As one Iban woman whom I met briefly in the Paku put it, 'You know how to ask questions, but you do not know how to converse' (*nuan nemu nanya aja, enda nemu berandau*). Nonetheless, my background knowledge regarding Iban mythology and ritual language is extensive. My main informants were well aware of this fact and they placed their statements accordingly. I also recorded responses, and, in some cases, translated them subsequently.

My second regret is that, while I performed each separate weaving operation myself on a number of occasions, I never had the opportunity of making an entire cloth from beginning to end. How far this omission may detract from the

completeness of this thesis, I have no means of assessing.

Methodology

My focus on traditional Iban patterns presented a problem. In the Baleh, where most of the information regarding these patterns is retained, many people had sold their old *pua* cloths. Selling cloth was and is common practice whenever a family falls on hard times. When the harvest is poor and the rice crop insufficient to sustain a family for the entire season, it is customary to deposit valuable items, such as cloth or jars, at the local Chinese shop in return for a monetary advance with the option of redeeming the items at the next harvest. In the 1970s, when Iban cloths were 'discovered' and sold to museums and collectors by western traders, the demand for them increased substantially. Chinese shopkeepers were quick to follow up the demand and actively acquired cloths in Iban longhouses, with the result that few old examples can be documented *in situ* today.

At the beginning of my field research, I attempted to solve this problem by photocopying photographs of cloths in museum and private collections. However, I soon discovered that it was impossible to achieve satisfactory results by this method. Unless the language game of names and how they are employed is understood, it is impossible to know why

identifications may differ. Towards the end of my research, several years after this initial attempt when I was much more knowledgeable, the use of photocopies proved very fruitful indeed. At the start, however, the only way to proceed was to document pattern names from the actual weavers or owners of cloths and to extend this documentation to as wide an area as possible.

My file now includes 298 *pua* cloths documented in the Baleh and related areas; 134 *pua* cloths documented in the Saribas; in addition to 83 skirts from both areas. In order to compile this file, I visited a total of 25 longhouses in the following river areas: the Baleh and its tributaries Merirai, Gaat, Mujong and Sut; the Rejang proper; smaller streams in the vicinity of Kapit; the Katibas, Bangkit and the Ngemah; as well as Skrang, Lubok Antu, Ulu Ai and Engkari. I visited a further 15 longhouses in the Saribas and Kalaka area: Betong and vicinity, the Padeh, Layar, Paku, and Ulu Krian.

Today, the Iban number approximately 400.000 people in Sarawak and Kalimantan combined. With regard to weaving, the area covered by my research provides a representative picture of the two main stylistic areas, Baleh and Saribas. Intermediate styles are represented by examples from the Skrang. Further research is needed for the Kanowit area, as well as for Iban living in the upper Kapuas in Kalimantan.

The latter communities, however, are no longer producing patterned cloth; undocumented examples from private collections have been included in this study for comparative purposes.

In addition to field examples, I studied the following museum collections: Sarawak Museum, Kuching; British Museum, London; University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge; Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford; Museum of Ethnography, Basel; Museum of Ethnography, Zurich; Museon, Den Haag; Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, Leiden; The National Gallery, Canberra.

Except for the cloths originally collected by Charles Hose and now held at the British Museum and at Cambridge, hardly any of these museum specimens are documented. Nevertheless, due to their age, they provide an important visual record of traditional patterns. The same applies for the four hundred or so cloths in private collections, of which I was able to obtain photographs.

It was only after an intensive study of all the available examples, and after understanding the various functions of names, that I was able to conduct an important experiment during a brief return visit to Sarawak in 1993. The main feature of this experiment, was to take two Saribas cloths to show to Baleh weavers. The results (discussed in detail in chapter 7), more than any other data, explicitly con-

firmed my initial findings. Once the mechanism of names and how they are used was understood, I could return to my initial method of showing photocopies of patterns to weavers. Ironically, it is this method which eventually enabled me to identify the few main traditional skirt patterns during my last visit in 1993. Prior to that, the identification of skirt patterns had eluded me due to the lack of old cloths in the field. The examples I used on this occasion are from the private collection of Beverley Birks who kindly allowed their reproduction in this thesis.

The majority of cloths featured in this thesis are field examples. Iban cloths with their intricate patterns and monochrome colouring are exceedingly difficult to photograph. More often than not, there was no space in the longhouse where a cloth could be displayed full size with the lighting necessary for photography. In cases when field photographs are inadequate for reproduction, I have therefore substituted examples (showing identical patterns to fabrics documented in the field) from private and museum collections. It will be understood that only a fraction of Iban patterns can be discussed in the space available. However, all the patterns which are important in an Iban context have been included in this thesis. Some patterns which have received attention in the literature (but remain outside the scope of my thesis) are discussed in appendices A and B.

CHAPTER 2

PUA in RITUAL

Patterned cloth plays a prominent role in Iban ritual and, even today, it is virtually impossible to come across ritual action without cloth being in evidence. The ritual function of cloth remains the main incentive for making it and I shall therefore begin by discussing the various ritual occasions that call for the use of cloth. If we ask Iban why patterned cloth is used in ritual, the usual response is that it is a custom decreed by the gods to their forebears long ago (*adat ari munya*) and that one must respect (*bebasa*) such customs. It is shameful not to own cloth and those who do not are said to be 'bad people' (*orang jai*). Cloth is considered essential for the performance of rites and if a family does not own any patterned cloth, it must be borrowed. The use of cloth, in other words, is obligatory. If cloth is not used, the gods become angry (*nganu*) and punish the offender (*mati busong*; cf. Masing 1981:79). The Iban terms used to refer to the purpose and power of cloth are *guna* and *bisa*, both of which are ancient terms derived from Sanskrit.

Guna and *bisa*

In Sanskrit, *guna* is 'quality', or the 'virtue in anything'

(Gonda 1973:89,639). In some Indonesian languages, 'magic' is the only meaning of *guna* (Gonda 1973:524). In Malay, the older and more specific meaning of *guna* is 'magical potency' (Gonda 1973:524). This is also true for Iban in which *guna* can mean 'of ritual or talismanic worth' (Richards 1981:109). The modern and more common meaning of *guna* in Malay is 'usefulness' (Wilkinson 1932:380). It is this later meaning which dominates in Iban usage today. *Guna* is a word which is employed in everyday discourse, meaning 'of use, wanted, needed, of benefit', as in 'what do you use that for?', or 'it's no use spending money without purpose' (Richards 1981:108-9). When speaking of the *guna* of cloth, the Iban always refer to its ritual use. However, since cloth is rarely used outside the context of ritual, *guna* may well mean simply 'usefulness' without any specific connotations to magical potency. In order to refer to the magical quality of cloth, the Iban use the term *bisa*.

Bisa is derived from Sanskrit *visa*, 'poison', 'venom', 'anything actively pernicious' (Gonda 1973:88,101,120,138). In Malay, *bisa* has the primary meaning of 'blood-poison; anything that gives a septic wound; venomous' (Wilkinson 1932:145). The term is used to refer to 'the stings of hornets, scorpions and centipedes; the bites of snakes; the poison .. used on darts; the septic nature of bites by tigers and crocodiles, and of wounds from krisses..' (Wilkinson 1932:145). In Iban, *bisa* retains the primary

meaning of 'poison' and is similarly used to refer to poisonous bites and stings of snakes and hornets (cf. Richards 1981:50; Brooke Low 1896:II,vii). Alcoholic drink and medicine are also referred to as being *bisa* (cf. Masing 1981:171,279). The use of the term is extended to anything which may produce pain or discomfort, such as chilli peppers or the afternoon heat (*bisa angkat*). However, the dominant meaning of *bisa* is 'powerful', or 'effective'. *Bisa* is used to refer to the efficacy of prayers, incantations, curses and speech in general (cf. Richards 1981:50, 355; Sather 1993a:287; Masing 1981:129,131,324,434). Thus, the incantations of the bards are said to be 'the most potent of curses' (*leka sumpah pemadu bisa*; Masing 1981:129).

Bisa is used to refer to the efficacy of charms (*pengaruh bisa*). These vary greatly in their level of efficacy and are used and valued accordingly (cf. Jensen 1974:121). Cloth is *bisa* in a ritual context. Some cloths are more powerful than others and it is essential that a cloth's level of efficacy is appropriate for the intended purpose. Major *gawai* call for the most potent of cloths which, on other occasions might be far too strong and their use may result in *tulah*, a disaster brought on by incorrect ritual procedure (Richards 1981:398). Informants are quite explicit on this point. If an inappropriate cloth is used during a *gawai* celebration, or used incorrectly, the main purpose of the *gawai* will fail and divination using a pig's liver

will augur ill fortune (*jai ati babi*).

Cloth in Ritual

Before proceeding it is useful to describe in detail the setting of most ritual action, the longhouse. An Iban longhouse comprises a series of separate apartments joined together to form one village under the same roof. An apartment, or *bilik*, is one unit owned and occupied by one family (also called *bilik*), usually consisting of three generations. It is a private area reserved for cooking and eating; it is also considered the women's domain. Above the *bilik* is the *sadau*, a sort of loft used for the storage of baskets and other farming implements. Traditionally, the *sadau* was the sleeping place reserved for unmarried girls, but in modern houses the entire family sleeps in separate compartments in the *sadau*. The *bilik* opens on to the *ruai*, a communal gallery running the length of the longhouse. It is a place for social gathering while performing tasks such as weaving. The *ruai* is also the main location for *gawai* celebrations. The *ruai* leads to the *tanju*, an open verandah with split bamboo flooring where rice is dried after the harvest.

A great number of diverse ritual occasions call for the use of cloth. The most common occasion observed today is in the

context of a *piring* ceremony and therefore deserves to be described in detail. *Piring* is Malay for 'plate', but in the Iban context stands for the entire ceremony of preparing a 'plate' of food offerings for gods and spirits. For this purpose a *pua* cloth is spread on the floor, and small plates containing a variety of ingredients are placed on it; these offerings comprise boiled rice, puffed rice, sweet glutinous rice, rice cakes, betel chewing material, tobacco, a pinch of salt, rice beer (*tuak*) and eggs; the number of eggs varies, a full *piring* consisting of eight dishes of each ingredient and eight eggs (cf. Richards 1981:285; Masing 1981:35). The ingredients are placed on a large plate by the officiant in prescribed order; followed by the waving of a cock over the audience while uttering a prayer; a feather of the cock is smeared in some of its blood and added to the offering which is then put in place (the location depending on the rite in question) for the gods to consume.

During major *gawai*, textiles are ubiquitous. *Pua* cloths decorate the communal gallery. Men and women don ritual clothing (skirts, loincloths and jackets) while carrying out ritual tasks. *Pua* are laid beneath *piring* offerings which punctuate every stage of the *gawai*. A *pua* is draped over the pole from which the hornbill effigy is to be launched. As the effigy is hoisted into place, women wave it on its way with *pua*. Women similarly use *pua* to wave away an eclipse of the sun. Cloths cover the shrine and

are used for the awning over the sacrificial pig. At the culmination of the *gawai*, the pigs are slaughtered and their livers put on a plate. The plate is ritually received on a folded *pua* by a woman of standing in the community before being read as an omen. Women carry coconuts representing heads in slings of *pua* while singing songs of praise in their honour.

Generally, objects are placed on top of cloth or are covered or wrapped in it. A new-born infant is carried in *pua* cloths to its first ritual bath in the river. Children are covered with a *pua* during adoption and for the ritual meeting with the grandmother. *Pua* feature in healing rites to cover the shrine and to close off the *bilik*. The shaman covers himself with *pua*. In healing rites for pregnant women the patient is rubbed down with a *pua* cloth. When a death has occurred, the corpse is laid out in an enclosure of cloths. *Pua* cover the corpse and are included as grave-goods. *Pua* are also given as gifts and generally form part of ritual fees. They are important heirlooms which are divided among family members at death or when leaving the natal *bilik* upon marriage.

On ritual occasions, *pua* are used for a reason. The purpose may be to protect, to erect a barrier, or to decorate a space. At times these functions overlap. The following account discusses some of the functions of cloth, but is by

no means intended as a complete record. It also should be kept in mind that cloth is rarely used in isolation. Most rites include offerings, prayers, incantations, the beating of drums, animal sacrifices which all contribute to the effectiveness of the rite in question.

Cloth as decoration

At major *gawai*, textiles are displayed for decoration, literally, 'to make things look nice' (*ngemanah*). Cloths are used as wall hangings and are suspended as an awning above guests seated on the gallery, or *ruai*, where most of the ritual action takes place. The use of patterned cloth elevates and marks the occasion as an important ritual event. *Pua* are displayed as a sign of respect to guests. At the same time women take the opportunity to show off their skills (*meri tau pandai indu kami*). Cloth is also intended as a 'sight for the gods' who are pleased to see patterned fabrics (cf. Vogelsanger 1980:118-119).

Cloth as a signal for humans

When *pua* are in evidence, it is clear that a ritual is under way. On some occasions cloth is used explicitly as a sign to indicate ritual action and more specifically to warn would-be visitors that certain interdictions are in

effect. Thus when a death has occurred, the longhouse is under severe ritual prohibitions (*ulit*) for up to a week or more. Any outsider entering the longhouse is obliged to honour these prohibitions. For this reason an upturned jar with a *pua* hanging from a pole is erected as a warning sign on the river bank.

One Iban term for this kind of banner is *tambai*. A *tambai* may be a *pua* cloth, but often a white piece of fabric is used instead. The term *tambai* is also loosely used for 'flag' (*menira*; Richards 1981:363.). Today the national flag is generally displayed at *gawai* for the same purpose. Such banners are a warning that prohibitions (*pemali*) are in effect. For example, there is a prohibition against strangers entering the longhouse for a day after a woman has given birth (Jensen 1967:175). This is announced by a banner (Freeman 1970:125). Similar prohibitions apply during the *ngar* ritual (as well as on other occasions), discussed in the next chapter.

Cloth as a signal for the gods.

Cloth is used in order to inform (*meri tau*) the gods that their attention is sought. In the chants, *Lang* and his family are invited to the *gawai* held in their honour. Their destination is marked by a flag which is seen by *Lang's*

wife through her telescope (Harrisson and Sandin 1966:280). During first rites of harvest, a flag is put up 'to attract the notice of the gods' and thus to ensure their participation (Sather 1977:159). For the duration of a *ngar* ceremony a *pua* is hung on the open verandah, or *tanju*, as a sign to the gods that dry weather is requested (Gavin 1991:22). *Pua* are not the only means to communicate an invitation to the gods. Ritual occasions generally involve a *piring* offering, as well as the sacrifice of a cock and a prayer, calling on the gods to attend. Drums are beaten in a special rhythm to announce to the gods that all is ready for their welcome (Jensen 1974:200). This also applies to one of the more intriguing uses of *pua*. Men sleep covered in *pua* to attract the visit of a helping spirit. Today this is usually done in the context of a *gawai*. Formerly, however, there was a more formal expression of this custom, called *nampok*. This is accompanied by prayers, special offerings and drum beating (Jensen 1974:122-3; Freeman 1975:284; Howell 1977:157).

Cloth as a path or bridge

Pua are explicitly said to serve as a pathway (*jalai*). In the chants, *Lang Singalang Burong* and his family descend to earth on 'ladders of clouds' (Masing 1981:250). One *pua* pattern is named *tangga remang* after this ladder. The title of another pattern clearly spells out its function as such

a stair-way. The pattern is a 'path' (*jalai*) for the gods to descend and 'inspect' (*ngabas dunia*) the government's achievements. In an elaborate welcoming ceremony for a newly-bought jar, *pua* are used as a pathway to move the jar from the *ruai* into the *bilik*. For this purpose, two *pua* are folded down lengthwise and placed on the floor, one before the other. The jar is moved step by step on this 'path' until the cabinet is reached where it is to be stored. For the procession for an infant's first ritual bath in the river, women hold a piece of cloth between them. This cloth is said to be a hand-rail (*lalau*) to support the woman carrying the infant (Sather 1988:169).

Cloth as a marker of ritual space

Pua are used to wrap the temporary shrine (*ranyai*, *pandong*) erected at *gawai*. The *ranyai* consists of a rattan frame which forms a circular space. A *pua* is wrapped around this frame, covering the entire structure. Inside the enclosure are placed offerings and, depending on the type of *gawai*, skulls, rice plants and so on. The shrine is where the gods take up residence for the duration of the *gawai*. It is here that they leave charms for the hosts before returning to their respective homes,

Cloth as a barrier

The use of *pua* as barrier material is explicit. The Iban term is *pelepa*, 'obstruction', or 'warning sign' (Richards 1981:262). *Pelepa* has a similar meaning as *tambai* above. *pelepa* are warning signs, as, for example, for an armed trap (*peti*). Such signs are also used as an obstruction, to 'close a path and prevent anyone disturbing a rite held there or spoiling its effect' (Richards 1981:262). *Pua* are commonly used as *pelepa* during healing rites when they are hung over the entrance to keep evil spirits out (cf. Sandin 1966a:36). In shielding rites (*bedinding*), cloth is 'magically turned into walls of stone' to protect against the incubus which is haunting the patient (Freeman 1967:321). In Freeman's account, two spirits are overheard in a dream referring to this cloth enclosure as *kota batu*, a 'defensive wall', or a 'barricade' made of 'stone' (Richards 1981:166).

Cloth as a magical tool

In the world of spirits, cloth changes its appearance and becomes something else. For the shaman (*manang*), textiles are indispensable tools, much in the same way as are charms. The most essential charm is a quartz crystal (*batu keras*) which is held up to a flame and peered into. In it, the whereabouts and condition of the patient's soul can be

seen. During serious illness, the soul is said to be lost and in order to retrieve it, the shaman's own soul has to go in pursuit in the unseen realm. This state is indicated when the *manang* is in trance and he or she is covered with a *pua* cloth (cf. Perham 1896:I,274; Jensen 1974:149). It is said that when abroad, souls travel at great speed. In order to catch up with the patient's errant soul, the shaman must have the power of flight. This is provided by a *pua* cloth which turns into 'wings' in the other world. One of my main informants, a weaver and a shaman, asserted that while in trance, she 'flies' while her *batu keras* accompanies her 'like a bird'. The shaman further uses a *pua* as one would a fishing-net in order to retrieve the soul (Jensen 1974:148). In some rites, a lizard (*menarat*) is made from rice and covered with a cloth. In the other world, this figure comes alive and assists the shaman in his or her task.

Cloth is useful with regard to what the Iban call *ayu*, which denotes a person's physical vigour, health and strength (Richards 1981:20). The *ayu* is portrayed as having a plant counterpart, a bamboo or banana stalk, which grows in an unseen realm. When the *ayu* is damaged, it wilts and the body sickens. The *ayu* represents the mortal aspect of a person's vitality. At death, the *ayu* dies as well. One important function of *pua* is to protect a person's *ayu* in a number of diverse situations, for example in adoption

ceremonies. The *ayu* of every member of a *bilik* family are thought to grow together in one clump in the other world. During adoption, the shaman symbolically cuts away the child's *ayu* from his natal family and transplants it to the *ayu* clump of its adopted family (*nusup ayu*). In one such rite recorded by Freeman, the cloth covers the freshly transplanted *ayu* of the child, 'to shade it and so to prevent it from becoming shrivelled in the heat of the sun' (Freeman 1970:21). The woman who leads the *ngar* ceremony is similarly at risk. In order to protect her *ayu* from being damaged (*enda alah ayu*), she drapes a *pua* over her shoulders.

A person's *ayu* is distinct from the soul, or *semengat*, which, upon physical death, continues to live in the land of the dead. The *semengat* is thought to wander abroad during sleep and it is the soul which encounters spirit helpers in dreams. The *semengat* of shamans and bards are said to leave their bodies and go on the journeys described in their incantations. The wailer of the dirge (generally a woman) thus accompanies the soul of the deceased to its new home in *sebayan*, the land of the dead. She also guides souls on their way back to the longhouse for the final parting at the festival for the dead (*gawai antu*). While her own *semengat* provides this assistance in the unseen world, 'she is herself treading on dangerous soil' (Howell 1977:70). It is for this reason that, while chanting the dirge, her head is covered with a *pua* and her feet rest on

a piece of iron (cf. Sandin 1966a:22). A further *pua* shields her face from the audience. This cloth again is referred to as a 'wall' (*dinding*).

A length of iron, or a heavy knife (*duku*), is commonly given as part of a bard's or shaman's fee, as is woven cloth. Iron here is intended as a 'soul-strengthenener' (*kering semangat*) and is considered essential for the task at hand. In this instance, cloth and iron are employed similarly as a protection of the souls of ritual functionaries. Cloth and knife are paired for healing rites. At the conclusion of such rites, the shaman 'brushes' along the patient's body first with a broad knife (*duku*), and then with a skirt or *pua* cloth. This is done to remove the 'hairs of *antu gerasi*' which are thought to cause the illness. To summarize, cloth is something else in the other world. It can be used either as various types of tool or as a protection for the officiant while performing these tasks.

Cloth and death

We have already encountered the use of cloth as barrier material for healing rites. When a death has occurred, cloth is used to contain the spirit of the deceased which poses a threat to the community, especially while the

corpse remains in the house. Upon death, the corpse, which is now a spirit (*antu*), must immediately be separated from the living (cf. Howell 1977:68). After being washed, it is laid out on the *ruai* in an enclosure of *pua* (*sapat*). Sather writes that, 'This enclosure is said to shield the rest of the house from the "heat" of the corpse; <t>he top of the enclosure is similarly covered with a cloth (*dinding lan-git*) to shield the sky' (1973b:88). This follows the Iban notion that a corpse is spiritually 'hot' (*angat*) and thus puts the longhouse community at risk. *Pua* cloths are used to contain this 'heat' and protect from its harmful effects until the corpse is removed and buried. *Pua* cloths and skirts are included as grave goods to keep the deceased from 'disturbing' (*enda kacau*) the living. *Pua* cloths perform a similar function when used to receive trophy heads. Unlike a corpse, skulls remain in the longhouse, suspended in clusters on the gallery. Here, the purpose of cloth goes beyond temporarily containing what is 'hot', or *angat*.

Cloth and the reception of trophy heads

The most important and prestigious occasion for the use of cloth is the reception of trophy heads (*nyambut antu pala*). Considering that none of my informants had actually handled freshly taken human heads in their life-time, it is noteworthy that all of them, men and women, agreed on this

point. In addition, it is on this occasion that cloths bearing the most powerful and effective patterns must be used.

The rite for bringing new trophy heads into the longhouse is called *encabau arong*. According to my informants, the returning warriors may not enter the house until the following morning. Above all, as I was gleefully told, they must wait until the women descend with *pua* cloths to receive the heads with due honours before carrying them into the house. Nyuak describes the event in detail (1906:406-407):

On the return of a war-party from a successful expedition, the men are not allowed to enter the village in the evening lest sickness should break out, but must wait in their boats until the following morning. A <*kelingkang*> is prepared for each trophy: this is a piece of bamboo some five feet long, the split end of which is spread out and woven so as to form a receptacle in which the trophy is placed, and decorated with the young leaves of the *areca* palm. In the morning the men carry the trophies to the foot of the village ladder, and the bamboo stakes, each supporting a trophy, are planted in the ground in a line. A large mat has been spread out on the ground on

which the men sit to await the women who are coming to fetch the heads and take them into the village. Presently the women descend from the house each swathed with a shawl of native cloth and bearing a plate with materials for an offering. The heads are then taken from the stakes and each woman receives one in her plate, covering it over with the end of her shawl. A procession is then formed and passes up the ladder of the village, along the open verandah and through the common room three times the women chanting the while the head-song. Then follows the *naku* or head-dance performed by the women and kept up during the greater part of the day together with all sorts of frolic and merriment. In the meantime a vessel containing water and a flat stone is placed near the head of the village ladder, and as each warrior steps into the house he places his foot on the stone and his back is rubbed with oil and a coil of wire is put round the neck of the young man who has been on his first expedition. These ceremonies are supposed to ward off any evil that may befall the warriors and the village from the curses of their enemies.

Regarding the head-dance, Nyuak adds the following account (1906:408):

The head dance is generally performed by four

women. They face each other two and two swinging a head in the right hand. They advance and recede with a slow swinging step partly forward partly sideways, each step accompanied with the cry "Ha Hai" the head being swayed to and fro.

To stay as close as possible to the ethnographic record, I follow Masing's three-fold division of what the trophy head stands for in Iban thought (1981:455-9). To begin with, trophy heads are precisely that. They are 'trophies', or 'signs of bravery' (*tanda berani*). It is to show off these trophies that warriors let out their war-cry, announcing their triumphant return from a foray.

Secondly, trophy heads are *antu pala*, or 'spirits' of the 'head'. Any corpse, even of family members, poses a threat to the living, and even more so the skulls of enemies whose ghost 'might haunt and so endanger the life of the beheader, and those closely associated with him' (p.456). In order to ward off this potential threat and to 'placate the ghost of the victim' it is essential to perform the appropriate rites before the skull can be brought into the house (p.456).

Masing's third meaning of a severed human head is 'seed' (*igi*), in particular the 'seed of the shrine' (*igi ranyai*). As stressed by Masing, in the chants, seed is 'the most

common metaphor for a severed head' (p.458). The purpose of this seed is to be planted. This is made quite explicit in the chants when *Lang* splits open the trophy head to reveal all kinds of seed, in particular the sacred seed of *padi* (p.368). As Masing concludes, trophy heads are thus associated 'with fertility and life' (p.459).

The ritual reception of trophy heads (like all ritual activity) intends to promote the good (the head as seed) and avert the bad (the head as *antu pala*), and cloth, as an important component of these rites, contributes to this objective. This is made explicit in the chants, where women cover trophy heads with *pua* cloths, so that these 'can no longer curse the people', and the shrine containing them no longer glows 'with a spiritual heat' (Sandin 1977:28).

There is little explicit information about what the cloth is seen actually to do here (reportedly the practice goes back to instructions received from *Singalang Burang* himself; Howell 1909:187). It would seem that, as for a corpse, the cloth provides a barrier for the power of the skull and shields those handling it. Cloths with the most powerful patterns must be used for the reception of trophy heads. Informants emphasize further that such cloths are too powerful (or *bisa* in the sense of 'poisonous') for any other use and certain to bring harm and misfortune if used on lesser occasions. The titles of these patterns not only refer to trophy heads, but their power is metaphorically

equated with the power of trophy heads. Only women who have mastered these patterns are qualified to perform the rite. This close association between trophy heads, headhunting, and the weaving of powerful cloth will be a recurrent theme throughout this thesis.

Cloth and the nursing of trophy heads

There is another use for cloth in connection with headhunting: the carrying or cradling of trophy heads in slings of *pua* (*naku antu pala*). The two occasions, receiving trophy heads and nursing them, have been lumped together in the literature (Davison 1987:374; Davison and Sutlive 1991:210; Graham 1987:106; King 1993:249). However, the occasion for nursing heads is quite distinct and occurs in the context of a *gawai* performed at a later stage (Perham 1896:II,181; Nyuak 1906:424; Sandin 1977:45; Masing 1981:221). This rite can still be observed today in the Baleh area during major *gawai* celebrations. In the course of these *gawai*, usually around midnight, the coconuts which have been suspended from the shrine as substitutes for trophy heads are taken down and the women sling them in cloth and pace up and down the verandah, singing songs in their praise and in praise of the warriors who captured them. This procession is quite different from the head dance described by Nyuak on the occasion of the initial reception of trophy heads.

The nursing of trophy heads occurs at a specific point in the plot of the chants. The rite is a re-enactment of a scene in the enemy longhouse, when *Nising's* wife nurses one of her children whose head is about to be taken (Perham 1896:II,181; Freeman 1979:240; Masing 1981:212). On the occasions I witnessed, the cloth used for the rite was the same as is used to carry real infants on ritual occasions.

As elsewhere in Southeast Asia, the Iban carry infants and small children on the hip, supported by a narrow cloth which is slung over the opposite shoulder and tied behind the back. In the Baleh area, the name for this type of cloth, *sandik*, is descriptive of precisely this action (Brooke Low 1896:II,xxxiv; Richards 1981:322). *Pua sandik* are used to carry infants to their first ritual bath. They are also used to carry 'rice-babies' at harvest rites (fig.129; also see illustration in Davison and Sutlive 1991:198).

In the Saribas, this type of cloth is called *pua belantan* (cf. Christie 1993:15). Again, such cloths are used to carry infants to their first ritual bath (cf. Sather 1988:169). The main characteristic of *pua belantan* is that they are white (fig.130; also see illustration in Sather 1988:170). This is a significant point. One major characteristic of powerful cloths is that they are red in colour (see next chapter). An undyed or white cloth, by contrast, is not *bisa*, or powerful. This tallies with the fact that

pua sandik in the Baleh are generally of 'mild' designs. No Iban woman would cradle her children in cloths which are *bisa*. Rather, ritual occasions involving children call for 'kind' and 'gentle' cloths (*pua mentas*).

Having made the distinction between powerful cloths used to receive heads and gentle ones used to cradle them, it is not clear if this distinction was formerly adhered to in practice. After all it is quite a different matter to cradle skulls, even old ones, rather than coconuts, as is the case today. As might be expected, informants today are not much help regarding the issue. In the chants, at least, gentle cloths are used to receive (*sambut*; Richards 1981:362) and powerful cloths are used to carry heads in slings (*sandik*; Nyuak 1906:424). On the other hand, the chants are not a reliable indicator for the function of differently graded cloths. Rather, the appearance of cloth names is largely determined by questions of rhyme and assonance, discussed in more detail in a later chapter.

Cloth and its use today

The reception of trophy heads is a thing of the past. Today, the function of powerful cloths is reserved for prestigious *gawai* where powerful cloth is employed for those segments of the rite which are considered crucial to

achieve its main objective. These occasions concern the shrine and the sacrificial pig. As I have noted, the shrine is the abode of the gods for the duration of the *gawai*. It is the gods' presence which calls for powerful cloths when covering the shrine. It is here where, it is hoped, they will leave charms. The *gawai* reaches its high point when the pigs are slaughtered and their livers are read as an omen. The proper observation of ritual procedure is thought directly to influence the condition of the pig's liver (cf. Masing 1981:72). For this reason, as my informants stressed, it is essential that the best cloth be used for the awning over the pig. Again a powerful cloth must be used for the reception of the liver on a plate in order to ensure good fortune. This last rite is a very formal affair which, as with the reception of trophy heads, can only be performed by a woman of standing in the community.

In summary, cloth is powerful and effective, or *bisa*, in a ritual context. The making of powerful cloth is surrounded by ritual restrictions and rules (*pantang*). These rules, rather than the technical details of cloth production, are the main focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

PRODUCTION of CLOTH

The efficacy of cloth in ritual is equal to the risks of making it. The art of weaving cloth was revealed long ago by deities who appeared in women's dreams. For operations which put weavers at risk, divine support is essential. A woman may 'know' (*nemu*) the technical aspects involved, but, unless authorized, she 'may not' (*enda tau*) carry out the procedure. Without explicit support from the deities and powerful charms, weavers do not dare to make powerful cloth for fear of being vanquished in the attempt. In order to avoid disaster, certain rules and prohibitions must be adhered to. The successful completion of powerful cloth confers prestige upon the weaver and to a large degree determines her status in the community.

Spirit helpers (*antu nulong*)

Kumang and her sister *Lulong*, the main deities of *Gelong*, are married to the brothers *Keling* and *Laja*, the heroes of *Panggau*. Many of the Ibah culture heroes live on the banks of the *Panggau* and *Gelong* rivers. Combined, *Kumang* and *Keling* are the actors of numerous tales and legends. *Kumang* incorporates ideal feminine qualities, including great beauty and skill in weaving. *Kumang* originally taught the

Iban to weave cloth and is the patron of weavers. She and her sister are invoked at crucial moments during the production of cloth.

Meni, Goddess of the Waters, lives at Rian Nandang Rapids with her father *Jali*, who lends boats to the *Panggau* people to travel downriver to attend Iban *gawai* celebrations. *Meni* is an even more accomplished weaver than *Kumang* and in the chants she weaves *Lang's* swordbelt when all others, including *Kumang*, have failed (Masing 1981:350-6). *Meni's* superiority is based on her knowledge of the arts of dyeing and she is the patron of the *ngar* ritual which involves the application of mordants.

Segadu is an equally accomplished weaver who lives high up in the sky. She is descended from celestial shamans and is herself associated with healing. In the chants, it is *Segadu* who is given the honour of ritually receiving the liver of the sacrificial pig (Masing 1981:281). *Segadu* is senior to *Kumang*. It was she who provided a home in the sky for *Kumang* and her sister *Lulong* when they were young (Richards 1981:329). Along with *Meni*, *Segadu* is invoked for the *ngar*.

Other helping spirits are not in themselves associated with weaving at all, such as *Bunsu Ribai*, a crocodile spirit, or *antu gerasi*, forest demons. Both are claimed as spirit

helpers by weavers, as is *Emplawa*, a spider spirit. A deceased relative, often the mother or grandmother, may also appear to aid a weaver in her dreams.

Dreams

Dreams are of major importance to the Iban and are examined for providing guidance in all matters (for details, see Freeman 1975:284-7). On important occasions, dreams are paid particular attention. Often dreams are unrelated to the situation at hand and contain merely an indirect message. To be of benefit, this message must be correctly interpreted. Dream interpretation relies on standardized sets of images. During the *ngar* ritual I documented in the Baleh, one participant dreamed of paddling upriver and catching a number of large fish and two wild boar (1991:24). This was interpreted as a 'happy' dream (*mimpi gaga*) and hence a propitious omen for the *ngar* under way. My own dream of a large house was interpreted similarly as a good omen. If dreams of 'shame' (*mimpi malu*), or other inauspicious dreams are encountered at such a time, an offering is made to avert failure. If the leader of the *ngar* has such a dream, the project may be postponed or even abandoned (cf. Jensen 1974:118,119; Sather 1992:117)

A second category of dreams involves explicit encounters with a helping spirit. Today, such dream encounters are

quite rare. As my informants explained, now, since they are Christians, the gods no longer visit them as they did in former times. Nevertheless, a weaver recounts her own dream in just as standardized a manner as she recounts those dreams which have been passed down by word of mouth. The dreams recorded by Freeman in 1950 follow the same general sequence and incorporate similar key images. In Sandin's account of Iban hero dreams which retell the authorization dreams of famous Saribas warleaders, this standardization is even more apparent (1966b:91-123).

Any dream encounter with a spirit is considered auspicious in itself as long as it does not involve some kind of mishap. Such dreams increase the weaver's self-confidence (*ati kering*). More important dreams involve an invitation to visit *Panggau* or *Gelong* where the dreamer is shown superior patterns and taught the secrets of dyeing. In another common sequence the dreamer is visited at her home by *Kumang* and *Lulong* who are on their way upriver and leave behind *pua* cloths in her care. While awaiting the deities' return, the dreamer is free to copy these designs (cf. Freeman 1950).

In two dreams I recorded in the Saribas, the woman, Simba, demanded charms from her spirit visitors, all of whom claimed to have forgotten to bring any (1991:4,7). One of these spirits, an *antu gerasi*, offered Simba the use of his

hands instead (cf. Sandin 1977:164). In the second dream, *Kumang*, who also has not brought charms, offers Simba the chance to prove herself at a trial. She is asked to count the teeth of *Kumang's* silver comb, a task of which Simba is incapable. She is given three tries, and, her failure notwithstanding, receives the deity's blessing, however limited, for having tried at all (Gavin 1991:4; cf. Sandin 1966b:101,120).

The most important dream encounters involve an explicit order (*asoh*) from the spirits. Such an order is binding. Disobedience brings sickness, or even madness and death. In the past, most weavers who know how to *ngar* claim to have received such explicit orders. It is not sufficient to receive the order just once, but it must be repeated at least three times (cf. Vogelsanger 1980:117). A weaver who proceeds without the repeated command is seen to be presumptuous and as acting outside accepted norms. At the same time, the weaver's code of behaviour does not allow boasting about such dreams and some weavers refuse to reveal the identity of their helping spirit for this reason. There is the fear that the deity will be angered at the breach of proper conduct and withhold her favours in the future (cf. Freeman 1950).

One informant gave another reason for not disclosing the name of her spirit helper. She said that since she was not sure who had appeared to her, rather than being wrong and

inviting the deity's anger, she chose to keep her guess secret. This is an important point because the spirit rarely reveals its name. Rather, the identity is deduced from the situation and circumstances in which the spirit appears. Some of the clues are straightforward. Being taught the *ngar* procedure is associated with *Meni*. If a second deity appears on this occasion, it is likely to be *Segadu*. Thus, in a dream I recorded in the Baleh, two spirits appear, one is said to be 'from the waters' (*ari ai*) and the other 'from the heavens' (*ari langit*) and therefore are identified as *Meni* and *Segadu*. If a weaver is shown patterns in dreams and promised charms to weave them, this is brought into conjunction with *Kumang* and other deities of *Panggau*. If a weaver feels confident of having interpreted her dream correctly, she will be equally confident in acting upon its message. This also applies to the finding of charms which are the tangible proof of the gods' favours.

Charms

The general term for charms, or amulets is *pengaruh*. Many charms are stones or stone-like objects (*batu*), but charms are generally referred to as *batu*, no matter what material they comprise. Another term for charm is *ubat*, meaning 'medicine' or 'poison'.

Ideally, a weaver is promised a charm in a dream. She is told where it will be found, what it looks like and is instructed about its properties and correct use. More commonly, after having been promised a charm, the weaver is on the look-out for any odd object which may seem significant. One of my main informants, who is also a shaman, owns a charm which is a whitish stone the size of a small finger. This stone has a black discolouration which, as the owner pointed out more than once, has a shape very similar to her own thumb nail. Because of this resemblance, the charm has a special significance for her.

Ordinary objects found under unusual circumstances, such as stones found when eating cake, are also assumed to be charms. Stones found in banana stems when cutting them down are another example, as are unusual snail shells (*tekuyang*) and deer horn (*tandok rusa*). Weavers pay particular attention when preparing the ingredients used for the mordant bath. If, for example, a stone is found imbedded in ginger root, it is kept as a charm. Seeds of *kepayang* (*Pangium Edule*), dried and hardened bits of turmeric all may be taken for charms if they are unusual in some way or if they are found in an apparently significant manner.

Such objects are kept as fulfilment of a promise received in dreams. Frequently, odd objects are kept in anticipation of a dream encounter which, it is hoped, will confirm an intuition that the object in fact is a charm with magical

properties (cf. Freeman 1950). In other words, it does not matter which comes first, the finding of the object or the dream which refers to it. The important point is that dream and object are related, or can be brought into conjunction. This applies also to ritual events when charms are expected to appear, the latter being referred to by Barrett and Lucas as a 'state of interpretive vigilance' (1993:584). One such occasion is the dismantling of the *ranyai* shrine at the end of a *gawai*; another is the *ngar* when the trough containing the mordants is searched for charms.

Some charms are directly related to the various stages of the *ngar* and will be discussed below. Suffice to say that charms are considered essential to make the mordants effective. The more powerful the charm, the less time is needed for the mordants to take effect.

The properties of many charms relate to the weaver's skill and confidence. *Ubat pandai* makes the user clever and increases her skills in general. *Ubat pengingat* is a charm which helps the owner to remember patterns and technical processes of weaving. One charm incites and encourages the weaver's heart (*peransang hati*). It gives confidence (*kering hati*) and urges the weaver to excel. Charms with similar properties are *pengerawang hati*, a charm for 'refreshing' one's 'spirit' (Masing 1981:274); or, in Sandin's translation, the 'opener' of the 'heart for better

understanding' (1967b:380,393). Richards calls this charm 'heart of hearts' which confers the 'ability to acquire knowledge or skill rapidly' (1981:271). Another such charm is *pengelantang hati*, designed to bring about a peaceful state of mind.

Another category of charm has the function to protect women while engaged in producing cloth. A *batu peniding tuboh*, for example, shields the weaver's body and ensures her physical well-being. Another common charm is *penyaga tepang* which protects from people who may cast evil spells (*orang tau tepang*). Porcupine quills (*bulu landak*) are employed for the same purpose. The quill is further thought to protect from madness (cf. Richards 1981:170; cf. Freeman 1950). Porcupine quills are a weaver's essential tool and ideally suited for sorting and picking thread. Most women perpetually wear a quill stuck in their hair for protection as well as the convenience of keeping a useful tool within easy reach. The quills are said to be provided by *Semerugah*, the Porcupine Spirit and father-in-law of *Pulang Gana*, deity of the earth. *Kumang* is said to visit *Semerugah* frequently in order to obtain quills (Richards 1981:170). Freeman further records the use of charms which protect from falling in love with men, literally, from being 'mad' over men (*gila orang laki*), a condition which is said to cause a disturbed state of mind in which work does not turn out well (1950).

However, the most effective protection is provided by the charm called *penyeliah jamah* which prevents a person being consumed by the task at hand. The charm is commonly used by men on the warpath when they assist warriors in 'avoiding' or 'evading' (*seliah*) the blows of enemy swords and spears (Masing 1981:341). Such is the power of this charm that, once in a weaver's possession, she can skip the usual stages of accomplishment and proceed directly to the most difficult of tasks.

The usual mode of using charms is to place them in a dish of water. Drops of this water are rubbed on the hands and on the spot where the fontanelle used to be. Freeman records that for tattooing, women mix the water with soot used for the dye. In this way, the charms' properties are transferred to the woman through the tattoo (1950). Charms are fastened to the tying frame when ikatting the main parts of patterns and to the warp beam during weaving.

Powerful charms are essential for the production of powerful cloth. They impart confidence and skill to the weaver and are effective for the task at hand. Charms protect the weaver during the production of cloth. More specifically, charms protect the wearer from being *alah*, or 'consumed' and 'defeated' by the undertaking (*enda alah ari utai digaga*; cf. Freeman 1950).

Alah and bisa

Richards glosses *alah* as 'beaten' or 'defeated' (Richards 1981:5). The majority of examples provided by Richards relate to warfare: one defeats or is defeated by the enemy. With regard to weaving and ritual action, being *alah* refers to the defeat, or 'weakening', of a person's physical strength and vigour (*ayu*). As will be remembered, the *ayu* is pictured as a plant-counterpart which grows in an unseen realm. When performing difficult tasks, such as weaving, the *ayu* is at risk. It is for this reason that charms are needed to protect it from damage. If charms are not sufficiently powerful, the weaver falls sick. She is 'beaten' by the effort and difficulty of the undertaking. This may manifest itself as a sense of physical weakness and exhaustion (*lemi tulang*), or general weariness and anxiety (*tusah*). The final result of damage to the *ayu*, however, is death (*alah ayu*).

Another term, *empa jamah*, adds further clarification of what is at issue here. *Empa jamah* carries much the same meaning as *alah ayu* and entails a weakening of one's health and vigour. Richards provided the following interpretation for this difficult term (p.c. 1993). *Empa* means to 'eat', but also to be 'consumed by' something, such as a disease. After completing a cloth, there is a kind of backlash. One is spent in the effort and for a time one is wearied in body and spirit, or 'run-down'. *Jamah* means to 'go at', or

'set hand to'. The term here refers to the activity of creating the cloth. It is the undertaking itself, the making of the cloth, which puts the weaver at risk. Significantly, the most powerful charm, *penyeliah jamah*, refers to this meaning of *jamah*. *Penyeliah* means to 'avoid', or 'evade'. The charm affords a form of protection from *jamah*, or the activity of making the cloth.

So here we return to the power of charms which is essential for making powerful cloth. Both charms and cloth are powerful, or *bisa*. The older meaning of *bisa* is 'poisonous'. In Iban, the stings and bites of hornets and poisonous snakes are said to be *bisa*. This significance applies to anything capable of causing injury or death (*alah ayu*). Some charms are *bisa* in this sense. The 'avoidance' charm (*penyeliah jamah*), for example, is so powerful that, unlike other minor charms, it is rarely borrowed. A weaver must be empowered to use this charm. If she is not, there is a backlash, with the charm's poisonous power turning back on her, inflicting injury.

This meaning of 'poisonous' applies also to the production of *bisa* cloth which puts the weaver at risk of sickness and death. According to informants, many women have died when attempting to weave powerful patterns which exceed the counteractive power of the charms in their possession (cf. Freeman 1950). *Bisa* patterns are 'poisonous' in the sense

that they, just like the bite of a poisonous snake, have the capacity to kill. For weavers this meaning of *bisa* is the predominant one. If I ask a weaver, 'How do you know that your cloth (or pattern) is powerful?', the answer is invariably, 'Because I fell ill when making it'.

The success of a rite may be attributed to a number of components other than *pua* cloths, such as prayers, the beating of gongs and so on. During the production of cloth, by contrast, there are no other components besides the weaver and the cloth she is trying to create. It is in this context then, that the 'poisonous' nature of patterns manifests itself most clearly. Being spent in the effort of making cloth is tangible proof to the weaver that her cloth is powerful. Thus, sickness is the ultimate test for a pattern's level of power. Completing a cloth without perishing in the process, means not to be defeated, or, to use positive terms, to 'conquer' the power of the pattern.

Nyuak's words (1906:I,22) provide a fitting close to this section. He writes that *Kumang* and *Lulong* and other deities of *Panggau*,

[H]elp women to weave and to work the ornamental patterns on the native cloth. Without being empowered in a dream by these spirits, how could women attempt to work these patterns? Should they make the attempt they would certainly go mad. That a

woman may weave good blankets.., she must be endowed by the spirits in a dream with a charmed porcupine's quill. Without this charm women can never weave the curious patterns of their cloth.

Production of Cloth

Growing and Processing of Cotton

Today, weavers rely entirely on commercial thread for producing cloth. In the course of my field research, I never witnessed local cotton being grown or processed. During and just after the Second World War, however, weavers were again dependent on home-grown cotton. When Derek Freeman conducted his research from 1949 till 1951, he could still observe the processing of cotton and the following summary is based on his and Monica Freeman's notes.

The Iban cultivate two types of cotton. The first, *taya tegoh* ('strong' cotton), is an annual. The plant is grown from seed near the rice field and grows to form small shrubs. The second, *taya Iban*, grows into a tree and may be planted near the farm or the house. After harvesting the cotton pods, the seeds are removed and the cotton is dried on the open verandah for two days. Then it is beaten on a mat until it forms a flat sheet (*lapis*). This sheet

is rolled up and cut into finger-sized pieces (*luli*) which then are spun into thread using a type of spinning wheel (*gasing*) common throughout Southeast Asia. The thread is doubled, stretched, and rubbed with a mixture of rice-gruel and the sap of finely shredded rotan. Then it is scraped (*nyikat*) with a coconut husk, dried, and rolled up (*nabu*) for storing.

Howell, the first to publish details about Iban weaving in 1912, lists the same operations with only minor differences. Neither Freeman nor Howell make note of any prohibitions which must be adhered to during these processes. This confirms my own findings. Informants who themselves had grown and spun cotton in their youth, denied the existence of any ritual restrictions (*pantang*) for these operations.

Applying the Mordants (*nakar*, or *ngar*)

If the thread is to be dyed with *engkudu* (*morinda citrifolia*), it must first be treated with mordants. Otherwise the dye will not 'take'. The rich purplish reds so highly esteemed by the Iban can only be achieved with *engkudu*. Other dyes, such as *engkerebai* (spp. *Stylocoryne*; Richards 1981:84), *beting* (unid.) and *engkala burong* (a fruit tree *Litsea garciae*; Richards 1981:82), are considered inferior to *engkudu*. None of these other plant-derived dyes require

the treatment with mordants.

The process of applying the mordants is called *ngar* or *nakar*. *Nakar* means to measure by volume and refers to the measuring of the ingredients which make up the mordant mixture. This task is carried out by the woman who leads the operation (*indu tau nakar*). Both terms, *nakar* and *ngar*, are used to refer to the event as a whole, comprising both technical and ritual aspects including the performance of proper rites, and the adherence to ritual restrictions.

The objective of the *ngar* is to make the thread red in colour (*mansau*). This is made explicit in several ways. If prohibitions are ignored, the operation will fail and the thread will 'not become red' (*enda nyadi mansau*). A chicken is sacrificed and its blood is dripped into the trough to make the thread 'equally red' (*mansau*; cf. Freeman 1950). However, the mordants themselves do not turn the thread red. It merely acquires a yellowish tinge from the ginger and turmeric which are part of the mordant bath. The actual dyeing with *engkudu*, which effectively turns the thread red, occurs at a later point, after the first tying. It is therefore the primary meaning of *mansau*, 'ripe' or 'cooked', which applies here (Richards 1981:208). The opposite of *mansau* is *mata*, 'raw', 'uncooked', or 'unripe' (*mata*, with a glottal stop, is distinct from *mata*, or 'eye', without the glottal stop; Richards 1981:209). Some

ingredients of the mordant, such as ginger, *kepayang* seeds and salt, are used both in a raw and in a cooked state, which usually involves roasting over an open fire. The former is referred to as *mata'*, the latter as *mansau*, or *tunu*, for 'burnt' (cf. Freeman 1950). During the treatment with mordants, the thread, in a sense, is 'cooked' when immersed in the mixture just taken off the boil, and becomes *mansau*, or 'treated'. Untreated thread is said to be *mata'*. Significantly, this untreated thread, which can only be dyed with *engkerebai* or other inferior dyes, ultimately also becomes red (cf. Howell 1912:62-4; Jabu 1991:77).

Today, it is quite rare to meet an Iban woman who can perform the *ngar*. It is rarer still for a person to have held a *ngar*, complete with full ritual ceremony, in recent years. Apart from the *ngar* I documented in the Baleh in 1988 (Gavin 1991), I have met only one other group of weavers in the Mujong who successfully held a *ngar* about ten years ago. Today, most cloths are dyed with chemical dyes bought in town.

The rarity of women who master the *ngar* is nothing new. Thus Howell writes that 'only one in fifty' women knows the procedure (1912:63). While Freeman records similar circumstances between 1949 and 1951, the *ngar* certainly was performed more frequently at that time than it is today. Freeman, for whom weaving was subsidiary to many other subjects of his research, documented a total of three *ngar*

ceremonies during his stay. The *ngar* was not only performed more frequently, but it was also a much more momentous occasion. Much of the information presented here is also contained in Freeman's fieldnotes, which, when significant, is indicated in the text by cross-references. I have further included many important details from Freeman's notes which I did not have occasion to record during my research. Many of these details are not remembered today or relate to practices which have been abandoned, such as tattooing. A great deal of Freeman's information, in particular regarding the *ngar* and the production of cloth, was collected by Monica Freeman. However, since the entries are largely mixed, I have chosen to credit the references generally to 'Freeman'.

The *ngar*

The performance of the *ngar* is subject to many restrictions and ritual requirements. It is for this reason that few women dare to lead the event. In fact, for the production of cloth, the *ngar* is the most restricted undertaking of all. A woman who can *ngar* reaches the highest stage of achievement as a weaver, and the highest rank as a woman. Her title is *indu tau nakar tau ngar*, she 'who knows how to measure the mordants and to perform the proper rites with the required divine assistance and approval' (Gavin

1991:4). For acquiring this knowledge, divine assistance and authorization are essential. Should a woman attempt to *ngar* without explicit authorization, she will be struck down for her presumptuousness. Neither will the mordant be effective, unless she has in her possession powerful charms, and unless the gods themselves attend the ritual.

The patron of the *ngar* is *Meni*. Ideally, *Meni* appears in a weaver's dream and invites her to attend a *ngar* ceremony held in a mythical longhouse. The dreamer is taught the procedure and is ordered to perform the ceremony herself upon her return home. *Meni* provides the required charms and promises to be present to oversee the proceedings. *Segadu* is the second deity associated with the *ngar*. Due to her association with the sky and day, *Segadu* is invoked to provide the hot and dry weather which is essential for success. In the Baleh, the two are named as a pair: '*Meni* from the Waters' and '*Segadu* from the Heavens' (*Meni ari ai, Segadu ari langit*). Most weavers who master the procedure (*tau ngar*) claim the assistance of one or both of the deities.

The technical operations of the *ngar* are straightforward. Various types of ginger are chopped and soaked in water. The liquid squeezed from the mash is boiled and poured into a wooden trough. The only ingredients which are considered crucial for the effectiveness of the mixture are salt and oil. They are added in a ratio of two to one. Oil is gained

from the seeds of *kepayang* (*Pangium edule*) and salt from the *nipah* palm. Ash is added in the form of roasted sea-salt and *kepayang* seeds, as well as roasted pieces of ginger. In addition, a burning brand of wood is thrust into the mordant mixture. The bundles of thread are repeatedly soaked and trodden in the trough, taken out and sorted, and re-immersed again for several days and nights.

The ritual aspects are more complex. In the following account, I adhere to the sequence of the *ngar* which I documented at Entawau in 1988. From Freeman's notes it is clear that this sequence is not a rigid one. Local variations exist, but they are minor. In Freeman's notes, for example, the sacrifice of a chicken occurs on the first day, not on the second, as at Entawau.

The first day of *nakar*

On the first day, the major ritual restriction concerns what the Iban call *jelungan*. *Jelungan* is a prohibition against outright naming of the undertaking under way. When fishing with poison (*tuba*), for example, it is forbidden to 'call the *tuba*-root by its ordinary name' or to 'exclaim' at the sight of big fish (Richards 1981:126). If the prohibition is ignored, the operation will fail and just a few fish, or none, are caught. The result is a waste of effort,

rather than sickness and death, which follow a more serious ritual offence (*mali, kudi*; Richards 1981:126)). In order to warn strangers, a rope of rattan (*likang*) is stretched across the stream further downriver (Richards 1981:192). Passing across this barrier is a ritual offence against *jelungan* for which a fine is imposed by the man leading the operation.

For the *ngar*, the rules of *jelungan* also apply. On the first day (*hari ngundur k'ai lia*), the event itself must be referred to obliquely. On this day, the thread is immersed in the ginger mixture for the first time. The term used to describe this action is *ngundur*, which means 'going down-river', as opposed to *mudik*, or 'going upriver' (Richards 1981:412). As with *tuba*-fishing, flags are set up as a warning that the rules of *jelungan* are in effect. It is forbidden to 'mention', 'call attention to', or 'pass remarks on' the *ngar* ceremony or its purpose (*enda tau rara*; Richards 1981:300). If this prohibition is ignored, the operation will fail, but there are no spiritual retributions for the offender. This is made quite explicit. People cannot call attention to the fact that a *ngar* is being held (*enda tau rara*), or the mordant will be ineffective (*enda nyadi*) and the dye will not 'take' (*enda mansau*). Apart from a fine, nothing will happen to the offender.

Often, the restriction is extended to talking in general

(*enda tau mulut, enda tau joko*), or, in the case of the *ngar*, to the exclusion of men (*laki enda tau ngabang*; Gavin 1991:20). The leader of the *ngar* at Entawau who had provided this information, later withdrew it. Instead, she asserted that men are allowed to be present but they may not talk. However, I recorded a similar extension of *jelungan* regarding men in the Saribas. Here two women claimed that for the *ngar*, the doors must be closed to men (*laki enda tau enggau*), because they are not allowed to 'see' (*enda tau meda*). They added, however, that men are barred for fear they would talk (*takut sida joko*), in which case the *ngar* most certainly would fail.

Freeman (1949) records that, for the duration of the *ngar*, a flag is placed both at the head of the ladder to the longhouse and at the bathing place (*pendai*). The flag (*tambai rumah*) usually consists of a white piece of cloth on a pole. It signals to would-be visitors (Freeman uses the term strangers) that they may not enter (*enda tau niki*) because the longhouse is temporarily under ritual restriction. Offenders are fined according to the quantity of cotton thread being treated. In the *ngar* recorded by Freeman, one woman is told to stand guard and watch for arriving visitors and to wave them away without speaking. In other words, it is still expected that visitors may appear. The emphasis is on preventing their approach and on the necessity to speak with them (Freeman 1949). To summarize,

jelungan is primarily a prohibition against the outright naming of the *ngar* (*enda tau rara*)¹. This prohibition may be extended to the exclusion of non-participants for fear they may talk. A further prohibition regards quarrelling (*belaya*). In this connection Freeman writes of a divorce case which was postponed for the duration of the *ngar* (cf. Sather 1993b:79).

On the first day of the *ngar*, the wooden trough (*dulang*) is decorated with flowers. Troughs vary in length from about a metre and a half to close to three metres, the width and depth being about a third of a metre (cf. Freeman 1949). The *dulang* is seen as an important ritual object (*pesaka*). It is likened to a boat (*perau*) and, accordingly, has a stern (*kemudi*) and a bow (*luan*). Freeman further writes that the *dulang* represents *Meni*.

The amount of most ingredients, such as the various kinds of ginger, is roughly estimated. Only when measuring the crucial ratio of salt and oil, a cup (*tacu*) is employed. The *tacu* consists of a halved coconut shell. This is an important device and, as the emblem of *Meni*, is usually bequeathed by her in a dream (Gavin 1991:8,21). Next, a *piring* offering is made for the trough and a prayer is uttered invoking the help of *Meni* and *Segadu*, as well as the heroines of *Gelong*, to attend the *ngar* and give their blessings. The leader of the *ngar* drapes a *pua* over her shoulders to protect her while mixing all the ingredients

in the *dulang*. Without the protection of the cloth, her life span may be shortened (*alah ayu*) due to the level of ritual difficulty inherent in the task.

In order to test the ratio of the salt and oil, pieces of wild ginger (*entimu*) are attached at both ends of a porcupine quill. In an alternative method recorded by Freeman, one piece of ginger is stuck through and moved to the centre of the quill (1949). This contraption is called *kelapong*. The blunt end of the quill is called 'stern' (*kemudi*) and the pointed end 'bow' (*luan*). If the blunt end dips, salt is lacking. If the other end dips, oil must be added. The *kelapong* is an important indicator for the correct ratio and hence the effectiveness of the mordant. It must be stressed, however, that the quill with its appendages is not a technical device and no care is taken to balance it prior to carrying out the test. Rather, as Freeman writes, the quill is a magical device, which, according to his informants, is the 'slave' (*ulun*) of *Meni* and obeys her word (1949).

When the mixture is ready, all the bundles of thread are immersed in the liquid. Some women brave the scalding temperature and tread through the trough. Later, the thread is turned, taken out and hung up to be straightened, and immersed once more for the night.

The second day of *nakar*

The second day is called the 'day of *nakar*' (*hari nakar*), or the day when the *nakar* actually takes place (*hari nyadi*). A flag is hung on the open verandah and a *pua* is draped over a pole as a sign of invitation to the gods. On this second day there are two noteworthy differences. First, according to my informants, the rules of *jelungan* do not apply. In fact, this is the day when visitors are encouraged in order to make this as festive an occasion as possible. Secondly, on this day, unlike on the first, charms are used.

For an important event such as the *ngar*, a weaver will employ all the charms in her possession. In addition to the types of charms discussed above, there are others whose properties and function are specifically connected to the *ngar*. One such charm has the capacity to 'wake' or 'rouse' the thread (*pengerak ubong*) to absorb the mordant effectively. Another is used to control the weather (*penyaga hari*) and thus to keep away the rain. A 'cooling charm' (*batu pencilap*) is used to avoid being burnt by the scalding liquid when treading the thread. Yet another charm recorded by Freeman (*batu engkabang*) assures the spread of the weaver's fame, so that she is hired by other women to lead their *ngar* (1950).

The charms are taken out of their wrappings and bathed in a

dish of water. Then they are rubbed on the hands of the woman leading the *ngar*. While lightly blowing on it, the charms are also rubbed on the spot where her fontanelle used to be. This is a common practice of healing rites (*pelian*) and is meant to impart the charm's power to the recipient.

For the following part of the *ngar*, the wearing of patterned skirts is obligatory. If this is not done, the gods will be angry (*nganu*) and retribution is certain. An offering (*bedara*) with two eight-fold *piring* is performed, one for *Segadu* and one for *Meni* (cf. Freeman 1949). A chicken is sacrificed over the trough before the boiled mixture is poured into it. At last, the water in which the charms have been bathed earlier, is added. Finally, with great chaos and a terrific war-cry (*manjong*), the women rush to immerse the cotton in the liquid. The war-cry is essential so that the women will not be 'defeated by the thread' (*alah ari ubong*); it is explicitly linked to a headhunter's victory cry (cf. Freeman 1949). All participants tread through the trough three times, followed by men, women and children from the audience, for this action is said to bring much luck. This part of the *ngar* is concluded by an obligatory ritual bath in the river (*mali enda mandi*). At nightfall, the trough is covered with a mat and a *pua*, while a lamp is lit for *Meni* to keep watch over the thread.

Exposure to sun and dew

After two days or more, the bundles of thread are taken out to dry on the open verandah. The sun is said to take out the oil. At night, the thread is exposed to the dew (*ngembun*), which draws out the salt. This process is continued for several nights and days. In Howell's account, the process lasted for a total of sixteen days (1912:64). My informants claimed that the number of days depends on the efficacy of their charms. While the thread is left outside, it is essential that it does not get rained upon. This would dilute and wash out the mordants before they have reached a certain density and concentration. It is for this reason that a fire is lit on the *tanju* as a sign that the women are asking for good weather.

The thread is turned every three hours or so, night and day. To be near at hand for the turning and in case it rains, the women move from their traditional domain, the *bilik*, to sleep on the *ruai*. This is not a small matter and is accompanied by much anxiety. The reasons given to me for the move to the *ruai* are practical ones only. Further probing only elicited explanations such as 'it is an old custom' (*adat ari munya*), or, 'we were ordered to do so in dreams'. Freeman's informants, by contrast, say that by sleeping on the *ruai*, *Meni* can see them and is pleased by their company (1949).

The nights spent on the *ruai* give rise to much social interaction and provide the background for the telling of epic sagas and tales (*enseru*). In Freeman's time this was also the occasion for women to acquire a tattoo, usually on the base of the left thumb. Only weavers who have reached a certain level of proficiency dare to acquire this mark of distinction. As mentioned above, the soot is mixed with water in which charms have been bathed to transfer their powers to the weaver and thus increase her skills. The time of the *ngar* is chosen because the helping spirits of weavers, particularly *Meni* and *Segadu*, are present to give their blessings.

After several days, the thread is tested. A few strands are placed in a small amount of cold water, squeezed and taken out. If the remaining water is milky (*ai tusu*) throughout (cf. Freeman 1950), the thread is pronounced to be ready and the *ngar* has reached its conclusion. The flag and *pua* are folded up and all that remains is the washing and drying of the bundles of thread before they are stored for future use.

Freeman records that, at the conclusion of the *ngar*, the trough is treated before being sent 'home' (*pulai*). It is rubbed with *engkilih* oil and fragrant plants (*bangkit*) are tied to its tip, or 'bow' (*luan*) before it is returned to the loft with a *piring* offering placed beside it. The offering is called *bekal*, or 'provisions', for the trough

on its journey home (1950).

It is noteworthy that, after having been dyed with *engkudu*, the red thread (*ubong mansau*) acquires properties similar to cloth itself. Red thread is tied around the patient's wrist after healing rites to be the 'bandage of the soul' and 'keep it in its proper place' (Richards 1981:113). Charms to increase the contents of rice bins are tied with red cotton as a form of tether (Sather 1980:90). For first rites of harvest, clumps of *padi* are tied together with red thread (Sather 1977:159). A thread is bound around the feet of a woman who has died in childbirth and a porcupine quill inserted in it to prevent her becoming an *antu koklir*, a malevolent spirit (Jensen 1967:173). During *ngerandang* (the rite of 'clearing a path' performed at the start of *gawai* celebrations) men dressed as warriors slash the red thread stretched across the *ruai*, an action which represents the clearing of obstacles (Masing 1981:75).

Lay-out of *pua*

Before proceeding to describe the next stage of production, it is useful to take a closer look at the parts which make up a *pua* cloth (figs.1,2).

Vertical borders.

The generic term for vertical bands running the length of the cloth is 'stripe' (*ara*). The patterned bands which often include bird and snake motifs, are called *anak pua*, or 'components' of *pua* cloths. The term is usually extended to denote vertical borders in general. Vertical borders run the entire length of the cloth. *Pua* always consist of two halves sewn together in the middle. Most borders are woven together with the main section and thus are attached by a continuous weft from outer edge to mid-seam. Borders are never ikatted together with the main section but are only added once the weaving stage is reached. On some older *pua* from the Baleh, the borders are woven separately and then sewn onto the cloth (fig.1). This is because the cloths are so wide that the combined width of main section and border cannot be accommodated on the back-strap loom.

Horizontal borders

The horizontal lines of alternating white and black are called *lintang* (see fig.2). Apart from 'across', *lintang* has the meaning of 'obstruct' or 'impede', such as a tree 'felled across the river to prevent passage of enemy boats' (Richards 1981:195). The implication for *pua* patterns is that the *lintang* is like a barrier, or a division, between the main section and the borders at both ends. In the

Saribas, one *lintang* (sometimes both) is checkered in black and white oblongs and aptly is called 'millipede' (*kemebai*; figs.52,53). In the Baleh this is called *penuri*, from *duri*, 'thorn', or 'spike'. *Kemebai* and *penuri* serve as a counting device for the pattern's width and will be discussed below.

In older *pua* (fig.1), a horizontal band is often added between the *lintang* and end borders. This band is called *selaku*. Some weavers say that the *selaku* provides a place for *Kumang* to reside while assisting the weaver (Heppell 1988:3). It is, however, up to the weaver whether she employs the device or not. At least today, *selaku* are rarely included in *pua* and the connection to *Kumang* has been forgotten. One informant called the *selaku* the *padong*, or 'sleeping place'. Formerly, the term was used to refer to special sleeping places for girls who were 'secluded' (*umbong*) before marriage (cf. Richards 1981:212,411). In the Baleh, the twined blue and white line used to hold the fringe in place, is termed a 'type of' *selaku* and poetically named *semalau* after a bird (see fig.2).

In the Saribas, the ikatted sections at both ends are called *punggang*, 'end' or 'fringe' (Richards 1981:290). In the Baleh, the term is *pemucok*, from *pucok*, 'point' or 'top', especially of objects which are standing erect, such as trees (cf. Sather 1993b:75,109 n.14).

Components

The main section of cloths, closed in by borders on all sides, is called *buah*, or pattern. The *buah* is composed of a background, called *indu buah*, the 'main' or 'principal' part of the pattern. Prominent motifs which are worked into the background are called *sigi buah*, 'single' or 'separate' pattern. Smaller motifs are called *pengalit*, or 'space-filler' (from *alit*; Richards 1981:6), since they are literally used to fill the empty spaces of the *buah*, or main pattern. When ikatting, the weaver works only on one repeat of the pattern (fig.2), while facing the thread sideways.

The Laying out of the Warp (*ngirit*)

The doubled thread is wound between breast beam (*rakup*) and warp beam (*tendai*), the distance exceeding the eventual length of the cloth by about a third of a metre. Two people share in this task and pass the ball of thread in a container between them. A quid of betel is placed in the 'mouth' (*nyawa*) of the breast beam. This is an offering to the gods to come and help. The *rakup*, or breast beam, is a central component of the backstrap loom and is often named to stand for the entire loom, if not for weaving as a whole.

One pair of warp threads is called *batang* which Richards

glosses as 'principal member or part' (1981:29). *Batang* is an apt term for the warp threads of Iban ikat textiles. Since these are warp-faced, only the warp (*batang*) is visible. Another term for the warp is *peniri*, from *diri*, 'to stand erect' (Richards 1981:73). Three *batang* make one *kayu*. *Kayu* essentially means 'tree', but is also a numeral classifier for objects of a longish shape (Richards 1918:143). One *kayu* is the amounts of thread which are tied off together when ikatting. The toothed line (*kemebai* or *pen-uri*), mentioned above, is a counting device for the amount of *kayu* of a given cloth. One projection of the *kemebai* corresponds to one *kayu*. The amount of *kayu* of a single repeat determines the width or 'size' of a pattern. A cloth which is called 'big' (*besai*) has many *kayu* to one repeat. This is possible even if the cloth itself is quite narrow. The width of one repeat can vary greatly. Weavers make cloths whose width corresponds to their level of technical and spiritual accomplishment. A beginner's pattern usually has no more than thirty *kayu*. Only an experienced and older weaver will attempt to tie a pattern of a hundred *kayu*, aptly called *pua seratus* (*pua* of 'one hundred'; cf. Jabu 1991:83 n.3).

Kayu are not the only counting device. One *singkap* has ten *kayu*; and a *pua* of one hundred *kayu* has ten *singkap*. The *buah* of traditional patterns are usually started, after the *lintang*, with a row of opposing coils (*gelong*; see fig.2).

These coils are often of the type called *gelong lima* and, more rarely, *gelong empat*. As the names imply, the latter has four inward turns or divisions (*empat*) and therefore takes up less space than *gelong lima*, which has five (*lima*). Because of the difference in size, five *gelong lima* make up ten *singkap*, or one hundred *kayu*, whereas five *gelong empat* add up to eight *singkap*, or eighty *kayu*. The amount of *gelong* is a reliable counting system and enables weavers to calculate the size of a given cloth at a glance. The cloth in figure 1 is an exception in that it has seven *gelong* to one repeat at one end, and six at the other. In this case, the amount of *gelong* is not a reliable counting device and the *kayu* must be counted singly. Since most *pua* are made by copying a pattern from another cloth, it is vital to start with the same amount of *kayu* as the original.

After the thread has been mounted, sorted and counted, five or more weft threads are woven in, first at one end, then at the other. This is done to keep the threads in place and the process is called *negi* (from *tegi*, or 'ram tight, drive firm'; Richards 1981:375). The term specifically denotes this first insertion of the weft and is distinct from the word for weaving which is *tenun*. During *negi*, the prohibitions of *jelungan* apply and no-one may talk or mention the process (*enda tau rara*). This first insertion of the weft is crucial for the correct alignment of the warp when weaving the cloth. If the *negi* is uneven, the fault remains

and is visible in the finished cloth. Finally, the thread is taken off the loom and folded down to one repeat and sewn into place at both ends.

Tying the warp (*ngebat*)

More often than not patterns are copied. If the pattern is an important one, a token compensation, or fee (*tasi*), must be paid to the owner. The original cloth is folded down to one repeat and then folded again to show only the section which is being worked. Some weavers claim that the borders of the folded original must face the weaver and thus come between her and the main pattern as a form of barrier. It is not allowed (*enda tau*) to place the cloth the other way, or upsidedown (*tunsang*).

The first tying is called *mungkal*, 'start', or 'do for the first time' (Richards 1981:223). The tied parts remain white, or cream-coloured, and appear so on the finished cloth. In other words, the first tying creates the main outline of the pattern and therefore is essential. Traditionally, *lemba*, a raffia-like fibre (*Curculigo latifolia*; Richards 1981:188), was used for tying. Today, this has largely been replaced by plastic *tali*, or 'string'.

Ngebat begins at the weaver's left. The horizontal line

(*lintang*) is tied first; or, depending on the type of *lintang* the weaver has chosen to use, the *kembai*, or *penuri*. One weaver in the Saribas said that the *kembai* is the 'seat' (*penudok*) of the main pattern, as it is of the border. The *lintang* is also called the 'landing stage' or 'jetty' (*sengkalan*) of the main pattern. The term 'landing stage' (*sengkalan*, or *pengkalan*) is used metaphorically in other situations. In the invocatory chants, for example, the first two lines of a stanza are called *pengkalan*. Since they are largely repetitive, they are said to provide the bard with a 'rest-area' (Masing 1981:109-10). As a rest area, the *lintang* has a similar function to the *selaku* which, as discussed above, provides a 'sleeping-place' and which is tied after the *lintang*. In the present example, the *selaku* is enclosed with another *lintang*, after which the first, or lower, border is tied. Then the *ngebat* of the main pattern, or *buah*, begins. At this stage, charms are tied to the frame for protection and remain in place until the main pattern is completed (Freeman 1950). The charms used on this occasion include a charm to remember (*batu pengingat*), charms of encouragement (*batu peransang*, *batu pengerawang hati*), a charm to ward off evil curses (*enda tau rara tepang*), as well as the most powerful charm of all (*penyeliah jamah*), which prevents the weaver from being consumed by the task.

The starting point of the main pattern, just after the *lintang*, is called *pun jari*. Richards glosses *pun* as

'start', 'origin', or 'base' (1981:290). *Jari* is 'hand', and here refers to the start 'by hand' of tying or creating the pattern. The termination of the main pattern, at the last *lintang*, is called *ujung*, or 'end, tip, point' (Richards 1981:408). The first tying (*mungkal*) of the main pattern at the *pun* is considered a sensitive point. Accordingly, when copying powerful patterns, the first coil (*gelong*) must be tied off by an older woman. Only then can a young and inexperienced weaver continue the tying. Similarly, when a woman is pregnant and hence barred from *ngebat*, it is sufficient that someone else ties off the beginning of the pattern at the *pun jari*. She may then continue the tying without fear of retribution.

Apart from the tying of the first *gelong*, there are other points during *ngebat* when restrictions apply. During the tying of one *gelong*, one must stay seated until it is completed. This rule is also in effect when tying certain elements of powerful patterns. On these occasions, a *piring* offering must be made and a cock sacrificed. The main pattern is closed off with another *lintang*. The *pemuk* border at the *ujung*, or upper, end is tied last.

Dyeing the warp

After completing the first *ngebat*, the thread is taken off

the frame and prepared for the first dyeing, which is always red. For dyeing with *engkudu*, the root of the tree is chopped, pounded, and mixed with finely ground bark of the *janggau* tree (spp. *Aporosa*; Richards 1981:123). I never had the opportunity to witness an entire cloth being dyed with *engkudu* and therefore, once again, refer to Freeman's notes. For the duration of the process, visitors are not allowed (*enda tau niki*) and the prohibition of *jelungan* is in effect (*enda tau rara*). A porcupine quill (*bulu landak*) is placed on the thread to guard against people with the evil eye (*tau tepang*; 1950). The prohibition of *jelungan* similarly applies today when dyeing with *engkerebai*. The process is usually carried out in a secluded area behind the rear kitchen. A fire-brand is run up and down the dye bath. At this point in particular, no-one may mention dyeing (*enda tau rara*).

After the thread is dry, it is stretched taut on the tying frame once more. The second tying (*pampul*) is against the indigo overdye. The tied part will stay red, whereas the red thread, which is exposed to the indigo dye bath, will become a dark brown. During this second tying, the use of charms is not obligatory, or at least is not considered essential. However, Monica Freeman, who wove a cloth while in the field, records two instances when a bad dream and a birth in the longhouse prevented her from work on that particular day (1950). After the second tying is complete, the warp is dyed with indigo (*renggat*) which involves the

same rules as for dyeing with *engkerebai* above. At last, the *ngebat* is opened (*ngetas*). When opening the fold, the rules of *jelungan* once more apply and one may not mention, or 'ask' about (*enda tau nyanya*), the process.

Weaving

Technically, weaving is a straightforward affair when compared to *ngebat*. It is also much less time-consuming. Charms are tied to the loom. The two halves are on a continuous warp, forming an upper and lower part on the loom. The weaver begins at the *pun* end of the first half. When the *ujung* end is reached, she turns it all around and begins again at the *pun* end of the second half. At intervals, laze-rods are inserted and anchored to each pair of warp threads with an interlacing stitch. This process is called *nirat* and helps to keep the warp aligned while weaving is in process.

According to some informants, it is forbidden to ask the pattern's name during the weaving stage. After the cloth is completed, a piece of thread is torn off and singed. If this is omitted, the weaver risks sickness, or even death (*alah ayu*). Some weavers eat a bit of thread at this stage. This is done to avoid being consumed at the point of completing the cloth (*empa jamah*).

The original *pua* is returned to its owner with a fee (*tasi*), usually consisting of a knife (*duku*), a small jar (*jagok*) and a small amount of money. If no fee is paid, the woman who copied the pattern will fall sick. *Tasi* is a 'token compensation' and also means 'rent' (Richards 1981:370). Some informants call the fee *tungkus*, which Richards glosses as a 'token paid in recognition of ownership' (1981:403). Both *tasi* and *tungkus* refer to the fee paid when land is being borrowed for farming (cf. Sather 1992:121). One of Freeman's informants says that the fee paid for borrowing cloth is the equivalent of the ring of a marriage ceremony, the original *pua* being the male part (*laki*) and the copy, the female (*indu*; 1950).

Freeman further records a complex ritual at the completion of weaving (1950). While the finished cloth is still on a continuous warp on the loom, the weaver passes seven objects over it, while rotating it. These are a hank of prepared *lemba*, a small package of *engkudu*, wrapped in banana leaf and tied with red thread (*ubong mansau*), a betelnut quid, a rolled cigarette, a chunk of coconut flesh, as well as a piece of wax used to prepare *lemba* grass for *ngebat* and some *janggau*, the bark used for dyeing with *engkudu*. The objects are said to be an offering to *Kumang* and other deities connected with weaving. While performing this action, the woman says a prayer to send 'home' (*pulai*), one after the other, the components of her loom. The cloth is then taken off the loom and placed in a

sintong basket (a small basket used when planting or reaping rice) with a *piring* offering on top of it. The basket is shouldered by a man of the weaver's *bilik* and paraded up and down the gallery three times. According to Freeman's informant, this is done so that 'people will be pleased at the sight of the new *pua*'. The ceremony would seem to serve as a formal introduction to the longhouse community. Freeman's informants say the *piring* offering constitutes the 'provisions' or 'supplies' for the cloth's journey 'back home' (*bekal enggau iya pulai*). Freeman records further that the *piring* is the 'share' (*ungkup*) of the pattern. If this share is not provided, Freeman's informants add, the *antu*, or 'spirit', of the pattern will return to 'haunt and torment us' (*ngeransi kitai*).

Weaving tools

The risks involved in the creation of cloth extends to the making of the loom which is always done by men. Freeman records that the carving of the breastbeam (*rakup*), in particular its 'mouth' (*nyawa*), can only be attempted by an older man (1950). A young man may be consumed by carving it (*alah ari nyawa ia*). The making of the trough (*dulang*) similarly puts the maker at risk. Freeman writes that the cutting of the wood is carried out with full ritual (*ningkoh*) as for a hornbill (*kenyalang*) effigy. This includes

the beating of gongs and a *piring* with the sacrifice of a cock. Freeman's informant was paid a fee, but fell ill after making the trough (*alah ari dulang*). The trough is an important ritual heirloom object (*pesaka*).

Orientation

There are specific points during the production of cloth which are identified as putting the weaver at risk. One such point is the initial or first part of a process, the second part being considered harmless in comparison. Thus, the treatment with mordants involves higher risk than the subsequent dyeing process and the first day of the *ngar* is constrained by more ritual restrictions than the second, when the rules of *jelungan* do not apply. The tying of the pattern is similarly governed by more restrictions than the weaving stage. In addition, the first insertion of the weft (*negi*) is considered crucial for the eventual evenness of the pattern and the rules of *jelungan* are in effect for the duration of it. Starting the pattern (at the *pun*) is a particularly sensitive point. Young people may not start powerful patterns, but must get an older and more advanced weaver to tie the first coil for them. Pregnant women may only *ngebat* if someone else starts the task (at the *pun*).

Pun, or 'start', 'origin', 'cause' (Richards 1981:290), but also 'commencement' (Howell and Bailey 1900:133) is, as

Freeman writes, 'a most fundamental concept of traditional Iban society' (1981:31). The originator of an important undertaking is referred to as its *pun*. Thus, the man who initiates a journey for gain of material wealth and social prestige (*bejalai*), becomes its leader (*pun bejalai*; p.35). Men who initiate migration to new territory or lead fighting groups, are *pun mindah* and *pun ngayau* respectively (pp.35-6). The *pun rumah* is the custodian of 'cooling' charms (*pencilap rumah*) which are essential to keep the house and its members in balance with *adat*. The *pun rumah* is also an augur (*tuai burung*), who can interpret omens to 'preserve the spiritual welfare of a community' (p.33). When a new longhouse is built, the *pun rumah* supervises the ritual aspects of construction. Each *bilik* has a main or 'source post' (*tiang pemun*) which is the first post to be erected. The *pun rumah* erects his *tiang pemun* first and he is the custodian of this central post which becomes the ritual focus of the longhouse. In addition, the central post is an important point of reference for the orientation of the house and its occupants.

Rivers are another such point of orientation. Rivers remain the main means of travel today, and were even more so in the past. Longhouses, if possible, are erected parallel to rivers. Accordingly, downriver (*ili*) and upriver (*ulu*) are a major means of orientation and are constantly referred to in everyday speech. A person lives either near the downriv-

er or upriver end of the longhouse, or is downriver or upriver in relation to the central *tiang pemun*. Contrary to western practice, left and right coordinates are always given as if going upriver (*mudik*; Richards 1981:222). The speaker thus pictures himself with his feet at the mouth of the river, his head at its source. In other words, the base, or beginning (*pun*), of a river is seen as being downriver at its mouth. The end, or termination (*ujong*), of the river is at its source, or headwaters.

The orientation of longhouses is expressed in relation to the river. In the area where I conducted research on this topic, the *pun* end of the house is downriver, its *ujong* end facing in the upriver direction (cf. Sather 1993b:78). Horizontal beams of the longhouse structure are similarly oriented with their natural base pointing downriver. Wooden posts must be erected in the same way as they grow, with the *pun* towards the ground. When trees, or bamboo, are felled, the *pun* is marked for this reason (cf. Sather 1993b:76). This orientation also applies to the entrance ladder, which in traditional longhouses consists of a notched log. Care is also taken to put the bamboo used for the frame of the *ranyai* shrine base first.

Pua cloths also have a beginning, or *pun*, and an end, or *ujong*. The location of the *pun* determines the cloth's orientation in ritual. It is therefore essential to know the location of the *pun* of a given cloth. The only rela-

tively reliable clue is the evenness of the initial row of coils (*gelong*). Since this is where the *ngebat* is started, the weaver can take care to arrange the coils in an even row. Once she reaches the *ujong* end, she rarely has exactly the same amount of thread left as is required by the pattern she is copying. She then either has to cut the pattern short, or lengthen it. In both cases, it is quite difficult to end with an evenly spaced row of coils (see for example figure 115).

One Saribas informant created her own memory aid by placing a *kembai* at the *ujong* end. But this device will be of little use to her descendants unless the information is passed on along with the cloth. In general, there is no sure way of telling where the *pun* is. This became clear when I presented informants with large photographs of *pua*. A number of clues were suggested, but none of these are fool-proof and to enumerate them in detail would only confuse the issue. Finally, the only way of knowing the location of the *pun* is to ask the weaver who made the cloth.

The *pun* of *pua* patterns is at the start, or the beginning, of the main pattern for both *ngebat* and weaving. The *ujong* is at the end, or termination, of the main pattern. The *pun* is also the 'rudder' or 'stern' (*kemudi*) and the *ujong* is the 'bow' (*luan*). For *piring* offerings, the *pua* is spread

out parallel to the *ruai* wall, which, in most cases, is parallel to the river. The *pun* of the cloth is placed pointing downriver (*k'ili*), the *ujong* in the upriver direction (*k'ulu*). Or the cloth, with its rudder and stern, is like a boat pointing upriver. To explain this practice, one informant pointed to the horizontal ceiling beams on the *ruai* which are also positioned with their natural base downriver².

As described in chapter 2, the *ranyai* shrine is covered with *pua*. This is one of the few occasions when *pua* are used in a vertical position. Here the *pun* of the pattern must be at the base (*baroh*), the *ujong* at the top (*k'atas*), the same way as a tree grows (*baka kayu*). It is forbidden (*mali*) to put the *pua* upsidedown (*tunsang*). This would bring bad luck, and have an adverse effect on the liver of the sacrificial pig to be read as an omen (*jai ati babi*). The orientation of the cloth follows that of timbers and posts of the longhouse structure, which are always put base first. In fact, the *ranyai* is conceived of as a tree, or *nibong* palm, and erecting the shrine is referred to as 'planting' it (*nanam*; cf. Masing 1981:73).

While most women readily provide the information regarding the *pun* for *piring* offerings, some are hesitant about the orientation for the *ranyai* shrine. I was told to ask men, either bards or men who specialize in erecting the *ranyai* shrine (*orang nanam*). Male informants confirmed the down-

river orientation for the *piring* offering, but called the *pun* 'pala', or 'head'. The *pua* produced for demonstration was a modern one with large human figures. Such patterns generally have the *pun* at the figures' heads. So here the downriver positions for *pun* and *pala* coincide. However, the designation *pala* for *pun* becomes problematic when male ritual experts claim that, for the *ranyai*, the *pala* (and *pun*) must be at the top. The paradox was eventually solved by a female informant who asserted that, for *pua* with human figure designs (*gambar orang*), the heads of the figures (and the *pun*) must be placed at the top of the *ranyai* (*mesti pala k'atas*). It is forbidden (*mali*) to place figures upsidedown. In other words, as this informant made explicit, for *pua* with human figure designs, the original *pun/ujong* orientation is reversed. This is confirmed by the fact that, in practice, figurative *pua* are always put rightside up on the *ranyai*.

The *pun* is at the start of the main pattern, the *ujong* at its end. Starting the main pattern is a most sensitive point. It is from here onwards that charms are tied to the frame until this section is completed. The main patterns, or *buah*, of *pua* cloths also form the main part of this thesis and the subject matter of the next chapter.

NOTES

- (1) Sather mentions similar prohibitions against talking for *manggol* rites which initiate the clearing of new farm sites (1992:122), and for rites which initiate the rice harvest (1977:155). Sather does not use the term *jelungan*, but it is clear that the restrictions are those which pertain to *jelungan*. Thus, if one talks during *manggol*, this is said to 'spoil' the effort (1992:122). For the rice harvest, Sather writes that 'during the rites themselves it is not possible to ask questions or discuss the purpose of what is being done' (1992:131 n.35).
- (2) Sather records two alternative ways of orientation, first, a reversal, with the *pun* pointing upriver and the *ujong* downriver, and second, a central *tiang pemun* with *ujong* ends extending laterally in both upriver and downriver directions (1993b:78; cf. Uchibori 1978:93).

CHAPTER 4

NAMES as TITLES

This chapter examines three issues: the nature and function of names as titles; the significance of their subject matter in an Iban context; and distinctive features of patterns.

As we have seen in the last two chapters, powerful patterns are *bisa*, or effective, in a ritual context and their production puts the weaver at risk. Powerful patterns, as a rule, have names (*buah benama*). The Iban term *nama* means, 'name, appellation, what any person or thing is called', but also 'reputation' and 'fame' (Richards 1981:225). Only famous persons who have made a 'name' for themselves, are said to be *be-nama* (Richards 1981:225). Similarly, only patterns of a certain level of ritual efficacy are given names which, in this context, function as titles.

Titles usually consist of one or two words, such as 'honey bear' (*jugam*) or 'rippling water' (*suri ai*). Others are more lengthy praise names (*julok*, *ensumbar*), composed of several rhyming lines. Titles are assigned to the entire main pattern (*buah*) of *pua* cloths. Iban refer to these names as *nama*, which here I render as 'title' because this is how such names function. Titles reflect or indicate a pattern's level of ritual efficacy. The more powerful the pattern,

the higher its prestige and rank. Titles thus serve as indicators of rank.

Rank

To refer to rank, Iban weavers use the term *ringkat*, 'storey' or 'floor' (Richards 1981:309). Another term is *pangkat*, 'rank' or 'position' (Richards 1981:251); both are Malay words (Wilkinson 1932:842,975). The foremost means of expressing high rank is to say that a pattern is powerful, or *bisa*. Such patterns are *tinggi*, which means 'high', but also 'exalted' (Richards 1981:392). Often a pattern's rank is expressed in relation to other, well-known patterns. The relational terms are 'above' (*atas*) and 'below' (*baroh*), words that also mean 'superior' and 'inferior'. The most common means of expressing high rank is in terms of age. To say of a pattern that it is 'old', or 'senior' (*tuai*), generally means that it is high in rank. Accordingly, a lesser pattern is 'young' (*biak*).

Age

A pattern's rank is determined by its age to a large degree. The idea is that old patterns have proven their power and efficacy over successive generations. When a weaver

creates (*tengkebang*) a new powerful pattern with a title to match, this new creation only acquires significance in a wider cultural context if it attracts the attention of other weavers who want to copy it. Otherwise, it has significance only for the weaver who first made it. During my field research I came across many such cloths. However, when a new pattern is copied by other weavers, it may then come to be known and established in an entire river system and thus acquires fame and prestige.

Nanggo, for example, created several patterns about fifty years ago, many of which are still woven throughout the Baleh area today. In this connection, Heppell writes that weavers become known and, on ritual occasions, are referred to by the praise names of the patterns they have created (1989:84). This may be true, but the fame, it seems, is short-lived. Nanggo died just over forty years ago, but it is only in her natal longhouse that she is remembered as the creator of these patterns today and only by older women who knew her personally. Heppell further writes that *pua* gain status by 'travelling', meaning the physical movement of a cloth when it is given as a gift to a visitor from a distant longhouse (1989:84). The point is taken up by Maxwell who claims that cloths which were carried along on nineteenth century migrations are 'particularly revered' (1990:107). While it is true that old cloths are held in high esteem, it is not so much the physical movement of an actual cloth which adds to a pattern's fame, but when a

pattern 'travels' by being copied; and it thus becomes known and famous in an ever wider area.

The status of Nanggo's patterns, which are classified as 'just a little old', pales in comparison to what the Iban call their 'original' patterns (*buah berasal*). These patterns are truly old (*tuai bendar*), having been passed down from long ago (*beturun ari munya*) from long-dead ancestors (*orang kelia*). Old patterns have proven their power over and over again as generations of weavers gain first-hand experience of this power by falling sick, and requiring potent charms, when making them. The power of these patterns and the validity of their titles have thus become an established fact. What is significant here is that pattern and title have been passed down together in an unbroken line (*benama beturun*). Such patterns are said to have a known pedigree (*nemu tusut sida*).

Titles

Most traditional patterns are non-pictorial and, therefore, it is not apparent, in the first instance, why they should be called 'honey bear' or 'tiger-cat'. When asking informants why a pattern is called such and such, the answer is, 'It is just the name, the same as I am called Rose, she Bidah, and so on'. Pattern titles function in the same way

as the proper names of persons. And just as a person can be called 'John' without 'looking like' John, a pattern can be called 'honey bear' without picturing the animal. Proper names and pattern titles are metaphors, where A stands for B by arbitrary association (Leach 1976:11-21). What this means in practical terms is that names cannot be guessed. A pattern's title cannot be learned from its motifs and design features just as we cannot know a person's proper name from his facial features or physical appearance.

However, there is a difference between proper names of persons and pattern titles in that the latter are often assigned retrospectively after the pattern has found acceptance. Important patterns are also assigned praise names, or *julok*. Richards glosses *julok* as 'praise name', or 'title', usually in the form of a riddle and given to men for some feat of daring or peculiarity (1981:131). The Iban are very fond of inventing praise names. A full seven pages of Masing's record of an Iban chant are devoted to the telling of praise names by deities and mythical heroes (1981:292-9). Often, such names allude to bravery and success in war. Examples are the 'Fighting Cock with Red Plumage Speckled with Green' and 'The Night Flying Bat that Braves the Murk of the Waning Moon'. Others are 'The Unmovable Tree Stump', or, 'The War Canoe Filled with Looted Kettles of Brass'. Of course, deities and men are not thought to *look like*, or even 'represent', tree stumps and war canoes. Rather, their qualities as warriors are equated

with these images. Praise names employ metaphor, allegory and poetic hyperbole to recall a person's feats of bravery and to reflect his prestige and fame in poetic terms.

Pattern titles function in much the same way. They are assigned to reflect a pattern's relative power in poetic imagery and language. A title does not intend to say that a pattern 'is' (or depicts) a honey bear, but that the pattern's quality or power, is *like* that of a honey bear. This usage of praise names was made poignantly clear by one informant who, in exasperation at my persistent questioning, pointed at her somewhat plain daughter-in-law and said, 'If we call her *Kumang*, does that mean she *is Kumang*?' (to flatter women by addressing them as '*Kumang*' is common practice).

The subject matter of pattern titles is taken from legends, myths, and above all, from the chants. And it is to these we must turn in order to understand the context of the imagery which is being invoked. A pattern called 'ladder of clouds' remains simply a pretty image unless we know that *Lang*, god of war, and his family descend such a ladder on their way to attend a *gawai* held in their honour. Titles do not just borrow their imagery from the chant, they are also composed in similar language.

Language

The bards' chanting is the main focus of *gawai* celebrations and forms the backdrop to all other activities. Depending on the type of *gawai*, this chanting continues for several days and nights with only short interruptions as the bards, usually in groups of three or four, circle the shrine while beating time with a staff. The repetitive and mesmerizing sound of the chants is largely derived from the prescribed scheme of rhythm and rhyme and these are therefore of primary concern. As Masing notes, 'The internal rhyme is achieved by using words with the same sound in their final syllables, while the internal rhythm is achieved by using words with only two syllables' (1981:115). In order to create the required assonance, words are often altered, while others are inserted that are perfectly meaningless apart from providing the right sound (Harrisson and Sandin 1966:75). Jensen makes the same point. He talks of 'largely meaningless words with decorative intent' (1974:65); while Barrett and Lucas say that the characteristic quality of the chants is that they contain 'nonsensical words' (1993:595 n.14).

The inclusion of meaningless words for assonance does not make for a clear message. Often the meaning is obscured intentionally. Iban are very fond of speaking in riddles and parables. In order to entertain their audience, bards often include witty verses, called *ramban*, to replace the

formal refrain (Masing 1981:122). These verses contain sexual jokes composed in obscure metaphorical terms, victimizing the women of the longhouse (cf. Barrett and Lucas 1993:573-4).

At times, the use of hidden language is obligatory. As discussed earlier, the rules of *jelungan* specifically prohibit the use of direct and clear speech if the event in question is to succeed. The same applies for the chants. The objective of the chants, and the *gawai* of which they are part, is to weaken the enemy before an actual attack is to take place. The chants are employed as 'a formidable weapon' and constitute the 'most potent of curses or malediction' which are hurled at the enemy (Masing 1981:131-2). The potency and efficacy of Iban chants is based on the notion that the spoken word, in certain contexts, can effect the course of events. One aspect of words of power is that they employ hidden language. As Masing writes, important subjects must be referred to obliquely, using metaphors and similes (1981:205). Understanding hidden speech is not regarded as esoteric knowledge (cf. Barrett and Lucas 1993:575). Bards and shamans may be more versed in the use and interpretation of deep vocabulary, but this knowledge is not secret and is open to anyone.

The principles outlined here apply also to the composition of pattern titles. In some of the oldest titles, the

emphasis is entirely on sound, assonance and rhythm, rather than on the meaning of the words. Obscure language is obligatory for titles which refer to powerful concepts. The imagery and metaphors of pattern titles are not secret, or exclusive to a female world of cloth. Rather, they are part of the general repertoire of the chants and other forms of poetry. For some praise names an entire passage may be lifted from the chants, while others include at least some stock phrases. The chants are therefore a vital source for understanding the context of the imagery employed in pattern titles and I will make frequent use of this source in the following account.

Arrangement of the material

The arrangement of the vast amount of material which I collected posed some problems. As Haddon (1936) and Gill (1971) before me, my initial inclination was to opt for clear categories. Haddon ordered designs according to their names and arranged these under the headings anthropomorphs, zoomorphs, phyllomorphs and objects in daily use. Gill ordered motifs by their shape which she divided into the five categories of figures, lozenges, dentates, zigzags and stripes (1968:169).

Tempting as such clear categories may be, both arrangements are arbitrary and do not take into account the two points

which, to the Iban, are of primary concern: age and rank. Since most old patterns are high-ranking, a chronological ordering automatically includes a sequence from high to low rank. It is for this reason that I have opted for this particular arrangement. With a chronological ordering, other categories fall into place as well. Today's patterns are mostly figurative and less difficult to execute whereas traditional coiled patterns are technically much more demanding. A chronological ordering therefore incorporates a sequence from non-pictorial and difficult to figurative and less demanding patterns.

I deviate from this framework occasionally in order to pursue a particular argument. I begin by discussing two categories which do not quite fit the basic chronological order. These are what I call 'archaic' pattern names, followed by a group of ancient figurative patterns. Both types of patterns are found in all Iban areas.

Archaic names

What I have chosen to call 'archaic' pattern names are of great antiquity and it is these names which are used in the chants when *pua* cloths are mentioned. In the chants, these names tend to be prefixed with *bali* or *ampang*, or both. *Bali* is distinct from *bali'* (with a glottal stop), meaning

to 'change', whereas *bali* without the glottal stop has no meaning or function besides being the first component of these names. *Ampang* and *bali*, when used as prefixes for pattern names, are best translated as 'pattern' or 'cloth' (Richards 1981:24), because this is what they refer to in this context. The terms are interchangeable or may be used in conjunction if it fits the required assonance and rhythm of a given stanza. The two highest archaic titles are *lebur api* and *menyeti*. These do not denote a particular pattern, but serve as *general indicators* of rank.

Lebur api

Lebur is 'heat' and *api*, 'fire'. When applied to cloth, the two words may best be translated as 'flaming red'. *Lebur api* refers to the depth of red colour and not to a particular pattern. The title indicates that the *pua* in question has been dyed to a deep *engkudu* red and hence is accorded high rank. Depth of dye depends on the proper application of mordants in the *ngar* ritual, the highest achievement to which a weaver can aspire. These are some of the connotations which are being invoked by the term *lebur api*, none of which are contained in the words 'heat' and 'fire'.

In *gawai antu*, the festival for the dead, *lebur api* is not a mark of distinction for powerful cloths but for the weaver who has woven such cloths. At the *gawai*, bamboo

baskets (*garong*) are plaited for every person who has died since the last rite was held. These baskets are differently shaped or embellished depending on the deceased's social standing and prestige (Sandin 1980:54,55). The highest-ranking basket for women called *lebur api* is red in colour. Appropriately, it is reserved for women who have reached the highest level of accomplishment: the mastery of the *ngar* ritual.

Lebur api can be attached to any pattern or cloth of high rank, which traditionally would have always been dyed with *engkudu*. Jabu (1991:81-2) also connects the term to colour, but adds that only cloths made by the *sungkit* technique (see appendix B) are called *lebur api*. I presume that Jabu's data were provided by one male informant from the Krian who had given the same information to me on a separate occasion (the data were not confirmed by anyone else). While it is true that old *sungkit* cloths are called *lebur api*, this is because of their colour and not because of the technique. Today, *sungkit* cloths are made with store-bought thread of different colours, and such cloths are not called *lebur api*.

Menyeti

Menyeti is an intriguing pattern name of great antiquity.

Its very sound invites the search for profundity. Harrison and Sandin grappled with the term, which has no literal meaning; they wrote, 'This has a deep meaning, and we have not found an old woman who can adequately explain it today' (1966:187). They go on to lament that Howell and Bailey just have it as 'the best kind' (1900:103). What Harrison and Sandin do not consider is that this may in fact be the basic meaning of *menyeti*. It serves as an indicator for 'the best kind' of *pua* pattern. This is the meaning it has today as it apparently did ninety years ago when Howell and Bailey compiled their dictionary. *Menyeti* is a collective term for the finest patterns and is not associated with any one pattern in particular. Richards' entry gives precisely this meaning, saying it is a 'fine ritual cloth' (1981:216).

Menyeti may derive from Malay *seti*, 'satin' (Wilkinson 1932:1094), or 'silk' (Kamus Dewan 1991:1194). Richards confirmed a possible derivation of Iban *menyeti* from *seti* (p.c. 1994). It is more than likely that the Iban came into contact with and were influenced by Indian *patola* cloths at some point in the past (Buhler and Fischer 1979:293; for details, see appendix B). In many parts of Indonesia, *patola* cloths are regarded as sacred heirlooms. It is feasible that *menyeti* was originally attached to such silk cloths and later on came to denote any prestigious cloth or pattern. Nevertheless, this connection is not suggested by Iban informants today. Instead, the term *menyeti* is said to

have no literal meaning other than being an indicator of high-ranking patterns and cloths. The obtuseness of the term does not distract, but adds to its mystery and hence, power. Archaic titles like *menyeti* and *lebur api* derive their powerful associations from the depth of meaning, rather than from the literal meaning of the words. Barrett and Lucas (1993:591) come to much the same conclusion regarding the *pagar api* shrine (literally, 'fence of fire') which is erected by the shaman for healing rites. They write:

The puzzle of the *pagar api* has prompted ethnographers to take various speculative leaps in order to locate its "real" meaning, but in doing so, they have lost sight of the fact that the name of the shrine is itself an enigma. This, indeed, is its dominant meaning. Iban explicitly assert that although the *pagar api* has to do with fences and fires, they do not know what it means because the name is too deep. Hence it is the very mystery of this term which captures the Iban imagination (Barrett and Lucas 1993:591; cf. Barrett 1993:253).

To summarize, two of the oldest rank referents, *lebur api* and *menyeti*, are obtuse terms whose depth of meaning is intricately tied up with their level of rank. Significantly, these epithets are general names and are known in all

Iban areas. Often, the terms are combined or added to other archaic names.

When archaic names appear in the chants, they are not chosen because of their significance as rank referents but because of their sound. At times, the two concerns coincide and a named cloth appears in its appropriate context. *Menyeti* is synonymous with *pua* cloths of highest rank, which, in the following excerpt, fittingly are associated with the reception of trophy heads, the most prestigious ritual occasion of all:

Yet your mother would not open the bundles of her best *bali menyeti* blankets, which is the traditional way of welcoming back from war (Sandin 1966a:35).

This coming together of proper use and fitting rhyme is rare. In most cases, the significance of archaic names cannot be deduced from the context in which they appear in the chants. The major concern seems to be that they fit the required rhyme. Sather comes to a similar conclusion regarding the names of different strains of rice. He writes, 'The choice of names referred to in the invocation appears to be chiefly a matter of poetic interest' (1985:34 n.43).

The chants

The chants of *gawai* are the main corpus of Iban oral literature. *Gawai* celebrations focus on these invocatory chants which narrate the journey of the gods to the ritual held in their honour. The chants have significance on more than one level. They are a record of traditional Iban life and cultural values. They provide a detailed record of the entire cosmos of deities and of the lands they inhabit. The chants are also an entertaining tale recounting the adventures of well-known heroes and even today they continue to be appreciated by people of all ages. In discussing titles, I frequently refer to crucial plot scenes and therefore begin with a brief outline of the main story. This outline is based on the *gawai amat* recorded by Freeman in 1949 (Masing 1981:ii).

The story begins in the Iban longhouse. When it is discovered that *Lang Singalang Burong* has not been invited, two heroes of *Panggau* are chosen as messengers. On their way to *Lang's* house, they pass the lands of many supernatural beings. They traverse the domains of the Spirit of the Shield and of *Tedong*, the water snake. They pass the land inhabited by a 'gigantic crocodile' and 'the abode of a snake whose tail touches the sky' (p.192), just to name a few. Of each they ask in vain :

Have you seen the seed of the shrine decorated

with tassels of human hair?

Have you seen the 'seed' which is red like a
blossoming flower?

But no-one has seen the trophy head they are seeking and they finally reach *Lang's* house at the Towering Ridge in the sky. Upon receiving the invitation, *Lang* summons his sons-in-law with a drum. Getting ready to join the celebration, *Lang's* daughters refuse to go unless they can bring as a gift a fresh trophy head still dripping with blood. Hearing this, *Lang* and his sons-in-law make off on a foray to snatch a trophy head from the domain of *Bengkong*, whose name is a reference to the rattan frame for head trophies. On their victorious return the warriors are welcomed by the women with great ceremony. With their prize secured, *Lang's* party departs for the feast on earth. On their journey across the sky, they pass many mythical lands, such as the land of the 'young man who never fails..' (p.233) and the abode of *Suri Ai*, the 'rippling water by the rapids' (p.235). Finally they reach the door in the sky which *Lang*, after his sons-in-law try in vain, opens with one thrust of his spear. They descend the rainbow ladder, surrounded by drifting clouds. The party proceeds, inviting other deities they meet on the way. *Remaung*, the tiger spirit, joins to eat the offerings on the roof top. Finally *Lang* and his family reach the longhouse on earth. They bathe and dress in their best finery before entering. The Iban hosts re-

ceive their illustrious guests with due honours. A pig is sacrificed, its liver read as an omen and then the festivities begin. When *Lang* is asked to dance, the gift slips out of its basket and falls on the floor. The women recoil in horror, exclaiming that it is not the shining thing of gold it was made out to be but 'ghastly like a bat cooked over an open fire' (p.308). Being mocked by the women, the head begins to cry. After a long succession of women who nurse and try to console the trophy head, it is the shaman who discovers the reason for its distress: the skull wants to be planted. A sword is forged and *Lang* splits the trophy head to reveal all kinds of seed. Aided by a number of ogres, *Lang's* party then clears the virgin forest for swiddens. What ensues is an allegory of headhunting in which, at the end of the farming cycle, it is not rice but a crop of heads that is harvested. The 'rice' having been stored away in the loft, cotton seed is planted. From this thread female spirits weave a war jacket which is presented to the sponsor of the *gawai*.

Ancient figurative patterns.

There are three ancient figurative patterns of major importance: serpents, crocodiles and large squatting human figures. These are considered 'old' patterns which have been passed down from long ago. All three patterns are common throughout Southeast Asia with similar significance

and are therefore not exclusively Iban. Unlike traditional Iban patterns, they involve figurative depiction. Due to this fact, it seems reasonable to discuss them separately. I begin by giving the mythological framework of these figures in Iban thought.

Serpents (*nabau*)

In Borneo, snakes are closely associated with dragons, or *naga*, which are female and related to the Underworld, as opposed to Upperworld, hornbills and maleness (King 1985:129-32; Sellato 1989:44-6). As in other parts of the archipelago, serpents, or pythons, are associated with the beginning of time and the origin of certain customs (cf. Geirnaert 1991:37; Adams 1979:87-104). In one Iban myth, a large python is killed after lowering itself from the sky at night and despoiling the rice fields. It is subsequently eaten, an offence which causes the Deluge (Nyuak 1906:17; Jensen 1974:76). In general, however, serpents are associated with the Underworld. The door between this world and the land of the dead is guarded by the Worm Queen, *Bunsu Belut*, who is a serpent (Richards 1981:39). On the journey to the land of the dead, the deceased must pass through this door which can only be opened by its guardian.

None of these connotations are cited by Iban weavers today.

Rather, on cloth, images of serpents are connected with the heroes of *Panggau*. Not so long ago in Iban mythological terms, the people of *Panggau* lived together with the Iban. When *Keling's* father acquired the power of invisibility from a cobra, many joined him and removed to *Panggau* and *Gelong* just below the heavens, whereas the Iban migrated to the Merakai river. The longhouse of *Panggau* is thought to be so close to the world of humans that the people of *Panggau* need no special invitation for a *gawai*. When hearing the beating of the gongs, they, as a matter of course, arrive to join in the festivities.

The people of *Panggau* are the culture heroes of Iban folklore. *Keling* and his wife *Kumang* incorporate ideal male and female traits. Being invisible in their human form, they appear at will as snakes. Snakes therefore are symbols of idealized heroes whom the Iban strive to emulate. At the beginning of their chant, the bards flatter the host's sons by likening them to cobras:

Stand aside then, you who though small, are already
the kindred of heroes.

So that you will not be harmed by my richly-worked
warrior's jacket;

Or my staff of tensile bamboo,

Should I fail to observe your diminutive selves.

Once, as though in a cradle of rattan,

You were carried deep in the womb of your mother.

At birth, wonder-working infant that you were, you
crawled in the smallest of bowls;
Rubbed with the juice of betel,
And sprinkled with the grated root of yellow
turmeric,
When you cried or whimpered,
Your doting mother, enfolding you as in a garment,
Likened you to a resplendant cobra,
His tail resting on an ornate mat,
His body coiled about a priceless jar,
His head rearing from a mountain peak
As he assails, with yawning jaws, the azure skies.
(Masing 1981:178-9)

Pua with patterns of serpents (*nabau*) evoke images of power as embodied by the snake deities of *Panggau*. *Nabau* patterns always have a recognizable representation of a snake and they usually include small motifs of birds or lizards which represent food (fig.3). These filler motifs are indicators of high rank and no weaver would dare to omit these offerings for fear of being struck down by the pattern's power. One favourite serpent pattern features a pair of *nabau* (*nabau begembar*; fig.4). Traditional Saribas snake patterns are called 'The Banded Krait, and the *Naga* stretched out straight' (*tedong bulan, naga ngeraran*; figs.5,6). The Banded Krait is the earthly form in which *Kumang* is said to appear (Richards 1981:170).

Crocodiles (baya)

For Southeast Asian peoples, crocodiles have special significance and the Iban are no exception. Again, it is useful to look at the role they assume in myth and legends.

Long ago, all the deities lived together at Tembawai, 'the old house site'. After a quarrel over a fruit tree, they dispersed in various directions. *Singalang Burong*, god of war, went to the Towering Ridge in the sky. The father of *Ribai*, the Crocodile King, migrated to lands across the sea and *Keling's* father to *Panggau*. *Ribai* and the people of *Panggau* have remained enemies to this day, and, if both are invited to attend a *gawai* feast, ritual precautions are necessary to prevent a renewed outbreak of hostilities. When that point is reached in the chants, *Lang* reminds the antagonists of their common ancestry which reconciles them for the duration of the festivities.

Ribai, the Crocodile King, is seen as a relative of the Iban as well. In this role he is invoked for rituals protecting the *padi* in which clay images are placed in the farm to devour pests (Richards 1981:30). In the chants, crocodiles are generally associated with fertility and power. The host and hostess are likened to 'massive' crocodiles and 'prolific' hens (Masing 1981:167). Like serpents and pythons, crocodiles are also used to refer to deities and to men of renown (Masing 1981:287).

However, just as the Crocodile King is both friend and foe for the deities of *Panggau*, so is the crocodile an ambiguous figure for the Iban. With motorized boats and cargo ships plying the major rivers today, crocodiles have disappeared from their shores. Apparently this was not the case as little as thirty or forty years ago when masses of crocodiles gathered at the mouths of Baleh tributaries. Since rivers are the major means of travel and source of water supply, contact with crocodiles was constant and posed an ever-present and very real threat. According to legend, men and crocodiles used to fight each other until a truce was finally reached (Richards 1981:30). Since then crocodiles are not hunted except in retaliation (Perham 1896:I,187). However, revenge is only carried out for what is seen as an unprovoked attack.

As elsewhere in Southeast Asia, crocodiles are punishment animals. For the Iban, crocodiles assume a position as guardians of proper conduct, especially regarding the custom of *puni* which requires that food, once offered, must at least be touched if the offer is declined. Anyone who fails to do so, risks spiritual retribution in the form of physical injury or death. It is during this time that people tend to be taken by crocodiles. For the Iban, food is of course synonymous with rice. Enforcing the respectful treatment of rice connects back to the crocodile's role as protector of *padi*.

Another connection combines the threatening aspect of crocodiles with human fertility and sexuality. Many stories tell of crocodiles changing into men at will. In one of these stories, two handsome visitors appear each night to dance with the women and girls of the longhouse. The men of the community grow jealous and burn the crocodile skins the strangers have discarded for the dance. It is since this day that the members of this longhouse are prone to attack by crocodiles.

However, there is a more pernicious connection between Iban women and crocodiles. Crocodiles may appear as incubi (*antu buyu*), seducing women by impersonating their husbands. Succumbing to such a spirit may cause miscarriage or death in childbirth. The services of specialist shamans are required to dispose of *antu buyu* (see above chapter 2). One story is told of how the cadaver of a crocodile was found below the house after the performance of the rite.

Creating crocodile patterns (figs.7,8) is prestigious, but not many weavers opt for this chance to prove themselves and today it is quite rare to find recently made examples of it. One reason given was that many families, or even entire longhouse communities, are prohibited from weaving the pattern, on account of a relative having been taken by a crocodile in the past.

Ogres (*Nising*)

The *Nising* pattern is similar to the squatting figures which are such a familiar theme throughout Southeast Asia and Indonesia (Barbier and Newton 1988). *Nising* figures are a traditional Iban pattern and not to be confused with modern figurative patterns which usually depict humans (for details, see appendix A). The Iban version shows the squatting figure frontally and, in old examples, the head consists of concentric sextagonal rings (fig.9). The actual 'face' is often reduced to a gaping, toothy mouth-like shape (fig.10).

The *Nising* pattern incorporates a number of interrelated images and concepts. In the chants, *Nising* (or *Beduru*) is the enemy of *Lang* whose head is struck off again and again to be brought as a gift to the *gawai*. In the Baleh, *Nising* is called *Bengkong*, a name which refers to the rattan ring-frame by which trophy heads are hung on the verandah (Masing 1981:219-21). *Nising* is the guardian of such clusters of trophy heads. His home is at the 'edge of the red sky' (Sandin 1977:90-1). In the chants, raids are as a rule carried out in this far-off realm at the 'margin of the crimson sky' (Masing 1981:356). *Nising* is also a member of the family of *antu gerasi*, ferocious demon spirits of the forest, described as hairy giants who prey on humans and hunt them with their hounds (Richards 1981:104). Conceptually, these forest demons are identified with the Ibans'

real-life enemies who also live at the 'horizon', beyond the domain of friendly and related longhouse communities (cf. McKinley 1976; Davison and Sutlive 1991:168).

All of these - *Nising*, forest demons and real-life enemies - may become allies under certain circumstances. As the Iban migrated into new territory, they drove out the existing inhabitants, or absorbed them. The nomadic Bukitan, for example, intermarried with the Iban and gradually adopted their language and way of life (Pringle 1970:39). In the early stages of this relationship, the Bukitan remained on the fringes of Iban territory, thus literally living at the 'horizon'. At times, they acted as guides and allies to the Iban, while still remaining the object of occasional head-hunting raids (Pringle 1970:39).

Antu gerasi, or demon spirits, may similarly become spirit helpers on rare occasions. In this role, they are powerful allies. The dual role of *Nising* as ally and enemy is clearly spelled out in the chants when *Lang* employs the help of *Nising* and other ogres to forge the sword needed for splitting the trophy head (Masing 1981:326). At a later point in the plot, *Nising* takes on the task of tasting the new *padi*, a synonym for a crop of human heads (Masing 1981:408-9):

A clump of saplings, a tree beside the pool:

The early ripening *padi* having been reaped, *Lang*

seeks someone to taste it.

Lang calls to the mountains from whence the
lightning strikes,
To *Nising*, the ogre of scorching heat, with but a
single short lock of hair.

'How could you, Uncle *Lang*, ask such a one to taste
our new *padi*?'

'Can you not see, kinsman Ketupong, his four
fingered hands,
It is he who makes it his business to strike at the
fully pregnant wombs of Uma Kelap women to bring
about abortion.'

A voice is heard calling to a dog that has a log of
wood about its neck;
A voice is heard calling for a dog with a striped
pelt.

Rain falls as *Nising*, the ogre of the dark rays of
the end of day,
Calls to his dog, Mansai, about whose loins a cobra
is coiled,
Who is to join him in tasting the new *padi*.
With his fingernails he plucks some grains from a
winnowing tray,
Puts them between his jaws that are as large as the
ribs of a flat bottomed boat,
Tastes them with his teeth as big as wild bananas.
His chewing sounds like the scraping of bamboo;
The crunching is as loud as the sound of a great

drum.

'Oh, it is true, that Uncle *Nising* most rapidly
devours our padi,

For his pastime is to press down with the ends of
his fingers on pregnant women of Uma Lesong
Kayans to bring about abortion.'

The fact that enemies may serve as allies is exploited in ritual. In the Saribas, one headhunting *gawai* is named after *gerasi* and features a statue of a demon hunter (Sandin 1977:13; 1980:42). The statue is erected on a pole at the culmination of the rite. Similar to the hornbill effigies of *gawai kenyalang*, it is sent on its way to inflict injury on the enemy. Similar *gawai* in the Baleh use statues called *Junan*, another ogre figure, and *Baketan tunggal*, or 'solitary' Baketan (Freeman 1975:280). The Baketan (or Bukitan) people formerly inhabited the Saribas and were absorbed by the advancing Iban (Richards 1981:23).

Junan and *Baketan* also appear as *pua* patterns. Both are much more recent than the *Nising* pattern and often show realistic figures (fig.11). In some examples, the head still retains its hexagonal shape but the face has become more realistic, clearly showing a pair of eyes, nose and mouth (fig.12). The progression from an abstract representation of a mask-like face to a realistic modern one is a strong argument against Haddon's evolutionary theory dis-

cussed in chapter 6.

The bards' chanting sends the carved effigies to wreak havoc among the enemy. The pattern's praise name similarly portrays a solitary Baketan crying for the serpent's liver, a synonym for the trophy head.

*Baketan Tunggal tujuh jengkal tulang balakang
rangai rangai ngiga indai.
rangau rangau diau di pulau
pinta bai ka indai atau nabau ngeraran.*

A solitary Baketan, seven spans across the back,
crying and crying for his mother;
sobbing and sobbing all alone,
asking for his mother to bring him the serpent's
liver.

(trans. assisted by Richards 1989)¹

Yet another stage of headhunting *gawai* is called *gajah meram*, or 'broody elephant'. Appropriately, an elephant effigy forms the focal point (Gomes 1911:215). Sandin, however, does not mention an elephant in his account of the *gajah meram* feast; instead, the rite is characterized by a pole decorated with skulls and palm leaves (*isang*; 1980:42). Gill further points out that a carved wooden *naga* or dragon figure in the Sarawak Museum is identified as *gajah*, a fact she calls a 'puzzle in Sea Dayak iconography'

(1968:147).

The puzzle can be solved by going back to our original *Nising* pattern which some people also call *gajah meram*, irrespective of the fact that it shows a demon figure, rather than an elephant. On a jacket featured in Haddon, one anthropomorphic figure is similarly tagged as *gajah meram* (1982:43). As for the *gawai*, the name is not to be taken literally. *Gajah*, or elephant, at least in this context, is a metaphor for powerful enemies, or allies, as the case may be. The praise name of the *pua* pattern contains a veiled curse and incitement to headhunting:

*Gajah Meram pagi hari dederam
ngalah ka tansang Rajah Geruna.*

Gajah Meram growls in the morning
and destroys the nest of *Rajah Geruna*.
(trans. assisted by Richards 1989)

To summarize, *Nising* is the possessor as well as the guardian of the headhunter's most coveted prize: the trophy head. He is the enemy whose head is struck off and, at the same time, the one who can relinquish a trophy head from his unlimited supply.

The three patterns discussed in this section are traditional, titled patterns of high rank. They differ from the

majority of old Iban patterns in that they are figurative and depict the serpents, crocodiles and ogres referred to in their names. For non-figurative patterns there is no such obvious visual connection. In addition, such patterns are regional and the Baleh and Saribas areas must therefore be discussed separately.

Baleh

The Baleh region is culturally related to other areas such as the Ulu Ai proper from whence the Baleh Iban migrated, and the Katibas which they passed *en route*. In the following account, references to the Baleh region, unless otherwise indicated, apply to these other areas as well.

Coil patterns (*buah begelong*)

The oldest and most valued patterns are 'coil patterns', or *buah begelong*. These are for the most part non-figurative, or, as Iban weavers say, they 'do not have pictures' (*nadai gambar*). If figures of birds, lizards or anthropomorphs are included, these are space-fillers which supplement the main grid (*buah indu*) of the pattern. Weavers say that coil patterns are the 'original' patterns of the Iban (*buah berasal*) which have been passed down for many generations

from a long time ago (*dulu kelia*). The highest mark of approval is to say that a pattern's coils are small and plentiful because such a cloth is not only pleasant to look at but also requires a maximum of expertise to make. These factors of age, aesthetics and technical requirements contribute to coil patterns being regarded as superior.

Not all coil patterns are of equally high rank. Some are the most powerful patterns of all, bearing titles which attest to their rank and prestige, while others can be made by novice weavers. Nevertheless, as a group, they are in a class of their own and even a low-ranking coil pattern has more status than a modern figurative one with a resounding title.

One noteworthy quality of coil patterns is that, as a class, they are credited with the capacity to incite to headhunting, or *peransang*. That women often were the principal instigators of headhunting is well-documented in the literature. Thus Ling Roth writes, 'From all accounts there can be little doubt that one of the chief incentives to getting heads is the desire to please the women' (1896:II,163). Similarly, Perham has noted that women are 'the prime movers of head-taking in many instances' (1896:II,181).

References to women urging on their menfolk are frequent in the chants. Here the implication is that to gain courage

men depend on women's insistent prodding. Thus, at the gate of heaven, when *Lang's* sons-in-law fail to open the gate, the women mock them and say 'It is true that you men are brave, but only when urged on by we women' (Masing 1981:255). In another version, *Lang's* daughter laments that if only her elder brother *Aji* were there, he surely would succeed where all others fail. *Lang's* sons-in-law retort that *Aji* could well afford to be brave since he was 'urged on by the fair' (Nyuak 1914:527).

According to my informants, *pua* play a major role in goading men into action. The most compelling incidence, I was told, is the reception of trophy heads. Seeing how the most powerful cloths are used on this momentous occasion inspires others to aspire to similar honours. Significantly, the same cloths which instigate the taking of heads also provide a suitable container once the task has been accomplished. This close relationship between cloth and head-hunting is epitomized in the following lines :

Tungkus seratus lebor api,
Kena aku nyambut leka balang merai
gigi luncik jarang.

A bundle of a hundred fine red cloths
for me to use to receive the crying trophy head
with its teeth filed to wide points.
(trans. assisted by Richards 1989)

Titles meant to incite to headhunting tend to do so covertly and in obscure terms. The obligation to couch important concepts in veiled language of respect, is most apparent in references to the trophy head. In the above lines, the trophy head is referred to with the well known terms *leka balang*, literally, the 'round thing' (*leka*), shaped like a 'bottle' (*balang*; Richards 1981:24). In the following excerpt from the chants, the gods themselves comment on the veiled terms used to refer to trophy heads. We are at the point in the plot when *Lang* and two of his sons-in-law, *Ketupong* and *Beragai*, have just asked their wives to come along to the *gawai* celebration. The women accept the invitation on the condition that a new trophy head be procured to be brought as a gift.

"If we are to attend a feast where red
clouds form,
I will not go,
Until I have seen brains spattered all over the
jars,
Otherwise we'll be outwitted by the women of
Panggau, where deer abound."
"If you wish me to feast on fermented rice
In the land where waterfalls are found,
I will not go,
Until I have seen floating, amid the guests, ash
from the smoking of trophy heads,

Otherwise, we'll be outwitted by the clever women
of *Gelong*."

Entering the gallery, *Ketupong* enquires of his
father-in-law *Lang*:

"Why does my loved one, when intent on taking me
along to this feast of rice wine and cakes,
Speak to me in riddles ?

Why does my beloved, asks *Beragai*

When intent on taking me to this feast make such a
mystery of it?"

"Your wife," says *Lang*, "'does not refuse to go,
But she wants to take along the seed of a wild
palm."

"Your wife," says *Lang*, "does not decline to go,
To drink ginger wine in the land drenched in thick
mists,

But she wants a sesame seed to take along with
her."

(Masing 1981:204,205)

Of all the pattern titles intended to incite to headhunt-
ing, none is more compelling than the most powerful of all,
rang jugah, named after the trophy head itself and dis-
cussed next.

Coil patterns (small coils)

The trophy head pattern (*rang jugah*)

Rang jugah is the highest ranking of all Baleh patterns. It is senior, or 'older' (*tuai agi*), than all others and appropriately called the 'father' (*apai*), and even the 'king', or *raja*, of *pua* patterns. The cloths bearing this pattern are appropriate for the ritual reception of trophy heads. Only experienced weavers are allowed to make the pattern. A woman who says she has woven *rang jugah* is making a definitive statement about her rank as weaver. My main informant, Iba, often told me that she had completed the pattern twice, an accomplishment few women can claim.

The pattern is easily distinguished from other coil patterns due to a prominent lozenge motif in the first half of the cloth (figs.13,14). It is when tying this motif that certain rules and prohibitions apply. The weaver must prepare an eight-fold *piring* offering and may not interrupt the work until the motif has been completed. The title *rang jugah* is the highest rank referent and as such carries deep meaning. That *rang jugah* stands for 'trophy head' is common knowledge. As one of Freeman's informants said, *rang jugah* is the 'same as saying trophy head' (*baka seput antu pala*). A single poetic line provided by one of my informants elucidates the name's meaning:

Rang jugah nyawa nempuah bau sinang.

The trophy head whose mouth (or breath) emits a stench like a civet cat.

(trans. assisted by Richards 1989)

This, it must be noted, is not a praise name (*julok*). The line was quoted out of context and stems from an unspecified oral text. It refers to the stench of a rotting skull before it is cleaned. In former days, the smell was valid proof that the skull in question was a fresh one, and, as Brooke Low reports, was 'nowise offensive' to the Iban (1896:I,166). Significantly, *bau* means both 'stench' and 'scent' (Richards 1981:29).

The title's first component, *rang*, is easily understood. It means 'jaw' or 'jawbone' (Richards 1981:298). *Rang* is a *pars pro toto* term, standing for the entire skull or trophy head. *Jugah* is a man's name. A famous example is the late Tun Jugah of Merirai (Sutlive 1992). Jugah is well remembered today and informants always jokingly refer to him when discussing the meaning of *rang jugah*. The joke is that in the context of the pattern title, *jugah* is not the name of a person, and *rang jugah* does not refer to the jaw of a man named *Jugah*.

Most informants say that *jugah* is simply a component of the title which as a whole stands for 'trophy head'. Only one informant mentioned that *jugah* may refer to some kind of

large animal. Here *jugam*, or honey bear, springs to mind because its skull can be counted as a human head trophy. Masing, himself an Iban, considered this a feasible connection. However, when I put the idea to informants, all asserted that the name is *jugah*, not *jugam*, and that there is no hidden connection to honey bears (unfortunately, Masing's musings on this point, which he voiced during a visit to the National Gallery in Canberra, were taken at face value by Maxwell, who subsequently refers to *rang jugah* as the 'jaw of the honey bear'; 1990:145). There are other possible connections to explain the meaning of *jugah* and these are discussed in appendix C. Most of these, however, are speculative and, lacking explicit confirmation by Iban informants, probably will remain so. For our present argument, suffice to say that for Iban weavers and ritual experts, the title *rang jugah* has deep meaning and because of it, power.

Skull basket (*sempuyong*)

The skull basket pattern is said to be the younger brother of *rang jugah* and therefore is just a fraction lower in rank (*baroh mimit*). The two patterns are closely related with regard to name and pattern. Both feature a lozenge motif as the focal point in the lower half of the cloth (figs.15,16). *Sempuyong* are cone-shaped baskets made by

splitting and splaying the ends of bamboo. *Sempuyong* baskets serve as receptacles for offerings at *gawai*. Formerly they were used to receive trophy heads. Due to this association, the *sempuyong* pattern, just like *rang*, is a suitable receptacle for trophy heads. *Sempuyong* is also the name of one stage of headhunting *gawai* (cf. Freeman 1975:280)). In short, the pattern's title, like *rang*, is closely associated with trophy heads and headhunting in general.

It is quite common that two quite similar patterns are assigned titles with similar significance. This is done deliberately when patterns are being copied. When a pattern is changed sufficiently for it not to be considered a faithful copy of the original, then it is given a new name which reflects the affinity of the two patterns. Judging from this as well as other examples discussed below, it would seem that Iban weavers are very aware when they make significant changes in a pattern.

Creeper or vine pattern (*berinjan*)

Berinjan is one of the archaic pattern names used frequently in the chants. Although *rinjan* means 'steep', *berinjan* is said to have no particular meaning. To this one informant added that it is a playful term, associated with youth. Appropriately, *berinjan* is a common beginner's pattern (figs.17,18). Strictly speaking, *berinjan* is not a title

and will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Firefly (*sepepat*)

The firefly pattern derives its name from the speckled motifs which fill the main background grid. It has a strong identity which has been preserved over a long period of time. The pattern was already recorded by Haddon and clear examples of both old and recent manufacture are found in all Iban areas (figs.19,20,21). Again, due to its age and small coils, the pattern enjoys a certain prestige, but the name, like the previous example, is not a title (see next chapter).

Coil patterns (large coils)

Mythical Tiger (*remaung*)

Remaung, the mythical flying tiger, is a powerful and ferocious spirit. Aptly, in the chants, it is he who keeps guard over the *padi* bin with its new crop of trophy heads (Masing 1981:420). At *gawai*, offerings are placed on the roof to avoid his entering the house. *Remaung's* fearsome nature turns to advantage when he becomes a warrior's helping spirit. Accompanied by such an ally, the headhunter is assured of certain victory (cf. Freeman 1981:39,60n.48).

What is remarkable about the *remaung* pattern is that it is found in all upriver areas from Kalimantan to the Baleh, but is quite unknown in the Saribas. Due to its age and association with a powerful spirit, the *remaung* pattern is accorded high rank. The pattern's characteristic features are large spirals, referred to as 'whirls' (*buli*; figs.22,23). Even though these combine to form the shape of a face reminiscent of the tiger motif found on Kayan beaded caps (Nieuwenhuis 1907, plates 71-75), Iban weavers maintain that the pattern shows no visual representation of the tiger's head or body (*nadai tuboh, nadai pala*).

Whirlpool (*gumbang besimpan*)

Whirls, or *buli*, are also a design feature of the whirlpool pattern, literally, 'the wave that keeps' (*gumbang besimpan*). The title refers to the 'swirling waves' from whence potent charms are plucked (Masing 1981:181). In the chants charms are often found in this way:

Our crop of *padi* will become light and easy to reap
After having been sprinkled with fluid from the
failure-preventing charms,
Of the late Jarau, the gift of a white serpent,
plucked from the centre of a whirlpool.
(Masing 1981:404)

The whirlpool pattern is quite a recent invention and it is mentioned here only because of the visual similarity with the tiger pattern. Weavers say that both patterns have 'whirls', or *buli*. Both examples shown here (figs.24,25) were woven by Iba. In the second more recently made cloth, she retained the main structural elements, but changed the scale and style of some of these. Iba called this new interpretation *bebuli mulas*, which also means 'whirlpool'. As with the jaw and trophy head basket patterns above (*rang* and *sempuyong*), different terms are used to express similar ideas and these terms are attached to structurally related patterns.

Indai Abang's beater-in (belia Indai Abang)

This pattern is of comparable age with the last example and also includes the 'whirl' motif (figs.26,27). The *belia*, or beater-in, is the weaver's 'sword' and is often used as a symbol of her craft. The *belia* is tapered towards one end which is carved and this gives it the shape and appearance of a sword. Made of hard wood and polished to a high gloss through frequent use, it is one of the more attractive of a weaver's tools. When sitting at her loom, the weaver beats down the weft with a few strokes of this 'sword'. A swift weaver is recognized by the fast rhythm created by the sound of her beater-in. In the chants, the scene of

Meni weaving *Lang's* belt is described in detail (Masing 1981:354):

She presses against the back-strap of the loom,
She throws the shuttle, like a fish darting through
still-waters,
She slams down her weaving sword with the sound of
a bird pecking on wood;
As she uses it the whole house, right up to the
loft, shakes.

In the dirge chanted at wakes, the beater-in has an important ritual function. When the deceased's party reaches the Door of the Earth, only its keeper, the Earthworm (*Bunsu Belut*), can open the door for them. This she does with the aid of a weaver's sword and a porcupine quill (Sandin 1966a:51-2; Gana 1988:108).

The pattern's name, *belia Indai Abang* refers to the beater-in of *Indai Abang*, also known as *Kalinah*. She is *Keling's* sister and famous for her weaving skills. She appears in weavers' dreams to show them patterns of special beauty for them to copy. The pattern's alternative name is *gantong belia*, literally 'hang up the *belia*'. What is meant is that there is no need to do the weaving - it is accomplished as if by itself.

Ladder of clouds (*tangga remang*)

The 'ladder of cloud' pattern is ancient and is found in all Iban areas, including Kalimantan (figs.28,29). As mentioned earlier, the ladder of clouds is a well known image from the chants. It is this ladder that is used by *Lang* and his family to descend from the sky to attend the *gawai* held in their honour. The pattern is of low rank and hence a favourite of novice weavers.

Ripples of water (*Suri ai*)

This title takes us to a later point in the gods' journey when they traverse the land of the spirit called *Suri Ai*, or 'rippling water':

Tanjong nyurong beteku siku numpu ka ulu Tarusan

Sandang,

Lebak majak besalin ulu bekilong baka jaong buah

brang,

Menoa Suri Ai sanggah wong ai pandi mali langkang,

Laman Sebilit Langit salikau labong ukir bepayong

bepantak subang,

Bini Seri kaki kerangan Kelukau pala lepong,

Emperaja ari ujan laboh enda sapuloh gempong.

A long and crooked headland stretching to the
headwaters of Tarusan Sandang,
A valley criss-crossed by hundreds of streams like
the clustering fruits of palm,
The land of *Suri Ai*, the rippling water by the
rapids whose waters never run dry,
The abode of *Sebalit Langit*, with the intricately
patterned headdress,
His wife is *Seri*, the Edge of the pebbly beach, and
Kelukau, the head of the pool,
His sweetheart is the rain that falls in drops of
ten at a time.
(Masing 1981:235).

The pattern's praise name is lifted almost *verbatim* from
the chants:

Suri ai sangga wong, sebelit langit selikau labong.

Rippling water by the rapids, ripples in the sky
like a striped turban.

(trans. assisted by Richards 1989)

The pattern is fairly recent (fig.30); it dates from after
the turn of the century, as does the following example.
Both are of comparable rank.

Dry weather clouds (*sintau kemarau*)

The image of dry weather clouds evokes an important feature in the farming cycle. When the jungle has been felled for swiddens, streaky cirrus clouds (*sintau*) high in the sky foretell the coming of the short dry season which is crucial for a good burn (Richards 1981:350). If the dry period is too short or delayed, a bad harvest is certain.

The dominant structure of the pattern is an undulating grid of parallel lines, filled with black-circled red dots (fig.31). The motifs filling up the spaces of this grid can be changed (figs.32,33). In a much more recent cloth (fig.34), the grid is still vaguely adhered to, the spaces are filled with realistically styled 'scattered stars' (*bintang bertabur*), the 'man in the moon' (*Aki Ungkok*) and 'sleeping cats' (*maiau tindok*). This cloth demonstrates clearly the procession from a non-figurative, formal style to realistic depiction and pictorial story-telling.

Modern non-figurative patterns (1920-1950s)

The most outstanding feature of this group of patterns is that they are assigned lengthy praise names in verse form, or *julok*. *Julok* are a relatively recent phenomenon. As my informants pointed out repeatedly, traditional patterns like *rang* and *sempuyong* do not have *julok*. Ideally, the

julok of powerful patterns are provided by the gods in dreams. But *julok* can also be made up by the weaver, or by some other person. This is only done if the pattern in question is an attractive one and if it is admired by many people.

Creator deity (*Selempandai*)

The deity *Selempandai*, shortened to *Sempandai* or *Sempetai* in the Baleh, is the 'creator of matter and maker of men' (Richards 1981:332). He forges humans on his anvil as they are born into the world. He is also invoked in healing rites to re-make and thus to heal the patient. *Selempandai* is brother of *Lang* and lives in the heavens. The praise name describes his occupation:

Sempetai ngaga indai enda tembu-tembu.

Sempetah ngaga inda enda badu-badu.

The smith (who forges) men makes mothers and is
never done;

The blacksmith hammers out grandmothers without
ceasing.

(trans. Richards 1989)

The *Selempandai* pattern (fig.1) is only known in the Baleh

area and is quite unknown in the Ulu Ai, the place of origin of most Baleh Iban. It seems that the pattern did not exist prior to the latest migrations which took place in the 1870s. It can therefore be assumed that the pattern is not very old. In the Baleh it is considered one of the highest patterns but lacks the superior status of traditional coil patterns such as *rang* and *sempuyong*. The Selem-pandai pattern is notable because there is no realistic depiction of the deity after which it is named.

Falling dew (*Keleku ambun belabuh*)

The 'falling dew' pattern is of comparable age to subsequent examples in this section, all of which have titles encouraging men to excel as headhunters (*meransang*):

*Keleku ambun belaboh minta tutoh ke Raja Nyadoh
buah engkeramuh mansau sedan.*

*Kelekit gajai langit minta tumbit ke Raja Tindit
bukit ngambi nyadi emperan.*

The dew falling in waves is asking *Rajah Nyadoh*
to cut the fruit just ripe for picking.

The dew falling from the sky is asking
Rajah Tindit to flatten the land.

(trans. assisted by Richards 1989)

The dew pattern was invented by Nanggo from Entawau, Baleh, sometime before the 1950s. Nanggo is well remembered by the older women of her longhouse for several patterns she created, a fact which was also recorded by Freeman in 1950. The 'dew' pattern is the most difficult of these because of the multi-coloured bands that criss-cross it at all angles (fig.35). All of Nanggo's patterns have titles with bluntly descriptive incitement to headhunting. One of these is the 'iron hook' pattern (fig.36):

*Sempetong isi rantong nyabak semidak ransing rong
rong minta umpan perut Badang.*

*Sempetong bisi rantai nyabak semidak ransing
rerangai minta umpan kerigai rusak marang.*

The iron fish hook is crying, weeping and howling,
proudly demanding the stomach of a Badang for
bait.

The iron hook is crying, weeping and softly
pleading,
proudly demanding the ribs and both flanks for
bait.

(trans. assisted by Richards 1989)

Nibong palm (kandong nibong)

The mythical *ranyai* palm is said to grow in *Sebayan*, the

land of the dead. Its fruit are charms and skulls which only the bravest warriors dare to cut down as the palm sways this way and that. As Masing notes, the temporary shrine erected at *gawai*, also called *ranyai*, is often referred to as *nibong*, a thorny palm, with skulls as its fruit, literally, the 'seed of the shrine' (*igi ranyai*; 1981:73). The title of the *nibong* pattern clearly spells out the Iban perception of the shrine as such a palm.

*Kandong nibong berayah, tangkai ranyai besembah,
kekelah ke rumah, kekelah ke tanah
ka nungkat ke tiang ngani nimang.*

The *nibong* palm, leaping up and down (in a warrior's dance),
fruit stalk of the shrine that bows down;
straining to the house, now to the ground;
(Thorny palm) that supports as a pillar,
and watches over the singing of the chant.
(trans. Richards 1989).

Another version of the title is more explicit about its intention to incite (*meransang*):

*Buah tukang tajah, tangkai ranyai besembah,
Nyawa kakelah ka ngalah ka rumah Taman Puyang.
Kandong nibong bepasang, tankai ranyai merayang,*

*Nyawa rarengong ka ngerentap ka tembong Negeri
Badang.*

The 'skull' (on a) twig of the 'dipping palm'
shrine,
murmuring (and asking) to destroy the Kayan
longhouse.
(Prickly) palm full of fruit for the snatching;
twig of the 'shrine' palm so (broad and) shady,
roaring to demolish the villages in the country of
the Badang.
(trans. Richards 1989).

The pattern of the *nibong* palm clearly depicts a tree with branches laden with trophy heads (fig.37); and it resembles the skull-tree patterns from the Indonesian island of Sumba, for example. In the Iban version, the warrior, who is the intended victim of the pattern's request, is shown in full war gear below the branches of skulls. The palm is further representative of the *ranyai* shrine itself. Thus the pattern points also to the future *gawai* when the warrior is honoured after his triumphant return.

The trophy head basket of *Mata Hari* (*sempuyong Mata Hari*)

The pattern is named after *Mata Hari*, a famous Baleh hero.
The 'trophy head basket of *Mata Hari*' (*sempuyong Mata*

Hari), refers to a headhunting *gawai* of the same name (Freeman 1975:280). The pattern's praise name combines several images of success in war:

*Sempuyong Mata Hari neradang tisi langit nyang,
Manok ijaup empelasi sabong di Miri menang di
kelang.*

Sempuyong Mata Hari brightens the edge of the sky,
the fighting cock with green feathers wins the
fight at Miri.

(trans. Richards 1989)

I documented this pattern in 1986 in a longhouse on the Mujong river (fig.38). The main design elements resemble the shape of *sempuyong* baskets. The interior of some of these 'baskets' is filled with four circular objects. Monica Freeman made a drawing of a similar pattern in the same longhouse in 1950. It is not clear who copied the pattern from whom. My informant, Kajut, claimed to have copied it from Freeman's informants. They in turn claimed that Kajut made the first copy from a cloth which was originally borrowed from the Gaat river. In any case, the Freemans recorded the pattern's name as *bengkong*, which, as Freeman writes, is the 'frame from which *antu pala* are suspended on the *ruai*'. In short, although the name has been changed, the associations with headhunting remain.

Both terms refer to trophy heads suspended in a container, either a rattan frame or bamboo basket. In the version recorded by the Freemans, the heads are shown realistically (fig.39). This is yet another example of a pattern being intentionally changed in the process of copying. As for the whirlpool and trophy head patterns discussed above, the new pattern receives a new name with similar meaning.

As we have seen, after the turn of the century and especially since the 1950s, pattern names have become more wordy. At first sight the wording of *julok* appears to be full of obscure and esoteric metaphors. However, as soon as their purpose is understood, it is easy to identify the recurring theme of incitement to headhunting (*peransang*). *Rajah Nyadoh* and *Tindit* of the *keleku* pattern above, are titles used to address the sponsor of the *gawai* (Masing 1981:437). In the *julok*, *Tindit* and *Rajah Nyadoh* are asked to perform certain tasks which are spelled out clearly. They must 'flatten the land', cut the 'wild fruit', and procure bait in the shape of 'intestines' and 'ribs'. They are left in no doubt where these items can be found. They must travel to the land of the Badang, traditional enemies of the Iban in the upper Rejang. The only item that is still not named outright is the trophy head.

With the exception of the *nibong* palm pattern, the examples in this group still remain largely non-figurative. In the next and last category of Baleh patterns, we move to a

literal and figurative presentation not just with reference to the names, but also to the patterns themselves.

Modern figurative patterns (from 1940 onwards)

In this section we come to the large figurative patterns that have become so popular in recent years. These figures usually represent humans and are appropriately called *pua Iban*. Others specifically refer to a particular hero or warrior. One well-known figurative pattern honours the pioneers who moved into the Baleh river basin at the turn of the century in fierce resistance to the policies of the Brooke Raj:

*Bujang mali balang tau nyerang numbang ke menoa,
Antu mali lebu ke ngeruboh tuan Raja.*

Young man never without war trophies, skilled in
battle, who over-runs the (enemy) country;
Demon never empty-handed, who pulls down the
Rajah's fort.

(trans. Richards 1989).

The domain of this spirit who does not know failure (*antu mali lebu*) is traversed by *Lang* and his family on their way to the *gawai* (Masing 1981:233). The pattern depicts the

brave warrior in frontal view, enclosed by serpents (fig.40). In early patterns images of serpents are associated with the heroes of *Panggau*. In modern serpent patterns the snake images are supplemented with figurative pictures of major heroes such as *Keling*, *Kumang* and so on. The pattern called '*Kumang waking up*' (*Kumang dani tindok*), for example, incorporates a figurative representation of the deity (fig.41).

Ladder of *Beji* (*tangga Beji*)

Beji is a remote ancestor who tried to build a ladder to reach the sky. Since the bottom of the ladder was made of soft wood it collapsed. Fittingly, some figures are portrayed upside down in the pattern (fig.42,43; cf. Jabu 1991:82). The pattern is a quite recent one and, since the legend is well-known, is common in both Baleh and Saribas.

Apai Sali

Apai Sali is a hilarious folk hero who does everything the wrong way around (cf. Sather 1993a):

Apai Sali ka numpit kara menyarong.

Apai Sali goes hunting with his blow-pipe in the crown of the *kara* tree.

In the pattern the *kara* tree is depicted complete with monkeys and birds feeding their young. *Apai Sali*, true to his reputation, is shown shooting his own dog in the hind quarters (fig.44).

In other patterns, weavers take the opportunity of poking fun at men. This custom is part and parcel of *gawai*, when a controversy between the sexes finds a formal expression in gender reversals acted out as part of the celebrations (cf. Freeman 1968:388-390). An adept bard knows how to foster this controversy by including in his chanting witty verses, already mentioned above, victimizing the female members of the longhouse. In a similar spirit, the weaver of one *pua* pattern mocks the young man who is refused by the girl he courts at night (fig.45):

Bujang ringat enda gali
pulai maut pemangai.

The angry young bachelor does not lie down,
but goes home to pull down his bedding.

Concluding remarks

In concluding this first section on Baleh patterns, I should like to stress one point in particular; this is the progression from one type of pattern and name to another.

The early coil patterns are notably non-figurative. The names of the higher or powerful patterns are short, often consisting of no more than one word. The evocative power of these names, however, is enormous. Pattern names such as *rang* and *sempuyang*, with their oblique allusions to trophy heads and headhunting, open up a field of meaning which lies at the very core of the Iban value system. These titles are all the more powerful because so much has been condensed into just one word. In more recent patterns headhunting is referred to in elaborate and wordy titles. While recognizing the poetic merits of these verses, much of the immediacy of earlier short names has been lost. In modern patterns we also see a gradual progression towards figurative depiction and the telling of pictorial stories. The development to literal presentation, both in the pattern and in the name, comes full circle in the cloth depicting *Apai Sali*, complete with his blowpipe and dog. In the following section on Saribas patterns we shall witness a similar progression.

Saribas

The Saribas as a district which is culturally distinct in certain respects from the Baleh, today also includes the Krian river, which was populated by immigrants from Saribas proper at a later time (Pringle 1970:59). Thus, when refer-

ring to the Saribas, it is this larger area which is meant.

The following presentation is limited to the most important of the Saribas patterns. The main reason for these patterns being remembered today is their high rank and the fact that they are very distinctive.

High-ranking patterns

The divided pattern (*bali belumpong*)

Bali belumpong (fig.46) is a 'pattern' (*bali*) that is 'divided' or 'cut' into equal lengths (*belumpong*). The characteristic of *bali belumpong* is the empty space in the centre, which divides or cuts the pattern into equal parts. *Bali belumpong* is accorded highest status in the Saribas, equalled only by the two patterns discussed next. The *bali belumpong* pattern is unusual in that its characteristic feature is not one type of pattern but rather the arrangement of the pattern on the cloth. The patterned ends can be filled with any kind of design, often a different one on each side (fig.47). Iban weavers do not specify why this pattern is singled out as particularly powerful. It is noteworthy however, that the central gap runs contrary to the Iban predilection for filling all empty spaces, or *horror vacui*, discussed in more detail later on.

The striped pattern (*kelikut*)

Kelikut is a word that only denotes this particular pattern (fig.48). In Iban, it has no other known meaning (cf. Richards 1981:150). *Kelikut* is often coupled with *kengkang*, or 'stripe'. Accordingly, the pattern consists of alternating horizontal stripes of black, white and red (cf. Haddon 1982:115), but may also alternate with other motifs (figs.49,50; for further examples, see Ong 1986:40,63). Some Iban say that *kelikut* is the highest ranking of all Saribas patterns. Unless a weaver has been specifically invited to weave this pattern in a dream encounter, she would not dare to do so.

The honey bear pattern (*jugam*)

The characteristic feature of the honey bear pattern is that it is entirely blue in colour (figs.51,52). *Jugam* means both 'black' and 'honeybear', an animal whose fur is black. When applied to cloth, *jugam* initially refers to the indigo colour which in Iban is also called 'black', or *celum*. As a title, honeybear is a metaphor for headhunting and as such is associated with high rank. In the chants, the capture of a honeybear is a synonym for taking a war captive (Masing 1981:218). To kill a honeybear is as brave a deed as killing a human. A bear's skull is therefore considered on *par* with a human trophy head and can be

counted as such. The fur is used to make war-jackets, affording protection to the wearer. The *jugam* pattern is a prime example of the sort of play-on-words and *double entendre* which Iban associate with depth of meaning and hence power. First, there is the visual pun: an indigo-coloured cloth which is appropriately called *jugam*, or 'black', and second, the deeper connection to honey bears and headhunting.

One noteworthy point about the three patterns just discussed is that they all tax a weaver's skills in one way or another. For one, it is difficult to apply dye evenly on a large unpatterned area, the main characteristic of the *belumpong* pattern. Secondly, dyeing with indigo is a skill which is acquired only with experience. Since the Iban use indigo very sparingly, if at all, it is a special achievement to dye an entire cloth with it. Finally, the horizontal stripes of *kelikut* require extreme care during all stages of production. If the tension on the warp is not kept even at all times, an unsightly zigzag design is the result (see fig.48). None of these observations are voiced by Saribas weavers today. But then none of them have ever woven such patterns themselves and thus would not be aware of the technical difficulties involved.

More recent patterns

Compared to the deep meaning of old pattern names, the Saribas ranking system of coloured border stripes is straightforward. The common sequence is red, yellow, black and white, with the red stripe facing outward. The highest distinction is a white outer stripe, called *semalau labang* after a white bird, and the second is a yellow outer stripe which is named *entaba* after an orchid. The significant point is that these marks of distinction can only be employed by a weaver of high rank. But even such a weaver occasionally makes patterns of lower rank. In this case, then, a white stripe marks the rank of the weaver rather than that of the pattern.

This straightforward ranking system is quite recent. Chemical dyes were available as early as the 1880s, but brightly coloured border stripes did not flourish fully until the 1920s when the majority of these kinds of cloths was produced. As mentioned earlier, notions of rank became a particular concern of the Saribas Iban. The system of coloured border stripes are similar to military badges or stripes which designate a specific rank. This type of clear ranking system finds further expression in *tiang* patterns, named after the ascending stages of Saribas headhunting *gawai*.

Ritual pole patterns (*tiang*)

Sandin gives two different versions listing the ascending stages of *gawai* (1977:13; 1980:41-2). Each stage is differentiated by the type of wood used for the sacred pole (*tiang*), representing a tree or palm. This pole is erected on the open verandah and becomes the focal point of the celebration. The third stage in one account is called *mulong merangau*, literally, the 'crying sago' (Sandin 1980:41). The pole for this *gawai* is made from durian wood, 'and is cleverly carved like an old sago palm tree when all its fruit has fallen to the ground' (Sandin 1980:41). The patterns named after these ascending stages of *gawai* often show fairly clear representations of such palms, such as the 'sago palm' pattern (*mulong merangau*) which depicts exactly this type of old sago palm after its fruit has dropped (fig.53). Other patterns include *ijok pumpong* (fig.54), *lemba bumbun* (fig.55), and *sandauliau* (fig.56), all of which are ranked according to the relevant stage of *gawai*. Thus, the *ijok* palm pattern is higher in rank than the one named after the sago palm.

Titles and meaning

For Iban *pua* patterns, 'meaning' is located in a pattern's level of rank. The title indicates a pattern's level of ritual efficacy and the level of accomplishment (both

technical and spiritual) required to make the pattern. Very few Baleh weavers can explain the imagery used in pattern titles in the context of the chants and Iban cosmology. There is, however, no uncertainty regarding the rank of titled patterns and most women (and some men) know which patterns are reserved for high-ranking weavers. Saribas women, by their own admission, cannot match patterns and names. But they certainly remember if a given pattern title is 'high' or not. Even women who have never seen a *kelikut* pattern, know that it can only be made by the highest grade weaver.

The 'meaning' of pattern titles is that they indicate who is authorized to make the pattern. Titles are like graded badges of rank and weavers are graded according to the rank of patterns they are authorized to weave. It is significant that *menyeti*, one of the oldest titles, can be assigned to any powerful pattern. The pattern itself, or the 'form', is incidental. The meaning (or 'content') resides entirely in the title.

For other patterns the title functions as a proper name. Patterns like *rang*, *remaung*, *kelikut* and so on, all have distinctive and recognizable features. Pattern and title form a unit which is handed down together. Here 'form' and 'meaning' are linked. Nevertheless, it is the title, rather than the pattern, which is widely recognized. Everybody

knows that *sempuyong* is a high-ranking pattern, but not all informants know what it looks like and, if put to the test, they may be unable to identify it.

The reason for assigning a particular title to a given pattern is arbitrary and does not depend on depiction, or formal resemblance between name and pattern. In many instances the reason for the choice of title is only known to the weaver who first created the pattern. Titled patterns start as personal symbols. They become conventional symbols as they are copied by more and more people and they come to be more widely recognized.

Who then assigns the title? Ideally, a title is revealed by the deities. At least this is assumed to be the case for old patterns which have been handed down through the generations. In practice, at least today, titles can be assigned by the weaver herself or by some other person. This is done if a pattern 'proves' its power by making its creator physically ill. A title may also be assigned if the pattern is a 'good' one (*manah*) and admired by many people. Since titles indicate the level of ritual efficacy, could it be said that they actually *confer* this ritual efficacy?

The power of words

As noted by Masing, the chants, as words of power, are

'capable of determining the course of events' (1981:131-2). In a similar way, I referred to pattern titles as being capable of inciting (*peransang*) men to headhunting exploits. However, as Tambiah (1968) has argued, words are not seen as having an effect outside the context of the rite, and this, as Masing would surely agree, applies to Iban chants as well. After all, if this were not the case, it would hardly be possible to record the chants on tape outside the context of a *gawai* performance.

Neither are pattern titles seen as words of power which actively confer power on the pattern. Titles designate or reflect a pattern's potential to be effective in ritual. They do this by the use of metaphor. Tambiah presents the argument with admirable clarity (1968:189):

In respect of linguistic operations the concept of metaphor presents no problem. The dictionary meaning is that it is a figure of speech in which a name or descriptive term is transferred to some object to which it is not properly applicable.

He continues:

Contemplate what implications this device may have for ritual, which has for its aim the actual transfer of an attribute to the recipient. The spell can

exploit the metaphorical use of language, which verbally and in thought makes the transfer. There is no trick here; it is a normal use of language (Tambiah 1968:189).

By being given a title, the ritual efficacy of a pattern is given oral expression. The title has meaning in that it indicates a pattern's level of rank. The Iban however make use of names for other reasons as well. These other names are the subject of the next chapter.

NOTE

- (1) Only translations quoted *verbatim* as provided by Anthony Richards are credited to him; in cases when I have made even minor alterations (such as adding or omitting a word or suggestion by him), the credit reads 'assisted by Richards'.

CHAPTER 5

NAMES as LABELS

Other than titles, there is a second category of names. These are assigned to patterns which are not powerful, or *bisa*. Such names are not rank referents and do not indicate a level of power or ritual efficacy. Here there is only 'form', or pattern, and no 'content' or 'meaning'. The second category of names functions as a reference system, as a kind of shorthand to distinguish one type of motif or pattern from another. I refer to these names as 'labels' because they function like tags of identification, much in the same way as the 'labels' which were pinned onto the cloths that form the basis of Haddon's study (1982:xvi). Iban weavers say these names are 'just' names (*nama aja*), as distinct from titles which denote rank and level of power. However, labels, like titles, are also 'just' names in the sense that they rarely involve realistic depiction.

Labels generally describe the formal characteristics, or external qualities, of patterns and motifs. They are similar to names of designs with which we are familiar in our culture, such as those referred to as the herringbone and chequerboard designs. In chapter 3, I mentioned some of the descriptive names used by Iban weavers. The toothed line, the counting device for bundles of warp threads, is called 'millipede' (*kemebai*), or *penuri*, after its 'thorny'

or spiky appearance. Two types of stitch, used to sew together halves of *pua*, are called 'crow's foot' (*kaki kak*) and 'crossing a river' (*semerai sungai*) because this is what they resemble.

Names may be chosen to indicate the function of a design feature. Examples are the alternative terms 'stern' (*kemu-di*) and 'bow' (*luan*) for the beginning and end of *pua* patterns. They serve as markers of orientation when the cloth is employed in ritual. The white and black lines separating the main pattern from the end borders are called *lintang*, a term which literally means 'lying across' (Richards 1981:195). The same device is also called 'landing stage' (*sengkalan*) since it functions similarly as a touching point and divider (as a wall does to adjoining rooms).

One important ingredient for the choice of name is a sense of humour, and names are often devised for plain fun. As already mentioned, to speak in riddles and parables is a favourite Iban pastime. People use back-to-front speech (*jako sabalik*) in order to conceal the meaning of their discussion from others (Richards 1981:121), but many word puzzles (*entelah*) are appreciated for their sheer entertainment value. Similarly, if one wants to poke fun at a weaver's lack of skill, this is done obliquely. If a woman fails to align her warp threads properly and as a result

produces a jumbled pattern, her threads (or loom) are said to 'move upriver and downriver' (*k'ulu k'ili*; cf. Freeman 1950). Another name for the bits that blur the outlines of ikatted patterns is 'ant-droppings' (*betai semut*). The term is a joke at the weaver's expense and the sort of indirect rebuke of which the Iban are so fond. One common motif of end borders (fig.57) is called the 'drunken pattern' (*bali mabuk*). No one knows what originally gave rise to this appellation, but it is assumed to have been some kind of joke which, to this day, is a source of amusement every time the name is mentioned.

Significantly, the names of skirt patterns function as labels, rather than as titles. *Kain kebat* patterns are not powerful, or *bisa*, and do not put the weaver at risk during production (this is despite the fact that, due to the intricacy of their designs, more effort and time is invested in them). Even an experienced weaver cannot make powerful *pua* patterns continuously (*beturut*) for fear of illness (*alah ayu*). She must alternate these with the making of skirt cloths which do not put her at risk (cf. Freeman 1950). Some skirt patterns are superior to others due to their age or technical difficulty or both. Such patterns cannot be made by young women (*dara enda tau*), but are reserved for older and more experienced weavers (cf. Freeman 1950). Nonetheless, the names of such superior patterns are not rank referents, but function as labels.

Women's skirts (*kain kebat*)

In the literature, the use of the word *bidang* to refer to ikatted skirts, is based on a misunderstanding (see Gavin 1993:196). *Bidang* is a numeral classifier for things which are spread out flat when in use (Richards 1981:48). An alternative term is *basi* (Richards 1981:28) and both words are used to refer to mats and pieces of land, as well as to cloth and skirts. Iban women (at least today) do not use the word *bidang* by itself when referring to patterned skirts, and, if we ask to be shown *bidang*, no-one will understand what is meant. The correct term is *kain kebat*, which refers to a cloth (*kain*) patterned by the ikat technique (*kebat*), as distinct from *kain sungkit* or *kain pilih*, patterned by the *sungkit* and *pilih* technique respectively.

In the last fifty years or so, Iban weavers have created many new *kain kebat* patterns. The old, traditional patterns are few in number, but are still being made today. As Freeman noted, skirt patterns have been handed on without significant changes (1950), and faithful copies of old patterns are found in all Iban areas. Therefore, when working with large photocopies of old *kain kebat*, the few main old patterns are recognized by everyone.

Shrew pattern (*Aji*)

Aji bulan, or just *aji*, is 'Moon Rat'; another meaning given by Richards is 'bat' (1981:4,5), while Haddon has *aji* as 'shrew' (1982). With regard to the cloth pattern, *aji* does not refer to one motif, but to the kind of fanning-out design, the distinctive feature of the pattern (figs.58-61). There are many kinds of *aji* patterns. One version has a lozenge motif enclosed by two curls (figs.59,61). This 'pin' (*sumping*) motif gives this version its name: *aji besumping*.

Hawk pattern (*lang*)

Lang is 'hawk'. The pattern indeed resembles the outstretched wings of a bird of prey (figs.62,63; see Haddon plate X). In the cloth shown in fig.64, the *lang* pattern alternates with the *aji* pattern. As one weaver put it, the two patterns are 'mixed'.

Sieve pattern (*pelangka*)

Pelangka is a sieve in a rectangular wooden frame which is used to separate *padi* from straw. Haddon identifies an angular motif as *pelangka* (1982, plates XXIV, XXX). A cloth made in 1991 is identical to Haddon's example and shows the

same angular motif (fig.65). The name *pelangka* applies to the overall pattern rather than to a single element. Other patterns, also called *pelangka*, employ only the design feature of the elaborate coils with smaller coils attached (figs.66,67).

The *penukoh* pattern

Richards has *tukoh* as 'fashion, type, style' (1981:398) and hence *penukoh* as 'style or design in weaving' (Richards 1981:273). This is an astute observation about how some pattern names function. The distinctive features of the *penukoh* design are crossing poles which emanate from half-moon shapes arranged in a row (fig.68). Brooke Low documented the same style of design as *penukoh* in 1890 (fig.69). Haddon omits the half-moon shapes altogether, but identifies the crossing poles as *papan penukoh*, or 'the plank where the prop is tied' (plate XXIV, m). Freeman identifies the design (in particular the half-moon shapes) as *buah senokoh*, which he glosses as 'an iron clamp used in making *prau* <boats>' (fig.70).

Leech pattern (*lintah*).

The leech pattern has several similar versions which all

include interlocking curves (figs.71,72,73; see Haddon plate XVI, XXXI). All these versions resemble the squiggly shapes of leeches. Richards appropriately glosses *lintah* as a pattern which is 'based on' the shape of a leech (1981:194).

Deer pattern (*rusa*)

The deer pattern (*rusa*; figs.74,75) is well illustrated in Haddon (plates III, XXX), who sees the motif as the depiction of an actual deer complete with snout, body and tail (Haddon 1982:82). By contrast, my informants stressed that *rusa* is only the name of the design. They asserted that there are no pictures of 'deer jumping around'. Some deer patterns are more elaborate than others. The example shown in figure 76 is called 'rolled-up deer' (*rusa nangkin*) because of the *rusa* motif in the centre which is curled back on itself.

Combinations

Often several patterns are combined in a single cloth. The cloth shown in figure 77 begins with two rows of the deer pattern, followed by the sieve pattern, which here is identified as *singa pelangka*. *Singa* means 'lion', but appears occasionally as a kind of prefix for old pattern

names. The design incorporates the elaborate coils of the *pelangka* pattern mentioned above, which are here called 'tassel', or *burai* (see fig.78). This is followed by another row of deer motifs, and ends with the shrew pattern.

The cloth in figure 79 also begins with a band of the deer pattern, followed by *aji besumping*. Then there is a zig-zagging line called a 'knobbly creeper' (*tangkong*). The focal motif is not a known one and is referred to simply as the 'longish thing' (*lumpang bukal*). The cloth is finished with another *aji besumping* design. The above identifications were provided by a number of weavers in several Baleh longhouses, using large black and white photographs of *kain kebat* patterns.

Weavers do not combine these designs in a single cloth in order to tell a story involving deer, a husking sieve, a lion, tassels and shrews. It is precisely this, however, which some commentators, starting with Haddon, would have us believe. Iban weavers do not look upon such combinations as a 'complete picture of the animal world', as Ong tells us (1986:75). Rather, the aim is to combine a number of patterns in order to achieve the best effect. The objective is to create a beautifully patterned cloth. The names attached to designs are labels, which serve to distinguish the kinds of patterns the weaver has chosen to combine. Motifs and designs are given names which tend to refer to

their formal features, thus providing the weaver with an *aide memoire* and handy reference system.

Pua patterns

Single motifs

Single motifs are found predominantly in border designs. Here they have largely a decorative function. As one informant put it, 'A good *pua* has a stern and a bow' (*pua manah bisi kemudi bisi luan*), which means that it has ikatted end borders.

In chapter 3 above, I discussed the patterned bands called *selaku*. One common motif filling these bands is called 'sleeping cat' (*maiau tindok*; fig.80). When questioned, informants assert that this is 'just' the name. The design is not a picture (*gambar*) of a sleeping cat. Another motif similarly arranged in banded rows is called *buah belum* after a type of fruit (fig.81).

As discussed earlier, the end borders of *pua* are called *pemucok*, from *pucok*, 'point' or 'top'. The most common motif of these end borders is called 'tip of a bamboo shoot' (*pemucok tubu*; fig.82). This motif has been documented by Haddon (plate XVIII,f,g), as well as by Freeman (fig.83). The name is an apt term for a motif whose tip, or *pemucok*, is at the same time the tip, or end, of the border

itself. Much has been made of this motif due to the fact that a person's physical vigour (*ayu*) is pictured as having, as a plant-counterpart, a clump of bamboo (or banana), which is tended by the shaman in healing rites (Appel 1991). Thus Sellato writes that in Iban textiles, among others, the bamboo shoot is a 'symbol of the vital force' (1989:48). There is, however, no connection between the *ayu*, an important concept in Iban thought and ritual practice, and the border motif on cloth; just as there is no intrinsic connection between the cross-stitch and the Christian cross, or between the herringbone pattern and the fish as a symbol of Christ.

Pemucok, 'point' or 'top', is the general Baleh designation for end borders. End borders with the 'drunken motif' (*bali mabuk*) or bird motifs are *pemucok* just as much as those with the bamboo shoot motif. The actual tip of the bamboo shoot motif is commonly called 'head of a grasshopper' (*pala buntak*; fig.84; see Haddon plate XVII,h). This is a diamond, or roundish shape attached to a straight line which sticks out like a grasshopper's head. This motif forms part of most bird motifs (*burong*), and many of these are based on a lozenge or triangle shape with what can be seen as wing-like projections (Haddon, plate VII). Some of the more well-known bird motifs bear some distinctive mark. There is a bird 'with a comb' (*burong besugu*; figs.85,86; compare Haddon, plate VII,1-p), a 'thin' bird (*burong*

kerus; fig.87) and a bird with a 'hole in the breast' (*burong sawang perut*; Haddon, plate VII,g,h; cf. Richards 1981:55, *bungai*). The distinctive marks serve to distinguish one type of bird motif from another. The distinction between these and other similar motifs is blurred. Haddon's 'young birds' look much like his 'lizards' (plates IX, XII). Another similar motif is called *empejungau*, after a freshwater fish with a long snout (Richards 1981:78; figs.88,89). The spider motif (*emplawa*), on the other hand, looks more like a bird than some bird motifs (figs.90,91,92), and, in fact, is often identified as such.

Single motifs are commonly used to fill the ikatted bands on vertical borders. The motifs are interchangeable. It does not matter if a lizard, a bird, or a snake motif is used. This is a question of personal preference. Single motifs are also used as space-fillers for the main pattern. Again, as space-fillers they fulfil a decorative function (compare Boas 1927:262). The Iban aesthetic demands that all empty spaces of a pattern are filled. The Baleh name for space-filler is *pengalit*, from *alit*, to 'stop up' or 'block' (Richards 1981:6). The equivalent Saribas term is *bubul*, which means to 'add in' or 'fill spaces' (Richards 1981:52). Which motifs are chosen as fillers depends again on personal preference and style. For example, one informant disliked the indistinct and squiggly motifs of the old cloth shown in figure 93. She called them *tebu*, which Richards glosses as 'sores on hands and feet due to yaws'

(1981:374). The informant added that, were she to make this pattern, she would insert bird motifs instead.

Space-fillers also have a ritual function. They are added as 'food' (*makai*). The trophy head pattern, for example, is usually provided with a food offering which is placed at the 'mouth' of the distinctive lozenge motif (the offering is lacking in fig.13). If these offerings are omitted, the weaver may be 'eaten' or 'consumed' (*empah jamah*) instead. The inclusion of space-fillers ensures that the weaver's soul is 'sent home' (*mai semengat pulai*) after completing a cloth. Nonetheless, even when used in this sense, space-filling motifs remain interchangeable.

Components of motifs

Names are also assigned to the components of motifs and patterns. In many cases, these names are used to designate parts of the design rather than parts of a creature depicted on cloth. The designations 'head' (*pala*) and 'testes' (*pelir*), for example, refer to the top and bottom end of motifs respectively. Such appellations should not be taken literally, unless we ascribe to the Iban the notion that spiders have testes (see Haddon 1982, plate XV). A claw-like motif (appropriately called 'claw', or *kukut*) is equally part of the tiger-cat, shrew, hawk and spider

patterns (Haddon 1982, plates IV,V,X,XV). *Perut*, or 'stomach', similarly does not refer to the actual stomach of a creature depicted on cloth, but to the 'inside' of a motif (compare Haddon 1982, plates V,X). The filler motifs of the *nabau* pattern (fig.4), are also called 'stomach' (*perut*); the additional labels 'female' and 'male' are added to distinguish between the two kinds of filler motifs used. Even the parts of coils (*gelong*) are individually named; the innermost point being called *dagu*, or 'chin'. One is reminded of similar designations used in a western cultural context, such as the 'neck' and 'mouth' of bottles; the 'lip' of jugs; the 'legs' of chairs and so on.

Main patterns of *pua*

The main patterns of *pua* cloths are not always assigned titles, but also make use of descriptive labels. This is the case for *pua* patterns which have been transferred, or 'lifted' (*angkat*), directly from skirts and hence use the same naming system. On *pua* these patterns are enlarged and repeated to fit the larger space. The main sections of cloths shown in figures 94 and 95 are entirely covered with the hawk pattern. The cloth in figure 96 shows the leech pattern, as does the example in figure 97. A Saribas cloth uses the leech design for both its patterned ends (fig.98).

All *pua* patterns can be named on formal grounds by employing descriptive labels. The *rang* pattern, when dissected by Iban weavers in these terms, is a pattern of 'creeping' or 'climbing plants' (*akar*; another meaning is 'root') filled with 'rice grain' (*igi beras*) and 'spirit's eye' (*mata antu*) motifs (fig.99), while the distinctive *rang* lozenge is a 'space-filler' (*pengalit*). Another name for the vine-like components which usually form the main background (*indu buah*) of coil patterns is *berandau*, from *randau*, or 'creeping plant'. Other names include *tangkai* and *pating*, both meaning 'stalk of fruit'. *Tangkong*, or 'knobbly creeper' is another common name (cf. Haddon 1982, plate XX), as is *berinjan*, already discussed in the previous chapter.

In the Saribas, coil patterns are not generally assigned titles, but are referred to with these common names for vine-like patterns. One Saribas creeper pattern (fig.100) is called *berinjan igi beras* after the rice-grain motifs (*igi beras*) which fill its tendrils, whereas the cloth in figure 101 is called *berinjan mata antu* because it makes use primarily of the spirit's eye motif (*mata antu*).

The naming of the firefly pattern (*sepepat*; figs.19.20,21) follows a similar logic. The prominent branches, or *batang* ('principal member or part'; Richards 1981:29), which are the characteristic feature of the firefly pattern, are

filled with irregularly scattered white motifs referred to as 'fireflies' (see Haddon 1982, plate XXI). These are distinct from rice grain motifs (*igi beras*) which are always arranged in an ordered sequence (fig.99). *Igi* (with a glottal stop) is a 'numeral classifier for fruit, eggs, seeds, teeth and the like' (Richards 1981:112). The name *gigi beras* which is applied to the rice grain motif in the Baleh, is an indication of the ordered arrangement which is associated with the motif. *Gigi* is Malay for 'tooth', whereas the Iban term is *ngeli*. *Gigi beras* is not a 'tooth of rice', but *gigi* here refers to 'tooth-like projections' which are neatly arranged and spaced, like the rungs of a ladder (Richards 1981:106). 'Firefly', on the other hand, designates a motif which is similar to the rice grain motif except that it is arranged differently. Over time, 'firefly' has become associated with the *pua* pattern featuring the motif. That 'firefly' refers to these scattered motifs rather than to the *pua* pattern as a whole is shown by one skirt in the British Museum collection (No.1905-385), where these speckled dots were tagged by Hose as 'fireflies', or *sepepat*.

It seems reasonable to assume that the name category of labels is the more basic system and possibly predates the name category of titles. Skirt patterns and their names are the same for all Iban areas. A Baleh shrew pattern is the same as a Saribas shrew pattern. Skirt patterns have hardly changed over the years. The examples discussed above in-

clude Hose's pre-1900 cloths from the Saribas, Freeman's Baleh drawings from 1950, as well as cloths which I documented and which have been woven just a few years ago. In short, the reference system of *kain kebat* names cuts across space and time. The same is true for the names assigned to single motifs and vine-like patterns. The Iban terms for space-filler are different for Baleh and Saribas (*pengalit* and *bubul* respectively), but their meaning is the same. The names for vine-like patterns also differ regionally. In the Saribas, *berinjan* and *berandau* are favoured, whereas in the Baleh weavers tend to use *akar* or *tangkai*.

The existence of two name categories, the one descriptive, the other related to referential meaning, has been recognised in the cultural traditions of other areas in South-east Asia. Writing on Javanese batik patterns, Boow distinguishes between proper names which are carefully chosen symbolic referents and names which are simply descriptive of design features, providing a kind of shorthand (1988:154-5). A batik design may have both a proper name as well as several descriptive names. Writing on Javanese dance, Hughes-Freeland similarly discusses the content and meaning of a dance performance as being distinct from the sum total of its components (1991:345-366). As with Iban patterns, the popular assumption is that batik designs, or dance movements as the case may be, have meaning which can be read like a kind of language. Javanese dance includes

hand gestures, which, as the author argues, tempt western analysts to embark on a 'quest for meaningfulness', searching for a 'lexicon of gesture' (Hughes-Freeland 1991:347). On the naming of individual dance positions and movement-sequences, Hughes-Freeland writes appositely:

The giving of names to sequences might tempt us also to ascribe meanings to them. However, we should be careful. Even our Western ballet has named sequences, and these are not indications of what they mean, but of what the movements *look like*, such as *pas de chat*, for example. Our expectation of exotic and replete sense might mislead us to see Javanese sequences like "elephant saluting" (*gajah ngoling*) or "areca palm in the wind" (*pucang karingan*) as being denotative, connotative, or at least symbolic. The motivation of such names however is descriptive not of movement meanings but of how they look. As such they serve as memory aids to the performer and form a classificatory system too (1991:354).

In an even more striking parallel to popular assumptions about Iban cloth, the names of batik filler patterns (*isen isen*) are generally assumed to indicate what the design represents or portrays in a conventionalized way. Thus Fraser-Lu refers to filler designs called rice grain, pigeon's eyes and so on as 'stylized representations' of

these objects (1986:29). What is not taken into account here is that some *isen isen* designs, such as the chequerboard and seven dots patterns, cannot be referred to in these terms. After all, we do not say that a chequerboard design is a stylized representation of a chequerboard. And, as Boow has shown, this type of name is part of a shorthand description, rather than a meaningful symbolic referent (1988:155).

Despite the improbability of popular assumptions, at least in the Iban case, many writers have continued to adhere to interpretations formulated by Haddon (1982). Considering that Haddon's frame of reference is based in the nineteenth century, it is remarkable that his view of Iban motifs has survived and is thoroughly entrenched and accepted over a hundred years later. A critical assessment of Haddon's interpretations is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

HADDON and the IBAN MATERIAL

Haddon's study, first published in 1936, contains the first in-depth treatment of Iban fabrics and their patterns (although named as co-author, Laura Start's main contribution was to provide the drawings). To this day, the study remains the standard published reference for all that followed.

In 1898 Alfred Cort Haddon paid his second visit to Torres Strait with a team of experts for what came to be known as the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits and New Guinea (Quiggin 1942:95-99). At the end of their stay in November of the same year, the party proceeded to Borneo following an invitation by Charles Hose, an administrator in the service of the Brooke Raj in Sarawak. While at Kuching, Haddon spent much of his time at the Sarawak Museum where he photographed and made sketches of some hundred Iban cloths of which many patterns were named (Haddon 1982:ix). He later purchased a number of cloths from Hose who had tagged many patterns and designs with their respective names. Eventually Haddon donated this collection of cloths to what was then called the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. Haddon himself never spoke with the Iban who had provided the names tagged to these cloths and explicitly says so in the acknowledge-

ments, in which he thanks the 'various unknown Iban who have given information' (1982:xvii). Haddon especially thanks Charles Hose 'for having supervised the identification of the designs on the cloths that have formed the basis of our study' (1982:xvii).

Hose was an administrative officer in Sarawak from 1884 until his retirement in 1907. For most of his career, he was stationed in the Baram river area and consequently his major work, published in 1912 in collaboration with McDougall (a member of the Torres Straits Expedition), concerns not the Iban but the Kayan and Kenyah peoples of the Baram district. Despite all the admiration heaped on Hose during his life-time, by today's academic standards he is seen as an 'enthusiastic amateur scientist' who at times, 'argued simplistically from inadequate data' (Durrans 1988: viii, xiv). As far as Iban textiles are concerned, it is clear that Haddon relied entirely on Hose for providing the basic data. In fact, some of Haddon's key passages are lifted *verbatim* from Hose's *The Pagan Tribes of Borneo*.

With regard to Iban cloth, we do not know how and from whom Hose collected his data. Neither are there records about the number of informants interviewed (cf. West 1984:220). What is clear, however, is that the data are highly selective. The majority of patterns documented by Hose and featured in Haddon are single motifs and skirt patterns.

Haddon discusses eleven *pua* cloths of which only five patterns are identified. These are the crocodile and fire-fly patterns, discussed above, while the remaining three (human figures, the *gajai* pattern and the 'moon-cloth') are discussed in appendix A. None of these, strictly speaking, are titled patterns. In other words, the name category presented in Haddon is confined to descriptive labels.

Haddon's interpretation of these motifs and patterns is based entirely on the *names* which were tagged to them. It is assumed that this name tag tells us what the motif depicts. There was, however, one major problem with this assumption from the outset: the motifs tagged as 'deer', 'shrew', or 'hawk' were not realistic depictions of deer, shrews, hawks and so on. Haddon commented on this lack of realism early on in his introduction, writing that 'in many cases it is almost impossible to see any resemblance between the design and the object it is intended to represent' (1982:xv). On the shrew pattern, Haddon quotes Hose and McDougall, who remark that, '..we have not been able to trace the slightest resemblance to the animal in any of the various examples we have seen' (1982:123; Hose and McDougall 1912:244). However, the discrepancy between the design and the object it is supposed to represent could easily be explained with recourse to the theory of evolution. Thus Haddon concluded that Iban designs named after deer or shrews must be derivations or stylizations of earlier, more realistic ones which had evolved into what Haddon called

'degenerate' forms (1982:78).

Now, what is interesting is that, in Haddon's account, there is ample evidence that Hose's informants were in fact telling him, as did mine, that the motifs in question are 'just' spacefillers (*bubul*). This is supported by one of Hose's entries tagged to an Iban skirt (No.1905-377) in the British Museum collection which reads, '*bubul*=pattern of no account to fill up'.

The tags which were originally pinned by Hose to the cloths discussed in Haddon's study and now stored at Cambridge, were removed by Haddon's wife and replaced with numbers written on cloth tape (1982:xvi). Regrettably, the original tags have not been preserved (or at least could not be located during my visit to the museum) and one has to rely on Haddon's transcriptions as they are presented in his study. Judging by these transcriptions, however, Hose must have been told on numerous occasions that certain motifs are mere space-fillers. The Iban terms quoted by Haddon are 'motif filling up a gap' (*bubul lapang*; 1982:75,82,115,119) and 'space-filler of the main pattern' (*jerit bubul indu buah*; p.117). In the face of this explicit evidence, Haddon had to concede that some designs are 'meaningless space-filling patterns' (p.76). He further writes of patterns being 'devised purely to fill up an empty space' (p.79). The same information, incidentally, was also given to the

Freemans. Thus the comment on one motif reads, 'This is a *pengalit* only' (fieldnotes 1950).

Neither Hose nor Haddon paid attention to such statements. Since the assumption was that motifs represent or at least originally depicted the object after which they are named, the statements were seen as indicative of the ignorance of Iban informants regarding the original form and significance of their designs:

The designs dyed upon the cloths are largely animal derivatives; but the artists themselves seldom are aware of the derivation, even when the pattern bears the name of its animal origin (Hose and McDougall 1912:243,244; Haddon 1982:123).

Nevertheless, even if designs had lost their original meaning for the Iban, Haddon still had to explain to what purpose they were used in cloth patterns. In many cases, finding this forgotten meaning proved to be problematic. Eventually, Haddon concluded that most patterns 'act largely as talismans or as amulets', and are somehow connected to omen animals (1982:125). For the design called 'eyes of the small green pigeon' (*mata puna*) he suggested that it 'perhaps' has the purpose of protecting the crops from these birds (pp.128-9). The underlying idea for using the deer pattern on women's skirts, Haddon opines, may be 'success in the chase' (p.126). Perhaps the most quaint of

Haddon's suggestions is that leeches are represented as a sort of charm to protect the wearer of the skirt from them (p.133). The problem with these interpretations is that they look for too literal a connection between motifs, their names and the function of the cloths in question. The search for this kind of literal meaning became particularly problematic when confronted with improbable combinations of motifs. One such combination is a shrew with rice grains in its stomach, which left Haddon, the biologist, nonplussed since no record of shrews feeding on rice exists (p.127). In another design the shrew motif is placed inside a husking box, but, as Haddon remarked, 'it seems very improbable that a jungle animal would enter the houses even if it could climb up the ladder' (p.127).

Haddon in context

Students of Iban cloth patterns who know Haddon mainly as the author of the major work on the subject, are often unaware of his pioneering work in anthropology (Urry 1993:78) and his role in art history and theory in general (Gombrich 1979:222; Gerbrands 1957; Thoresen 1977:112). Haddon's interpretation of the Iban data should not be seen in isolation, but in the context of the debate on the origins of art which was a major concern in the 1890s of both ethnographic as well as art historical discourse.

A major figure in this discourse was Gottfried Semper (1860) who was associated with what came to be known as the 'technical-materialist' theory. Semper saw the need for protection and cover from the elements as the primary incentive for man's earliest creation of shelter, moving from wickerwork fences to the weaving of natural fibres (1860:28). Patterns were assumed to have come into being as by-products of these processes, generated spontaneously over and over again from the techniques of basketry or weaving (1860:213).

Opposed to this view stood Riegl's concept of *Kunstwollen* ('will to art'), which postulated that the origin of art must be sought in man's innate artistic urge (a view also subscribed to by Boas several decades later; 1927:356). Riegl's *Stilfragen*, published in 1893, remains, in the words of Gombrich, perhaps the 'one great book ever written about the history of ornament' (1979:182). The work's continuing validity is attested to by the publication of an annotated English translation, *Problems of Style*, in 1992, almost exactly one hundred years after the original.

Stilfragen is largely a polemical work. In opposition to Semper and his followers, who saw the origin of art in the need to protect and cover, Riegl saw the desire for adornment as far more elementary; he argued that decorative motifs that satisfy this desire existed long before they

may have been generated as by-products of weaving or other techniques (1992:5).

Riegl's argument for an artistic motivation behind decoration was also directed against Goodyear who, at the other extreme from Semper, saw symbolism as the sole and decisive factor in the generation of ornament (Riegl 1992:7). In *The Grammar of the Lotus* (1891), Goodyear argues that, for the ancient Egyptians, the lotus flower was a symbol for the Sun (Gombrich 1979:182; Riegl 1992:65). The diffusion of this ornament was attributed solely to its innate symbolism.

It is the latter of these theoretical orientations, Goodyear's thesis and his search for ancient symbolism, which also motivated Haddon and his colleagues. Alfred Cort Haddon was an unlikely candidate to investigate into the origins of art; he was trained as a marine zoologist, in which capacity he paid his first visit to Torres Strait in 1888. It was during his stay there that he became interested in indigenous art forms and on his return to England published *The Decorative Art of British New Guinea: a Study in Papuan Ethnography* (1894), followed a year later by *Evolution in Art: as illustrated by the Life-Histories of Designs* (1895). In the latter work, Haddon brought together the studies of a number of ethnographers who, like himself, were pioneers in a new field and who shared his realist-

degenerationist position; and it is from this position that Haddon's subsequent interpretation of the Iban material must be seen. The main points are summarized in the following section.

'Designs are not mere decoration'

Haddon and his followers were convinced that the designs they were examining were more than 'merely' decorative. Writing on Mexican designs, Lumholtz, who shared this view, put it quite bluntly: 'No savage ever sat down to decorate an article from mere fancy with meaningless designs' (1903:785). Similarly Haddon wrote that, 'It is inconceivable that a savage should copy or adapt a certain design because it promises to develop into a more pleasing pattern' (1895:318). Instead, it was assumed that motifs were invested with meaning and symbolic content, or, to use Gombrich's expression, that 'designs were intended to function as signs' (1979:222). Thus Haddon wrote that,

No apparently insignificant superfluity is meaningless, they are silently eloquent witnesses of a past signification like the mute letters in so many of our words. Almost every line or dot of every ornament has a meaning, but we are without understanding, and have eyes and see not (1895:333; also cited by Gombrich 1979:222; and by Thoresen

1971:11).

The designs under investigation were thought to function as signs which could be read like a form of primitive language. Writing on the designs carved on a wooden paddle from central Brazil, Karl von den Steinen wrote that, even if a composition of motifs did not carry a specific message, such motifs nevertheless represent 'the element of picture-writing' (1897:250; in Haddon 1895:178). Based on these and other findings Haddon was led to conclude that, 'The least advanced of men can convey information, that is, they can write by means of *Pictographs*' (Haddon 1895:217).

The advantage of the research carried out by Haddon and his colleagues was that their objects of study were part of a living culture, unlike Goodyear and Riegl who studied the decorative arts of the ancient Egyptians and Greeks. Guided by evolutionist theories, Haddon and others saw their savages as representing an earlier stage of evolution. Here then, at last, the origin of art could be studied at first hand. This was a revolutionary opportunity which was remarked upon by several of the ethnographers at the time (Von den Steinen 1897:250; Kroeber 1901:324).

Nevertheless, it is clear that data collected on objects in the field constituted only a fraction of the specimens on which the ethnographers based their conclusions. The bulk

of the examples were part of undocumented museum collections, as can be seen from the list in Haddon's *Evolution* (1895:ix-xvi). Von den Steinen also makes this methodology abundantly clear; he writes, in his introduction, that the 'main task of uncovering the secrets of a most unusual and mysterious ornamentation took up many years after my return, having to research the many collections which had been dispersed all across the globe' (1925; my translation of the original German).

But then the aim was to establish a universally valid origin of art, rather than the meaning of the designs in the culture that produced them. The objective was to find the original meaning of the designs when they were first created. This scientific enquiry set ethnographers apart from and above the savages whose art forms they were investigating and allowed them to treat informants' statements selectively. Stolpe, writing on Polynesian carved designs, makes this explicit: 'If one asks the reason of a device or custom, one usually gets no satisfactory information....Should any one, therefore, to-day, ask a native of these islands whether the ornamentation here delineated has any significance, and the reply should be 'no', I could not recognise in it any decisive evidence' (in Haddon 1895:270). The assumption is that natives are ignorant of the 'true' significance of their decorative motifs, or in any case are 'no longer capable of accounting for their original meaning' (Haddon 1895:270).

Often, it seems that all the natives were deemed good for was to provide the *name* of the designs. The assumption was that the name tells us what the design represents or depicts, if not now then at least when it was originally conceived. It did not matter whether or not the designs in question resembled the object they were supposed to depict. Indeed, most of the ethnographers expressed puzzlement at the lack of realism in native art at some time or another. Thus Haddon remarked on Von den Steinen's data that 'one fails to see how <the design> could by any stretch of the imagination be considered to suggest that fish' (Haddon 1895:177). Von den Steinen himself was moved to exclaim 'How differently is the world pictured in the minds of these people!' (1897:243; my translation of the original German), and he was puzzled on a number of occasions when simple geometric shapes were identified by informants as representations of concrete objects. This led Von den Steinen to remark that a design is only recognizable on account of its name being securely attached to it like an 'identity-card' (my translation of German *Steckbrief*, which is used by Von den Steinen; the quote is taken from Hein 1889:12). Notably, Hein transferred Von den Steinen's statement word-for-word to Dayak designs in a lecture given to art teachers in Vienna (1889:12), and included it, again word-for-word, in a later publication on Borneo art (1890:96).

In short, names are the crux of the matter. The assumption that designs represent something or other is based on the fact that they are assigned the name of a given object. Haddon and other ethnographers, who followed the tenets of evolutionist theory, saw no need to investigate the different reasons for assigning names to designs. Nor did it matter that motifs were not realistic renditions of the objects they were supposed to represent. This was treated as a minor problem which could easily be addressed by resorting to the theory of evolution and degeneration.

In the opening pages of *Evolution*, Haddon proposed 'to deal with the arts of design from a biological or natural history point of view' (1895:2). The life-histories of artistic representation consist of three periods, namely, birth, growth and death. When translated to the stages of artistic development, these periods correspond to origin, evolution, and decay (1895:6,7). Most importantly, for Haddon, all art was based on realism:

The vast bulk of artistic expression owes its birth to realism; the representations were meant to be life-like, or to suggest real objects; that they may not have been so was owing to the apathy or incapacity of the artist or to the unsuitability of his materials (1895:6,7).

An artist's technical deficiencies helped explain the lack

of realism when designs were first created. But, for Haddon, it is during the process of their evolution that the copies become further and further removed from the original, in the same way as the offspring of an animal vary from the parent (1895:315). It was Pitt-Rivers who conceived a practical experiment in which a drawing is given to one person to copy; this, in turn, is given to another person to copy and so on. Pitt-Rivers' follower, Balfour, implemented his mentor's suggestion in what has become a famous example of the so-called 'sequence method' (for details, see Gerbrands 1957:37):

In a series of twelve to fifteen copies thus obtained, the snail's shell gradually leaves the snail and becomes a kind of boss upon a twig, and finally the design is turned upside down; the artist at this stage being convinced that the sketch is intended to represent a bird, the 'horns' of the snail having become the forked tail of the bird (cited in Haddon 1895:311; see Balfour 1893:26 plate I).

To Haddon and others who were convinced of the validity of such sequences, this experiment proved that any design, despite its stage of degeneration, could have originated as a realistic and hence meaningful representation.

Discussion

Boas questioned the concept of degeneration within evolutionary theory (1927). He observed that the examples used by evolutionists are hardly if ever dated, and the reverse process in which a geometric form develops into a realistic one is equally feasible (1927:118). For his research among American Indian peoples, Boas concluded that there is no stable relation between form and content; he wrote that,

The essential conclusion drawn from our observations is that the same form may be given different meanings, that the form is constant, the interpretation variable, not only tribally, but also individually (Boas 1927:128).

Kroeber similarly concluded that there is 'no real pictography' (1900:46; taken from Thorensen 1971:115), in the sense that interpretations are personal and arbitrary.

In the Iban case, there are no extant examples which would indicate that patterns called deer or shrew evolved from realistic prototypes (compare Boas 1927:122-3). The oldest specimens bearing these patterns which were collected in the late nineteenth century look much the same as ones made today.

There are, however, several important differences between

Boas's material and the Iban ethnography. As Boas shows, a basic triangular design is variously interpreted as a tent, hill, mountain, cloud, fort, bear, fish tail and a town (1927:121-2). Nonetheless, the design is taken to represent, or stand for, these objects. With regard to Iban motifs and patterns, the name is often 'just' the name and these designs are not intended as 'pictographs'. In other words, the question of being able to 'read' a design (in the sense used by Boas and Kroeber) does not arise.

Nonetheless, Iban designations for designs, just like Boas's identifications, are, at least initially, also personal and arbitrary. If an Iban weaver is shown a new design, she can only know the name if told it. However, as we have seen, names are remarkably stable with regard to old patterns which have been handed down for generations; thus, traditional skirt patterns, such as *aji*, *lang*, *rusa* and so on, are identical in all Iban areas. In these cases, names are just a means of reference and function as labels. In short, it is not the form and meaning that are constant, but the form and what it is called.

Titled patterns, by contrast, comprise a unit of form and 'meaning', in the sense that the title functions as a rank referent. These units of pattern and title, such as *rang*, *remaung* and so on, are well-known and recognized in a wide area. The questions then are: Have these patterns (or their

distinctive features) become conventional symbols which are associated with power and ritual efficacy? and, Can these 'symbols' be read like a code or language, as Haddon would have liked? These are among the issues to be explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

FORM and CONTENT

In chapter 4, I pointed out the distinctive features, or 'form', of titled patterns. For generations, patterns have been handed down along with their names. Their pedigree (*tusut*) is known. A pattern's identity as a unit comprising both pattern and title can only be preserved over time if it is faithfully copied. This is indeed what happens. One *rang* pattern, woven in the Ulu Ai a hundred years ago (fig.102), is identical, coil by coil, to one made in the Baleh in 1990 (fig.103). Generally, if changes are made, they are made deliberately and marked with a change of name.

This, however, is not all that happens. Changes are made in the scale and emphasis of patterns and much else, as I shall show presently. After documenting some hundred patterns in the field, I was confronted with a rather chaotic picture. Patterns are turned around, parts are incorporated in other patterns and given new names. Dissimilar patterns are ascribed the same name and so on.

This state of affairs poses no problem for Iban weavers. They know that changes occur because they themselves have implemented such changes. Moreover, since new patterns are created from dreams or by recomposing existing designs, the

possibilities for change are endless. Therefore it is not surprising that weavers only take responsibility for the pedigree of their own patterns. They say, 'I only know the patterns I have woven and those which have been handed down in my family'. When confronted with a *rang* pattern different from their own version, they say, 'Other people call this pattern *rang*, our *rang* pattern looks different'. In other words, weavers only vouch for the identity of their own patterns whose origin and pedigree are known. What other people do is their affair. At the same time it would be considered presumptuous to question their identifications. It is assumed that a different *rang* version may have its own valid pedigree. For this reason weavers who are asked to identify patterns shown at exhibitions, refuse to do so.

My position as an outside researcher is quite different. Having collected data from a number of weavers who all vouch for the pedigree of their patterns, I cannot favour one version over another. Instead I must try to establish whether and in what manner they are connected. With a file of a hundred or so examples only a few parallels can be drawn between them. But with over four hundred documented cloths, in addition to examples from western collections, a clearer picture emerges and, in many cases, it is possible to establish common roots.

My search for a common denominator or system of classification was an arduous and time-consuming task. In this regard, Needham's paper on polythetic classification (1975; 1983) provided a useful point of departure. The main points may be summarized as follows. Monothetic classification is the conventional, or common-feature definition of a class. In this definition, what is known of one member of a class is also known of all other members. The presence of a common feature is both necessary and sufficient for membership in a monothetic class. Following Wittgenstein, Needham calls this common attribute a 'specific' feature (1981:2). On the other hand, in a polythetic class, no feature is common to all members. Instead, they are connected by what Needham calls 'fluctuating sets of attributes' (1983:7). The image of a chain is used to illustrate the principle of polythesis where 'the definitive attribute keeps changing from one link to the next' (1983:37). These attributes are termed 'characteristic' features and they are not essential for membership; rather, the appearance of any one feature is incidental and sporadic (Needham 1981:2).

Polythetic classification is a useful analytical tool to conceive of a number of pattern variations as belonging to one group or class. What we are looking for then are clusters of distinctive features, rather than a single feature. To give an Iban example, we are able to conceive of the whirlpool patterns with their semantically linked titles as one rather than two distinct name groups. Polythetic sets

also allow for regional changes, as one particular version may be elaborated in one area rather than in another. As we shall see later, in some instances Iban weavers themselves seem to perceive their patterns as being linked polythetically. In general, however, weavers do not see the need to find a link between their own pattern version and someone else's simply because both bear the same title. For this reason polythesis is of limited relevance in a local context and remains largely an externally imposed theoretical framework. Nevertheless, the terminology is extremely useful to illustrate what is at issue here. To discuss motifs in neutral terms I refer to them as 'distinctive' features.

Wittgenstein also referred to polythetically linked features as 'family resemblances' (Needham 1983:37-8,41). Interestingly, this term provides an appropriate connection with the Iban mode of ordering patterns genealogically, as in a family tree. The Iban term is *tusut*, which Richards glosses as 'pedigree', 'genealogy', or 'family tree' (1981:405). As we have seen, for Iban weavers the pedigree of patterns is a major concern and the term is habitually used when discussing cloth. Ideally, patterns are handed down in an unbroken line of descent. Copies are called 'subsidiary', literally, the 'children' or 'offspring' (*anak*) in relation to the original, or 'parent' cloth (Freeman's informants refer to copies as 'female', to

originals as 'male'; the implications of this use are discussed in chapter 9).

What I propose to do then is to take patterns called '*rang*', or 'trophy head', by their respective owners and arrange them in a family tree. The oldest cloths stand at the base of the tree and recently made ones are placed at the tip or apex. Cloths are included if they are identified as *rang* by a reliable source. As long as this condition is met, examples from widely dispersed areas can be accommodated in the genealogy. We can then establish the distinctive features shared by the group of patterns. Once these are known, undocumented cloths from museum collections can be added to the tree, provided they exhibit the same distinctive features. Since many cloths in collections are older than field examples, this adds considerable scope to the investigation.

The objective is to establish to what extent titled patterns constitute a stable unit. The proposed investigation is more than a mere art historical exercise. As we have seen, the power of cloth is closely linked to the main pattern, or *buah*. It is at the start, or *pun*, of the main pattern that ritual precautions are necessary and remain so until the section has been completed. For the *rang* pattern, the weaver is particularly at risk when tying the lozenge motif. In this case, power, or the potential to inflict injury, seems to be directly identified with the pattern's

distinctive feature.

The question then is, are the distinctive features of patterns specific and essential? And is their presence sufficient for a pattern's membership in a class? If the answer is yes, then distinctive features would serve as indicators of membership in a class. In practical terms this would mean that a given pattern could be identified as the *rang* pattern as long as it contains the distinctive lozenge motif. If the answer is no, then the next question is whether or not the presence of the motif indicates that a given pattern is considered to be powerful. In short, is the lozenge motif a 'symbol' or indicator of power?

In order to investigate these issues, I have selected two of the most powerful patterns: the 'divided' or *bali belumpong* pattern from the Saribas, and the 'trophy head' or *rang* pattern from the Baleh.

The divided pattern (*bali belumpong*)

The *bali belumpong* pattern is one of the oldest and highest Saribas patterns and is recognized by everyone. Its distinctive feature is a large, unpatterned area in the centre (figs.46,47). The pattern of a recent cloth from the Ulu Ai, also called *bali belumpong* (fig.104), looks quite

different. In particular, the central gap is missing. Instead, the pattern consists of banked rows of a horseshoe or mouth-like motif.

The existence of two distinct versions presents no paradox for Iban weavers. To them, it is not surprising that a *bali belumpong* pattern from the Ulu Ai should be entirely different from the Saribas version. That a connecting link does in fact exist, is shown by two Saribas cloths, one from the field (fig.105) and one from the collection at Cambridge (fig.106), the latter being the older of the two. Both examples include the central gap as well as the mouth-like motif, the distinctive feature of the Ulu Ai cloth.

If arranged chronologically, there are two possible family trees. In the first, the Hose cloth with gap and mouth is the prototype from which the other two cloths (featuring either the gap or the mouth) evolved. In the second genealogy, the gap and mouth cloth is just one variation of the basic gap pattern and the Ulu Ai cloth appears as a late off-shoot.

When applying the classificatory terms discussed above, Saribas *bali belumpong* cloths constitute a monothetic class, with the gap as the specific and essential feature. When we add the Ulu Ai cloth, a polythetic class is formed, the pattern being connected to the Saribas version by virtue of the gap and mouth cloth. Without this link, the

chain would be broken. Here the mouth-like motif and the gap are characteristic features whose presence is incidental, or sporadic, and neither feature is essential for membership in the *bali belumpong* group.

It is highly unlikely that any Iban weaver today could point out the connecting link between these patterns. However, it can be assumed that the change (using only one element) was consciously carried out at the time. It does not matter which element (or how many of them) constitutes the original distinctive feature. The point is that, by omitting (or adding) one feature, the pattern's original identity was changed, or extended. In this case at least, the pattern's rank or power as indicated in the title is not inextricably linked to one particular feature. Or, to put it another way, form and meaning as a unit are not constant.

Rang (Baleh)

The distinctive feature of the *rang* pattern is a lozenge motif, usually placed in the first half of the cloth after the *pun*, or start (fig.13). Apart from the lozenge motif there is what I call a bottle-shaped motif above it (fig.107). This second motif does not appear to be essential for the identity of the pattern since some versions do

not feature it (figs.102,103).

The next four examples were all woven in the last twenty years and show some of the changes which can be made. In a cloth from the Mujong river (fig.108), the lozenge motif is represented twice in each half section of the cloth, the bottle-shaped motif once. In a Baleh cloth, the scale and stylistic emphasis has been changed to such a degree as to make the pattern almost unrecognizable (fig.109). Both motifs are present in a version from the Ngemah river, but the former has been turned around and enlarged, while the background has been changed dramatically (fig.110). In a cloth from the Ulu Ai (fig.111) a mutation of the lozenge motif is represented six times, taking up the whole centre field. Three of the last four examples were identified as the *rang jugah* pattern by their respective owners or weavers. The distinctive pattern is also found on cloths made by the *sungkit* technique (figs.112,113).

If arranged in a family tree, several examples (figs.102, 103,109,112) connect in a straight line to the *rang* prototype (fig.13). In two examples (figs.110,111) the changes are quite significant and the link to the prototype is only known to the weavers who created them. Nonetheless, the distinctive lozenge motif is present in all examples shown and thus constitutes the specific and essential feature of a monothetic class. This, however, is not the whole picture. In chapter 4, I presented the trophy head basket or

sempuyong pattern as a close family relation of *rang*.

Sempuyong

The *sempuyong* pattern is almost as ancient as *rang* and just 'a bit below' (*barah mimit*) in both age and rank. From my files, it would appear that figure 16 shows the 'classic', or prototype, *sempuyong* pattern. The essential elements are similar to those of *rang*. The *sempuyong* lozenge assumes the same prominent position in the first half of the cloth, after the *pun*, or start (detail A of fig.16). But, unlike the open-ended *rang* lozenge, the *sempuyong* motif is closed. The focal motif at the upper, or *ujung* end has a kind of hour-glass shape (detail B of fig.16).

Despite this apparent clear-cut identification, the line of distinction between the two patterns is actually quite blurred. Accordingly, the names *rang* and *sempuyong* are often mixed up or switched and a *sempuyong* style pattern may be identified as *rang* and vice versa. It seems that both patterns became intermingled quite some time ago as shown by some old cloths which are composites of the two patterns (fig.114). The shape and position of the *sempuyong* lozenge are the same as in the 'true' *sempuyong* pattern, but the *rang* lozenge appears inverted on the upper end of the cloth. A more recent off-shoot (fig.115) also

connects to both *rang* and *sempuyong*. The pattern features the bottle-shaped motif of the *rang* prototype and is called *sempuyong bunga* after one stage of headhunters' *gawai* (Freeman 1975:279,280).

All these patterns are related. Names are changed, but their meanings stay within the same semantic field of headhunting. *Rang* refers to the trophy head, *sempuyong* to the basket used to receive it, and *sempuyong bunga* to the *gawai* held in honour of its captor. The patterns share certain features, but there is no specific feature shared by all. Rather, the patterns are linked by sporadic resemblances and form a polythetic class. This fact is recognized and made explicit by Iban weavers. They say, 'There are many kinds of *rang*' (*bisi maioh macam rang*). One woman made the same statement regarding *sempuyong*, but she used the word *bansa*, for 'sort', or 'kind' (Richards 1981:26). Nevertheless, the lozenge motif and its permutations are distinctive features of this group of patterns. The presence of the motif may be unstable and its appearance may change, but it still remains an indicator of rank and power. The 'form' and 'meaning' of these patterns are related. The next and crucial step for further investigation is to cross regional borders.

Rang (Saribas)

While several of the patterns just discussed exist in the Saribas (figs.116,117,118), the names *rang* and *sempuyong* are not known. Here, these patterns apparently did not acquire a distinct identity or rank and hence were not assigned titles. Instead, they are given general names for 'creeper' or 'vine' patterns, such as *tangkai* and *berinjan*, already mentioned above, *belulai* (from *lulai* for 'tree') and *berandau* (from *randau* for 'creeping plant'). As I argued in chapter 5, these names function as labels, the most common being *berinjan*.

An important experiment

This takes us to a crucial step in my investigation. Understandably, I was intrigued by the Saribas family relations of *rang* and puzzled over ways to initiate a discussion about them with Baleh informants. I had already taken Saribas *rang* versions to the Baleh. These were practically identical to Baleh versions and, as might be expected, Baleh weavers identified these as being 'just like' (*sabaka*) their own *rang* pattern (fig.116).

The question is, what happens when Baleh weavers are confronted with cloths which show the *rang* lozenge but otherwise are quite different from their own version? Evidently,

it was crucial to choose the right pattern. My first choice was an undocumented cloth obtained from a local shop (fig.119). One reason for selecting it is the clear rendition of the *sempuyong* lozenge. The background is a flared coil pattern quite different from the tightly coiled one of *sempuyong*. The choice of the second cloth (fig.120) was based on several considerations. To begin with, this is a common Saribas pattern, usually called the 'interlocking' (*berasok*) pattern (fig.121). Just as frequently, it is referred to by one of the names for vine-like patterns (*belulai*; fig.122; *berinjan*; fig.123). Secondly, a strong case can be made for this pattern being originally connected to *rang*. Frequently the *rang* lozenge is faithfully represented, complete with the familiar open-ended 'jaw' and the obligatory food offering inside it (fig.124).

I had quite specific expectations of what Baleh weavers would tell me about these two cloths. Above all, I expected them to place the patterns firmly within the *rang* and *sempuyong* family. At most, I thought they might suggest some related name. These expectations were not fulfilled. Instead, the answers I received are very interesting indeed. In fact, the answers are crucial for understanding how pattern names are applied, how they function, and how meaning is ascribed depending on context.

Baleh weavers do not conclude that, due to the presence of

the familiar lozenge motif, the name is *rang* or *sempuyong*, or some other associated name. Weavers say, 'The title cannot be known; only the people who made it know the name'. When the pattern's title is not known, nothing can be said about the significance of the lozenge motif, however prominent it may be. As the Baleh informants explained, 'We do not know what the weaver intended; she may have just made this pattern up (*ngaga kediri*) and may have included the lozenge simply to fill a space (*pengalit aja*)'. The distinctive feature of the first cloth, although identified by Baleh weavers as being 'like' (*baka*) the *sempuyong* lozenge, here is simply a space-filler (*pengalit*). In the second cloth, the lozenge is said to be similar in shape, but nevertheless 'different' (*lain agi*) from *rang*. It is 'only a space-filler' (*pengalit aja*) and not connected to the main background pattern (*indu buah*). Baleh informants identified both patterns as *akar* or *tangkong*, terms which are used to refer to vine-like patterns. In other words, when a pattern's title is not known, informants revert to using the name category of labels in order to describe the pattern put before them on formal grounds.

The important point is that for the Baleh weavers who identified these patterns on formal grounds alone, the *rang* pattern has enormous significance. For the *rang* pattern the lozenge motif has vital importance. The motif is an essential feature which gives the pattern its very identity and indicates its rank and power. Baleh weavers say that

the lozenge motif 'belongs' to the *rang* pattern (*sigi buah empu*). Without it, *rang* is not *rang*. Tying the motif is surrounded by prohibitions. Yet, the same weavers who adhere to these prohibitions today, identify the lozenge as a mere space-filler in patterns whose identity they do not know.

There are several important conclusions to be drawn from my experiment. First, in the case of the *rang* pattern, form and meaning (pattern and title) are a fixed unit. However, even motifs with referential meaning (such as the *rang* lozenge) remain essentially decorative elements which can be used to compose patterns without referential meaning. This is how the distinctive lozenge motif has been used in the Saribas for quite some time and is currently so employed. In the Paku area, I documented several old examples of the firefly pattern in which the *rang* motif is used to fill the spaces of the pattern's characteristic prominent framework (fig.21). The difference is a matter of function. For the firefly pattern the motif has no 'use' (*guna*) other than filling a space. It is 'just' a space filler (*pengalit aja*) and can be omitted or changed. For the *rang* pattern, the motif has a use or purpose. It is the feature, or form, which is tied to the pattern's content or meaning, as indicated in the title.

So, which is it to be? Is the *rang* lozenge essentially a

'symbol' or an 'ornament'? Is its 'true' identity to be found in the context of the *rang* pattern, or is it essentially a 'mere' decorative motif?

While the *rang* pattern has enormous significance for the Baleh Iban and other upriver groups, the same pattern has no particular distinction in the Saribas where it is classed with other vine-like patterns. Judging from the age of extant examples, it is unlikely that the *rang* pattern was the first to incorporate the motif. The Saribas interlocking pattern (fig.124) uses a very similar motif and many examples of this pattern are at least as old as examples of the *rang* pattern. In other words, there is no evidence that the *rang* pattern was originally conceived as such. For the Baleh Iban, the pattern is known as *rang jugah*, the highest ranking pattern of all. For the Saribas Iban it is merely one particular kind of vine or creeper pattern (*berinjan*). Neither constitutes the 'true' identity or meaning of the pattern. Both are equally valid.

Here it is significant that Baleh informants identified the lozenge motif as merely a decorative motif in the foreign cloth. They did not say that the 'real' meaning of the motif is to be found in the context of the *rang* pattern. Neither did they intimate that the makers of the foreign cloth used the motif outside its proper context or that they were unaware of its 'true' significance. Rather, they identified the motif as an intrinsically decorative design

without referential meaning.

It would seem that an important conclusion is to be drawn from this experiment. This is that the 'original' (*asal*) coiled patterns of the Iban are essentially decorative in nature. 'Meaning' is superimposed after the pattern has been created by assigning a title.

The decorative nature of traditional Iban patterns

By far the most common answer given by Iban weavers to questions about their motivation for composing patterns in a certain way is 'because it looks good'. There are several indications that Iban weavers are guided primarily by decorative concerns. To begin with, Iban *pua* cloths exhibit the basic form of frame and fill. A 'good' *pua*, as the Iban say, has proper borders. In addition, Iban coiled patterns obey the fundamental law of symmetry and rhythm which governs decorative art the world over (cf. Riegl 1992: 15,47).

For Iban ikat-patterned cloth, the technique itself creates symmetry since patterns are repeated along the horizontal axis. *Pua* cloths always exhibit bilateral symmetry since generally they are composed of two halves while skirts tend to be repeats of three. So accomplished are Iban weavers in

this technique that, in good cloths, the repeat is not apparent and the pattern seems to continue uninterruptedly from side to side, giving a rhythmic rather than a static effect. To achieve this, the fewer repeats there are the better. As I pointed out in chapter 3, beginners' patterns have many repeats, which may dominate, making the pattern appear static. Difficult patterns which are reserved for more experienced weavers have many warp threads to one repeat.

Rhythm is also a dominant quality of the vertical composition of patterns. Very rarely are patterns mirrored along a horizontal axis (see for example fig.111). Generally, *pua* as well as skirt patterns change in an uninterrupted flow from one end to the other. Traditional coil patterns never appear 'banded' as do Sumba *hinggi* cloths, for example.

The meandering flow from one end to the other is an essential aesthetic quality of coiled patterns. When copying such patterns, care must be taken not to interrupt that flow. If the copier works at a larger scale and the pattern has to be cut short (*tingkoh*) or some design elements need to be taken out (*muai*) to fit the enlarged pattern into the same length, this can only be done at certain points. If the copied pattern appears to be cut off abruptly, it is considered 'spoiled' (*salah*).

However, it is the Iban predilection to decorate all vacant

space with space-fillers (*pengalit*) which provides the most convincing argument for the decorative nature of Iban patterns. Even Haddon remarked on the Iban 'dislike of an empty space' and of designs which have no 'obvious significance other than being decorative' (1982:82). Riegl sees the desire to fill all available space with decorative patterns, or *horror vacui*, as indicative of an early stage of art which is mainly preoccupied with decorative concerns (1992:65,137,215). For antique ornament, Riegl provides ample proof of the postulate of *horror vacui* representing 'a widely shared, primitive aesthetic perception' (1992:65 n.25).

This seems to hold true in the Iban case as well. My initial questions of 'what does this motif mean?', 'what is its purpose?' and so on, were often answered with, 'It is only a space-filler'. In retrospect, this makes perfect sense. The components of patterns do not have intrinsic 'meaning' akin to the kind of iconographic language we expect. Their 'meaning', or purpose rather, is to fill a space. No more.

This example may be taken as paradigmatic for much of the discourse between ethnographer and Iban weavers. My preoccupation with names and meaning created a situation which does not necessarily reflect Iban concerns. By asking the question, I create a situation in which names and meaning

become the focus. Iban weavers, by contrast, if left to their own devices, concentrate on the aesthetic merits and the arrangement of formal elements of a given cloth and discussions among themselves will focus on these.

Here it is important to point out that Iban weavers look at patterns from quite a different perspective than western observers. In the context of an exhibition, for example, we display *pua* cloths full length, while allowing space for the cloths to be viewed from a distance. This is done so that we can 'take in' the entire pattern. In a ritual context, *pua* cloths are rarely if ever displayed in this manner. For the *piring* ceremony the cloth is spread out full size, but the pattern is obscured by the plates which are placed on it. For the *ranyai* shrine, the cloth is wrapped around the circular frame; it is also covered with a number of objects (guns, spears, coconuts, various leafy plants and so on) which again obscure a full view. In short, *pua* patterns are rarely seen in their entirety.

It also seems that the weavers of these patterns do not conceptualize them as a comprehensive whole. When I showed large photographs to weavers, their first reaction without fail was to turn them sideways, the same way as patterns are tied when ikatting. More often than not, informants would fold the featured pattern down to one repeat in order to 'see' it. This was done as a matter of course when I brought actual cloths to show to informants. In other

words, weavers 'read' foreign patterns in the same way as they create them.

After years of familiarity with Iban cloth, I learned to recognize certain patterns, such as *rang*, at a glance. On more than one occasion I realized that Iban weavers do not have a similar facility for 'reading' an entire pattern in this way. Several times when I brought cloths with the *rang* pattern to show to weavers who themselves had woven the pattern at one time, they only recognized it after a lengthy examination of each section. On a number of occasions, they did not see the distinctive lozenge motif until I pointed it out. It seems that Iban weavers focus on the detail, rather than on the composition in its entirety. In other words, Iban perception of their fabric patterns is quite different from our own and further research in this direction might be very rewarding.

Significantly Iban weavers rarely see occasion to elaborate on the aesthetic qualities of the cloths they themselves have woven. But when shown cloths from elsewhere they take the opportunity to give a critical assessment. This is precisely what happened when I took my two Saribas examples to show to Baleh informants. It was the first cloth in particular (fig .119) that drew attention and admiration. Three different weavers asked me for a photograph of the cloth in order to make a copy. As is often the case, few

women could articulate reasons for liking the pattern other than saying it is 'good' (*badas*) or 'beautiful' (*manah*). One weaver said that were she to copy this pattern and enter it in a weaving competition, she would be assured of winning first prize. Several women praised the maker of the cloth as an expert at ikatting, dyeing and weaving (*pandai ngebat, nyelup, betenun*). The cloth was judged to be 'good' (*manah*) in all major respects. First, it had proper borders with a neatly ikatted pattern of motifs of which they approved. As mentioned earlier, borders are an important visual asset. A 'good' cloth is framed properly. As with many aesthetic aspects, they change with fashion, and today, some women consider the old wide side borders excessive and prefer narrower ones. In this cloth, however, the borders were judged to be just right. Further admired were the evenness and neat arrangement of the coils; the round filler patterns (*mata antu*) alternating evenly between black and red; and the vine-like tendrils (*akar*) descending in even steps. In short, it is the regularity, or even rhythm and symmetrical sequence which is esteemed. At the same time, the pattern is not static or placed awkwardly, but the composition is well-balanced. At no time, after my initial questioning, were informants concerned with what the pattern may 'mean'. The women wanted to copy the pattern because of its aesthetic qualities, not because of its potential 'meaning'.

To summarize, Iban patterns are fundamentally decorative in

nature. A pattern acquires meaning when a title is assigned to it. Titled patterns, especially those with proper names, comprise units which, given time, can become conventional symbols. However, the components of such a unit remain essentially decorative motifs which can be used in other contexts with no referential meaning.

This was demonstrated clearly on one particular occasion in the field when Baleh weavers took the distinctive motif of a high-ranking pattern (*Selempandai*) and used it as a decorative filler motif in another cloth.

Selempandai (or *Sempandai*)

In chapter 4, I introduced the pattern named after the creator deity *Sempandai* (fig.1). To identify distinctive features, it is useful to look at several examples of the pattern. The cloth in figure 125 is quite similar to the first one. In figure 126 the pattern is simplified and in figure 127, the essentials are reduced to fit a cloth about a quarter the size of a *pua* (this type of small cloth is made for the tourist market). The distinctive features are a prominent zigzag line ending in double-headed coils at the start of the pattern. There are also a truncated lozenge and thick vertical lines fringed with single coils.

For my next point it is necessary to return once more to *rang* (fig.128). I recorded this cloth in a Baleh longhouse where it is called 'paddling' *rang* (*rang bedayong*) because of the 'hands' (*jari*) which are attached to the lozenge. Apart from the main *rang* pattern, there is what my informants called an addition (*tampung*) at the upper end of the cloth. The separation between the *rang* pattern and this addition is quite distinct. As my informants explained, the weaver of the cloth (who died many years ago) probably had some thread left over after completing the main pattern. Rather than adding an over-large border, she used one design element from *Sempandai*, the thick vertical lines fringed with single coils, to 'fill in' the empty space. This design element is also called *Sempandai*; but, as my informant stressed repeatedly, as an addition, the name and pattern have 'no use' (*nadai guna*) for the main pattern and its title which is *rang*. Here *Sempandai* is used as a label. It designates the pattern which is used as an addition, no more. In other words, the same name (attached to the same pattern) can be used as either label or title, depending on context and the intention of the user. In the first context, it is the distinctive feature of a titled pattern with referential meaning; in the second, the same design is merely a design.

To summarize, 'meaning' is not indelibly fixed to motifs and patterns. Rather, referential meaning depends on the context in which a pattern is used and on the significance

ascribed to it by the weaver. If weavers can decide the 'meaning' of a motif depending on the context in which they use it, then that gives an intriguing twist to the conceptualization of the ritual power and efficacy of cloths, discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 8

POWER and EFFICACY

In view of the last chapter, the power and ritual efficacy, which is ascribed to cloth, becomes an even more intriguing issue. Before proceeding with my data, it is necessary to turn to the literature where this quality tends to be conceptualized in a certain way. Thus, Heppell writes that the weaver 'seeks to capture the essence of the spirit and render it in the cloth' (1989:81). I admit to having used similar language in a paper written at the beginning of my field research (1991:4); at the time, it seemed a reasonable way of expressing the matter. This essence, so the popular view goes, can be 'switched on', and brought to life, like Aladdin's genie emerging from his magic lamp. This is at least what Heppell would have us believe, writing that men sleep covered by textiles so that 'the spirit represented in the pattern will visit the person at night' (1989:82).

The power of human images

The attribution of life to human images in art is common even today in western society. According to Freedberg (1989), it is this attribution of life which motivates much of the vandalism directed at paintings and sculpture. In a

newspaper article, Lubbock comments on this 'iconoclastic impulse' (1994:23):

The target of the attack is not the picture so much as the image. Landscapes and still-lives are usually passed over. It's figurative works, and the figures in them, that bear the brunt. People go for the face, the eyes or, like Michelangelo's *Pieta*, the nose. The *Venus* took it on the back and buttocks. Leonardo's *Cartoon* was shot through the Virgin's heart. (Admittedly, Michelangelo's *David* only lost a toe, but up on its pedestal that was the nearest extremity within reach.) As Freedberg says, "It is perfectly clear that any number of these assaults are predicated in one way or another on the attribution of life to the figure represented."

The attribution of life to images is not limited to iconoclasts, but is part of our cultural heritage, at least since the Greeks and the notion of what Gombrich calls Pygmalion's power (1960:115). In the myth, the sculptor falls in love with the statue he created; in his despair he turns to Venus who answers his prayers by endowing the image with life. Similar legends have been reported from all over the world (Kris and Kurz 1934:100-112).

For the Iban, Freeman records similar stories (1950). One of Freeman's informants told of how, when sleeping with a *pua* with designs of the forest demon *antu gerasi*, he dreamt that the demon stood over him, leering. In another of Freeman's accounts, a weaver, while busy tying the figure of an ogre, saw the spirit she was fashioning take shape before her, towering over her with fierce and staring eyes (1949).

From these data it seems that the Iban also make a connection between pictorial representation of spirits in cloth and their appearance in dreams and visions. However, as I have shown, patterns are effective, or *bisa*, in ways which do not involve, much less depend on the coming alive of a spirit represented in them. Above all, it is the actual process of making cloth which involves risk of spiritual retribution. The risks are expressed in general terms of being 'defeated' (*alah*) or 'consumed' (*empa*) by the task at hand. The stages of production singled out as particularly sensitive are applying the mordants, the first insertion of the weft, and the tying of the first coil of the main pattern. Another sensitive point is the completion of the cloth when a thread is singed and an offering made to avoid a weakening of body and spirit after the task just completed (*alah ayu; empa jamah*). In none of these instances is there a notion of a spirit (directly connected with the action itself) who may threaten to attack the weaver.

In other words, alongside Freeman's accounts cited above, there are numerous occasions when the efficacy of patterns is not associated with the coming alive of spirits depicted in them. Rather it is the emphasis placed on figurative patterns by ethnographers which has led some authors to portray the risks of making cloth exclusively in terms of spirit manifestations (cf. Needham 1983:80). Here it is important to note that the Freemans, in collecting data on Iban textile patterns, concentrated on recent designs which are almost exclusively figurative. Monica Freeman remarked on this fact, saying that she and her husband focussed on 'innovative' designs, rather than on 'conventional' ones (p.c. 1993). Authors with access to the Freemans' notes, subsequently made similar observations, derived from the focus on figurative designs (Heppell 1989; Vogelsanger 1980; Maxwell 1990).

The focus on human images

The emphasis placed on figurative designs by ethnographers and western textile collectors alike is nothing new. Regrettably, this focus has led to a distorted presentation of the significance of these designs. Starting with Haddon's statement that human figures 'may be made only by the wives and daughters of chiefs' (1982:124), the emphasis has remained on design of human figures in most publica-

tions since. As I pointed out elsewhere (1991:195), it is likely that Hose, in providing this information, was guided by observations he had made among the Kayan and Kenyah peoples, who reserve certain motifs, anthropomorphic among others, for the aristocracy (for details, see King 1985:139). In contrast to the Iban, the Kayan and Kenyah have a stratified social structure. In addition, Iban weavers acquire the right to weave ritually important patterns through dream inspiration and other means, rather than from their fathers' or husbands' social rank.

The reason for the emphasis on figurative designs, I would argue, is due to the readability of such designs. Coiled patterns such as *rang* confront the untrained eye with a confusing welter of interlocking tendrils. We cannot make sense, or 'read' such designs and, in consequence, they remain meaningless to us; we therefore tend to focus on 'readable' figurative patterns. This tendency becomes apparent in the patterns usually chosen for publication. The Pitt Rivers Museum, for example, has a fair-sized collection of Iban cloths, many with traditional coiled patterns. However, the motif chosen for a postcard printed by the museum shows the small anthropomorphic figure of a minor border design. Chinese shopkeepers in Sarawak are well aware of our predilection for human figure designs and the price for such cloths goes up accordingly.

The Iban themselves do not attach similar importance to

designs of figures; these are largely a recent phenomenon. The only old figurative pattern of high rank is the *Nising* pattern. It is however not considered on *par* with powerful coiled patterns such as *rang* or *sempuyong*. Another old pattern, only found in the Saribas, consists of rows of small figures, called *engkeramba*, meaning 'model' or 'doll' (Richards 1981:84). This pattern is not accorded high status or power (see appendix A). Small figures serve mainly as space-fillers (*pengalit*) and are often included on end borders in Saribas *pua* where they have a decorative function. When asked about the meaning of these motifs, the usual reply is that they are 'just pictures' (*gambar aja*).

My very first interview in a Saribas longhouse is indicative of the little value the Iban attach to these small figures. On this occasion, I asked about the significance of a figurative border design. The weaver of the cloth replied that the figure was a 'catun'. When asked to translate this, my interpreter insisted that 'catun' was an English word. Nonplussed, I wondered if 'cotton' was meant. But the translator explained that the weaver was referring to the 'cartoons' she had seen on television. From the perspective of subsequent research the use of the term (which was repeated by informants in other locations) made sense since such small figures in themselves are insignificant and, apparently, look faintly comical to the Iban as well.

At times, however, the western emphasis on figures is extended to the search for 'concealed' figures within traditional coil patterns (see for example Maxwell 1990: 127-8). Coil patterns are thus seen to contain 'abstract human faces and figures' (Holmgren and Spertus 1977:44; compare fig.30 *suri ai*); an alternative term favoured by some authors is 'stylised human figures' (Bullough 1981:13, fig.VII; compare fig.24 *gumbang*). As in the two cases cited, these interpretations are not derived from field data, but are based on the authors' own 'reading' of the designs. I would argue that seeing hidden figures in Iban patterns can be attributed to what Gombrich calls the 'notorious' tendency to 'project faces into any configuration remotely permitting this transformation' (1979:171). But, as Gombrich rightly points out, 'how can <the interpreter> be sure that what he reads as a face was intended to represent one?' (1979:265). Well, at least in the Iban case, it is unlikely that such hidden faces and figures were intended (for details, see appendix B). Meaning is hidden in the metaphors and play-on-words of titles, rather than in the pattern on the cloth.

To return to Heppell's statement quoted at the beginning of this chapter, it does not seem likely that Iban weavers are intent on 'capturing spirits' in their patterns, much less the 'essence' of spirits. Yet, it is somewhat surprising to come across accounts today which employ the term 'essence' in connection to ritual efficacy, some twenty years after

the publication of Needham's seminal article, *Skulls and Causality* (1976; 1983). In it, Needham questions the need for an intermediary term, such as some form of 'life-force' or 'soul-substance' in the causal connection between head-hunting and its effects. As Needham shows, indigenous accounts do not postulate such a mediating factor, whereas ethnographers persist in interpolating a third term. It is the use of such terms which leads Needham to the following conclusion:

... all these terms belong to a scientific idiom derived from physics: electromagnetism, hydraulics, mechanics. They were adduced by the ethnographers because certain effects had to be causally accounted for; and if the latter were caused by the taking of heads, then these must have produced the effects by means of some "force" or "energy". This is the way physical effects are accounted for, and it was in accordance with this scientific model of explanation that (to judge by the terms typically employed) the ethnographers conceived what they thought a fit interpretation of the causality of head-hunting (1983:86).

There is one instance, in connection with cloth, the *ngar* ritual, when the term 'essence', in the sense of a 'soul-substance', seems to be particularly misplaced.

Dew (ambun)

According to Iban eschatology, upon death a person's soul passes through a number of stages, eventually dissolving into dew in which form it is absorbed by the growing rice plant. Since the exposure to dew is such an important aspect of the *ngar*, some authors have suggested that *pua*, after having absorbed the dew, in a sense 'contain' the 'essence' of the ancestors. Thus Drake writes that Iban women enhance the phases of a cyclic regeneration comprised of dew, rice seed germination and the spirits of ancestors by 'weaving charm textiles that capture the dew, the celestial essence' (1991:284). Drake's paper includes data he collected among the Mualang, a people culturally related to the Iban who live in the middle Kapuas region of Kalimantan. But the paper's main arguments are drawn from the literature on the Iban of Sarawak (Drake 1991:272).

Heppell similarly writes in an unpublished paper (1988:15) that, in absorbing the dew during the *ngar*, Iban cloth is 'imbued' with the 'essence of the ancestors'. Appel (1991) makes the same connection, but with the reservation that it needs to be confirmed by field research. I must admit that the possibility of such a connection occurred to me at the start of my fieldwork. I was also aware of Heppell's paper which he had presented at a symposium in Kuching that summer. I was therefore intent on learning what the Iban had to say on the matter.

First let us consider how the connection between rice and dew has been presented in the literature. In a recent paper, Sather repeats the much-quoted Iban phrase, 'Rice is our ancestors (*Padi aki' ini' kami*)' (1994:130). Sather adds the following comment:

Compressed in this statement is not merely a metaphor, but a sense of genuine physical identity. Rice represents a transubstantiation of the ancestors, a direct physical embodiment of their continuing presence in the living world.

and:

<Dew> is absorbed into the plants and so becomes the very life-stuff of the rice crop itself. The Iban therefore describe rice as their "ancestors" because they see rice as embodying the final corporal residue of the souls of those that have gone to the Otherworld before them.

During my field enquiries I did not come across similar explicit statements. All my informants said was that ancestors (as dew) 'help' to make the rice grow. This is how Richards refers to the matter; he glosses *ambun* as a 'poetic' term for the 'souls of the dead (*sebayan*) in the form by which they help *padi* grow' (Richards 1981:8).

Jensen does not say if the Iban perceive their ancestors as being physically present in the *padi*, but mentions that upon death the *semangat*, or soul, only becomes dew after it has died (1974:108). Davison and Sutlive, who have pushed some interpretations further than one might wish, simply note the importance of the association between dew, ancestors and rice, but concede that, 'There is, however, no specific notion of a re-cycling, or transmigration, of the soul' (1991:162).

While my informants were aware of a connection between dew and ancestors, they did not make a similar connection for the *ngar*. My roundabout allusions to such a connection were met with incomprehension. Finally, when I asked directly if such a connection existed, they denied that it did, arguing that, 'Dew has many uses; we use it as medicine (to bathe an infected eye, for example)'. Other informants at different times gave similar answers, if less elaborate. In any case, no one stated that the absorption of dew during the *ngar* was associated with the souls of the dead.

To summarize, the ritual efficacy and power of Iban cloth patterns cannot be attributed to figurative representation or to the presence of some sort of magical 'essence' in the cloth. In order to understand Iban notions regarding the power of cloth, we have to look elsewhere.

Power and efficacy

Having challenged two popular ways of conceptualizing the ritual power of cloth, it is not easy to find a replacement based on Iban statements. When asking Iban women about cloth patterns, it occurred to me on occasion that, from their perspective they may be making statements about their rank as weavers, while we assume all along that they are discussing the meaning of the actual patterns on the cloth. What if our assumptions with regard to the ritual efficacy of cloth are similarly misguided? What if references to the power of *bisa* patterns serve mainly as an index for a weaver's relative rank? This at least seems to be indicated by the kind of responses given by Iban weavers.

When I ask an Iban weaver, 'how', 'why', or 'how do you know' that a cloth, or pattern, is powerful, the answer is, 'Because I fell ill when making it', or, 'Because many people have fallen ill, or have died, when trying to make it'. This is the only clear and consistent statement Iban weavers make on how the power of cloth (or patterns rather) manifests itself. Power is associated with the physical and mental effects the creation of the pattern has on the weaver.

The power of cloth to inflict injury is the core around which the entire complex of weaving revolves. Falling sick

is an index of the level of power (or rank) of a given pattern. The rank of a pattern is an index of the rank of the weaver who can make it; and a pattern's rank determines the ritual occasion the cloth can be used for.

The power of cloth to inflict injury in turn creates the need for protective counter-measures in the form of ritual restrictions and rules, divine support and authorization received in dreams, the bestowal of charms and so on. If it were not for the power of cloth to inflict injury, dreams and charms (or the dynamics of the complex of weaving) would be obsolete. At the same time, it is the need for such counter-measures which renders weaving as the main means for women to acquire prestige. The dynamics of the weaving complex are not tangible, concrete events which can be observed; as such they are subject to human interpretation and regulation. If the weaver falls sick it is taken as an indication of the pattern's power; if she does not fall sick, this may be attributed to the power of the counter-active charms in her possession, rather than to the pattern's lack of power. In the second case, both interpretations are possible, and both are offered depending on the situation and the whim of the persons who are involved in providing an explanation. (There are of course reasons for making cloth other than the desire to acquire prestige, reasons which are not emphasized in the present discussion; many women weave simply because they like it; weaving is also a means of relaxation, or even a form of 'meditation',

as can be seen by the qualities deemed necessary for the task, such as the peaceful state of mind brought about by some charms; Freeman further recorded instances of weaving being carried out as a 'sacrificial act' after committing adultery).

Ritual prohibitions

Human regulation is part of most Iban ritual practice which, in turn, is noted for its flexibility. As Uchibori notes, Iban religion is 'remarkably transformable' due to innovations derived from dream inspirations (1983:100). Masing goes further and writes that 'all Iban ritual activities originate from dreams' (*samoa pengawa Iban bepun ari mimpi*; 1981:63). Freeman similarly stresses the 'fundamental importance' of dreams for Iban religious life and the extent to which they produce 'innovation and change' (1975:285). In short, Iban ritual life is dynamic. Freeman gives a number of field examples to show how instructions received in dreams are responsible for new ritual practices. If anything, this sort of innovation is on the increase today.

The first time I met Temenggong Jinggut was on the occasion of a *gawai kenyalang* celebration in a Baleh longhouse. He was acting as *orang nanam*, the man responsible for erect-

ing, or 'planting', the *ranyai* shrine. To be exact, he was showing the people there how to include a nest of eggs in the shrine, an innovation which he had been taught in a dream (cf. Masing 1981:478-9). Being a man of considerable prestige and wealth, this innovation was seen as having proven its success and hence people were eager to imitate Jinggut in the hope of achieving similar results.

Instructions received in dreams are rarely a straightforward affair and much depends on how the dream is interpreted. Correct interpretation is also vital for augury and other methods of divination. Omens provide mere guidelines. There is no safe way of knowing that one interpretation is the correct one and only future events prove the choice right or wrong (Freeman 1961:156-7; Richards 1972). Once a decision has been reached and a course of action chosen, gongs are beaten and leaves stuffed into ears to avoid hearing further omens which may be inauspicious. Observing this practice has always struck me as a contradiction in terms; but it only appears as such if our premise is that omens, in a sense, 'predict' future events. The Iban, by contrast, are well aware of the part played by their own choice of action. In Freeman's words, the attitude is that 'of a man, who, having taken good counsel and every safeguard, decides for better or for worse to shut his ears to all further admonition' (1961:157). Interpretations of omens are a highly personal affair and differ depending on the context to which the omen is taken to refer. As Freeman

observes, this kind of 'manipulation of augury' is common among the Iban; he sees augury as providing the Iban with the 'opportunity for sanctioned wishful thinking' and concludes that, 'Augury, then is far from being an inflexible system unamenable to human regulation' (1961:156-7).

Ritual prohibitions that govern weaving are similarly flexible and open to regulation. Rules and regulations are guidelines to success, revealed long ago by beneficent gods. However, these rules are not fixed and are habitually circumvented. If rules are broken outright, ill consequences are not inevitable. As I was told, as long as no one draws attention to the fact that a rule has been broken (*rara*), nothing will befall the offender. In short, rules are not seen as divine laws which, if broken, automatically bring spiritual retribution.

Neither are rules fixed once and for all, but are open to innovation and change, as the best course of action is reassessed and tested. Old prohibitions are discarded if they prove to be no longer effective. For example, during a visit to Entawau in 1993, I met one woman who had performed the *ngar* by herself, without a dream invitation and without the aid of charms. I was introduced to this woman by a participant of the *ngar* I had documented at Entawau five years previously. At the time of the introduction, the longhouse happened to be under ritual restrictions follow-

ing a death (*ulit*). During a time of *ulit*, all aspects of weaving are prohibited and as a result our conversation took place clandestinely and was conducted in a whisper. This lent the affair a conspirational air which, however, was in tune with the glee with which I was told that, even without charms and dreams, the operation had been a success. This, incidentally, proves wrong my prediction that weavers would eventually prefer to use chemical dyes rather than disregarding traditional prohibitions attached to the *ngar*, thus leaving 'the sanctity of the *ngar* intact' (Gavin 1991:29).

Dreams

First, it must be noted that we do not really know what the Iban mean when they say, 'I had a dream' (*aku mimpi*). Richards glosses *mimpi*, as both 'dream' and 'vision' (1981:219); and it is clearly the latter which is meant when women claim to be shown cloth patterns in dreams. Here, dreams are a conventionalized means of expressing what might be called an artistic vision or inspiration in a western cultural context. In an incident recorded by Freeman, a distinction is made between dreams which occur in 'real' sleep and those which occur in 'shallow' or 'superficial' (*mabu*) sleep; it is only in the former that deities are said to reveal their identities (1950). Certainly more research must be done in this area.

However, for the discussion at hand, we must make do with the present state of knowledge. As discussed in chapter 3, dreams are decoded by means of standardized sets of images. The presence of one or two of these images is sufficient for a dream to be interpreted in a certain way. The choice of interpretation depends largely on the self-confidence of the woman concerned; and, as with omens, a good deal of wishful thinking may also be involved.

Dreams, in a sense, comprise the 'outward' sign of the divine validation of a weaver's status. As such, dreams are a conventional means of substantiating claims of artistic expertise. The use of this means of validation is subject to a certain code of behaviour. For example, it is frowned upon if a woman puts herself forward by boasting about her dreams; for leading the *ngar* ceremony, dream invitations must be repeated three times. However, conventions change and today, with the majority of Iban being Christian, it is uncommon to hear claims of explicit dream encounters with *Kumang* and other deities associated with weaving. As one informant put it, nowadays, the gods do not 'come and speak to us anymore as they used to' (Gavin 1991:17). Instead, indirect dream invitations through a second party (usually a relative) are increasingly common (see Gavin 1991:16-7; Masing 1981:477).

With regard to these conventions and codes of behaviour, it

is interesting to examine the differences between Baleh and Saribas. As I pointed out in the introduction, weaving continued in the Baleh uninterruptedly and in the process adjusted to modern needs; whereas in the Saribas, where weaving ceased at the time of the Second World War, the manner of claiming expertise is 'frozen' in what today may be regarded (at least by Baleh weavers who have 'moved on') as a somewhat quaint way of expression which belongs to the past. In the Saribas, levels of accomplishment are listed in a rigid and standardized way which does not have much validity in a modern context. Distinctions range from ordinary housewives who cannot weave (*indu paku indu tebu*) to the highest status of women who can perform the *ngar* (*indu nakar indu ngar*); in between are women who are mainly good hostesses who are also capable of weaving ordinary designs (*indu temuai indu lawai*); women who depend on copying designs (*indu sikat indu kebat*) and women capable of inventing their own patterns (*indu negkebang indu muntang*; Jabu 1991:80-1).

The differences between the two areas became glaringly apparent during the weaving seminar held in Kuching in 1988. For this event sixty or so weavers were brought in from both areas. In order to make up their half share, quite a number of Saribas women without any weaving experience were included. These women learned the first steps of making patterned cloth during this event, a fact which was quite obvious to the experienced Baleh weavers. Nonethe-

less, it was a (male) weaver from Saratok who was chosen to give a demonstration of the *ngar* process. In the course of this demonstration, he presented one of the essential tools, a coconut measuring cup (*tacu*), saying that he had been 'given' this cup by *Meni*.

In the past, this may well have been the manner in which Iban weavers explained how they obtained the measuring cup, which is indeed associated with *Meni*. And in fact this is how a Baleh weaver will recount how her grandmother or great-grandmother originally acquired her cup. But it is not the way in which the event is referred to today. Baleh weavers who had witnessed the demonstration in Kuching, often retold this particular incident, poking fun at the speaker's phrasing and what they saw as his pretentious demeanour (especially since the incident had occurred in a very public setting). Another cause for ridicule was that, at the seminar, Saribas weavers had blamed their ineptness at making cloth on the fact that *Kumang* did not appear in their dreams. To this, Baleh weavers retorted (in private), 'We do not dream of *Kumang* either, but we still know how to *ngebat*'. In other words, in the Baleh, the conventions of claiming expertise have changed and adapted to modern terminology.

However, to return to my main argument, the question is, how far are dreams (and other means of claiming rank)

manipulated? On more than one occasion during my field research, dreams followed standardized sequences so closely as to give the appearance of being manufactured. This of course is impossible to prove short of an admission by the informant. After all, one cannot prove that a dream did not happen as is claimed, or, in fact, that the dream happened at all (cf. Barnes 1974:100). I must admit that I rarely challenged accounts of dreams. Freeman, on the other hand, came pretty close to uncovering what he calls a 'carefully staged piece of deliberate deception' (1949).

The case involves two informants, Jabai and her daughter Bidang. Both had dreams predicting the finding of charms in the course of the *ngar* which was being held at the time. Jabai dreamt that she would be given two *pengaroh*, or charms, a fact which she announced to all persons attending the ceremony. Bidang's dream was extremely detailed and, in Freeman's words, 'laid down the exact circumstances under which the *pengaroh* would be found'. All of these circumstances were met: Bidang was sitting beside Jabai at the time of finding the charm; she saw the stone floating in the mordant mixture at the head of the *dulang*, or trough; Bidang snatched this stone in her hand; it resembled a piece of hardened turmeric (*kunyt nyadi batu*). As Freeman comments, 'That these conditions should be met by chance is so improbable as to be inconceivable'. He proceeded openly to question this sequence of events. Above all, Freeman demonstrated that even such a small stone as the one in

question, could not float, and that, even if it did, it could not be seen in the murky liquid of the trough. One interesting part of this account is the response of Freeman's Iban audience:

Already, at this point, it was obvious that my rigorous examination of the finding of the *pengarah* was not being appreciated. It is apparently quite untoward, and unheard of, for anyone to sceptically question the veracity of the finder of a *pengarah*.

Freeman at this point desisted in pushing the matter further, conceding that, 'The only way of finally proving this would be to extract a confession from one of the persons concerned'.

A number of questions present themselves regarding this incident, not all of which can be answered satisfactorily. To begin with, it seems fairly certain that, as Freeman observed, the incident was 'staged'. However, it is difficult to assess the extent to which the perpetrators were actually aware of their deceit. They may well have succeeded in deceiving themselves, at least to some degree.

Another question, at least to the western observer, is an obvious one: if the stone was planted deliberately, how can the perpetrators regard it as possessing magical proper-

ties? It is by no means clear, however, if this question arises in an Iban context. After all, deception and trickery are part and parcel of healing rites, for example (for details, see Freeman 1967:330,340-1; Sather 1993a; Barrett 1993). The shaman's trickery is viewed as a means of making manifest in tangible form what occurs in an unseen realm during the rite (the patient's errant soul being retrieved in the shape of a pebble and so on). Most importantly, the shaman's deception does not rule out the notion of ritual efficacy itself. Just how indistinct these concepts are can be seen by the difficulty of discussing them without resorting to the term 'belief' which, as Needham has shown, is exceedingly difficult to define (1972).

However, these aspects of Freeman's incident need not concern us for the discussion at hand. If it is tacitly accepted that dreams and the finding of charms (as conventional signs of validation) can be manipulated, then Freeman's rigorous enquiry, from an Iban point of view, is beside the point. Manipulation and even outright deception do not detract from the validity of the system that is being manipulated. Students who cheat on their exams do not question the value of a university degree; quite the contrary.

However, as Freeman notes, it is quite outside accepted conventions to accuse a person of lying. It is also beside the point since dreams are not a concrete experience and as

such cannot be 'proved' either way. Even if a woman's account is recognized as deception by her peers, and even if this is frowned upon, still no one would accuse her of lying outright, at least not in her presence. After all, there are other, more effective means of curtailing her ambitions. During my fieldwork, I observed a number of occasions when weavers' claims to distinction failed to find acceptance in the community at large. Dumo, one of the participants of the *ngar* at Entawau, is a case in point. Although she tried to put herself forward as leader of the ceremony, she was denied that position by the other participants (1991:18). Frequently, weavers claim their new patterns are *bisa*, citing incidents of illness as proof of this power. This, however, has little effect on the woman's status unless others are keen to copy her creations and confirm her claims by reports of having been similarly affected by the pattern's power.

To summarize, one aspect of the power of cloth is that it serves as an index for the rank of weavers. Seen from this perspective, the dynamics of the weaving complex, dreams of helping spirits, the finding of charms and so on, are conventional means for claiming rank; since these are not concrete events, they are open to human regulation. By pursuing this line of enquiry, I may not have answered questions regarding the precise nature of the ritual power and efficacy of patterned cloth. However, the arguments I

have raised may provide a useful point of departure for further enquiry in this direction.

CHAPTER 9

WEAVING and HEADHUNTING

The data presented in this thesis show weaving to be a more complex undertaking than has been appreciated to date. Does this affect how the relation between weaving and headhunting is viewed? I think it does. Most discussions, in particular recent ones, centre on questions of gender equality and male dominance. I should like to advance the view that such questions are not necessarily relevant in the context of traditional Iban society.

In traditional Iban society, headhunting and weaving are parallel male and female prestige systems and markers of life-cycle events. The weaving sword, or beater-in (*belia*), and the spear are paired emblems for weaving and headhunting respectively. At conception, the Iban-to-be is offered the emblems of warfare or of weaving and, according to the choice, becomes a boy or a girl (Ling Roth 1896:I,176-7; Jensen 1967:167). For the ritualized first bath, spear or beater-in are positioned on the river bank (Ling Roth 1896:I,101). In some accounts, a shed-stick (*letan*), is mentioned in place of the beater-in (Sather 1988:169; Jensen 1967:176).

Weaving and headhunting are primary male and female frameworks against which the achievement of the individual is

measured. Ideally, a girl is not considered fit for marriage unless she has woven a *pua*, and a suitor is not accepted unless he has captured a head (cf. Ling Roth 1896:II,164; Pringle 1970:24,25). At rites for the dead, the honours bestowed on men and women are graded and depend on the rank they have achieved as headhunters and as weavers. No grade is specified for persons who have not made a mark within these achievement scales (Sandin 1980:54-55).

In order to advance in rank, it is essential for both weavers and headhunters to obtain the gods' blessings in dreams and to be given powerful charms. The location for the two activities, however, is quite different. To obtain heads, men travel beyond the horizon, to unknown territory. Weaving, by contrast, is carried out within the longhouse itself. Many women work on the public gallery, especially during the day, while others prefer the *sadau*, or loft. Traditionally, the *sadau* is the sleeping place of unmarried girls and, in old-style longhouses, this is where the rice is stored. In the *sadau*, no animal may be killed, not even for an offering (Sather 1980:91). The *sadau* therefore is the most private and protected place of the longhouse.

The location of headhunting and weaving may be opposed, yet the risks involved are alike. For men, the risks for invading enemy territory are very real. They may be pursued and killed by the foe. For women, the risk of being vanquished

is on an unseen plane. However, in both cases the result of failure is death. This is made explicit in that the terminology of warfare is used for both undertakings. Weavers are 'defeated', or *alah*, by the creation of powerful cloth. In other words, rather than equating headhunting with bravery and weaving with beauty, as Graham (1987:103) and Drake (1988:34-5; 1991:283) have done, bravery is the ideal for both men and women; weaving in this respect is similar to, or 'like' headhunting.

Weaving and headhunting may be regarded as being alike, but they differ considerably as far as public prominence is concerned. *Gawai* related to headhunting are the most lavish and prestigious of all Iban ritual celebrations. Their splendour and extravagance are not equalled by any similar rite for weavers. The *ngar*, which constitutes a weaver's most important rite, is an end in itself. Its purpose is the application of the mordants, not the honouring of successful weavers. In order to gain further insight into the relation between headhunting and weaving, it will be useful to examine their relation with other important cycles and events in Iban life.

Cycles

Rice

If arranged in terms of timing and time invested, rice

farming takes priority even with regard to headhunting. Like headhunting, the growing of hill rice is a ritual undertaking (Freeman 1970:153). The Iban say that rice cultivation is their 'way of life' (*adat kami bumai*), which sets them apart from remote ancestors who 'lived in the jungle like Punans' (Jensen 1966:21). Hill *padi* cultivation follows a precise time frame. In June, when the Pleiades first appear on the horizon, it is time to perform the rites of *manggol* (Freeman 1970:171,172). In August, when the Pleiades appear at the zenith of the sky shortly before dawn, it is time for sowing (Freeman 1970:172), and so on. Tasks are clearly divided along gender lines: men fell trees and fire the site; men dibble, women sow. After the dibbling and sowing, men are free to go on the warpath, or to follow other pursuits which take them away from the longhouse for longer periods of time. They usually are required to return for the harvest (Gomes 1911:76).

The building of a new longhouse is timed in relation to rice farming. The appropriate time is four to six weeks before the harvest so that the newly harvested rice can be stored in the new house (Howell 1977:41).

Pregnancy and childbirth are of course processes which cannot be timed at will. I was told that during pregnancy there are no restrictions for work on the farm for either husband or wife. It is only said that women need not farm

in late pregnancy and when nursing (Jensen 1967:166). On the other hand, during pregnancy the husband is restricted from hunting wild boar or taking human heads (unless a relative claims the kill as his). This restriction seems to have been quite important since it is well remembered today. The birth of a child apparently prevents the husband from joining a war party since he cannot go out at night for one month (Ling Roth 1896:I,97).

Death is the only event which takes priority over even rice farming. When someone has died in the longhouse, all farm-work is abandoned for three days (Freeman 1970:124,125). The prohibition against work in the rice fields is most important (Uchibori 1983:96). Also, the bin containing the stored rice cannot be opened during the initial mourning period of *pana* (Sather 1980:92). A pregnant woman may under no condition touch the corpse, even if it is her husband or parent, or her child will be born dumb (*isu*). Headhunting appears to be out of the question while the corpse is still in the longhouse since even today no-one may leave the house during that period. But after burial, headhunting is essential since a trophy head is required before mourning restrictions can be lifted.

Weaving

What about weaving in these contexts? As Freeman noted, the

main burden of rice cultivation falls on women (1970:228). The tasks of rice farming take precedence above all else. Weaving is the preferred activity which is taken up at any free moment, but only after all tasks of a cultivator of rice, gardener, mother and housewife have been seen to. In other words, weaving is entirely dependent on the necessities which arise from rice farming as well as from other requirements of daily life.

In relation to rice farming, a specific time-frame is prescribed for the *ngar*, which ideally should be performed when the *padi* is knee-high but before the grain is formed (*buah bedau pansut*; Gavin 1991:19). One may not *ikat* during the planting stage, or the sheath of the *padi* plant will not open (Freeman 1950). Weaving, on the other hand, is encouraged at this point, since it is seen as being 'symbolical' of a 'thick, strong crop' (Freeman 1950).

When moving into a new house, the last items to be moved are weaving materials and skulls (Howell 1977:197). Weaving can only be resumed after the ritual cleansing of the new house (*mandi rumah*) and after the erection and blessing of the main entrance ladder (*tangga rumah*; Howell 1977:45). Should the breast-beam fall below the house, it may not be recovered until a fine has been paid (Richards 1963:19). At no time, even after the initial moving in, may the breast beam (or loom) be carried past the central house post

(*tiang pemun*) on the gallery but one must go outside to the *tanju* to pass. This prohibition is crucial and is strictly adhered to today.

During pregnancy a woman has to adhere to several prohibitions (*penti*) with regard to making cloth. First, she may not lead or even participate in a *ngar* ceremony. She may spin cotton, tie the warp (*ngebat*) and weave only if someone else starts the process for her (cf. Ling Roth 1896:I,98). According to Jensen (1967:170) and Sandin (1980:64), the use of indigo is forbidden (Sandin specifies that these restrictions only apply from the seventh month of pregnancy). Ling Roth further writes that cloth may not be cut (1896:I,98), and Sandin that weaving is not allowed (1980:64). Basket- and mat-making are also prohibited during this time (Ling Roth 1896:I,98). This last restriction extends to the weaving of rattan mats (*tikai lampit*), which is done by men (Sandin 1980:64).

When a death has occurred, restrictions regarding weaving and anything connected with it are severe. Cloth, thread, or any parts of the loom cannot be brought out, worked on, or even talked about. If cloth is being worked on, there is a fear that it will be taken as grave goods (*baya*) and the weaver herself will die (Freeman 1950). A cloth left behind unfinished at a weaver's death may not be taken over by someone else unless that person has worked on the cloth while the woman was alive (Freeman 1950).

Freeman records similar rules during the performance of healing rites. If the rule is ignored and a cloth is being worked at this time, the offender is likely to fall sick and thus require the services of a shaman. The cloth she has worked on may then be required as the shaman's fee. Similarly, rice cannot be taken from the *tibang*, or *padi* bin, during mourning and healing rites, or the family's rice stores will be depleted (Sather 1980:92).

When headhunting becomes a necessity in order to lift mourning restrictions, another set of restrictions, or *penti ngayau*, come into effect for weaving. The tying of the pattern, or *ngebat*, is not allowed, or may be done only at short intervals, to avoid cramps and similarly to make the men slow and heavy of limb (cf. Hewitt 1908:118). The *ngar* cannot be held at that time since the verandah must not be obstructed, which would result in the men's passage being similarly barred. The only activity which can be carried out without too many restrictions is weaving, even though, according to some informants, weaving also is not allowed.

To summarize, weaving is governed by more restrictions than any other activity. The timing of certain operations must be adapted to the requirements of farming, pregnancy and childbirth, death, moving into a new longhouse, and headhunting. Rice farming is the cycle which takes priority.

The only notable exception is death, which also affects work on the farm. Again, the prohibitions surrounding a death in the longhouse are most prominent and stringent with regard to weaving. In sharp contrast, headhunting takes its central purpose from death: a new trophy head must be procured in order to end mourning restrictions. Next, I would like to discuss the similarities of the products of headhunting and weaving: trophy heads and cloth.

Products

As discussed previously, trophy heads on one level are simply 'trophies' (*tanda berani*), literally 'tokens' of 'bravery', which bring prestige to the man who captured them. Trophy heads are *bisa*, not only in the sense of being effective, but also in the sense that they continue to pose a risk to their captor and his family who fear retaliation by the ghost of the victim, if not by his relatives (Masing 1981:457). It is for this reason that trophy heads require continuing attention and care. They must be regularly 'fed' and be warmed with a fire.

The powerful *pua* cloths a woman has woven in a sense can be said to be her *tanda berani*, or tokens of valour. Cloth, as we have seen, is *bisa*, in that its production puts the weaver at risk. In sharp contrast to skulls, however,

cloths are not *bisa* in the sense that they continue to pose a risk once they have been completed. Cloth is not stored in any special way; it is not 'fed' again after the ceremony at its completion and there is no notion of a spirit which may threaten the weaver thereafter. What then about male and female distinctions with regard to cloth itself?

Male and female

As mentioned in chapter 3, the copy of a cloth is referred to as 'female' and the original as 'male'. A more embellished version of a given pattern is also 'male', in contrast to the more plain 'female' one. In addition, patterns which appear on both *pua* and skirts are designated as 'female' on the smaller cloth. In each instance, the male version is 'more' of something: it is older, bigger, or more elaborate. In short, the male versions are more prominent. The designations male and female here function as labels, which are used to distinguish one type of pattern or cloth from another. However, there is one instance when the male/female designation, rather than being a mere label, indicates a level of efficacy, and it is this which, in my view, demonstrates a crucial correlation between headhunting and weaving.

As we have seen, some patterns of *pua* cloths are powerful,

or *bisa*. The pattern's title indicates its level of power and rank. A weaver is ranked according to the level of power of *pua* patterns she has woven. The patterns on women's skirts, on the other hand, are not titled, or powerful, or ranked. This distinction forms the basis of a rule which, if followed, protects the weaver: the making of powerful *pua* patterns must be intercalated with the making of skirts whose patterns are not powerful and hence do not put the weaver at risk.

As a group, *pua* are classed as male and skirts as female. The latter are female attire on ritual occasions, whereas one main function of *pua* is to serve in rites celebrating the exploits of headhunters. However, the most important factor for the male/female distinction is that, upon marriage, if the woman moves to her husband's longhouse (*ngugi*) to become part of his family, she may take the skirts she has woven with her. These are her private property. By contrast, the *pua* she has woven are the property of her natal *bilik* and she must leave them behind (Freeman 1950). This is upheld by Iban customary law (p.c. Freeman 1994). In this instance, we have a clear division between *pua* which are male, powerful, ranked and belong to the larger social sphere of the family, as opposed to skirts which are female, not powerful, not ranked and are the private property of women. The private/public distinction brings us to an important argument in the anthropological literature of recent years.

Private versus Public

Rosaldo (1974) argues that, universally, there is an area of activity in society which is seen as predominantly or even exclusively 'male', and it is this activity which is socially valued and considered morally important. Men are thus the 'locus of cultural value' (p.20). Achievement in this male area of activity is the yardstick by which an individual's rank is measured. In this sense, becoming a man is an achievement and boys must learn to excel in this area of activity, or, in other words, they 'must learn to be men' (p.25). Social groups elaborate the criteria for measuring achievement by creating rituals that define men's relative rank and prestige. Men thus create and control the 'hierarchies and institutions we associate with an articulated social order' (p.28). With regard to women, Rosaldo argues that, 'in most societies we find relatively few ways of expressing the differences among women' (p.28). Girls, unlike boys, become women (or mothers) 'naturally'. Apart from their role as mothers, women's achievement in other areas may rival those of men, but, 'they do not pursue these in a systematic male fashion' (Landes in Rosaldo 1974:30). Rosaldo concludes that, 'One possibility for women, then, is to enter the men's world or to create a public world of their own' (p.36).

These definitions are significant in the Iban case. As

Ortner and Whitehead argue, structures of prestige are of 'greatest import for the cultural construction of gender in any given society' (1981:12). Iban society, as already noted, is egalitarian. On the equality of men and women, Sather (1978:340) writes the following:

In Iban social life, sexual equality is a significant principle. The social structure is totally bilateral. The distribution of social rights and responsibilities is more or less equally balanced between the sexes, and within the *bilek*, men and women enjoy identical jural rights and an equal claim to the family estate. In everyday life, there is very little overt inter-sexual antagonism. Women are not excluded from ritual or public affairs, premarital sexual relations are institutionalized in nightly courtship, and there is very little formal segregation of the sexes of any sort. The major exception to the principle of sexual equality is in the domain of warfare, to which enormous prestige was traditionally associated and from which women were wholly debarred.

Freeman elaborates on the social position of women and the prevalence of headhunting:

Although in respect of succession to *bilek* family estates women have the same jural right as men,

Iban social life is very much dominated by male values. These values are associated primarily with the attainment of prestige in a series of exclusively male activities, the chief of these, traditionally, being participation in the cult of head-hunting which, for the Iban, has long been a major cultural obsession (1967:334).

Freeman continues:

This <ritual activity central to the cult of head-hunting> consisted in the celebration, over the years, of a sequence of rites (*gawai*) arranged in ascending order of importance so that as each stage was reached a man enhanced his individual prestige. To this end there would often be great expenditure of a family's time and resources, almost all for the attainment of the social ambitions of its menfolk and the gratification of male vanity (1967:335).

The relevance of Rosaldo's 'public' model for the Iban case is obvious. Headhunting is the primary male prestige system from which women are 'wholly debarred'. Women, in effect, do not take heads. Male prestige is validated in ritual celebrations. These are the most important and socially valued of Iban ritual life.

Is weaving 'male'?

If we take Rosaldo's definition of the public model as indicative of maleness, then Iban weaving should also be classified as 'male'. Girls do not become weavers 'naturally': they must learn it. Moreover, like headhunters, they must be authorized in dreams and given powerful charms in order to raise their level of achievement. More importantly, charms are essential to overcome the risks posed by the undertaking which, as for the headhunter, may result in death. A weaver's rank is given formal expression in the rites she may perform at major *gawai*. In the Saribas *gawai antu*, high-status weavers are publicly honoured. Iban women, as weavers, thus have a 'formalised role' in the sense used by Tiffany (1978:35). And, as I argued in the last chapter, they pursue weaving as a prestige activity in a so-called 'systematic male fashion'. The interesting point here is that as long as a weaver makes skirts, or privately owned items, she barely registers on the achievement scale. It is only once she makes *pua* cloths which belong to the wider social sphere of the *bilik* family, that she enters a level of measurable rank.

In this context it is significant that the *ngar*, a weaver's highest achievement, is the one activity which is termed the women's warfare, or *kayau indu*. The use of the term, according to Davison, has 'puzzled' Iban scholars (1987:453) and, even though the following discussion is

somewhat tedious in its detail, it nevertheless serves to support my main argument. Davison suggests that the application of the term 'warpath' is rooted in a complex association between the colour red (*mansau*), blood and warfare on the one hand, and the association of the term's secondary meaning, which is 'ripe', with fecundity and hence with warfare again, on the other (pp.450-6). Davison draws a further parallel between the dyeing of cloth and the taking of heads (which are referred to as 'fruit' or 'seed') as 'processes that involve the transformation of a "raw", or undeveloped, state of material, into a "ripe", or developed end-result' (p.454).

Although I have not recorded any explicit Iban statements in this regard, it is quite possible that the colour red is associated, in this context, with bloodshed and warfare. However, as I pointed out in chapter 3, the application of the mordants during the *ngar* does not actually turn the thread red in colour. This happens at a later stage, after the first tying, when the warp is dyed with *engkudu*. For the *ngar*, the term *mansau* has the primary meaning of 'ripe' or 'cooked' (I suggested 'treated'), rather than 'red'. Treated thread (*ubong mansau*) is also used for the honey-bear pattern, which is dyed entirely with indigo. In addition, untreated or 'raw' thread (*ubong mata*) is dyed with *engkerebai* or some other inferior dye, a process which also turns the thread red. As to the *ngar* involving a transfor-

mation from one state to another and being likened to head hunting for this reason, there are a number of other stages during the production of cloth which involve a similar transformation: from cotton to spun thread, from thread to woven cloth and so on. In addition, the dyeing with *engkerebai* or indigo also involves a transition from plain to coloured thread. In other words, we have to look elsewhere for a solution to the puzzle.

In this respect, Rosaldo's paper (1974) provides a useful approach. She argues that, in their economic pursuits 'women tend to work individually, or in small, loosely organized groups' (p.34), whereas many of the typical prestige activities of men require formal planning and organization. In the Iban case, it is noteworthy that most of the stages of producing cloth are carried out by one individual at a time. Women may sit together on the *ruai*, chatting and exchanging gossip, but each of them works on her own cloth. The major exception is the *ngar* which is formally planned and organized by a leader, who is likened to the leader of war-parties. The dyeing with *engkerebai* and indigo, significantly, is again an individual affair, carried out privately by each weaver. In my view it is this parallel of the formal organization of the *ngar*, rather than the association with the colour red and warfare, which occasioned the ritual's designation as the women's warpath.

There remains the question of whether or not it is due to

this formal organization that the *ngar* is considered a weaver's highest achievement. I have no definitive answer to this question. Instead, I want to focus on the fact that a term has been borrowed from men's warfare in the first place. Whatever the reasons, it is a fact that the *ngar* is called the women's warpath in 'imitation of' the men's warpath, to borrow Vogelsanger's phrase (1980:121). As Rosaldo argues, women either 'enter the men's world' or 'create a public world of their own' (1974:36). Iban women, it would seem, have done both. First, they have entered the men's world in that the weavers' achievement scale is relevant only in relation to the men's prestige system of headhunting. The most powerful of *pua* patterns are directly linked to the taking of heads and a woman's status is primarily expressed in relation to these powerful patterns. The risks of weaving are expressed in terms borrowed from male warfare. Thus weavers are 'defeated' (*alah*) by the creation of cloth and they shout their war-cry in triumph (*manjong*) at the crucial stage of immersing the thread in the mordant mixture. By using terminology relating to warfare, women can be said to have entered the men's world, or, as Davison and Sutlive phrase it, weaving 'is thus contained in the world view of men' (1991:206).

At the same time, Iban women have also created a 'public world of their own'. Weaving is an exclusively female affair from which men are 'wholly debarred', to use

Sather's phrase. Nevertheless, it is abundantly clear that, in the Iban case, headhunting is the dominant model. As Vogelsanger notes, 'The women's prestige system expressed in weaving seems to be an imitation of the men's prestige system expressed in headhunting, certainly not the other way around' (1980:121).

From private to public

The interesting point is that, historically, Iban weaving may well have developed from a private and unstructured activity (the production of skirts) to the ranked and 'public' position that it occupies today (the production of ranked, 'male' *pua* cloths). It can be assumed, for example, that Iban women wove plain indigo skirts (*kain celum*) before acquiring the skills necessary for making patterned ones. It is also probable that they made skirts, whose width can be accommodated on the backstrap loom, before proceeding to large *pua* cloths which are composed of two halves. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that skirt patterns have been transferred to *pua* cloths, not the other way around. Here it is significant that *pua* patterns which have been 'lifted' from skirts (*angkat ari kain*) in this way are not accorded rank of any sort. In addition, as we have seen, early coil patterns are merely labelled patterns of no particular rank. It is quite likely that *rang jugah*, the highest ranking Baleh pattern, evolved from an un-

ranked, common vine-like pattern which it remains in the Saribas to this day. In other words, ranked *pua* patterns appear to be a later development.

Historically, bark-cloth and mats preceded the weaving of cloth. Iban *pua* cloths replaced two items: bark-blankets (used to cover things) and mats (used to place things upon). Until the turn of the century, Iban blankets commonly were made of bark. These blankets were also called *pua*, or *puah* (Ling Roth 1896:II,35). Howell and Bailey gloss *pua* as 'blanket', or 'sheet' (1903:133). Even today, *pua* has the basic meaning of 'blanket'. In one longhouse, for example, my hostess asked if I had been given a blanket (*bisi pua?*) as I was about to turn in for the night. Whether or not bark-blankets in the past were decorated or had a ritual function is unknown.

With regard to mats, it is clear that they predate weaving. Some mat patterns have been transferred intact to skirts patterned by the *songket* technique (a kind of supplementary weft using gold or silver thread). Some ikatted skirt patterns, such as the *aji* or shrew pattern above, are closely related to mat patterns as well. Today, a distinction is made between plain mats and patterned ones, the latter falling under the same ritual restrictions as patterned cloth. Thus, when the longhouse is under mourning restrictions, baskets and plain mats can be worked, but

work on ikatted cloth and patterned mats is not allowed.

Often, mats are used in place of *pua* cloths and *vice versa*. For example, in the Saribas the use of *pua* cloths for setting out a *piring* offering is unheard of. According to Freeman, in 1950 mats were similarly used in the Baleh for this ceremony while a *pua* was used only on very special occasions. Today, only some forty or so years later, the use of *pua* for the *piring* is the norm. In fact, it is this use which today is given as the most basic function of *pua* cloths.

If this chronology of how weaving developed is correct, one might suppose, especially in view of the points raised in the last chapter, that Iban women manipulated their present prominent position in the public arena. It can be assumed, for example, that the use of *pua* cloths for the *piring* ceremony was suggested in a dream. The inspiration and authorization to assign powerful titles to *pua* patterns is also generally received in dreams. As we have seen, dream revelations serve to initiate new ritual practices and thus constitute a potential political tool which can be employed to suit the needs of an individual or group of individuals. One might argue then, that Iban women moved from making unranked skirt patterns to ranked *pua* cloths, creating a clearly hierarchical and exclusively female achievement scale in the process.

Questions of superiority

From this perspective, Iban women actively pursue their status position based on weaving, rather than weaving 'compensating' women for not being headhunters, a view advanced by some authors. Thus Drake writes that weaving as a prestige activity could be a 'clever mechanism of psychodynamic compensation' (1991:289). Davison and Sutlive use the term twice in this context, saying that Iban women 'were compensated' for their exclusion from headhunting (1991:164, 211).

Both perspectives, ascribing either an active or a passive role to women, are based on the assumption that, in Iban society, men are seen as being superior to women. Ortner sees male cultural superiority as a universal condition: 'I would flatly assert that we find women subordinated to men in every known society' (1974:70). Ortner's statement is based on the observation that certain types of data constitute evidence that a given culture ascribes inferior status to women. In the Iban case, headhunting as the primary and exclusively male prestige system provides such data. Accordingly, it is said that Iban social life is 'very much dominated by male values' (Freeman 1967:334), that Iban men are perceived as being 'superior' or more 'important' than Iban women (Davison 1987:389), and that men have 'greater status than women' in Iban society (Heppell 1989:82).

As Mashman observes, most Iban ethnography has been written by men and she is surely right in saying that a certain degree of bias, or at least 'under-representation of women', applies to many of these accounts (1991:233). Sutlive's view of Iban gender relations, for example, is drawn from a number of legends told of *Keling* and *Kumang* (1977, 1991). Here *Kumang* 'always comes off second best' (1991:490). Sutlive argues in a much-quoted phrase that Iban women 'set the stage for the accomplishments of men' and, in fact, 'require' men to rescue them from situations caused by women's stupidity (1991:490; cf. Sather 1977:158-9). Sutlive's account is based on selective reading and, I would say, reflects the author's own view rather than providing a comprehensive picture of male and female abilities as presented in Iban hero stories. In addition, it would seem overly simplistic to rely on these legends as the sole yardstick of Iban perception of women.

What has always struck me during my field research is the limited access of male researchers. As both a foreigner and a woman I am put in a slightly anomalous and hence advantaged position in that I have access to the male as well as the female domain. As a foreigner and as an ethnographer I am 'male' and treated with full male honours. This includes being given the traditional male seating position against the outer *ruai* wall. I am also asked to perform *piring* offerings and, if I so wish, can initiate all-male journeys

to *gawai* celebrations in other longhouses. However, once there, I can choose to either remain with the men and participate in their drinking bouts, or I can align myself with women and their activities.

In order to pursue the objective of my research, weaving, I was aligned with the women's domain for the majority of time spent in the field. From inside the *bilik*, men appear on the periphery (cf. Mashman 1991:255). This applies not just to men working away from home in timber camps, but also to resident males who basically enter the *bilik* only to eat and sleep. Male ethnographers (and possibly Iban men as well) would be shocked to see to what extent they (and male pursuits) are peripheral to the daily life and concerns of Iban women.

The *piring* ceremony provides a paradigmatic case for the male as opposed to the female perspective. As mentioned in chapter 2, *piring* are ubiquitous during *gawai* celebrations. The man who is to perform the rite sits with his back against the outer *ruai* wall, the customary seating place of men (women's traditional position being with their back towards the *bilik*, usually in the middle of the *ruai*). As the man sits in his position of honour, the woman emerges from the *bilik* carrying plates with various ingredients. First, she spreads a *pua* cloth and then kneels or squats to place the plates upon it. Having completed this task, the woman may either stay to attend the ceremony, or she may

return to the *bilik*, only to re-emerge to collect the plates and cloth at the end of the rite.

From the position of the person performing the rite, the woman here appears to be in a subservient role. At least this is how I interpreted the situation initially and, as a woman, I distinctly remember being somewhat embarrassed by this apparent degradation of Iban women. My perspective changed when being asked to perform the rite became a nuisance, since it prevented me from recording activities happening elsewhere. Then I discovered that if I assumed the woman's role in setting out the offering, I was then free to move around as I pleased. Based on this experience, I perceived the male role not just as an honour but also as an obligation.

For Iban women, there is another, perhaps more important aspect. Since it is the women's task to prepare the ingredients, they also control the occasion itself. Sutlive is right in saying that women 'set the stage'. However, in doing so, they have control over the proceedings. After all, without a stage there is no performance. Women exert this sort of control with regard to many if not most public occasions in which men feature as prominent 'actors'. Thus men can be said to 'require' women's cooperation in setting the stage for the public validation of their status. Masing used this argument when I asked him if Iban women were

considered to be 'inferior', based on the fact that all major *gawai* are celebrated to honour men rather than women. Masing replied that since it is women who control the very staging of these *gawai*, they certainly are not viewed as being 'inferior'.

The control exerted by women constitutes 'power' rather than formal 'authority', in the sense discussed by Rosaldo (1974:21). In the Iban case, this informal power is no small matter and, as Freeman observes, women's influence is 'considerable' (1970:227). To date, these aspects of women's influence have not been fully explored despite an attempt in this direction by Komanyi (1972). A more recent work, titled *Female and Male in Borneo* (1991), hardly fulfils its promise of 'challenging' prevalent views of gender (Waterson 1993:125). Except for Mashman's paper, the contributions by Drake, Davison and Sutlive referred to above, all favour male superordination as shown by the terminology used: women 'are compensated', and 'require' or 'rely on' men. As Waterson observes, Sutlive and Appell, in introducing the volume do not 'take much trouble to locate their discussion within the ongoing gender debate' and she questions whether the authors 'actually read' the works of feminist anthropologists (1993:125). To me it seems that the title itself, 'female and male', rather than the more common and better-sounding 'male and female', is indicative of the level of readjustment intended. Surely much more needs to be done in this direction.

Having said that, it must be conceded that, at least today, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to determine the position of headhunting regarding Iban gender relations. It will be remembered that, in traditional Iban society, headhunting is the sole exception to gender equality and thus provides the evidence for regarding women as 'subordinated' to men (Ortner 1974:70). Today, headhunting of course is no longer practised. Already in the early 1960s, Richards remarked that it was hard to collect data on augury relating to warfare after such a 'long period of peace', which at the time of his research had been a mere thirty years or so (1972:63,74). Today, headhunting as a means of acquiring prestige has been replaced by other activities such as education, business and politics. However, success in these fields is still expressed in terms of headhunting (Masing 1981:480-1). Even though women are not as rigorously excluded from these areas as they were from headhunting, they nevertheless remain largely masculine-oriented (Masing 1981:480-1).

Weaving has not been replaced with a similar equivalent by which women may achieve renown in a modern context. One innovation is that today superior weavers are given prizes in weaving competitions. But this can hardly be compared to the prestige of a successful politician, not to mention the power and influence that come with such a position. Today, women also supply the tourist market with specifically

designed small cloths. This in itself does not carry prestige and the financial gains are negligible. By contrast, unskilled labour in timber camps provides men with enormous earnings which, unlike profits from surplus *padi*, are controlled by men (cf. Mashman 1991:263). Women do not have similar opportunities other than perhaps prostitution (Sutlive 1991:521-8) and, today, Iban women may well be regarded as the 'second sex'.

However, this thesis is not concerned with conditions prevailing today. Rather, my emphasis is on the relation between headhunting and weaving in 'traditional' Iban society at a time when the trophy head pattern fulfilled the purpose it had been designed for and when headhunting was the motivation for making the most powerful of cloths. Because headhunting is an institution of the past, we have to rely on nineteenth century data to assess the relation between the two. Since this material is very malleable, it can be moulded to fit a number of interpretations and indeed several have been offered.

In an attempt to search for an exclusively female value system, Mashman is at pains to show that weaving is 'outside' and 'in opposition to warfare and maleness' (1991:262,247). She thus sees women as 'not subordinated by a male value system' and weaving as representing 'alternative values' (p.246). I have pointed out some aspects of making cloth which may be seen as representing 'alternative

values'. One such aspect is the location of weaving versus the location of headhunting. However, Mashman also argues that 'women do not in any way compete with men for bravery' and that they have no status in a prestige system based on courage and daring (p.239). With this I very much disagree. Women's status as weavers is directly derived from making powerful cloth. Cloth is only considered powerful if its creation involves risk of life and, hence, bravery on the part of the weaver. In this sense, weaving is very much part of a value system based on bravery, whether this system is considered to be exclusively 'male' or not.

Just how malleable the material can be is shown by Davison and Sutlive (1991) who used some of my unpublished data to support arguments with which I would prefer not to be associated.

In an elaborate construct, the authors argue that it is childbearing and the cultivation of rice, rather than weaving, which are the 'true' equivalents of headhunting. Men go headhunting to increase the fertility of women and rice. In fact, the authors say that Iban women 'must rely on Iban men to supply them with trophy heads in order to realize the fertility of their bodies' (p.211). The authors reach these conclusions by examining 'structural correspondences' and 'metaphorical equations' between headhunting and reproduction, both human and agricultural.

None of these connections are made explicit by informants and here are presented as 'collective representations' of which the Iban themselves are unaware. The fact that the Iban see weaving as the equivalent to headhunting is done away with by arguing for female forms of 'mutedness' when alternative, women-oriented views of the world, such as 'female models of fertility' are said to have been marginalized and obscured (p.206).

In my view, Davison and Sutlive have not shown the relevance of these assertions to Iban men and women. Even when allowing for the mechanics of collective representations and female mutedness, it would still entail a drastic reworking of basic Iban ethnography to accommodate the theories championed by these authors. After all, childbearing is not ritualized. No dream invitations, helping spirits, or charms are required for a woman to bear children. Unlike in Timor, Iban women are not ritually presented as headhunters after giving birth (Barnes 1992:40-1). Weaving, on the other hand, is a highly ritualized undertaking and the cloths so produced are culturally valued objects, rather than products of 'nature', or children (Ortner 1974).

The differences among these interpretations aside, all of them (and this includes my arguments for deliberate manipulation on the part of Iban women) start from the premise of male superiority. It is the relevance of this premise in

the context of traditional Iban society which I question (cf. Strathern 1984:30-1). As far as this is possible at all, I will attempt to avoid considerations of relative superiority in the following summary.

Summary

Headhunting and weaving are the main male and female means of achievement. Both are highly ritualized undertakings and both involve risk of life. If successful, both activities result in benefits for the community. Trophy heads bring fertility and prosperity; cloth affords protection in times of crisis and provides a means of communication with gods and spirits. These gains, however, are intangible: the mystical power of skulls and cloth cannot be empirically shown or measured.

Here the similarities end. On a headhunting foray, a man has the opportunity to demonstrate his bravery and daring for all to see. The trophy head constitutes a tangible and unequivocal sign of valour. Weavers, by contrast, work alone and their battles are won in privacy. A weaver's victories are not physically witnessed by her peers and cannot be proven by empirical means. Significantly, during high-risk operations, weavers must be isolated in silence and the operation itself cannot be mentioned. Finally,

cloth, the end-product of a weaver's battles, does not constitute unequivocal proof of her daring. The power of cloth to inflict injury during production is not self-evident.

Weaving takes a subsidiary position not just in relation to its counterpart, but to most other Iban activities, be they ritual or mundane. As a prestige activity, weaving is closely modelled after headhunting which is the dominant value system. Headhunting is the yardstick against which everything else is measured. Accordingly, the prestige of weavers is given less public recognition than the prestige of headhunters.

Headhunting as a prestige system is an exclusively male affair. The acquisition of heads, however, appears to be a cultural obsession of both Iban men and women. According to nineteenth century accounts, women are 'at the bottom, the prime movers of head-taking in many instances' (Perham 1896:II,181) and 'were it not for the taunts and jibes of their wives', Dayaks would 'give up headhunting' (Brooke in Keppel 1853:129). Thus it seems that headhunting as an institution is not forced on women, rather, headhunting is forced on men by Iban women. Women are the driving force. *Kumang*, the 'ideal woman' helps headhunters by appearing in their dreams (Sandin 1966a:91-123). As the patron of weavers, *Kumang* inspires women to weave cloth which in turn incites men to take heads. Powerful cloth is essential for

the reception and ritual installation of trophy heads into the longhouse community. Thus women are not barred from headhunting, but have an active role in it, a role which is different in nature from the men's role.

The difference in how male and female roles are perceived was demonstrated very clearly in the course of one incident which occurred at Entawau. On one of my visits there, three hornbill effigies, one small, the other two about equal in size, were stored in a place of honour on the *ruai*, pending the celebration of a *gawai kenyalang* a few months hence. When I asked a number of people about the gender of these figures, all agreed that the small one was the 'child', or *anak*. Regarding the two larger figures, opinions differed; some informants said that both were male, others that they were female, while one person asserted that one was male and the other female. When I confronted a group of persons about these contradictions, one woman explained that, according to oral tradition, the figures' gender depends on their location. While an effigy remains on the *ruai*, it is female. Once the bird is launched at the culmination of the rite to fly off to enemy territory, it becomes male.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

In the introduction, I referred to Kroeber's article on the decorative art of the Arapaho (1902). Kroeber's findings challenged prevailing evolutionist views, including the assumption of a stable relation between forms and their meaning; he concluded that there is no 'fixed system of symbolism in Arapaho decorative art' (1902:144). Kroeber's conclusions were in turn challenged by Mooney (1903). As an outsider I have no way of assessing the validity of the individual arguments of the debate (for details, see Thorsen 1977:118); however, several issues raised by Mooney are particularly relevant when transferred to the Iban case and therefore serve as a useful point of departure.

I

Mooney writes that Kroeber 'has mistaken the vagaries of individuals for the genuine system existent in the tribe' (1903:127). Yet, in the case of Iban patterns, there is no authority above the individual level. This pronounced individuality extends well beyond the arena of weaving. As Pringle writes, 'before the Iban came into contact with Europeans they had no word which expressed their own relative cultural unity...They identified themselves by river:

'We of Skrang' (*kami Skrang*) or 'We of Undup' (*kami Undup*), or sometimes merely as 'We of this area' (*kami menoa*) - and *menoa* could refer to a river segment, or only to the territory of a single longhouse-village unit' (1970:18-19).

The identity of patterns is based, at least initially, on one woman assigning a name to the pattern she has created. This pattern may then be copied by her family and close relatives, followed by other members of the longhouse, and eventually by women from other river systems. Over the years, a pattern may thus become known in all Iban districts. My initial objective to identify 'Iban' patterns was therefore based on a fundamentally faulty premise; an exercise which started from the wrong end, so to speak. Just as Europeans chose to categorize and label diverse ethnic groups as 'the Iban', so attempts to search for 'Iban' patterns must be seen as a largely western-derived concern. This became evident on a number of occasions during my fieldwork, as I have already indicated in previous chapters. Iban women did not share my concern to establish a single identity for certain patterns; and they were not in the least perturbed when shown versions of patterns from other districts which differed from their own. This is not to say that tracing the dispersal of a given pattern is a pointless exercise; the presence of a given pattern in different areas gives an indication of its age, as well as of its visual appeal.

II

With regard to the Iban case, Mooney's second point of criticism of Kroeber's position - namely that 'there is no fixed system of symbolism in Arapaho decorative art' (1902:144) - needs to be considered. Mooney offers the following comment:

We are forced to dissent as radically from the conclusion <of Kroeber> as from the premises. While believing that the majority of the designs here represented have no meaning whatever, but are purely ornamental, we know that there is a fixed and recognized system of symbolism among the Arapaho and that this system exists and is identical in its general principles among all the tribes of the plains (1903:129; also cited by Thoresen 1971:20, 1977:119)

As Thoresen points out, no evidence is cited by Mooney to support his assertions (1971:20, 1977:119); one is reminded of Stolpe's views on Polynesian ornament, which he expressed in similar terms. He stated that, 'the old primitive images, highly conventionalized, *must* have a symbolic significance' (in Haddon 1895:270-1; emphasis in original).

From my field experience, it can be extremely misleading to start with the premise that cloth patterns have symbolic

significance; in the Iban case, this premise proved a severe handicap for entering into a meaningful dialogue with informants and, for a long period, we simply talked past each other. In order to proceed with a discourse at all, I had to accept informants' statements, such as, 'It is just the name', as a 'given'. However, it is quite possible to accept such a 'given' while retaining the expectation that a symbolic meaning might yet be discovered. Informants' statements which contradict this expectation can easily be rationalized by assuming that 'they do not know'; or, 'they have forgotten'; or even, 'they do not tell me because it is secret knowledge'.

The assumption that motifs have readable symbolic meaning seems to be a dominant one in many Indonesian textile studies, and much time and effort is spent in the search for this meaning. Just how far such an assumption is a handicap can be appreciated when it is simply set aside. The art historian Ernst Gombrich was not burdened by what he calls the 'assumption that designs must be interpretable as signs' (1979:224); and it is the lack of this constraint which allowed him, as a relative outsider to the subject, to grasp essential connections, as in the example of a famous batik design, called *parang rusak*, or 'broken blade'. This design has inspired many interpretations; Rouffaer and Juynboll (1914:503-8) saw it as representing birds' heads, while others saw it variously as lotus

leaves, broken or warring deer horns or knives, seaweed, waves, and sunbeams, to name but a few (for details, see Boow 1988:106). To this variety of competing symbolic interpretation Gombrich remarks '..it is noteworthy that this uncertainty does not extend to the significance of the pattern in its social context' (1979:226). Gombrich here refers to the fact that the design is (or was) reserved for use by the nobility. His insight is confirmed by Boow's detailed study (1988); she writes that, 'Many informants felt that the meaning of *parang* designs lay in their functional significance as indicators of *ksatryia* status in the old Hindu-Javanese caste system..' (1988:104). In short, the 'meaning' of the design is located in its use, rather than in its form.

III

The third point I want to investigate is Mooney's statement that a fixed and recognized system of symbolism 'is identical in its general principles among all the tribes of the plains' (1903:129).

Often, the validity of a symbol is not just accepted for related peoples, but is assumed to explain the meaning of the motif wherever it appears. Goodyear's solar symbolism (1891), for example, is based on seeing the lotus motif as representing a kind of universal key, which, once discov-

ered, can be attributed to the motif (and its variations) wherever it may occur (Gombrich 1979:182).

It is this implicit faith in a fixed meaning which informs Carl Schuster's work on so-called genealogical patterns which he traced across the world (1956-8). In this remarkable study, stylized figures which are interconnected by their limbs are seen as symbolic of the inherent structure of society (p.107). Schuster's interpretation may well apply in some cultures; this, in fact, is confirmed by Ruth Barnes (1991:11-17), who reports precisely such an interpretation by weavers of Lembata in Eastern Indonesia. However, in many cases there is no evidence that Schuster's interpretation is correct. He himself writes that, 'It is doubtful whether the designers themselves were aware of the *true identity* of the traditional forms (1965:347; emphasis added). But it is this 'original' or 'true' meaning, a 'universal key' in other words, which Schuster is eager to establish. He is quite clear about this objective, writing that, 'A broad survey of "genealogical patterns" has led me to infer that such patterns, wherever they occur, are best understood as representing (or as having represented originally) a *succession of deceased ancestors*' (1965:342; emphasis in the original).

Schuster's theories were applied to some Iban patterns by Jager Gerlings (1952); in order to locate stylized figures,

patterns are dissected into segments which allow this kind of reading (see for example 1952:113, fig.21). In his summary, the author acknowledges his debt to Schuster whose experience at 'reading' ornaments provided the necessary 'key' for the interpretations (1952:148). Schuster's theories are applied to a number of examples of Iban cloth patterns (among many examples from other areas) in a multi-volume work, published between 1986 and 1988, which is 'based' on his researches and writings. The interpretation offered by Schuster may well be correct for some cultures and in some cases the arguments certainly are convincing. But it is an error to assume a universal meaning for the motif. At least for the Iban, there is no indication that they ever saw their 'genealogical patterns' as such.

The search for the universal validity of symbols is very tempting (a more recent, though academically much less sound example is Max Allen's study of what he calls the 'birth symbol'; 1981). However, such a project is founded ultimately on an evolutionist (rather than historical) approach; it is concerned with the *origins* of decorative forms.

It is Riegl's monumental work on ancient Mediterranean ornament (1893,1992) which led Gombrich to make the following statement:

I have called *Stilfragen* perhaps the one great book

ever written about the history of ornament. It owes its greatness to the inspiring vision which rose up before Riegl's eyes when he realized that the study of ornament was a strictly historical discipline (1979:182).

While Riegl did not dispute the symbolic significance of certain motifs, what he did question was the attribution of a universal symbolic meaning (Riegl 1992:7). Above all, Riegl recognized that motifs are not copied solely for their symbolic content, but also for their decorative qualities (1992:7-8,96-7). If a motif is to succeed as a symbol, it must have visual appeal. This was recognized, for example, by the ancient Egyptians who, as Riegl observes, 'had already taken care to insure that most of their vegetal motifs had inherent artistic potential' (1992:50); the same need for decorative appeal is recognized by today's commercial designers.

However, motifs may also be copied for their decorative appeal alone, divorced from their symbolic content. As Riegl notes, 'Any religious symbol can become a predominantly or purely decorative motif in the course of time if it has artistic potential' (1992:50). This can be observed in a number of cases: 'The cultures that adopted Egyptian symbols no longer understood their hieratic meaning, to judge from the arbitrary way in which they usually applied

them' (1992:50); Riegl adds that, 'In the hands of the Phoenicians, motifs that at one time had representational value now became purely and simply decoration' (1992:97).

In practice, this means that symbolic significance can only be ascribed if there is evidence to support it. Riegl observed, for example, that the so-called sacred tree, 'has been unjustifiably credited with far too much importance and influence' (1992:94); he questioned the 'lofty, symbolic associations that have often been read into the motif'; associations which, as he stressed, 'we can no longer document' (1992:94). Riegl, by contrast, saw the success of the sacred tree motif mainly in its usefulness as a median which allowed an arrangement of animal figures in absolute bilateral symmetry on either side (1992:47; for details, see Gombrich 1979:244).

The Iban data strongly support Riegl's standpoint. For a large number of Iban weavers, the pattern called *rang jugah* is of utmost importance; its distinctive feature, a lozenge shape, is inextricably linked to the pattern's identity, ritual efficacy and power. Yet, as shown by my 'important experiment' described in chapter 7, the same weavers for whom the lozenge motif is a symbol of power and rank, see it *primarily* as a decorative motif devoid of referential meaning. In other words, even though we discover the 'symbolic' meaning of the lozenge motif for the *rang* pattern, we cannot assume that this is its 'true', much less

its 'original' meaning. If the motif does not have the same meaning for a collection of people numbering some 400.000 souls in one specific time period, what can we then presume for the meaning of motifs once they pass from one culturally distinct population to another over a time period of centuries?

However, the most astonishing realization prompted by my experiment was that Iban weavers seem to lack an *intention* to create fixed symbols. In fact, they do not seem to be aware of such a notion. Therefore, from an Iban insider's perspective, I was chasing after a phantom in the earlier phases of my research. I wonder if Kroeber, at the conclusion of his study, experienced a similar sense of futility as I did when the full implications of my experiment dawned on me. The problem is, it seems, that we start our investigations one step ahead of the evidence.

It is a humbling thought to imagine what would have happened had Riegl stepped into an Iban longhouse to conduct a survey of cloth patterns. With his background, he would have recognized immediately the features which indicate that Iban patterns belong to what he termed the Geometric Style (in this case constructed from 'curved lines'; 1992:129); these features are frame and fill, symmetry and rhythm and, above all, the urge to fill all available space (or *horror vacui*). Had he then heard Iban weavers identify

motifs as 'space-fillers' (*pengalit*), this would have provided conclusive evidence for him that these are inserted for decorative and aesthetic reasons, rather than for symbolic ones. Surely he would have drawn parallels between Iban figurative patterns (fig.164), and some of his own examples in which the use of filler motifs is recognized as being indicative of an earlier stage of art, preoccupied only with decorative concerns (1992:137).

From this premise, Iban statements to the effect that names of motifs are 'just' names, would not have presented a problem: Riegl would have recognized that Iban weavers use motif names much in the same way as he used 'palmette', 'ivy leaf' and so on, as a means of distinction between motifs (1992:160). In short, for Riegl, a complete re-orientation would have been unnecessary. By contrast, I was handicapped by a view which seems to be taken largely for granted in Indonesian textile studies, namely, that designs must be interpretable as signs. For me (as for others surely), to let go of this assumption amounts to what Thoresen, in a similar context, referred to as a 'personal conversion experience' (1977:116).

IV

Aside from the assumption that designs are signs, an assumption, indeed, which goes back a long way in scholarly

discourse, other justifications are cited today when interpretations are stretched beyond the explicit ethnographic data available. Alit Veldhuisen-Djajasoebrota, for example, links traditional Central Javanese batik patterns with what is called 'four/five thinking', or *manca-pat*, of ancient Javanese philosophy (1979:201,212). By applying the method of structuralism, the author attempts to 'expand the meanings' batik designs 'may contain', and she concludes that, 'At least some batik patterns may not be just designs' (1979:212).

When data from another cultural context appear to fit with a given theory, these data may then be embraced without thorough critical assessment. Levi-Strauss thus endorsed Schuster's interpretations of 'genealogical patterns' and compared these with 'kinship diagrams not unlike those used by modern anthropologists' (1966:15); he was justly taken to task by Gombrich for such a facile transference, which ultimately is, once again, based on the 'assumption that designs are interpretable as signs' (1979:224). In another example, Edmund Leach proposes a number of hypotheses regarding one type of Trobriand shield design (1954). The connections he draws are very convincing, but it is questionable if these are the kinds of connections which are (or were) made by the creators of these designs. In appendix C, I explore similar hypothetical connections between trophy heads and crocodiles. It is very tempting to pursue

such connections simply because they make such good stories. Investigations of this sort make one feel like a kind of Sherlock Holmes who 'sees' what others, including the very peoples under study, do not.

V

Justine Boow writes that in a Javanese context, interpretations of batik patterns are offered by cultural experts (court officials, puppeteers, dance masters and so on) all of whom have 'highly worked out theories of symbolic meaning, often very different from one another's' (1988:103); she adds that it is quite common for informants to 'ad lib' such interpretations (1988:103).

The Iban situation is quite different for a number of reasons; although ritual experts such as bards and shamans have specialized knowledge with regard to ritual chants, this knowledge does not extend to cloth patterns which are the preserve of women. While it is true that some women are more knowledgeable about patterns, this expertise is limited to the patterns which are handed down within the family and between other relatives. As shown by my field experiment, it is quite inappropriate to 'ad lib' an identification; a weaver either knows a given pattern, or she does not. However, this latter situation prevails only in a traditional longhouse setting, in which there would have been a

fair number of active weavers. Today, under a set of new circumstances, artificial 'experts' are being created in a number of ways.

As mentioned earlier, in the Saribas weaving was interrupted by the Second World War and as a result much information has been lost forever. When I conducted my research in Saribas longhouses, no active weavers were available to provide information. On several occasions, one woman was pointed out as the 'expert' who, it was claimed, still remembered pattern names. With this role thrust upon her and without another person present to question her pronouncements, this woman would then identify, in a fashion, the patterns put before her. Since the identifications obtained in this way were often contradictory, it was quite obvious that these 'experts' relied largely on guesswork. It was not until my last visit to the Saribas in 1993 that I was introduced to a woman who, in contrast to her predecessors, divided the cloths put before her into those she recognized and those she did not. It was only with her assistance that I felt confident to identify certain Saribas patterns presented in this thesis.

Experts can also be created by ethnographers. Michael Heppell's main informant, Enyan, for example, is largely an artificially created 'expert'. Enyan was taken by Heppell to stay at his home in Melbourne for a period of six

months, during which time she was presented as an 'Iban expert weaver' on a number of formal occasions. As discussed in more detail in appendix B, Enyan is prone to 'ad lib', rather than to say 'I do not know'. By the time I spoke with Enyan in 1988, she was quite used to her specialist's status and, given the opportunity, was eager to confirm that status. The fact that Enyan lives alone in a detached house (in a community of other Ulu Ai Iban resettled on the Skrang) is an important point, because, as in the previous example, her pronouncements were not capable of being checked and questioned as they would in the traditional setting of a longhouse community comprising active and competitive weavers.

Then there is the problem of educated Iban who interpret their ancestor's cloth patterns from a western point of view. Empiang Jabu, for example, offers the following interpretation of a common filler-motif, called 'fire tongs' (*sepit api*; see fig.134; compare Haddon 1982, plate XXIII,i): 'This is a metaphor for strength, endurance and the supernatural power to withstand fire, a virtue of *Selempandai* the supreme spirit who created man with fire tongs at his blacksmith's forge' (1991:81). The connections drawn here are not made by active weavers, at least not in my experience. Here it is significant that the author is from the Saribas where, once again, she is not checked and corrected by active weavers as would be the case elsewhere.

Finally, with the increase in communications today, there is an additional opportunity for information to be fed back into the longhouse from non-Iban sources. Earlier I mentioned the weaving seminar held in Kuching in 1988. At the conclusion of the event, all sixty weavers were given complimentary copies of Edric Ong's catalogue (1986). During the seminar, I made enquiries regarding the *bali belumpong* pattern, which at this stage I had documented only once in the Ulu Ai (apart from the well-known Saribas version). Only one participant at the seminar, a woman from the Baleh area, recalled having seen the pattern, which, from her description, seemed very similar to the Ulu Ai example. When I visited the woman several weeks later at her home, she did not repeat her earlier recollections and referred to the Saribas *bali belumpong* cloth in Ong's catalogue instead. The printed version had taken on the authoritative role.

It is a rather disturbing thought that my thesis, once published, may have a similar effect. At least, or so I hope, I have made a case for Iban cloth patterns being viewed from more than one dimension. In this respect, Riegl's words, written over a hundred years ago, may provide a fitting epilogue:

It is one of the most difficult tasks to establish the frontiers between ornament and symbol. This

question, which has so far been little pursued, and that almost exclusively by amateurs, still offers a superabundant field for the exercise of human ingenuity, though it looks very doubtful today that it will ever be possible to cultivate it even in an approximately satisfactory manner (1893:31; trans. and cited by Gombrich 1979:217).

APPENDIX A

Three *pua* patterns

Human forms (*engkeramba*)

The *engkeramba* pattern (fig.131) has already been mentioned in a previous chapter. Here, again, are the main points. Much has been made of human figure designs because of Haddon's statement that these 'may be made only by the wives and daughters of chiefs, and even they must begin by making other patterns' (1982:124). This statement is repeated or alluded to in many subsequent publications on Iban cloth (Holmgren and Spertus 1977:42; Palmieri and Ferentinos 1979:74; Fraser-Lu 1988:145; Rokossa 1993:137). The reference is notably absent in Gittinger's excellent account (1979:213-228).

As mentioned earlier, full human figure motifs are the sole preserve of Kayan and Kenyah aristocrats (King 1985:139). It can be assumed that Hose, who provided the data, transferred it to the Iban context without taking into account that, unlike the Kayan and Kenyah, the Iban do not have social classes. In addition, a woman derives the right to weave high-ranking patterns from her own status as weaver, rather than from her husband's or father's social position. Haddon's statement is therefore mistaken on two counts. Haddon further cites the labels which are attached to the

cloth in question; these read, 'figure used to keep off harm', and '*engkeramba* are used to prevent harm coming to crops, etc.' (1982:124). Both statements apply to carved wooden figures (called *engkeramba* or *agum*; Richards 1981:84), which are placed near the farm or longhouse to deter harmful attention by spirits and humans alike (for a detailed description of such a figure, see Sandin 1971:23-5). The notched ladder leading up to the longhouse commonly features a carved head which is also called *engkeramba*. In the chants, this head is portrayed as a guardian whose task is to 'question', and thus to frighten, those who want to pass (cf. Sandin 1977:47). Hein further reports that new trophy heads may be stored temporarily beneath the ladder with the figure acting as their guardian (1890:14).

It is the protective nature of these figures which is being referred to by Haddon's labels. There is, however, no indication that the figurative motifs on cloth are similarly accorded protective qualities. The basic meaning of the word *engkeramba* is 'model', or 'doll', and as such is applied to wooden carved figures which are used to protect the farm. Figures used in other contexts, such as a child's doll, are also called *engkeramba*.

Apart from clarifying these points, I have little to add. The *engkeramba* pattern is indigenous to the Saribas, and, as I pointed out earlier, few active weavers can be found

in the area today. It is clear, however, that the pattern is not accorded high rank comparable to other patterns, such as *bali belumpong* or *kelikut*. Today, the pattern is rarely called *engkeramba* by informants, but is referred to as *gambar*, or 'pictures'; or, as mentioned earlier, as 'cartoon'.

In the Baleh, there are no known examples of repetitive rows of small figures. When I showed photographs of the Saribas pattern to Baleh weavers, they usually reacted with contempt and ridicule. Baleh weavers did not like the pattern and judged it easy to make because of the lack of a coiled background design. They said that it was 'not a traditional pattern' (*ukai buah asal*) and that it 'had no significance' (*nadai reti*).

Another popular interpretation of such figures in the literature is that they represent ancestors (Holmgren and Spertus 1977:42; Palmieri and Ferentinos 1979:74; Maxwell 1990:17,138). This, it seems, is a facile appellation which is applied without much evidence. As Forge (1979:279) observes, the museums of Europe and elsewhere are full of carvings of which the catalogue card reads, 'ancestor figure', an identification which, in many cases, seems dubious. In the Iban case at least, I have not come across figurative patterns identified as 'ancestors' by informants. In the Katibas, I recorded cloths with patterns of human figures which were called 'Iban' (*buah Iban*); but

these were not identified as figures of particular persons, living or dead. Nor had my informants ever heard of ancestor figures being portrayed on cloth.

Gajai

Following Perham (1896:I,176-7), Haddon links the *gajai* motif to a frog-like creature which is said to be the earthly manifestation of the Iban creator god *Selempandai*. This creature reportedly makes a sound at night which foretells the gender of the child to be born (Haddon 1982:115-6,131). However, according to Harrison and Sandin, the creature, which is associated in this way with *Selempandai*, is not a frog, but a cricket (1966:55). This identification is supported by Richards' first dictionary entry for *Selempandai* which is 'cricket' (1981:332). It thus seems that Perham was mistaken in identifying the creature as a frog.

Regarding the motif on cloth, let us begin by establishing what it looks like. Is it, as Haddon states, a frog? Haddon takes this identification from Howell and Bailey's *A Sea Dayak Dictionary* (1900-1903); the entry for *gajai* reads, '(begajai), as *kalambi gajai*, a jacket with a frog pattern' (1901:46; Haddon 1982:106). And in fact, both my field examples identified as *gajai* by my informants are featured

on jackets; one from the Engkari (fig.132), and one from the Ngemah (fig.133). Neither of these includes a frog-like figure. My informants said that the *gajai* motif either has a very small head or no head at all. Beyond this descriptive comment, they had nothing to add. Neither did they identify the motif as a frog. The *gajai* motif seems to consist of indefinite speckled shapes, at times with what appear to be hand-like extensions. Similar figures are featured in Haddon, where they are labelled *gajai* (1982, plate XIII,j), or *entilang gajai* (plates XIII,k; VIII,o). Richards glosses *entilang* as 'anything of indefinite shape and moving' (1981:90); the examples provided are a 'shoal of fish' and a 'band of white cloud' (1981:90).

The drawings in Haddon are somewhat misleading since they excerpt one section of what is actually a banded pattern. Unfortunately, a full view of the entire pattern is not provided; this is understandable since the cloth (which I was able to study at Cambridge) is quite faded and therefore difficult to photograph. As a substitute, I am including a photograph of a similarly composed pattern in the Sarawak Museum (fig.134). As can be seen from this example, the *gajai* shapes link to form a kind of background grid, which in turn is filled with other motifs, one of which Haddon identified as a '*gajai*-bird' (1982, plate VIII,n; the 'pincers' extending from the rhomb shape are commonly identified as fire tong motif, referred to above p.304). In other versions of this pattern, of which I have seen a fair

number in private collections, this background grid is filled with anthropomorphic, or frog-like figures (figs. 135,136). And it is this particular version of the pattern which, it would seem, gave rise to the identification of *gajai* as a frog figure.

The identification is repeated by Masing, who translates *baju gajai* as a 'jacket' with 'patterns of frogs' (1981:173,436). Richards glosses *gajai* as 'froglike pattern in weaving' (1981:93). It seems likely that the authors merely followed Howell's and Bailey's gloss (1901) in this instance, and both authors have intimated as much to me in conversation.

Having come this far, we have yet to establish the meaning of the word *gajai*. The root word is *gajah*, or 'elephant' (Richards 1981:92). Sandin (1967b:295) takes his cue from this root meaning and, in the chants, translates it as the 'pattern of the *begajai* elephant'. This is despite the fact that no cloths with elephant figures exist and therefore the reference must be seen as poetic hyperbole and license which is part and parcel of the chants, rather than having anything to do with the literal meaning of the word. In another Saribas chant (Sandin 1977:58-9), the cloth pattern is described as having 'the picture of an elephant' (*gambar jelu gajah*).

In an attempt to resolve the dilemma, I asked a Saribas bard, or *lemambang*, about the meaning of *gajai*. I was told (and with much authority), that the word *gajai* has no meaning in itself. It is an expression of the chants (*leka timang*), the sole purpose of which is to create an assonance with the word *gajah*, or 'elephant'.

But then what about the cloth motif? Haddon may well have got it right when he placed the *gajai* motif with other bird figures (1982, plate VIII). This at least seems to be confirmed by two cloths in the British Museum, tagged by Hose as 'elephant bird' (*burong gajah*) and 'small bird' (*anak burong*; fig.137). This last example is very similar to the *gajai* motif I documented in the field (fig.132). It seems that the *gajai* motif is seen as a kind of bird motif (*burong*). This is supported by the fact that, to judge by Howell's and Bailey's dictionary entry and by my field examples, it is essentially a motif found on jackets, which commonly feature bird motifs and hence are called 'bird jackets' (*baju burong*). In the Saribas, where it is found predominantly on *pua* cloths, I documented one example, quite different from all others featured so far, but nonetheless showing the familiar fleeting shape (fig.138); this pattern was identified, not as *gajai*, but as *burong*, or 'bird' pattern (for a postscript on the *gajai* pattern, see the end of this appendix).

A 'moon' cloth

The last cloth pattern I want to discuss is referred to by Haddon as the 'moon' cloth (Haddon 1982:120-2). Hose's tags identify the pattern as *bulan menimbang* or *menyimbang*, said to be the 'name of a god in the heavens' (1982:122). Haddon however questions this latter statement since (citing Perham), 'the moon is not regarded as a divinity' (1982:122). The puzzle is easily solved.

The Iban word for 'moon' is *bulan*; Richards has *bulan penyimbang* as 'sliver' or 'sickle' moon (1981:54), derived from the root word of *penyimbang* which is *timbang*, or 'cut to a point' (1981:348). However, *Bulan Menyimbang* is also the name of a hero of *Gelong*, the mythical longhouse of Iban legends and home of *Kumang* and her sister *Lulong* (Sandin 1977:182-3). This quite possibly is what Hose's tag entry, 'a god in the heavens', refers to. Hose's informant, or 'translator' in this case, may well have drawn a parallel between the Christian heaven and the homes of Iban deities in *Panggau* and *Gelong*.

I documented only one field example as *bulan menyimbang* (fig.139), and on this occasion was told that the name does not refer to the moon, but to the hero of Iban legends. The most common name for this pattern, however, is *timbang terabang*. *timbang*, again, is 'cut to a slant'; *terabang* is adjusted for assonance from *terabai*, or 'shield' (cf.

Richards 1981:384). The name refers to what the pattern actually looks like. It has shapes which are slanted or cut to a point like a shield. This second name was also recorded by Haddon (written *simpang taribang* and *simang taraba*; 1982:122) for two cloths in the Sarawak Museum, which shows that two names were already reported for the pattern at the time of his visit in 1898. The third name I recorded in the Saribas is 'cumulus cloud' (*niga duduk*).

In the Baleh, even more names are given for the pattern. One of these is *tancut laut*, or 'trousers' (*tancut*) of the 'sea' (*laut*); the name, of course, is a jocular appellation, and always given with a laugh. Another name is *labong Laja*, or the 'headscarf' (*labong*) of *Laja*, brother of *Keling*, the two most famous heroes of *Panggau*.

For the Saribas pattern, informants stressed that it is the grid of slanted diagonal lines (referred to as *timbang*), which constitutes the 'actual' pattern, while the prominent trifoil motif functions as a 'filler' (*bubul*). In the Baleh, this grid has been accentuated and 'filled out', so to speak, with patterned lines (fig.140), while the trifoil shape is represented twice only, and turned back-to-back. The most common name for this version of the pattern is *lang ngerembang*, a 'hawk' (*lang*) who is 'clearing a path' (*ngerembang*; from *rembang*, to 'tread down', 'make a path'; Richards 1981:304). Freeman documented the same pattern in

1949 in a Mujong longhouse, where it was called *remaung tasik*, or the 'mythical tiger' (*remaung*) of the 'sea' (*tasik*; fig.141; also featured in Maxwell 1990:120). The same pattern, slightly modified, is known as *sanggul Kumang*, or the 'hairbun' (*sanggul*) of *Kumang* in the Ayat, a tributary of the Bangkit (fig.142), an identification also recorded by Freeman on a jacket (fig.143); and as *pintu salong*, the 'door' of a 'Kenyah funerary pole' (*salong*; Richards 1981:320) in the Ngemah (fig.144). The design has further been identified as *ngancau padi*, or 'spreading out *padi* to dry' (*ngancau*), by weavers from the Kain river, a Baleh tributary.

These then are some, but by no means all, of the names which have been assigned to the pattern and its variants at different times. The pattern, it seems, has never had (or developed) a distinct identity. It is a 'free' design which can be used in all kinds of combinations. The names assigned to each version are, strictly speaking, neither titles nor labels; one might say, they are a bit of both. *Lang Ngerembang* or *remaung tasik* and so on, are titles in the sense that they are proper names. However, they do not function as rank referents, since the pattern is not assigned a rank to speak of and can be made by anyone. As such, these appellations function as labels, or a means of distinction. New names are assigned when the motif is altered, or arranged in different combinations.

APPENDIX B

Some comments on *pua sungkit*

There are two reasons for discussing *pua sungkit* in an appendix, rather than in the main body of the text. First, there are hardly any old *sungkit* cloths left in Iban long-houses today and little information can therefore be obtained from the makers of them. Second, the *sungkit* method of patterning was (and is) practised by a minority of weavers, mostly in the Ulu Ai region; therefore, it is somewhat outside the scope of my thesis which deals with Iban cloth in general. The *sungkit* technique is a basic warp-faced weave, while the actual design is made by wrapping bundles of warp threads at each insertion of the weft (see fig.113).

Sungkit cloths were produced during two main periods in Ulu Ai history. The second, which continues today, started about forty years ago, in the 1950s, when there was a 'craze' for doing *sungkit* work (p.c. Anthony Richards 1988). The first period ended by the turn of the century or even earlier, to judge from extant examples. When it began is not known. What is apparent, however, is that *sungkit* cloths are at least as old as the oldest ikat cloths in existence today.

Both periods of production are mostly limited to the Ulu Ai area. I only came across a few *sungkit* cloths in Saribas longhouses. One of these, kept by a family in the Ulu Krian, was taken as plunder from the Gaat by the father of the present owner, a man in his seventies (this tallies with the fact that a punitive expedition against Gaat rebels occurred in 1915; Pringle 1970:262). Another cloth was a mere fragment and nothing was known about it. *Sungkit* cloths kept in Baleh longhouses today were usually made prior to the migration from Ulu Ai. I came across one such cloth (fig.112) in a Mujong longhouse; the owner, a young woman, could not provide any information about it, apart from the fact that the cloth had been brought from the Ulu Ai.

The reason for this lack of field examples is that *sungkit* cloths became quite the craze on the international art market in the 1970s and 1980s (Holmgren and Spertus 1989:104), and were avidly sought after by Chinese traders for this reason. The excitement over these cloths derived mainly from two factors; firstly, they were of great age; and, secondly, since these cloths were not mentioned in Haddon, they were an entirely new discovery. And so it was concluded that *sungkit* cloths 'are the most precious textiles of the Iban' (Holmgren and Spertus 1989:104). It is the latter view, which, from the available data, is rather doubtful.

The *sungkit* method was always limited to the Ulu Ai area and thus was never a mainstream technique adopted by the majority of Iban weavers, as is ikat. When Ulu Ai Iban migrated to the Baleh, the technique was not taken up in the new location. As my Baleh informants asserted, 'we do not have it here' (*nadai ditu*). This, they said, is because they do not like the method, which they consider tedious and time-consuming. The technique is not difficult to execute (as my informants were quick to point out), but it takes a long time to finish the design.

Looking at these statements objectively, it probably requires the same amount of time to produce a *sungkit* cloth as it does to make an ikat cloth of similar size. But for the ikat method, operations are divided into separate stages of ikatting, dyeing, ikatting again, and finally weaving; whereas for the *sungkit* method, once the threads have been dyed, patterning and weaving occur simultaneously and thus may give the impression of 'taking forever'. A further argument in favour of ikatting (which my informants did not mention) is that traditional coiled patterns are more difficult to manage in this medium (see fig.150 below).

It would seem that *sungkit* cloths are 'special' because they are rare (and hence are considered to be 'precious' on the art market). However, they are rare because few people

adopted the technique and therefore fewer cloths were produced. When the method was abandoned around the turn of the century, the few cloths in existence were kept precisely because no new ones were being produced. These cloths came to be regarded as 'special' by their owners because of their great age, whereas ikat cloths, at least in the Baleh, were constantly being replaced with new ones. And it is because of the high esteem in which these cloths are held (due to their age and rarity) that they are used on important occasions, such as for the awning over the sacrificial pig, and, formerly, for the reception of heads. However, it is mistaken to assume an exclusive use of *sungkit* cloths for rites connected with headhunting, as has been suggested in the literature (Watters n.d.; Holmgren and Spertus 1989:104). None of my informants (I asked this question on a number of occasions) knew of *sungkit* cloths being singled out for use on such occasions, and, for the reception of trophy heads, *sungkit* and ikat cloths are equally suited (*sabaka*).

These considerations aside, it is the patterns, some of which are unique to *sungkit* cloths, which have attracted most attention. Here we must consider first the extent to which these patterns were influenced by Indian *patola* cloths (s. *patolu*). As Buhler points out, when trying to follow up *patola* influence, 'one should examine not so much single decorative elements as several elements taken in conjunction, and also look at the way the surface has been

divided into fields or squares' (1959:9). Based on this criterion, it is possible to assume *patola* influence for ikatted *pua* cloths which, as Buhler and Fischer note, are 'reminiscent of *patola* in the arrangement of patterned areas' (1979:I,293).

The similarity of composition is most apparent in *sungkit* cloths. In addition, some *sungkit* motifs are also common *patola* motifs. Buhler and Fischer (1979:I,285) comment on the cloth featured in figure 145, that, 'The arrangement of the patterns corresponds to the arrangement in *patola*: main field, end panels and end bands are there as well as longitudinal borders and border stripes. The pattern motifs of the main field and the border stripes are also *patolu*-like'. However, as the authors point out, it is not clear if the motifs and the arrangement were copied directly from Indian imports, or whether they were copied from cloths imported from Bali, which exhibit similar motifs and which in turn are *patola* copies (1979:II,303 n.245). The pattern in question is common on *sungkit* (fig.146) and is identified by some informants as *buah bunut*, a 'pattern' named after a type of 'wild mango' (Richards 1981:57), which is diamond-shaped (cf. *angkong*; Richards 1981:12).

There are just a few *ikat* patterns which have been transferred to the *sungkit* technique. Of these we have already encountered the *rang jugah* pattern (fig.112,113); others

include *remaung*, the 'tiger' pattern (fig.147); the *nabau* pattern, which in the *sungkit* version is identified by informants as the 'python' (*sawa*) pattern (fig.148). *Naga* have been adapted to *sungkit*, with the development of a pattern unique to the medium (fig.149). Attempts to transfer coil patterns are not always successful (fig.150), demonstrating the limitations of the *sungkit* method when compared to *ikat*.

It is one type of *sungkit* motif (figs.151,152) which has excited the imagination of western observers more than any other. Not many examples of these motifs exist and today, most, if not all, of these cloths are kept in western collections (at least I have never come across an example in the field). Since practically none are left in Iban longhouses, the information that can be obtained from their makers (or from their descendants) is very scant indeed.

In an attempt to identify some of these motifs, Michael Heppell and I showed photographs of the two cloths above (figs.151,152) to his main informant, Enyan (a weaver from the Ulu Ai), on the occasion of the weaving competition held in Kuching in August 1988. Enyan identified the last row of figures (fig.152; detail E) as *bong midang*, a 'boat' (*bong*) which 'goes on a voyage' (*midang*; Richards 1981:219). Heppell quotes the full praise name elsewhere (1988:7; 1989:83):

Boat for a voyage rumbling down to be launched,
The keel once a trunk creaking before it was
felled.

The title refers to the boat in which the figure is seated (the extensions on both sides of the 'waist'), rather than to the figure itself; it is therefore somewhat misleading of Maxwell (1990:194) to refer to the motif as the '*Bong Midang* spirit', especially since it is not specified if the figure is spirit or human. The motif in the second to last row (fig.152; detail D) is given the following praise name (cited in Heppell 1988:5):

Antu pala beringka gitang ba dilang Antu Gerasi.

Trophy heads hanging in their baskets above *Antu Gerasi's* hearth.

Heppell identifies the components of the design as 'hearth', 'ring frame', 'house pillar' and 'heads' (1988:5). Here it would be essential to ask Heppell's informants if the design is a 'picture' (*gambar*) of 'trophy heads hanging above *Antu Gerasi's* hearth', or if the title is 'just the name' (*nama aja*), in the same way as the deer pattern is not seen as a 'picture' of a deer, despite the fact that its components are variously identified as 'feet', 'head', 'snout', 'tail' and so on (Haddon 1982, plate III). As pointed out earlier, these appellations

designate parts of the design rather than parts of a creature depicted on cloth. That this is how such designations function becomes even more apparent in another example featured by Heppell, the *sungkit naga* design (1988:10), parts of which are designated as 'knee' (see fig.149) and 'feet' (in addition to 'head' and 'tail'). Unless we want to ascribe to the Iban the notion that snakes possess feet and knees.

That the design may not be perceived by the Iban as a picture of heads and hearths seems to be indicated by the fact that, in some versions, these components are transformed, or vanish altogether. In the version shown in figure 153, for example, the circular motifs identified as 'heads' in Heppell's example are missing, while the 'house pillar' is transformed into a diamond shape detached from the surrounding design. Nonetheless, it is the identification of the lower section of the design as the rattan ring frame for head trophies (*bengkong*) which is reported by another source (Watters n.d.). Watters, however, identifies the design as *Singalang burung* (featured in Gittinger 1979:227), the Iban god of warfare; this identification, as the author makes quite clear, is based on his own 'common sense' reading of the image and need not be discussed further (cf. Maxwell 1990:102).

To return to the cloths under discussion, Enyan identified

two motifs she had not seen before; the first of these (fig.152; detail C), she said may be *kejatan*, a spirit (*antu*) who sends his head on nightly missions to devour people's rice stores; the second motif (fig.151; the first row of figures from the bottom), Enyan identified as *kamba*, goblins, or dwarfs, with black eyes and pendulant breasts who live in the forest and lure humans to their doom (cf. Richards 1981:136). However, it is quite clear that both identifications are Enyan's own interpretations made up on the spot. This is even more clear in the light of what follows. During the interview conducted in my presence in 1988, Enyan identified the motifs shown in rows two and three of figure 151, and in rows one to three of figure 152 (see details A and B of fig.152), as *kala*, or 'scorpion'. Now this is somewhat puzzling since, on another occasion, she identified the same motif as *Meni*, the goddess associated with dyeing (p.c. Heppell 1988). During the interview in 1988, Enyan did not give an indication of remembering her earlier identification.

Several months later when I visited Enyan in her home, she showed me an album of photographs taken during the six months she spent at Heppell's home in Melbourne several years earlier. In one of these photographs, Enyan is seated in front of a *sungkit* cloth which shows the motif under discussion. When I asked Enyan to identify the motif, she said that she could not remember its name. Now, it would seem, that it is on this occasion (out of the three) that

Enyan spoke the truth. When dealing with what appears to be an unreliable informant, it seems reasonable to suggest that her interpretations should be treated with extreme caution unless these can be confirmed by an independent second source (in Maxwell 1990:194, the identification of the motif as Meni is attributed to *The Iban*).

There is, however, one further insight which I can offer regarding this elusive motif. During a brief introductory visit to the textile storage at the Pitt Rivers Museum at Oxford in 1991, I was given a quick glimpse at some Iban cloths kept folded in a drawer. Flicking through these, I clearly recognized the figure just discussed and marked down this fact for future reference, all the more so because the cloth in question was not a *sungkit*, but an ikat, and I had never seen the motif featured on an ikat cloth before (or since). For a number of reasons, I did not visit the Pitt Rivers Museum again till August 1994. During this visit, I could not locate the cloth I had seen earlier. It was only once I had inspected all the cloths in the collection (and had been assured that all cloths were accounted for), that I had to concede, somewhat reluctantly, that I must be mistaken in remembering something which, by all accounts, was not there.

Now, I must clarify that, at the time of my first visit to the museum, my ability to recognize Iban patterns was at

its very best after several years of studying hundreds of cloths and photographs. At that point I was able to recognize design features at a glance, even if shown only sections of cloths. During my second visit, by contrast, my familiarity with patterns was already much reduced, since I had not been exposed to them on a daily basis for some time. While writing up this section on *pua sungkit*, my eye again became accustomed to these motifs and, when looking at photographs I had taken of the cloth at Oxford, I 'saw' the motif again (fig.154). Of course, as will be apparent at close inspection, the 'figure' of the *sungkit* motif (details A and B of fig.152) is not really a figure at all, and is 'seen' only fleetingly, when scanning the image in quick glances; as soon as we actually 'look' at the motif, the 'figure' disappears. Gombrich refers frequently to our propensity to project faces; he sees the power of 'reading in' as inseparable from the processes he calls 'reification' and 'animation' (1979:155) and makes the following suggestion:

.. it is worth while observing ourselves during this process of 'reading in'. The rapid identification of some of the features is followed by the 'effort after meaning', which looks for further anchorage in the tangle of lines. We easily succeed in 'making sense' of some of the lines and accept others for what they are - mere flourishes. But the more intently we look the more we may also find

that the image 'dissolves' and recomposes itself according to various possible readings (Gombrich 1979:264-5).

What Gombrich calls the 'instability of these acts of projection' applies certainly in the case of our *sunokit* motif. With Wittgenstein's famous duck or rabbit? figure (1963:194), one can only see one or the other. For the Iban motif, once one sees the 'figure', it is difficult to not see it. On close inspection, the 'faces' of these motifs (details A and B of fig.152) can hardly be referred to as such. At least they are very different from the realistic face of the last figure (detail E of fig.152) with its two eyes, nose, gaping mouth and teeth. The actual 'bodies' of the two motifs do not fare much better. What I always 'saw' as a tight-fitting jacket (in the style of the 1950s) is hardly appropriate in a nineteenth century Iban context when women did not clothe their upper bodies at all; the lower part of the motif is odder still, and cannot be compared to the realistic rendition of the first figure with its upturned legs, the conventional way of portraying human figures in Iban cloth.

In this context it is useful to recall my first field-interview with an Iban weaver. I was showing her Haddon's spider motifs which an overly eager translator identified by reading the caption aloud. To this the woman commented,

'It does not look like a spider to me'. This incident makes one wonder if Iban women actually 'see' the figure in the *sungkit* motif. What is clear from the cloth at Oxford at least, is that the woman who transferred the motifs from a *sungkit* cloth to ikat, did not 'see' them as cohesive figures, but as separate design elements. In the process of copying, she 'deconstructed', and thus altered, a cohesive motif (whether or not this is seen as a figure) into a composition of un-linked parts (fig.154).

Looking at the transformed motifs on the ikat cloth, one is reminded of the series of ancient British coins (frequently cited by evolutionists and featured in Steadman 1979:107), which degenerate from realistic renditions of heads to a welter of lines through successive copying. In the case of the *sungkit* motif, it is quite feasible that the 'original' motif was in fact a realistic figure, which was, however, not understood by Iban weavers who copied the pattern. When studying *patola*, some motifs (such as some elephant motifs), when turned sideways, show a fleeting resemblance (gone in a flash) to our *sungkit* motif. But even if we locate the very motif from which the 'degenerate' form on *sungkit* cloths was incorrectly copied, this does not get us any closer to uncovering the meaning these motifs have (or had) for the Iban, which, it will be remembered, is our objective.

Postscript on *gajai* and *menyeti*

It will not have escaped the attention of the astute observer that the topmost motif in the Oxford cloth (detail C of fig.154) closely resembles the fleeting shape of the *gajai* motif discussed earlier. Not only does this 'figure' lack a distinct head (said to be one characteristic of the *gajai* motif), but also exhibits the common speckled appearance. Another motif on the same cloth (detail A of fig.154), which in the *sungkit* version is part of the figure's 'costume' (detail B of fig.152), closely resembles the motif documented as '*gajai*' on a jacket (fig.132). If the *gajai* motif, as seems to be indicated, is indeed derived from *sungkit* and, ultimately from *patola*, then we might have another explanation for the name's association with *gajah*, or 'elephants', which are commonly depicted on *patola*.

A similar connection may apply to *menyeti*, the collective term for high-ranking patterns. In chapter 4 I pointed out a possible link between the term and *patola*. In the Merirai, I documented one pattern, called *menyeti* (fig.155), which shows the same basic features as a more modern and slightly modified version from the Baleh (fig.156). The motif is an ancient one, as can be seen from one example from the British Museum (fig.157). This motif is also quite commonly found on *sungkit* (fig.158,159); a fact which makes my earlier connection more plausible.

To summarize, there seems to be evidence, however circumstantial, that a connection exists between some Iban motifs and Indian *patola* (whether this connection is derived directly, or indirectly through imports from Bali and elsewhere). Significantly, these 'imports' are limited to discrete motifs and thus are quite distinct from interconnected coiled patterns, said to be the 'original' Iban patterns.

APPENDIX C

Trophy heads and crocodiles - a hypothesis

I want to stress from the outset that the following account is entirely hypothetical. Even though most connections drawn here are derived from the material itself, it is questionable if these kinds of connections make sense in an Iban context and if in the past they were actually made by the Iban themselves. However, it is certain that today Iban informants are unaware of these connections; they therefore remain hypothetical as long as explicit confirmation is not forthcoming. Initially I had doubts whether or not to include this hypothesis. It is such a 'good story' that it may well be quoted more than most of the other data presented in this thesis. At last I decided to include it as an example of the kind of exciting, yet unsubstantiated interpretation which is such a temptation to uncover.

In chapter 4 I did not provide a conclusive explanation for the title *rang jugah*. As will be remembered, the meaning of the two words combined is 'trophy head'; the first word, *rang*, or 'jaw', being a *pars pro toto* term. It is the meaning of the second word, *jugah*, which is less easy to explain; so far, *jugam*, or 'honey bear', and Jugah, a man's name, have been rejected. One further possibility which I want to consider here is word inversion; this is a common

device used in 'back-to-front speech' (*jako sa-balik*), where 'the order of syllables in a word <is> reversed to conceal the meaning from others' (Richards 1981:121). If we reverse the order of syllables of *jugah*, we get *jagu'*. *Jagu'* (with a glottal stop) is the Baleh term for 'crocodile'. As far as rhythm is concerned, *jugah* is a much better match for *rang* than *jagu'*. *Rang jagu'* is awkward, whereas the internal rhythm of *rang jugah* works well. James Masing, an expert on Baleh gawai chants, confirmed that under Iban rules for word inversion, a change from *jugah* to *jagu'* is feasible. Henry Gana, a Saribas Iban and therefore unacquainted with the *rang jugah* pattern, suggested on his own accord that *jugah* could stand for *jagu'* when I questioned him with the title. Like Masing, Gana is an expert on Iban oral literature and is currently preparing a doctoral thesis on the subject. If the 'hidden' meaning of *jugah* is *jagu'*, then that would make *rang jugah* the 'jaw of a crocodile'.

Following the crocodile connection brings us to a compelling passage in the chants. The story is at the point when *Lang* and his sons-in-law return from their foray to *Nising's* domain with their prize, a fresh trophy head. When the women of the house prepare for its reception, *Lang's* daughter asks the following (Sandin 1977:114):

Who will be the first to receive it (the skull)

later on, mother,
With a *bali tengkebang* blanket?

To this Lang's wife replies:

You cannot receive it, dear daughter,
Since you cannot yet make a pattern in the woven
blanket.

You still ask my advice,
On making a pattern in the form of the jaw of an
adulterous crocodile!

The reference to an 'adulterous' crocodile is an intriguing one for which I am not able to give a satisfactory explanation. The Iban term used in the chants is *butang* which Richards glosses as 'commit adultery or any offence construed as adulterous' (1981:58). Masing suggested that the term may refer to crocodiles who, as mentioned earlier, impersonate a woman's husband to seduce her and thus, in effect, commit adultery (p.c. 1993). Harrisson and Sandin apparently see the meaning of *butang* as 'copulate' rather than 'adulterous'. They write that crocodiles are referred to as adulterous 'because in sexual intercourse they often rise out of the water in a great flurry, improper public conduct by Iban standards' (1966:246). Masing, on the other hand, translates *baya butang* as 'transgressing crocodile' in the Baleh chants (1981:203).

The significance of *butang* aside, there is another interesting point to be considered here. In the chant, a woman may receive the skull on condition that she can make a pattern in the form of the jaw of a crocodile. In real life, however, this condition applies to weaving the *rang jugah* pattern. A woman who has made *rang jugah* reaches the top of the class. Only weavers who have reached this stage are considered fit to receive trophy heads. In addition, cloths with the *rang jugah* pattern are singled out as ideal receptacles for the trophy head to which the name refers.

So far we have two points where crocodiles seem to be connected with *rang jugah*. The third point, a resemblance between the patterns, is, in my opinion, the weakest point of this hypothesis. It could be said that the *rang* lozenge motif somewhat resembles the shape of crocodiles' heads as they are commonly depicted on Iban *pua* (fig.16). Some crocodile figures have a stylized head over which a shape similar to the *rang* lozenge is super-imposed (figs. 160,161). In some *rang* versions the similarity to this super-imposed shape is quite striking (fig.113). Finally, in one cloth, the *rang* lozenge alternates with realistic crocodile figures (fig.162).

This last example was acquired in the trade and comments from the original weaver or owner are not available. I showed the cloth to Iba, my main informant. She identified

the *rang* lozenge and the crocodile figure but did not draw a connection between them. In fact, the question of whether or not *jugah* could mean 'crocodile' was always answered in the negative. In other words, the above connections are not made by Iban weavers even when drawing attention to them.

However, there is a further connection. Some crocodile patterns from the Katibas area feature heads which are identical to the hexagonal spiralled heads of the *Nising* figure (fig.163). Since *Nising*'s own head is the trophy head *par excellence*, this would seem to make for an identification of human head trophies with crocodiles' heads. In this connection, Brooke Low reports that the heads of crocodiles are hung up over the fireplace 'side by side with the cluster of human heads' (1896:I,446). What then is the connection between the skulls of crocodiles and human trophy heads? As we have seen above, crocodiles are closely associated with rice and fertility. In a similar vein, the most common metaphor for the trophy head is 'fruit' or 'seed'. The Iban do not use trophy heads in rites explicitly promoting fertility, but, as Masing notes, trophy heads nevertheless are associated with 'fertility and life' (1981:459). It may be suggested then that grounds for a connection between the *rang jugah* pattern and crocodiles may exist.

Once more, it is important to note that the above remains a speculative account as long as local confirmation is not

forthcoming. In fact, Iban weavers do not search for, nor make explicit, the kind of connections I have proposed here. Suffice to say that for Iban weavers and ritual experts, the title *rang jugah* has deep meaning and because of it, power.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

Iban Ritual Fabrics:
their patterns and names
(Part 2: Illustrations)

being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the University of Hull

by

Traude Gavin

April 1995

ILLUSTRATIONS

Code:

- file refers to my file of cloths which I documented during my fieldwork.
- * indicates cloths documented in the Saribas.
- K for *kain kebat*, or skirts.
- P for *pengalit*, or components.
- aji pattern names given without further gloss were identified by their makers or owners; only the first, or the first two words of a name are provided.
- (i) refers to identifications by Iban informants when shown cloths or photographs of cloths.
- (a) refers to identifications made by the author, based on similar or identical examples documented in the field.

1. *Sempandai* (a); private collection.
2. Lay-out of pua cloths.
3. *Nabau* (a); private collection.
4. *Nabau begembar*; Baleh 1988 (file No.156).
5. *Tedong bulan*; Ulu Krian 1986 (file No.10*).
6. *Nabau ngeraran*; Layan, Saribas 1988 (file No.91*).
7. *Bayu*; Lubok Antu 1988 (file No.228).
8. *Bayu*; Layan, Saribas 1988 (file No.60*).
9. *Nising*; Baleh 1987 (file No.12).
10. *Nising* (a); Sarawak Museum No.67/61.
11. *Junan*; Ulu Ai 1988 (file No.210).
12. *Buah Junan*; drawing by Monica Freeman, Mujong 1950.
13. *Rang jugah* (a); private collection.
14. Detail of fig.13; drawing by Julian Davison.
15. *Sempuyong*; Baleh 1988 (file No.154); detail A; detail B.
16. *Sempuyong*; private collection; detail A; detail B.
17. *Berinjan*; Katibas 1988 (file No.194).
18. *Berinjan*; Paku, Saribas 1988 (file No.67*).
19. *Sepepat*; Ulu Ai 1988 (file No.207).
20. *Sepepat*; Layan, Saribas 1988 (file No.112*).
21. *Sepepat*; Paku, Saribas 1988 (file No.71*).
22. *Remaung*; Mujong 1988 (file No.158).
23. *Remaung* (a); private collection.
24. *Gumbang*; Baleh 1987 (file No.6).
25. *Bebuli*; Baleh 1987 (file No.7).
26. *Belia*; Baleh 1990 (file No.246).
27. *Gantong belia*; Baleh 1986 (file No.54).

28. *Tangga remang*; Merirai 1987 (file No.35).
29. *Tangga remang*; Baleh 1988 (file No.74).
30. *Suri ai*; Baleh 1989 (file No.243).
31. *Sintau*; Ulu Ai 1988 (file No.111).
32. *Sintau*; Ulu Ai 1988 (file No.107).
33. *Sintau*; Ulu Ai 1988 (file No.124).
34. *Sintau*; Gaat 1987 (file No.27).
35. *Keleku*; Baleh 1988 (file No.150).
36. *Sempetong*; Baleh 1988 (file No.148).
37. *Kandong nibong*; Katibas 1988 (file No.198).
38. *Sempuyong*; Mujong 1986 (file No.58).
39. *Bengkong*; drawing by Monica Freeman, Mujong 1950.
40. *Bujang*; Mujong 1988 (file No.170).
41. *Kumang dani*; Merirai 1991 (file No.272).
42. *Tangga Beji*; Mujong 1988 (file No.165).
43. *Tangga Beji*; Betong, Saribas 1988 (file No.96*).
44. *Apai Sali*; Gat 1987 (file No.28).
45. *Bujang ringat*; Merirai 1987 (file No.37).
46. *Bali belumpong*; Layar, Saribas 1988 (file No.51*).
47. *Bali belumpong*; Layar, Saribas 1990 (file 127*).
48. *Kelikut*; Layar, Saribas 1988 (file No.115*).
49. *Kelikut kengkang*; Ulu Krian 1986 (file No.2*).
50. *Kelikut*; Layar, Saribas 1988 (file No.73*).
51. *Jugam*; Layar, Saribas 1988 (file No.64*).
52. *Jugam*; Layar, Saribas 1988 (file No.114*).
53. *Mulong*; Layar, Saribas 1988 (file No.41*).
54. *Ijok*; Layar, Saribas 1988 (file No.61*).
55. *Lemba bumbun*; Layar, Saribas 1988 (file No.95*).

56. *Sandauliau*; Layar, Saribas 1988 (file No.76*).
57. *Bali mabuk*; Kapit 1993 (file No.P14).
58. *Aji*; Ulu Ai 1988 (file No.K25).
59. *Aji besumping* (i); private collection; identified, Baleh 1993 (file No.K64).
60. *Aji*; Brooke Low 1890; Sarawak Museum No.227.
61. *Aji*; drawing by Monica Freeman, Mujong 1950.
62. *Lang* (i); private collection; identified, Baleh 1993 (file No.K68).
63. *Lang*; drawing by Monica Freeman, Mujong 1949.
64. *Lang/aji* (i); private collection; identified, Baleh 1993 (file No.K75).
65. *Pelangka*; Baleh 1991 (file No.K58).
66. *Pelangka* (i); private collection; identified, Baleh 1993 (file No.K72).
67. *Pelangka* (i); private collection; identified, Baleh 1993 (file No.K78).
68. *Penukoh*; Ulu Ai 1988 (file No.K52).
69. *Penukoh*; Brooke Low 1890; Sarawak Museum No.225.
70. *Senokoh*; drawing Monica Freeman, Melinau 1950.
71. *Lintah*; Lubok Antu 1988 (file No.K50).
72. *Lintah* (i); private collection; identified, Baleh 1993 (file No.K65).
73. *Lintah*; drawing by Monica Freeman, Baleh 1950.
74. *Rusa*; Baleh 1988 (file No.K23).
75. *Rusa*; Ulu Ai 1988 (file No.K49).
76. *Rusa* (i); private collection; identified, Baleh 1993 (file No.K73).
77. Combination; private collection; identified, Baleh 1993 (file No.K79).
78. *Buah burai*; drawing by Monica Freeman, Sut 1950.

79. *Combination*; private collection; identified, Baleh 1993 (file No.K71).
80. *Maiau tindok*; Paku, Saribas 1988 (file No.67*).
81. *Buah belum*; Baleh 1988 (file No.P7).
82. *Pemucok tubu*; Baleh 1990 (file No.P2).
83. *Pemucok*; drawing by Monica Freeman, Mujong 1950.
84. *Pala buntak*; drawing by Monica Freeman, Mujong 1950.
85. *Burong besugu*; Baleh 1989 (file No.P3).
86. *Burong besugu*; drawing by Monica Freeman, Mujong 1950.
87. *Burong kerus*; Baleh 1989 (file No.P4).
88. *Empejungau*; Baleh 1989 (file No.P5).
89. *Empejungau*; drawing by Monica Freeman, Mujong 1950.
90. *Emplawa*; Baleh 1991 (file No.P10).
91. *Emplawa*; Baleh 1993 (file No.P20).
92. *Emplawa*; drawing by Monica Freeman, Mujong 1950.
93. *Tebu (i)*; private collection; identified, Baleh 1993 (file No.312 berinjan).
94. *Lang (a)*; Rijksmuseum Leiden No.2230.2.
95. *Lang (a)*; British Museum No.1938.
96. *Lintah*; Betong, Saribas 1988 (file No.99*).
97. *Lintah (a)*; private collection.
98. *Lintah (i)*; private collection; identified, Baleh 1993 (file No.310).
99. *Igi beras, mata antu*; drawing by Julian Davison.
100. *Berinjan*; Paku, Saribas 1993 (file No.143*).
101. *Berinjan*; Paku, Saribas 1993 (file No.146*).
102. *Rang jugah*; Ulu Ai 1990 (file No.255).
103. *Rang jugah*; Baleh 1990 (file No.249).
104. *Bali belumpung*; Ulu Ai 1988 (file No.115).

105. *Bali belumpong*; Kalaka, Saribas 1988 (file No.116*).
106. *Bali belumpong* (a); University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge No.35927.
107. Detail of fig.13; drawing by Julian Davison.
108. *Rang jugah*; Mujong 1986 (file No.64).
109. *Rang jugah*; Baleh 1988 (file No.99).
110. *Lebur api*; Ngemah 1988 (file No.177).
111. *Rang jugah*; Ulu Ai 1988 (file No.113).
112. *Pua sungkit*; Mujong 1988 (file No.157).
113. *Pua sungkit*; private collection.
114. Composite; private collection.
115. *Sempuyong bunga*; Baleh 1987 (file No.14).
116. *Berinjan* (a); private collection; and detail.
117. *Berinjan*; Layar, Saribas 1988 (file No.42*).
118. *Berayah*; Layar, Saribas 1988 (file No.56*); and detail.
119. *Akar* (i); private collection; identified, Baleh 1993 (file No.297).
120. *Akar* (i); private collection; identified, Baleh 1993 (file No.290).
121. *Berasok*; Paku, Saribas 1993 (file No.135*).
122. *Belulai*; Layar, Saribas 1988 (file No.79*).
123. *Berinjan*; Betong, Saribas 1986 (file No.35*).
124. *Berasok* (a); private collection.
125. *Sempandai*; Mujong 1986 (file No.63).
126. *Sempandai*; Baleh 1987 (file No.10).
127. *Sempandai*; Baleh 1988 (file No.155).
128. *Rang jugah*; Baleh 1989 (file No.245); and detail.
129. *Pua sandik*; Lubok Antu 1988 (file No.218).

130. *Pua belantan*; Paku, Saribas 1988 (file No.66*).
131. *Gambar*; Ulu Krian, Saribas 1986 (file No.12*).
132. *Gajai*; Engkari, Ulu Ai 1988 (file No.241).
133. *Gajai*; Ngemah 1988 (file No.191).
134. *Gajai* (a); Saratok; Sarawak Museum No.71/29.
135. *Gajai* (a); private collection.
136. *Gajai* (a); private collection.
137. *Anak burong*; British Museum No.405.
138. *Burong*; Paku, Saribas 1993 (file No.138*).
139. *Bulan Menyimbang*; Layar, Saribas (file No.126*).
140. *Lang Ngerembang*; Mujong 1988 (file No.160).
141. *Remaung tasik*; drawing by Monica Freeman, Mujong 1949.
142. *Sanggul Kumang*; Bangkit, Katibas 1988 (file No.196).
143. *Sanggul Kumang*; drawing by Monica Freeman, Melinau 1950.
144. *Pintu salong*; Ngemah 1988 (file No.192).
145. *Sungkit*; Museum of Ethnography, Basel No.IIc18679; photograph by Peter Horner.
146. *Buah bunut*; Sarawak Museum No.252.
147. *Remaung* (a); Sarawak Museum No.87/79.
148. *Sawa* (a); private collection.
149. *Naga* (a); private collection
150. *Akar* (a); Sarawak Museum No.78/82.
151. Composite; private collection, identified, Kuching 1988 (file No.257); and detail.
152. Composite; private collection, identified, Kuching 1988 (file No.258); detail A; detail B; detail C; detail D; detail E.
153. Unid.; Sarawak Museum display (no number).
154. *Gajai* (a); Pitt Rivers Museum No.1908.59.15; detail A; detail B; detail C.

- 155. *Menyeti*; Merirai 1987 (file No.38).
- 156. *Menyeti*; Baleh 1987 (file No.16).
- 157. *Bali belumpong* (a); British Museum No.414.
- 158. *Sungkit*; Museum of Ethnography, Basel No.IIc20014; photograph by Peter Horner.
- 159. *Sungkit*; private collection.
- 160. *Baya* (a); private collection.
- 161. *Baya*; drawing by Monica Freeman, Mujong 1950.
- 162. *Rang/baya* (i); private collection, identified, Kapit 1990 (file No.263).
- 163. *Baya*; Katibas 1988 (file No.47).
- 164. *Baya* (a); private collection.

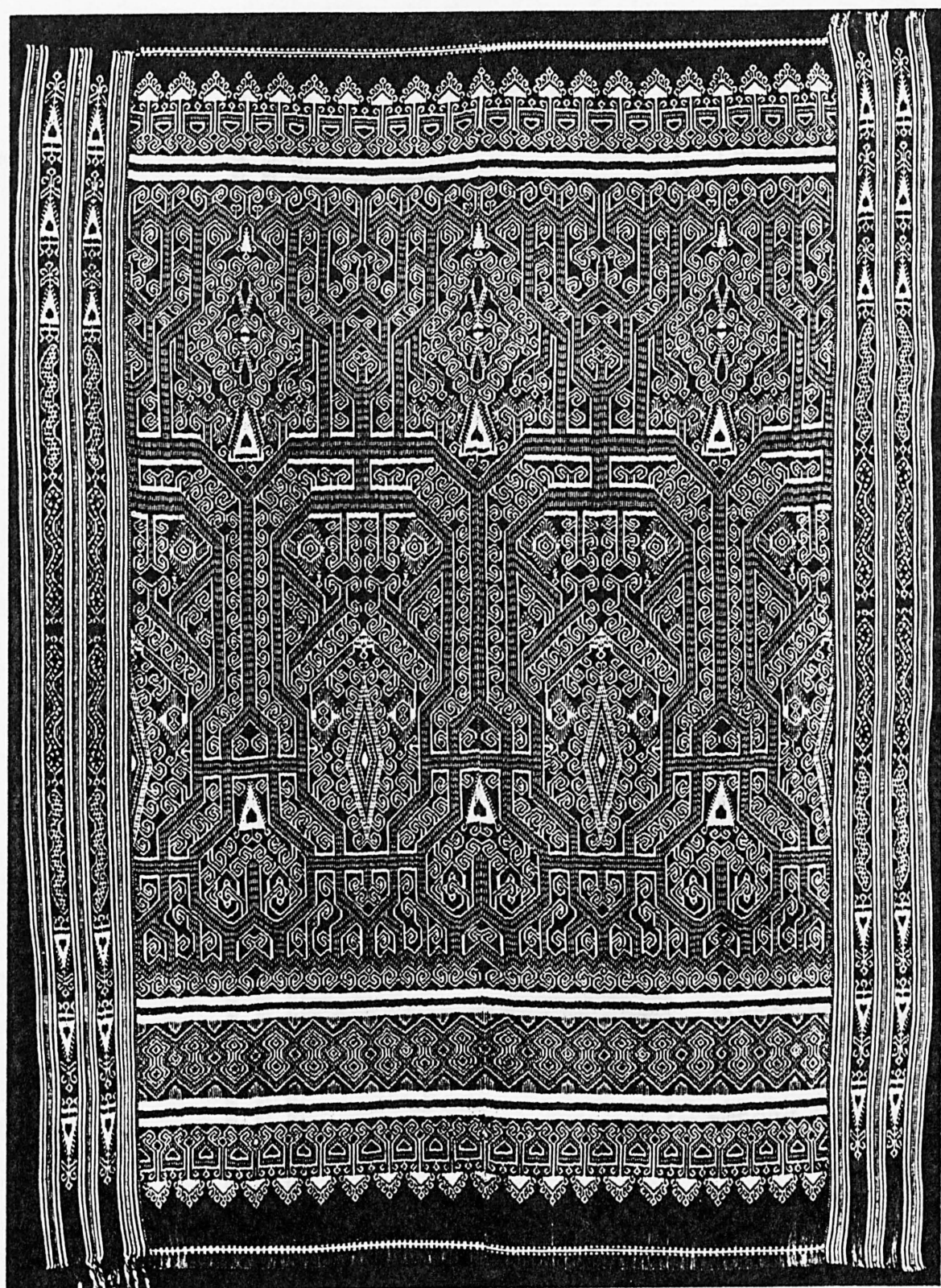


Fig.1

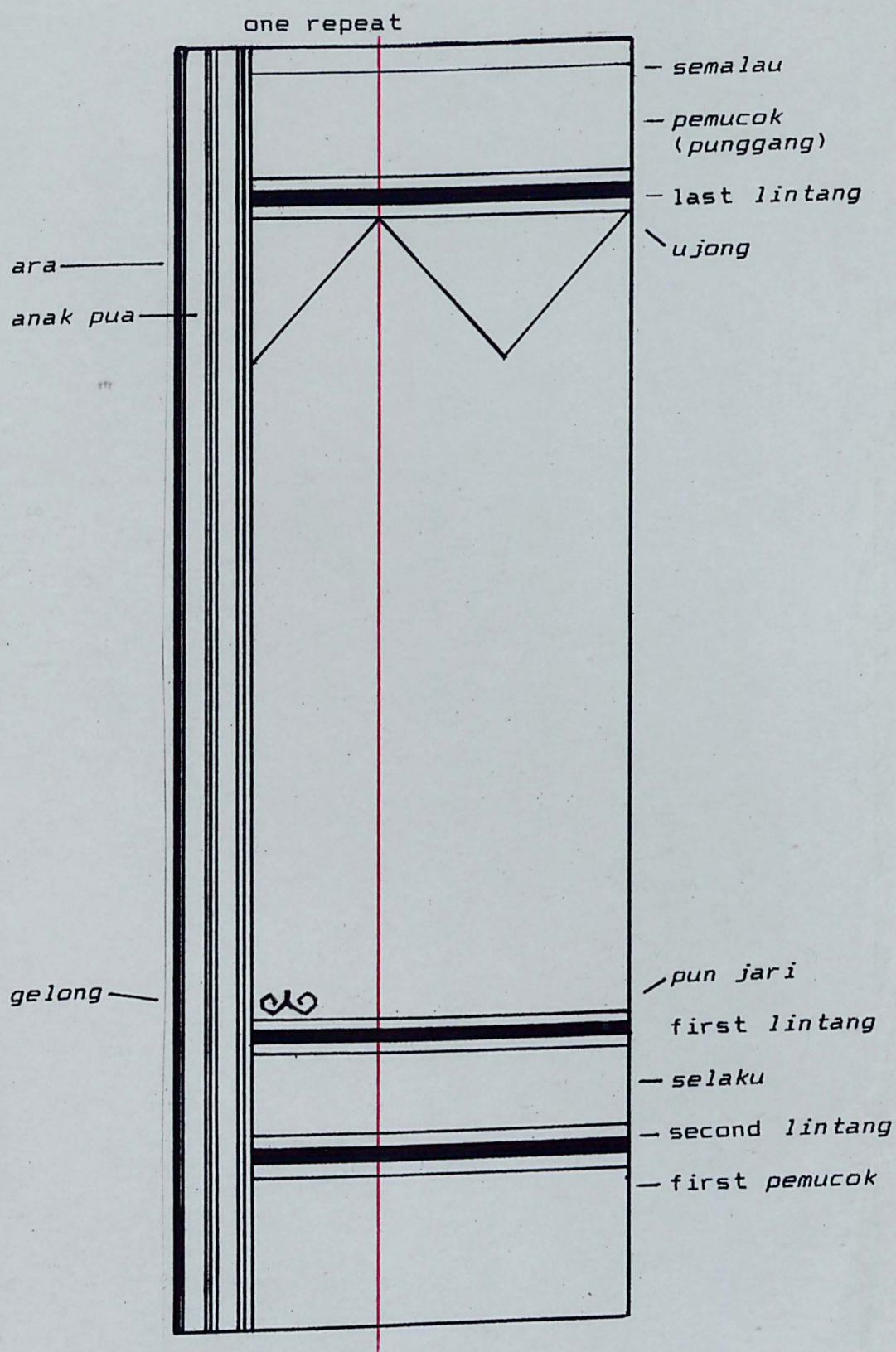


Fig.2 (not to scale)

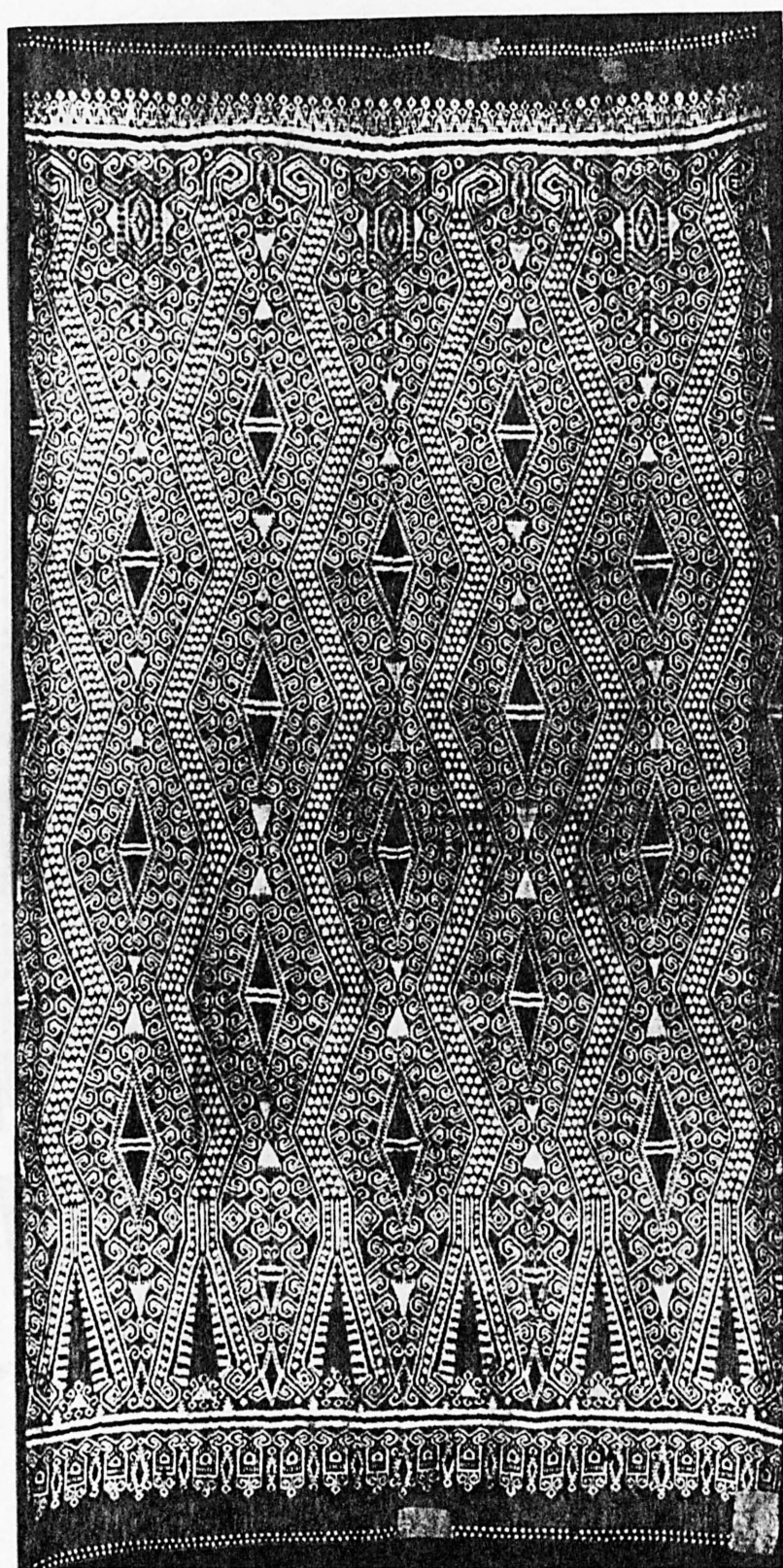


Fig.3

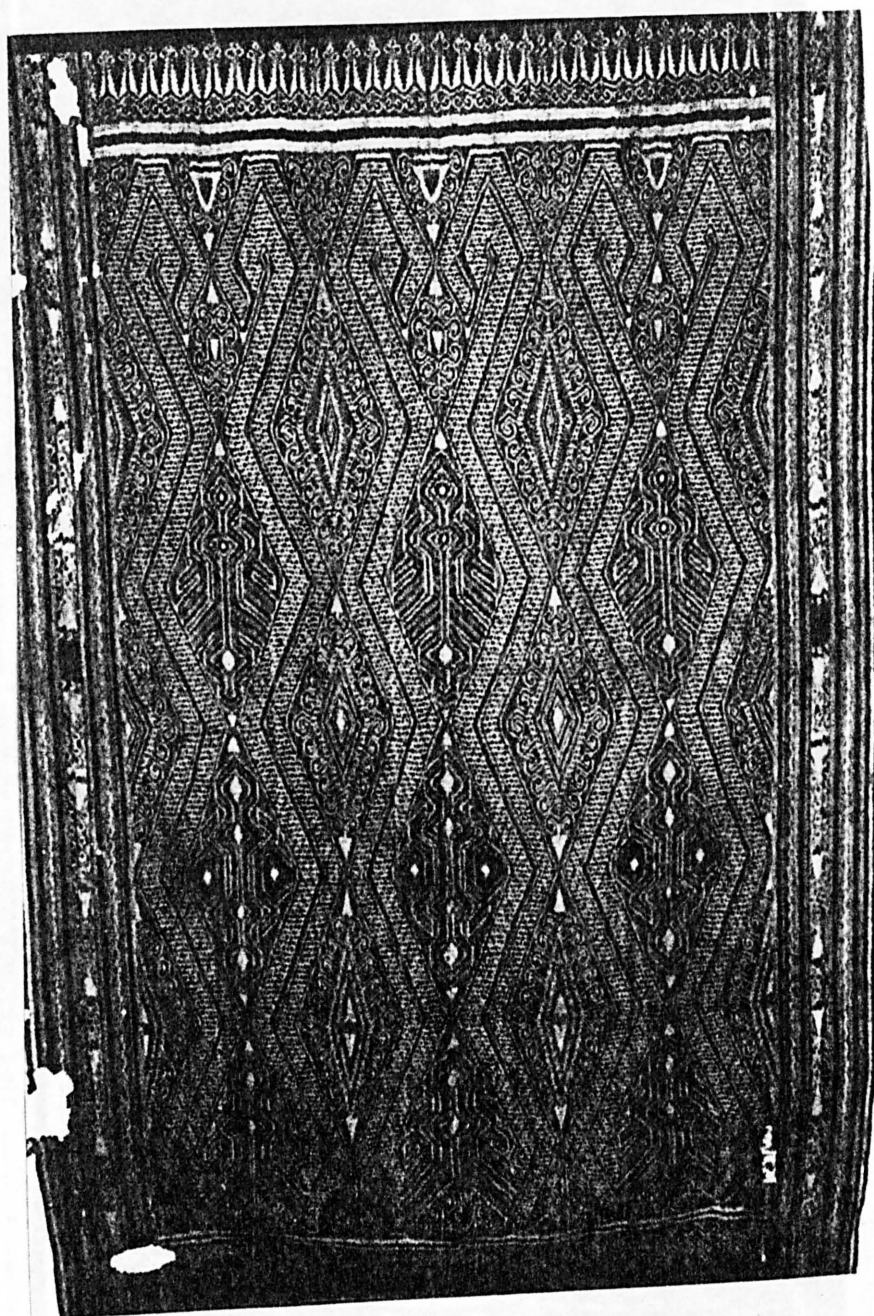


Fig.4

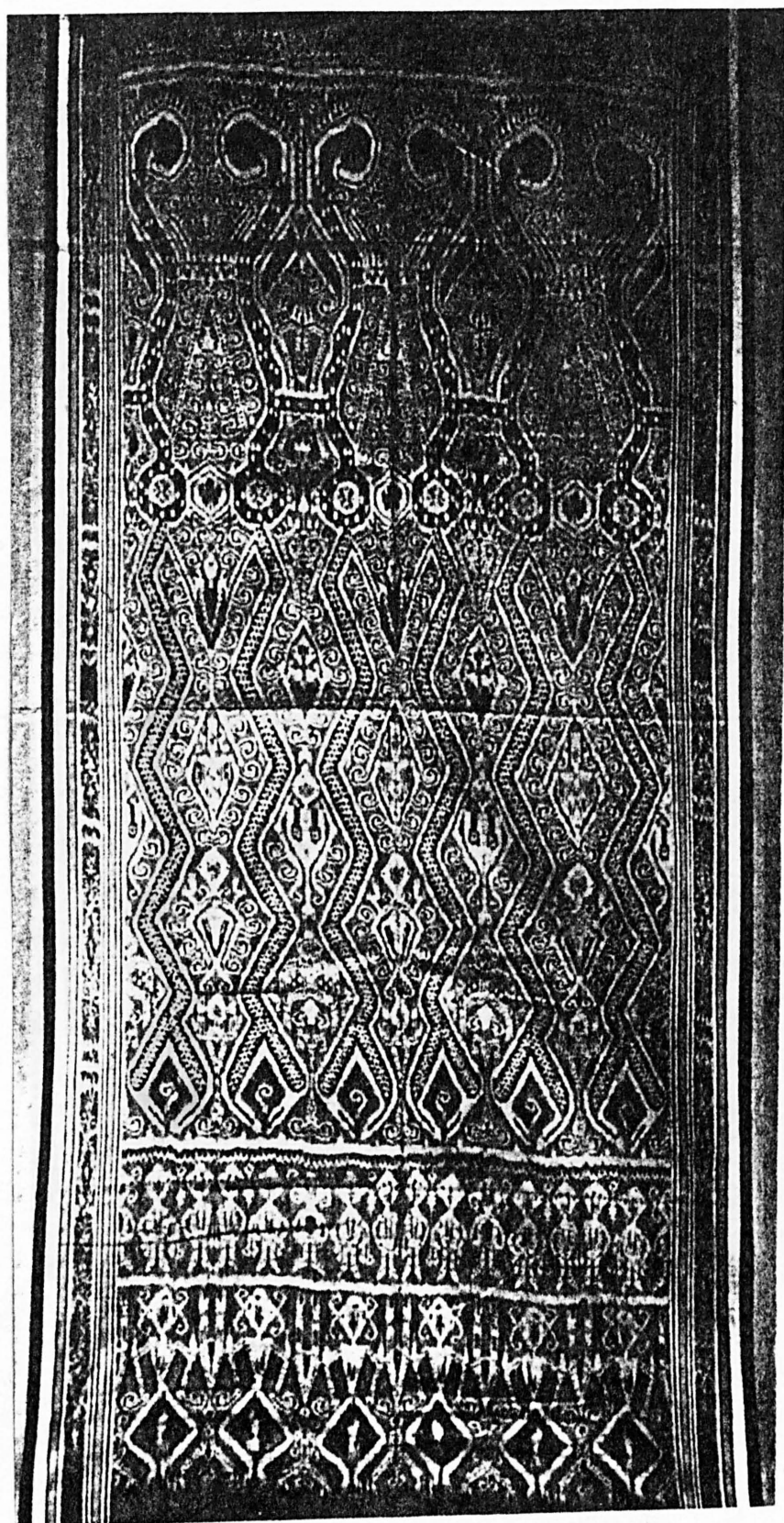


Fig.5

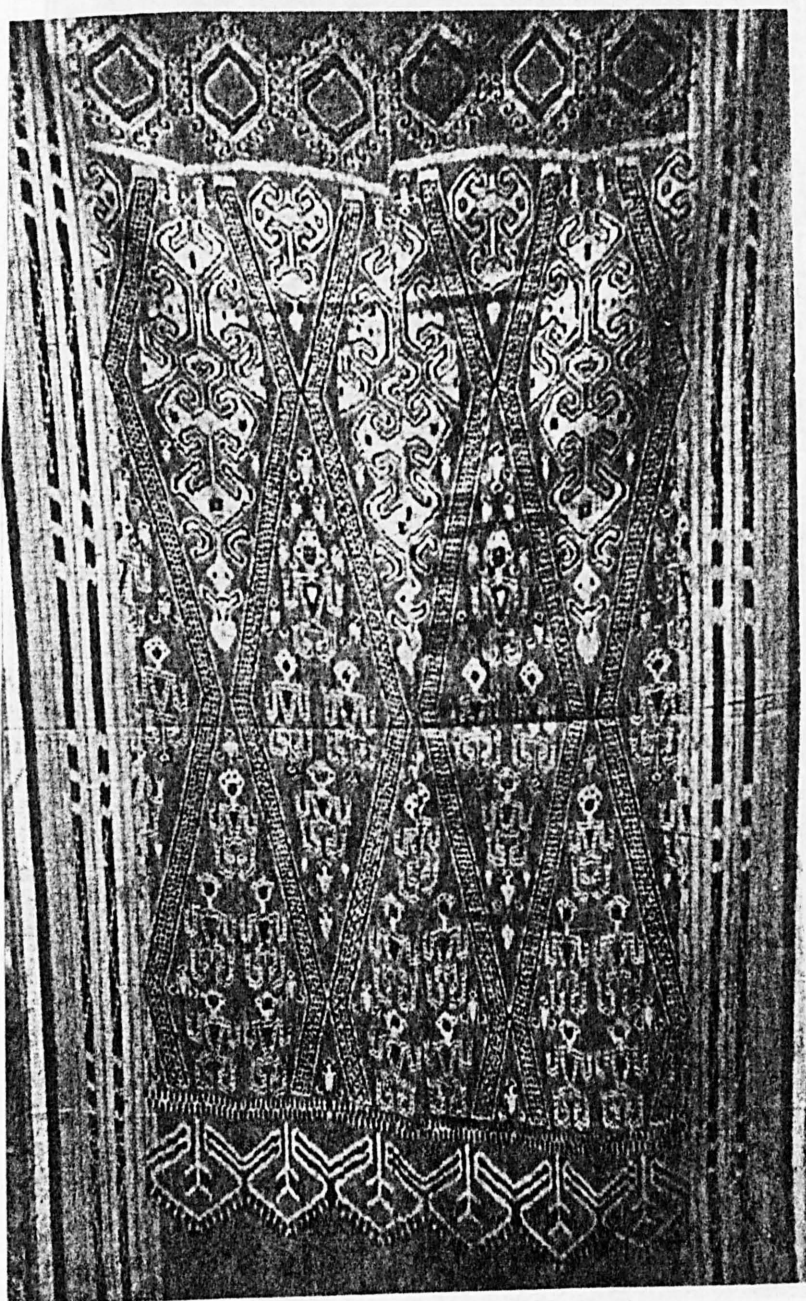


Fig.6



Fig.7



Fig.8

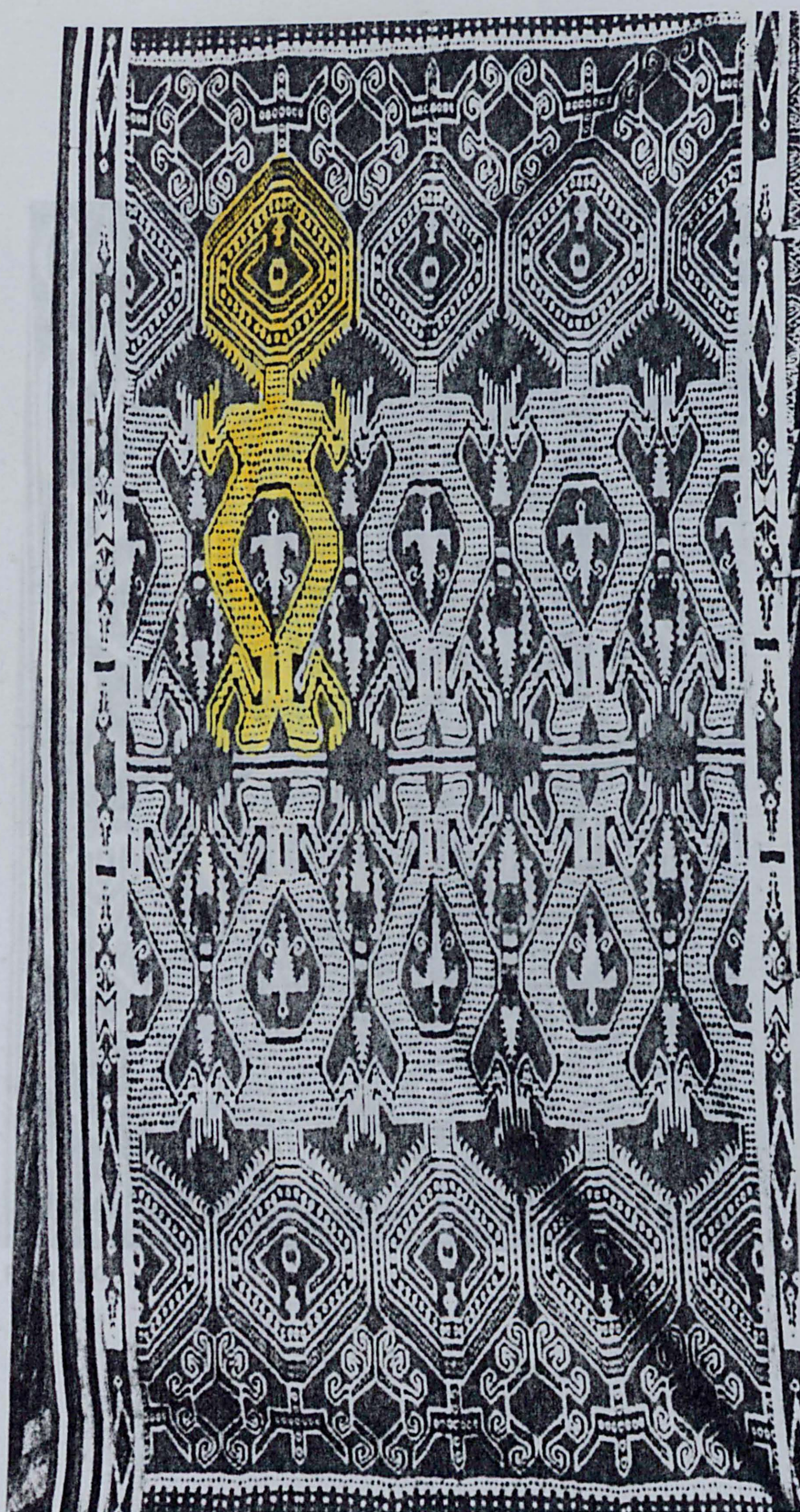


Fig.9



Fig.10

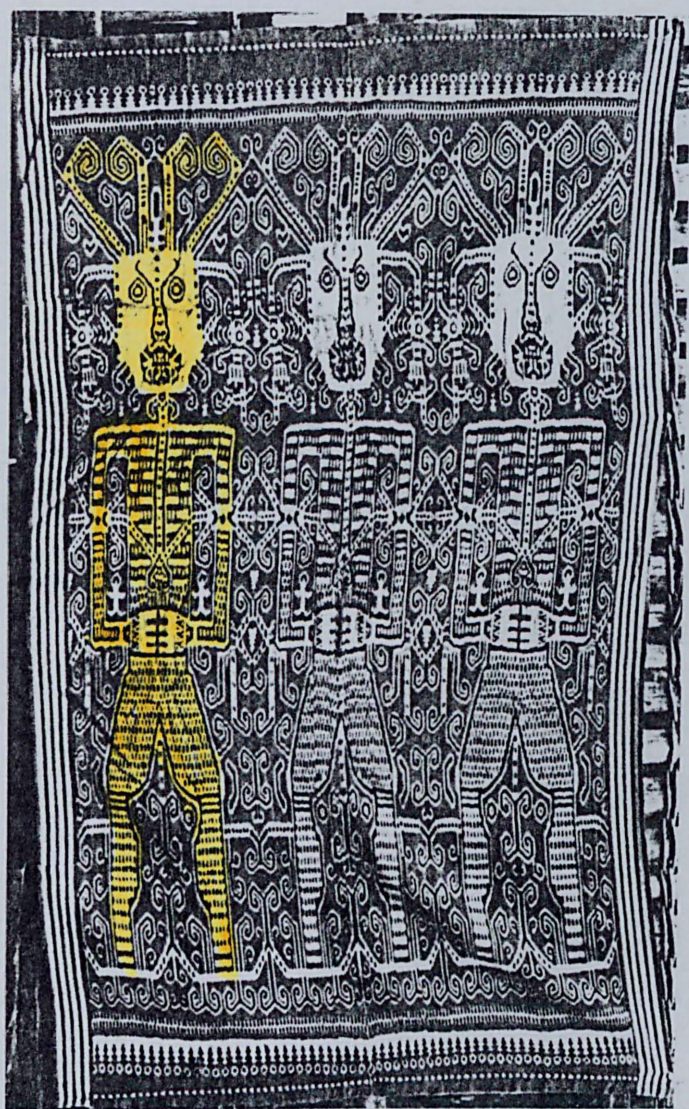


Fig.11

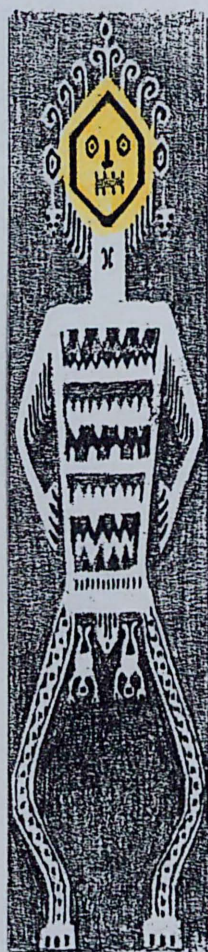


Fig.12

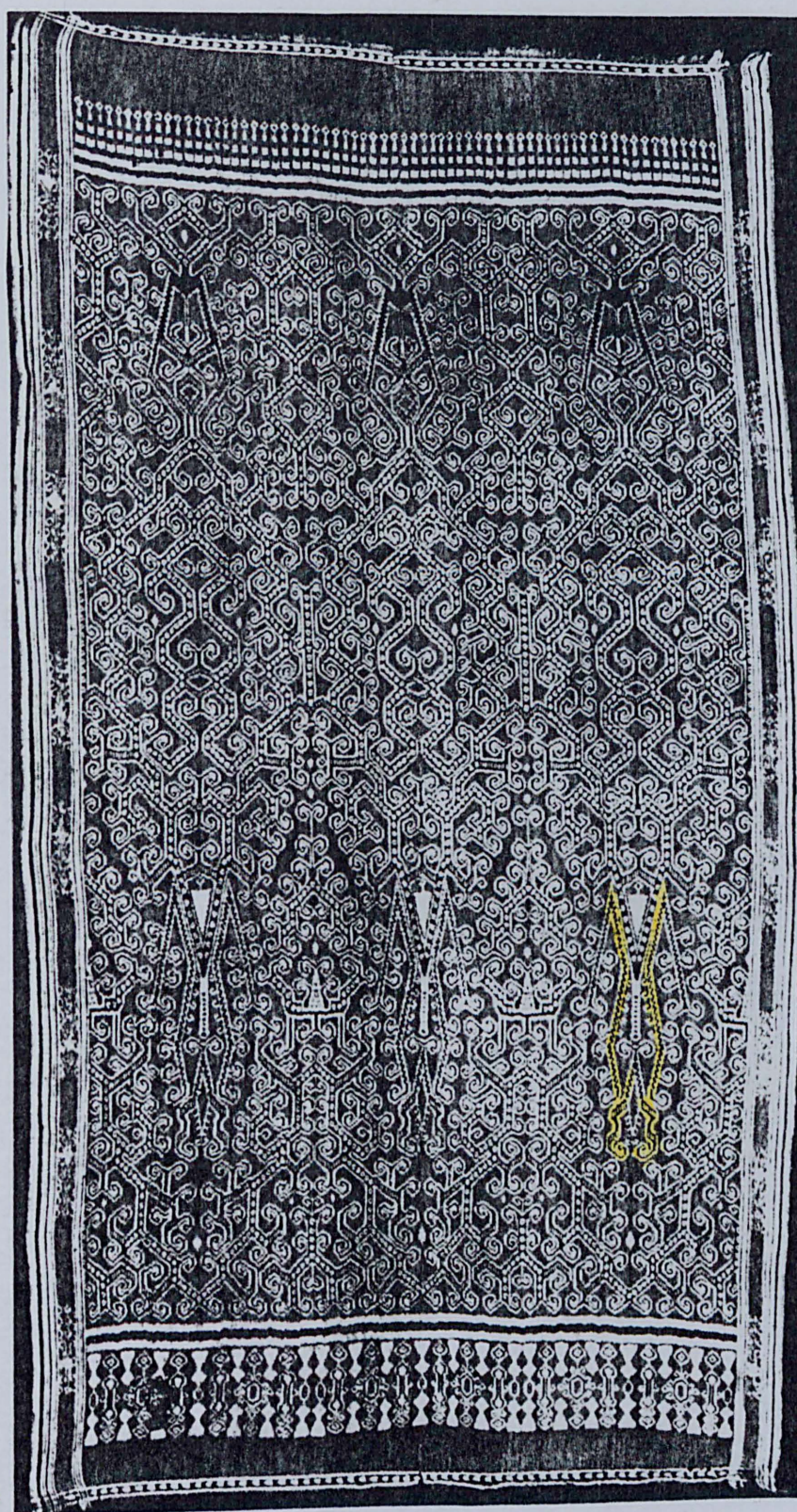
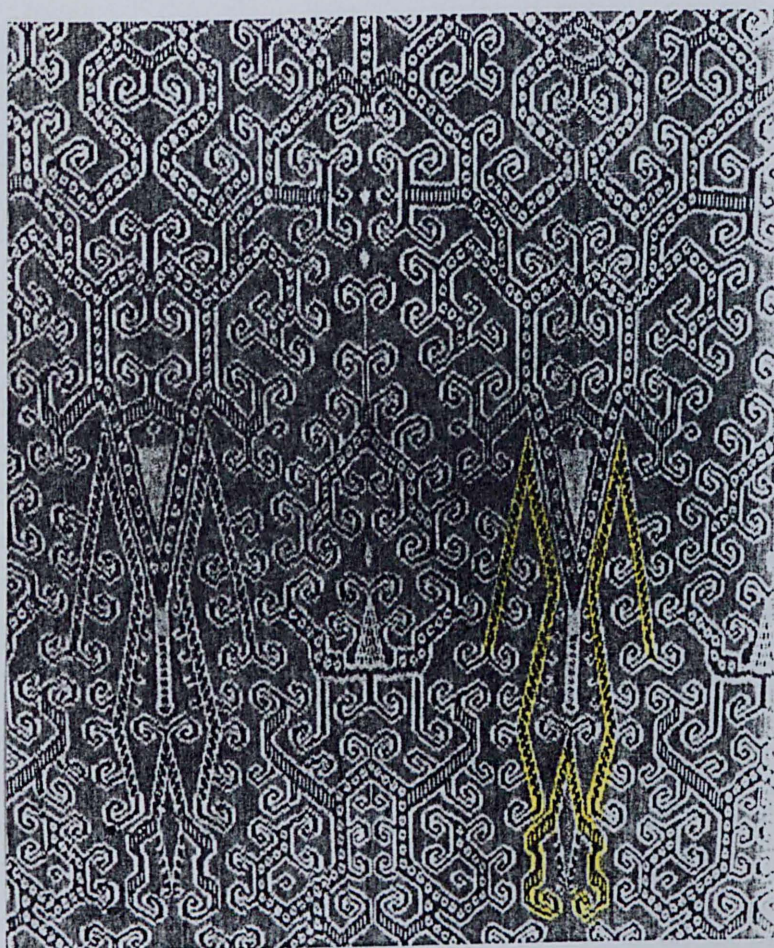


Fig.13



Detail of fig.13



Fig.14

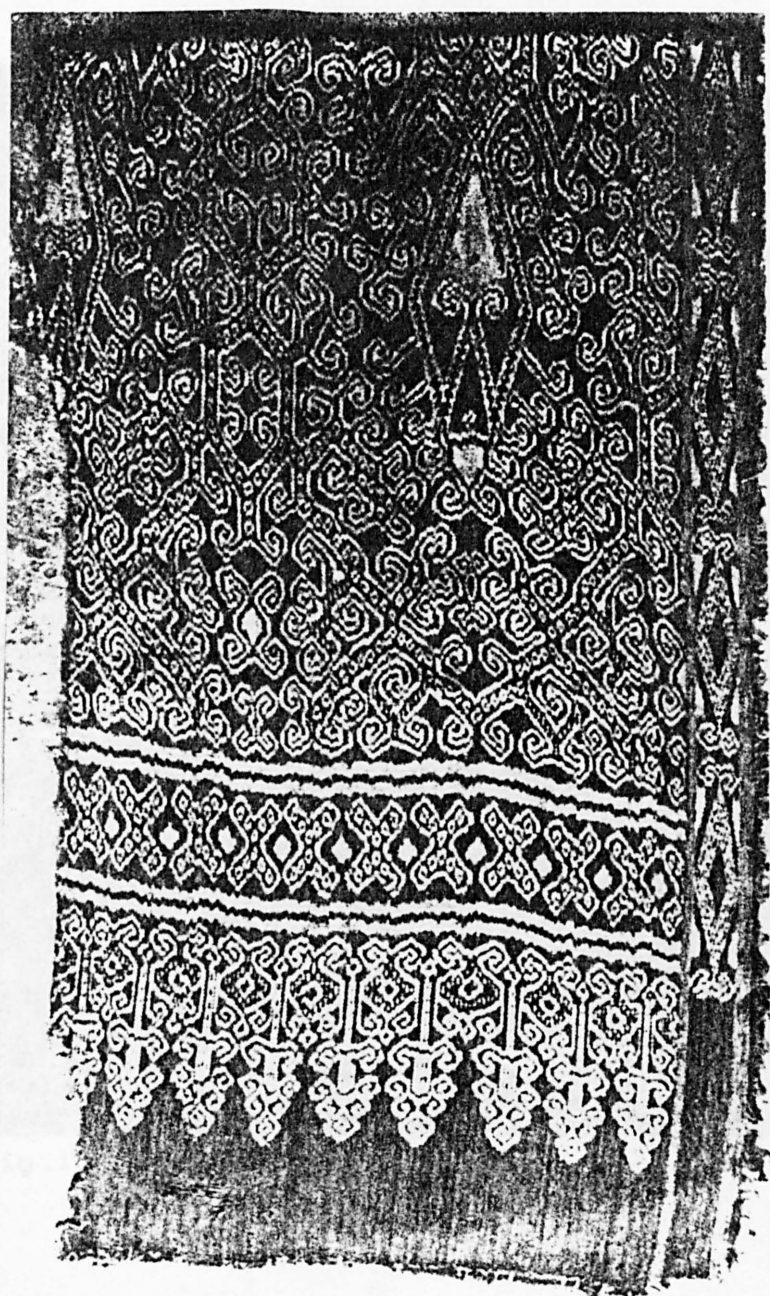


Fig.15 (detail A)

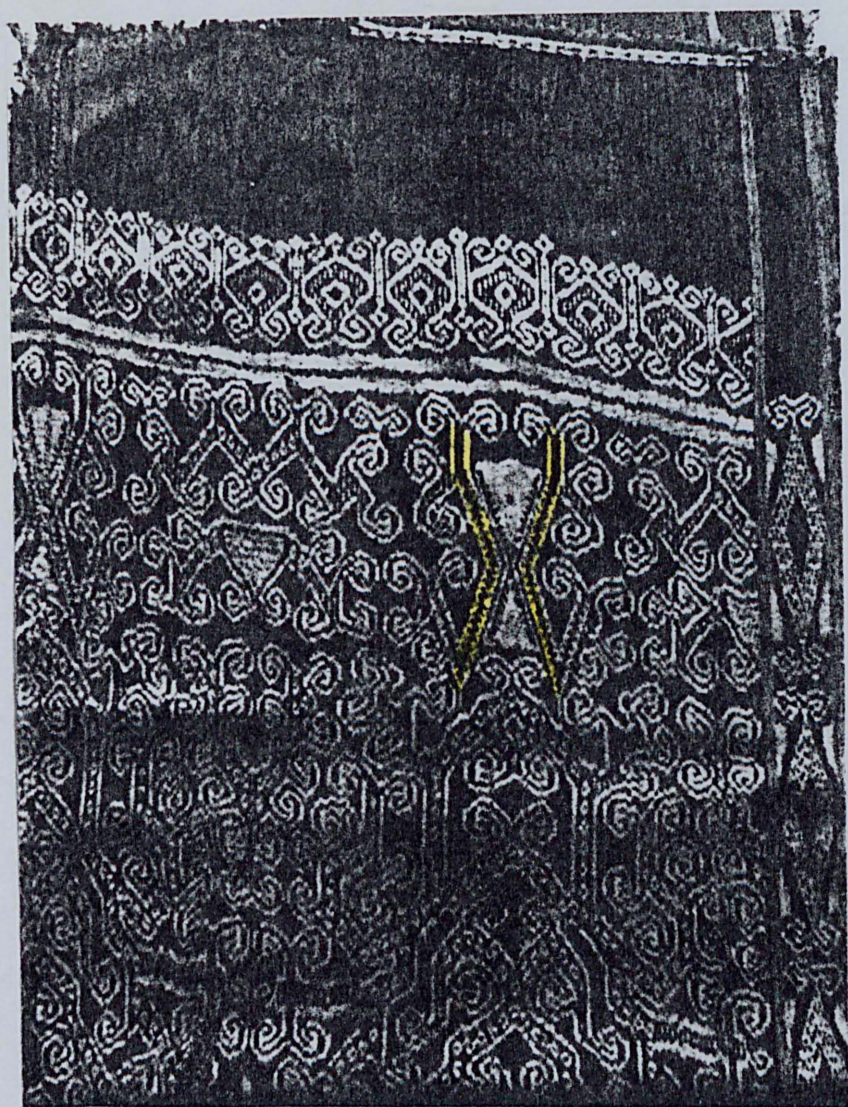


Fig.15 (detail B)

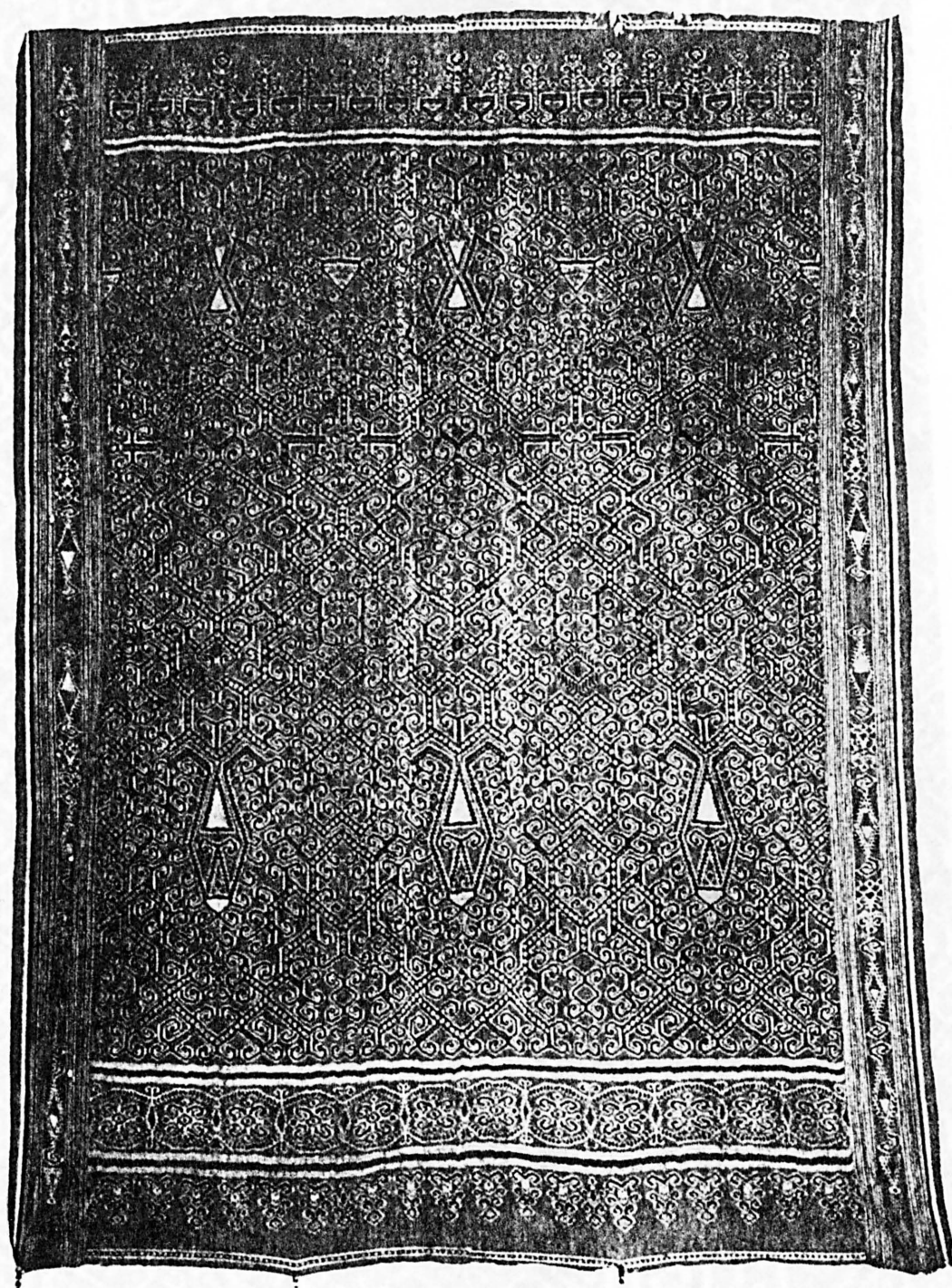
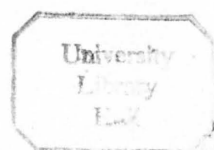


Fig.16



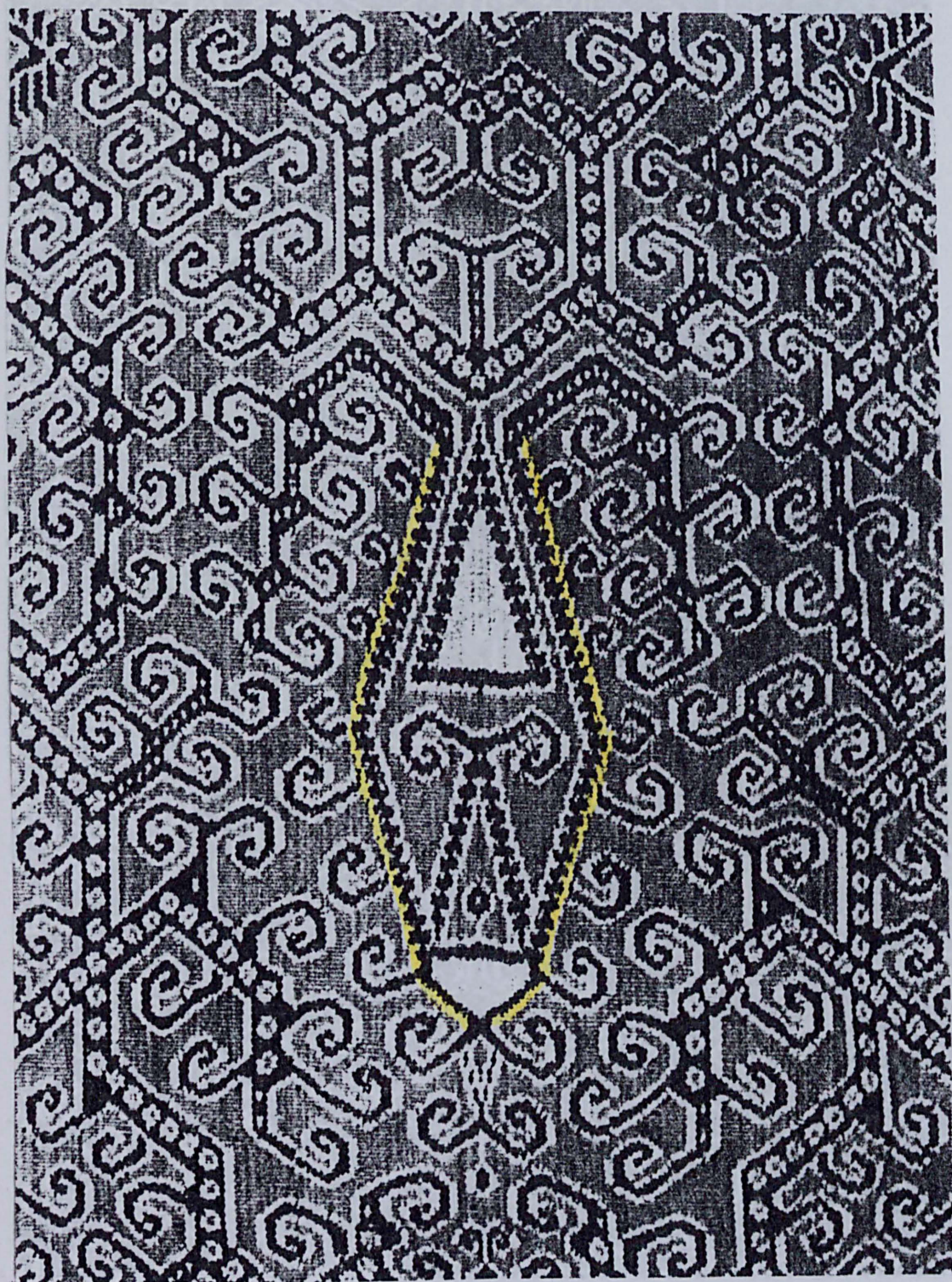


Fig.16 (detail A)



Fig.16 (detail B)



Fig.17

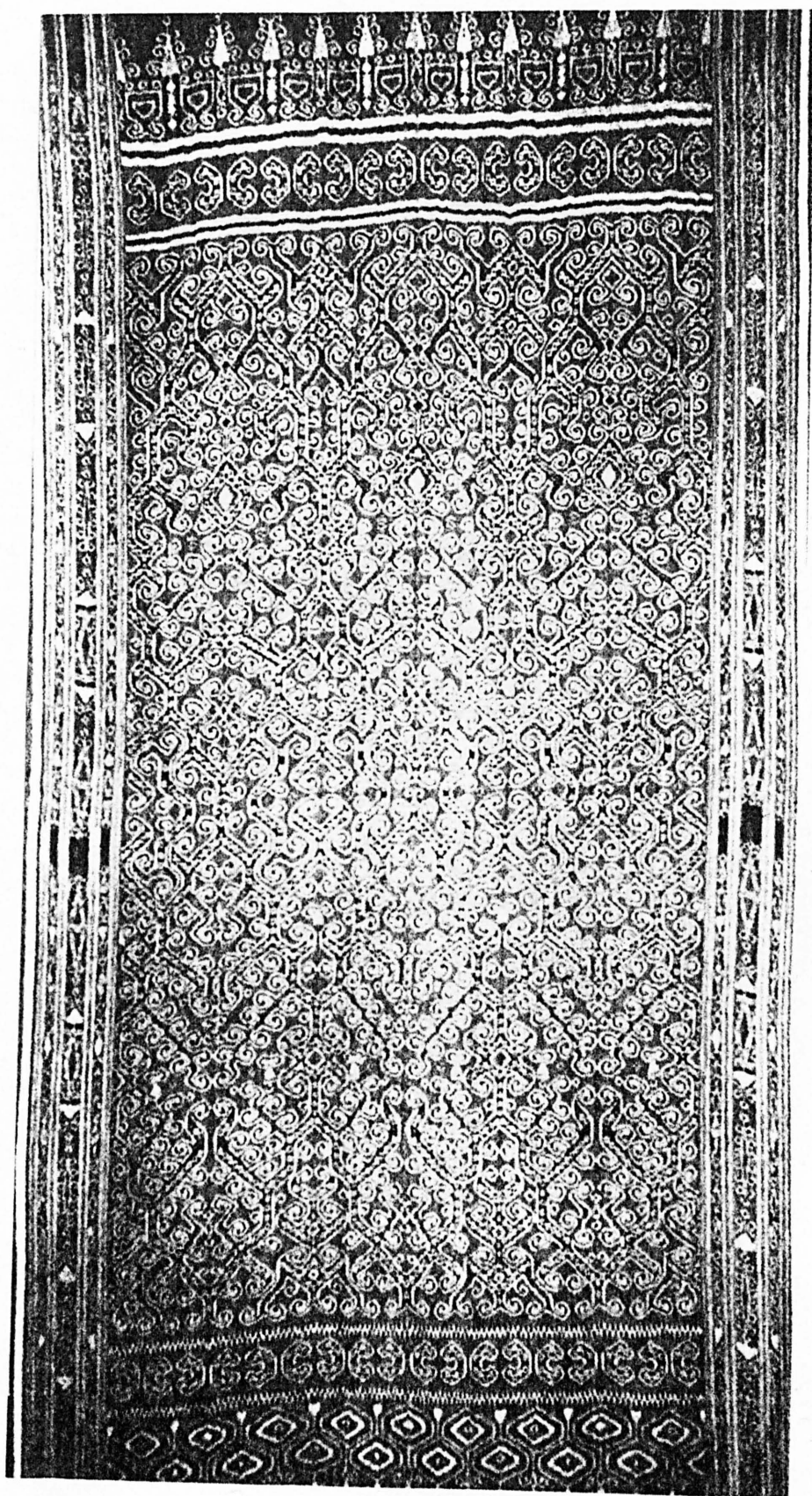


Fig.18

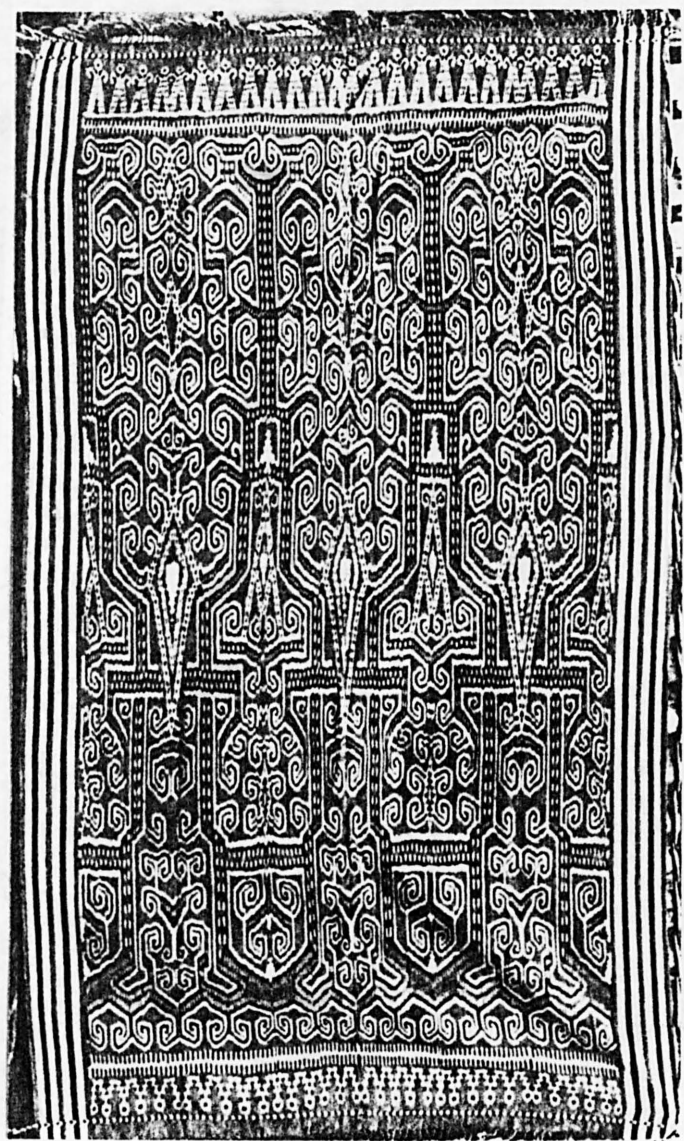


Fig.19

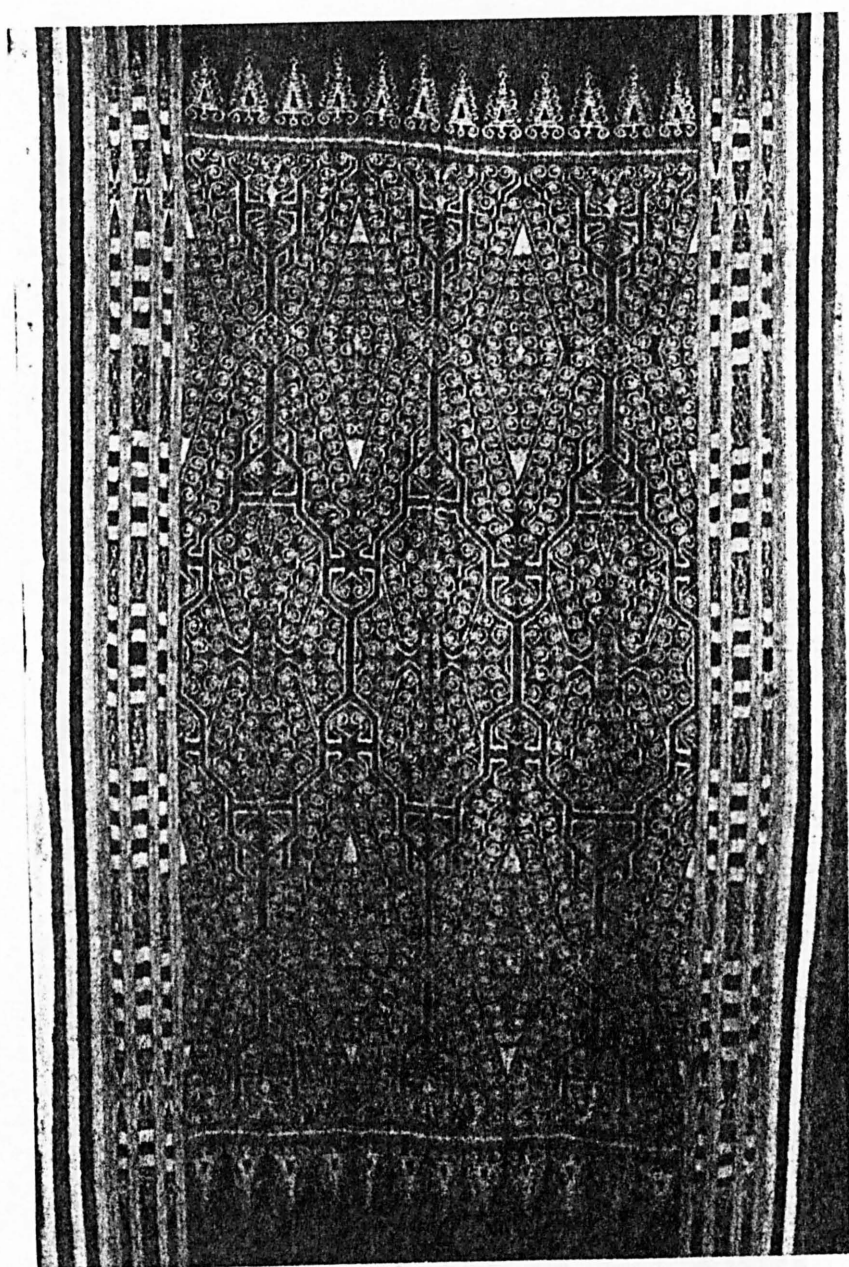


Fig.20

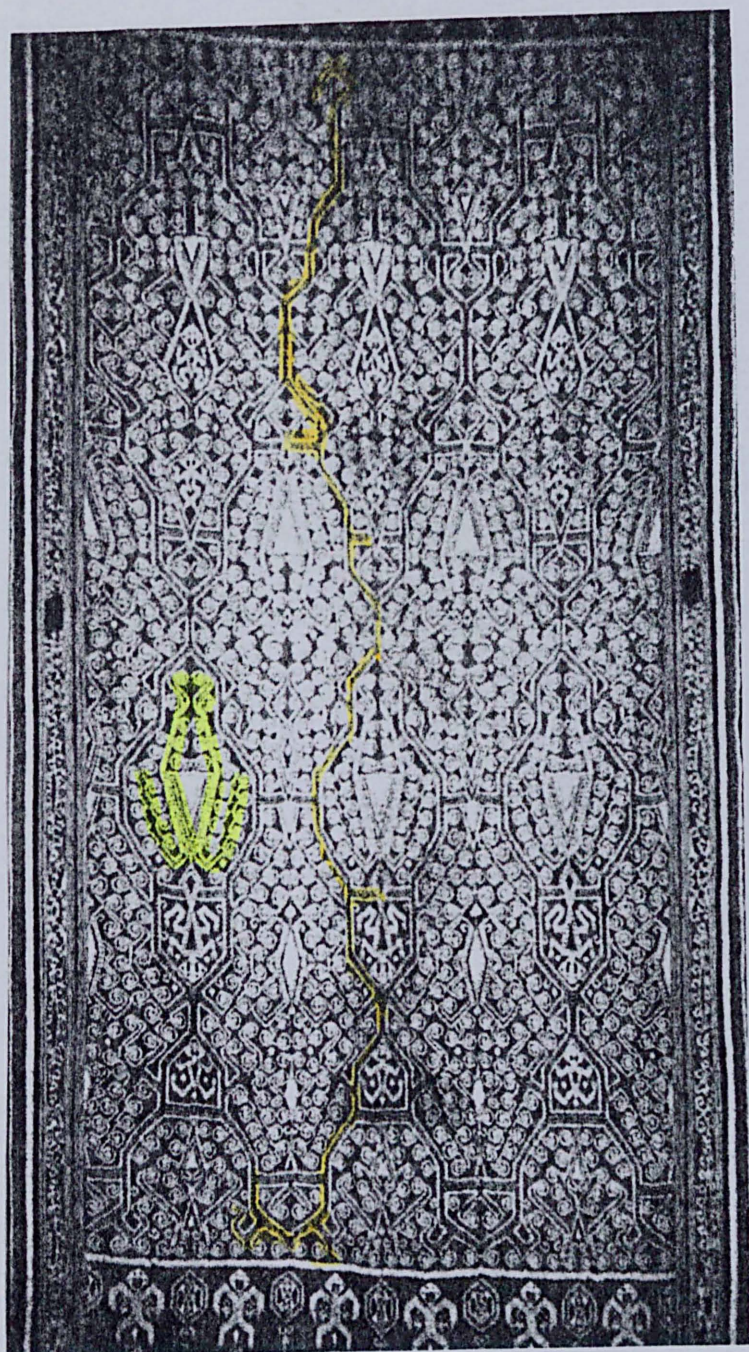


Fig.21

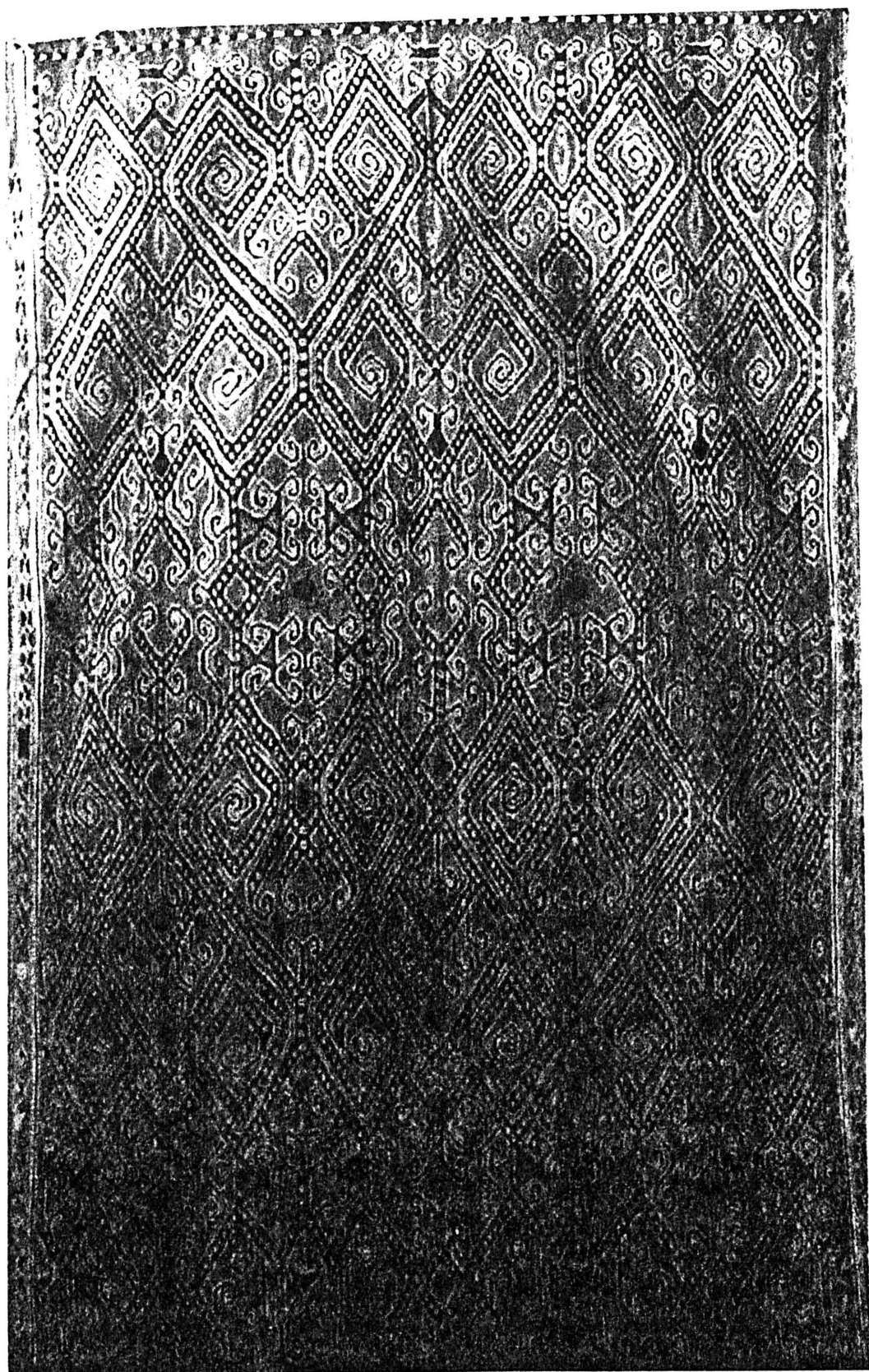


Fig.22



Fig.23

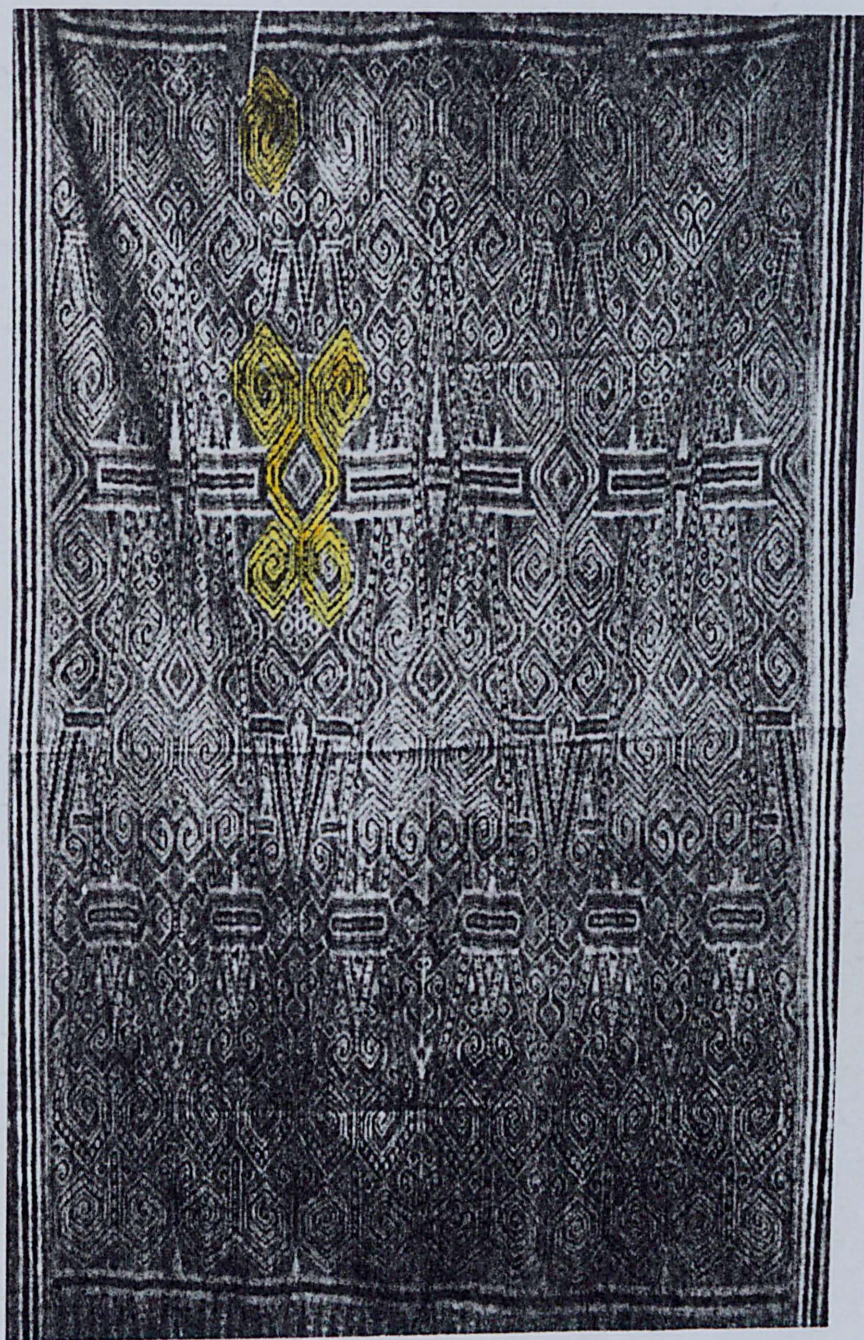


Fig.24



Fig.25

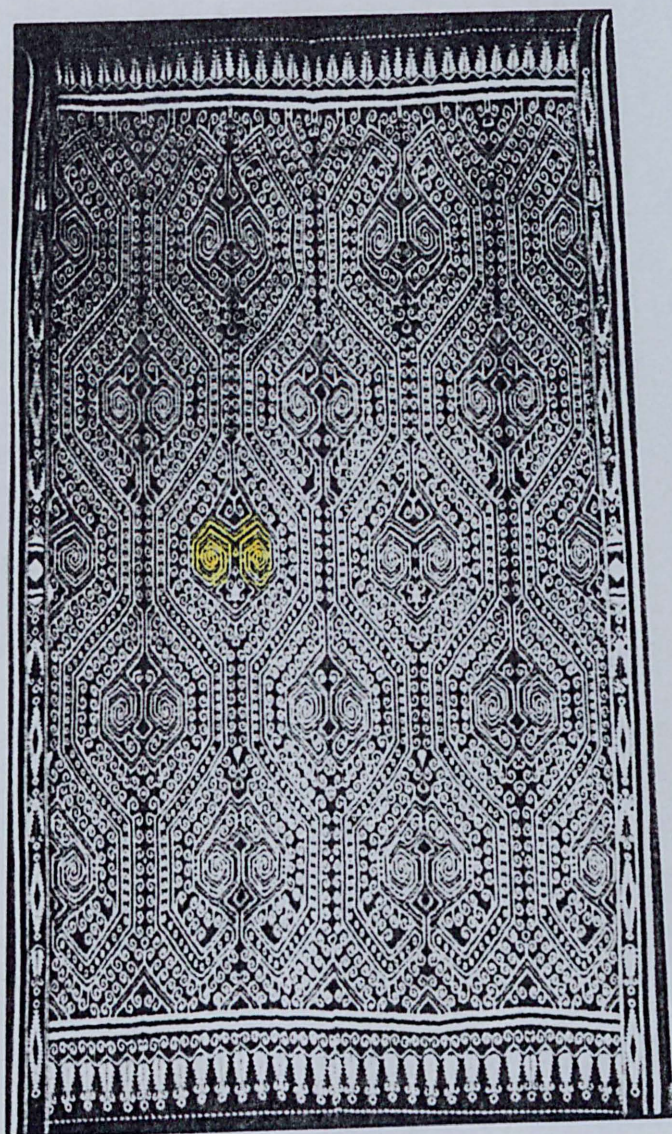


Fig.26

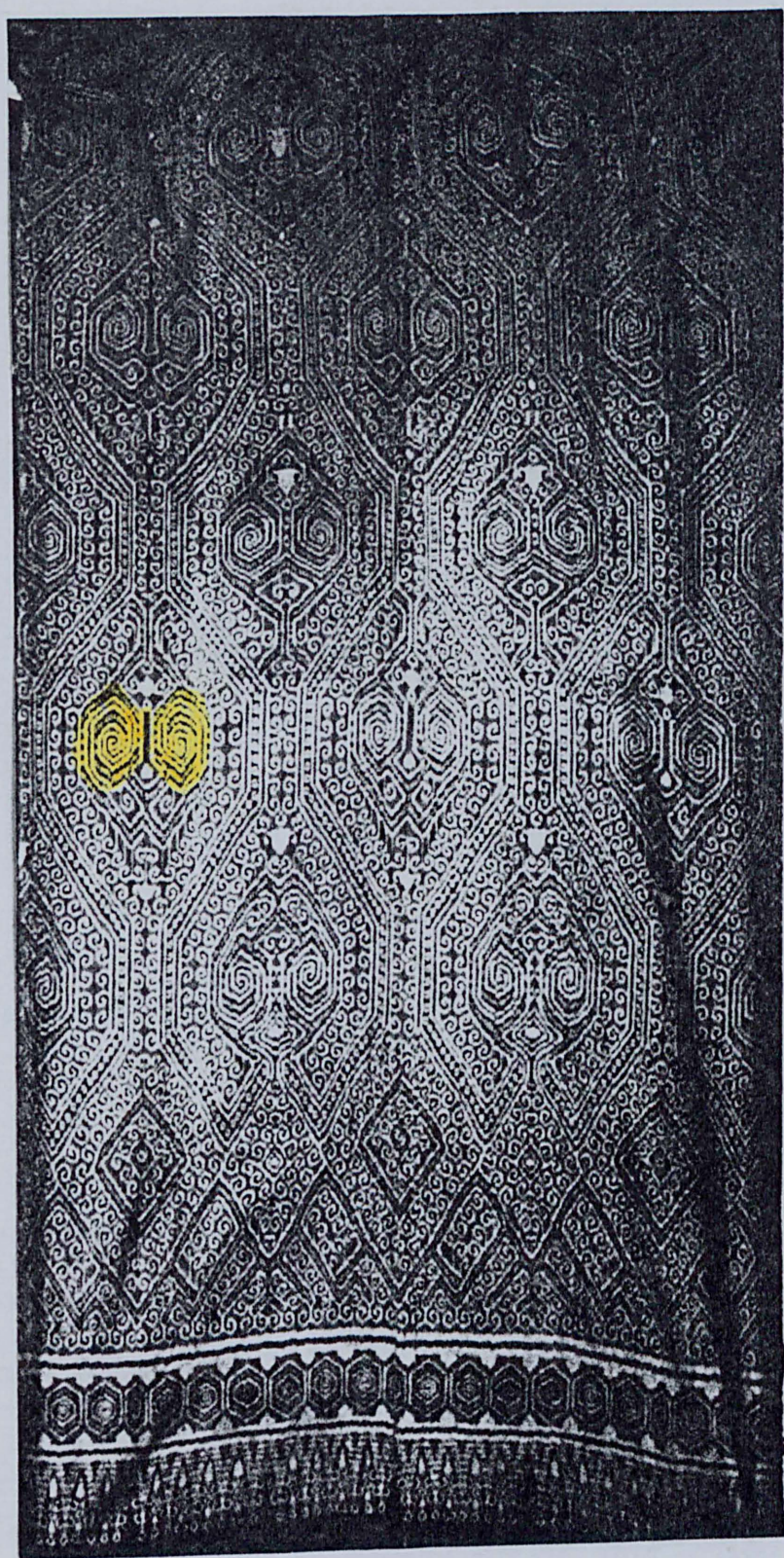


Fig.27

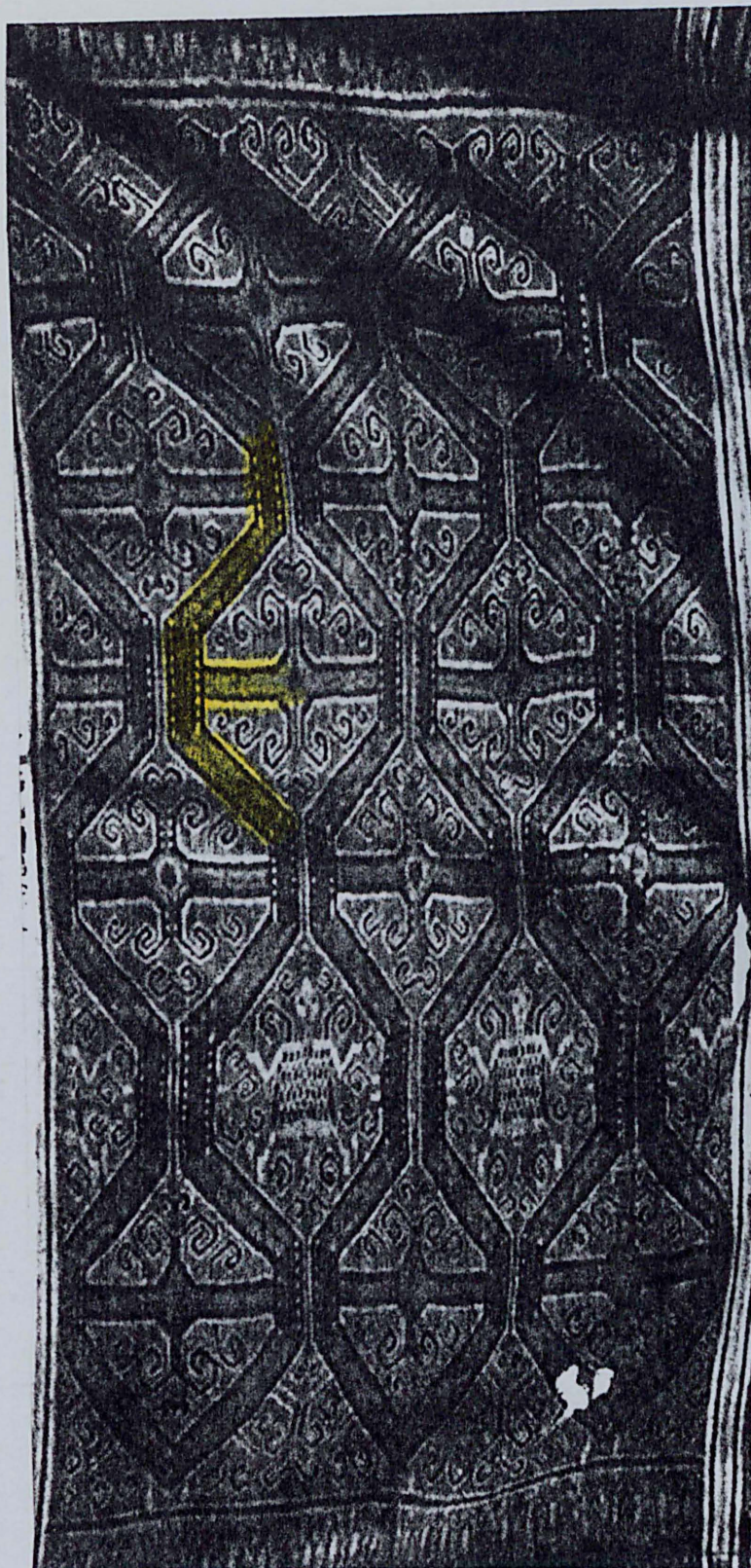


Fig.28

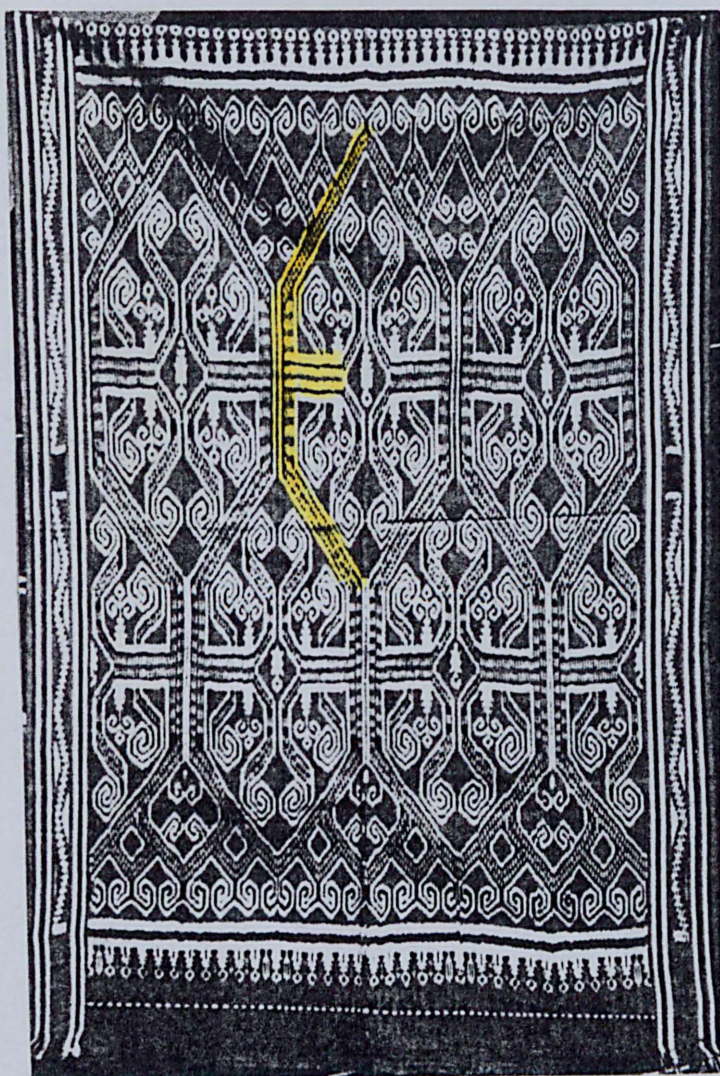


Fig.29



fig.30

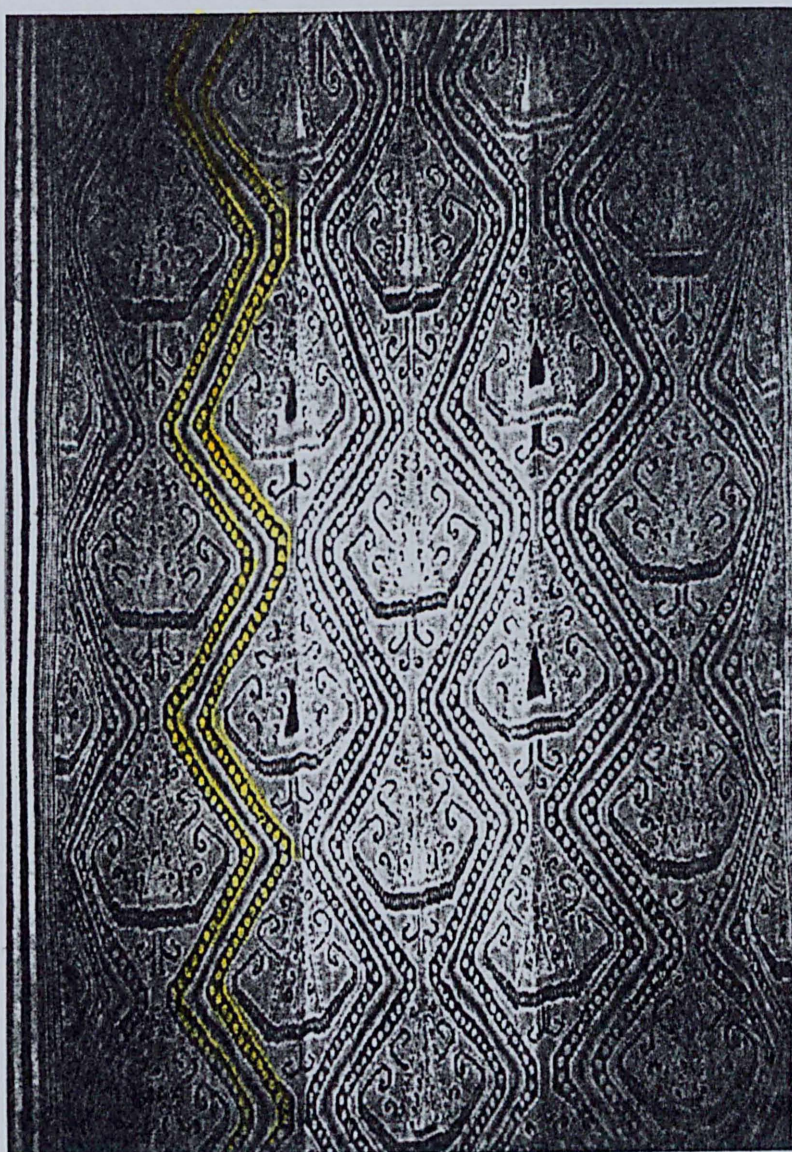


Fig.31

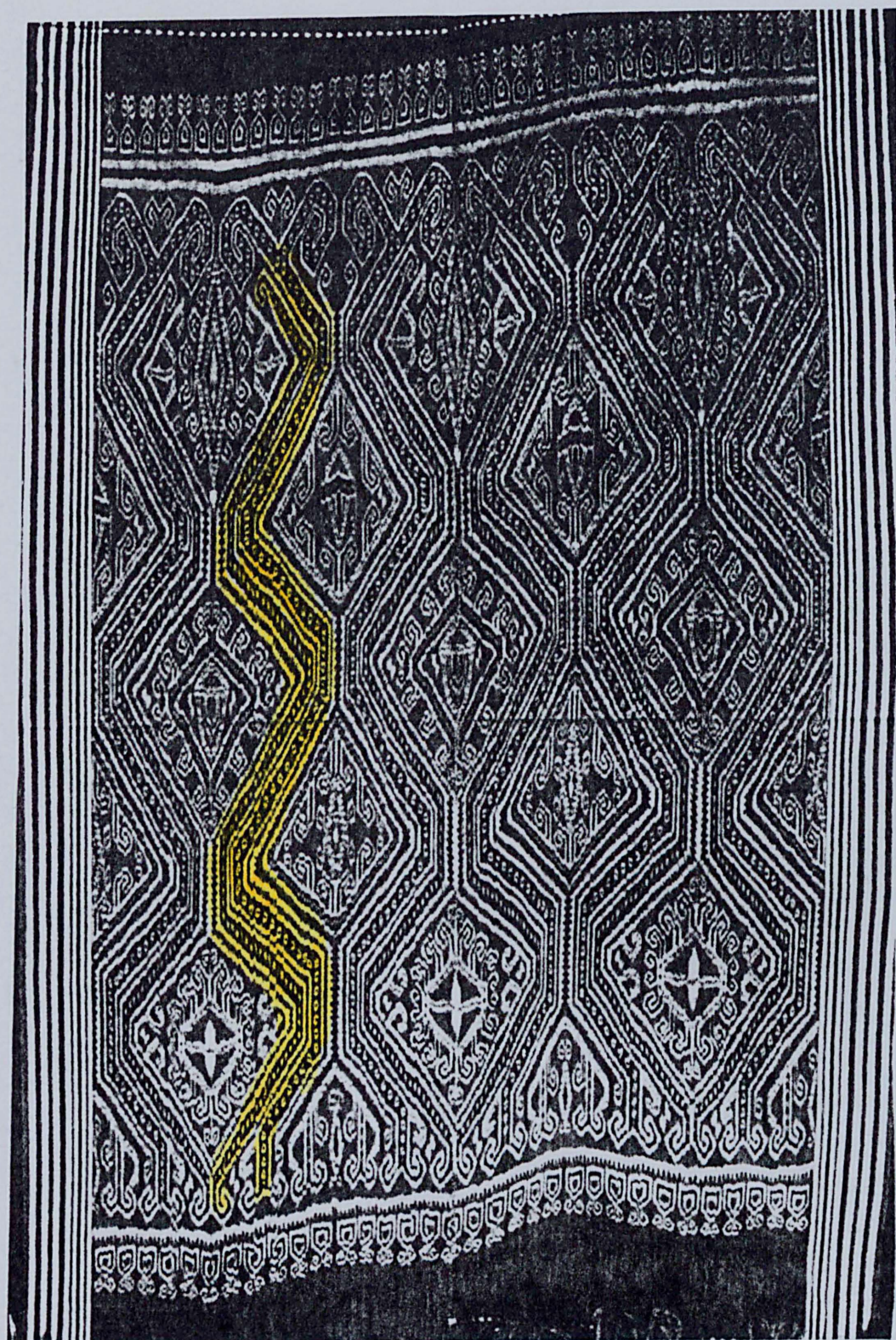


Fig.32

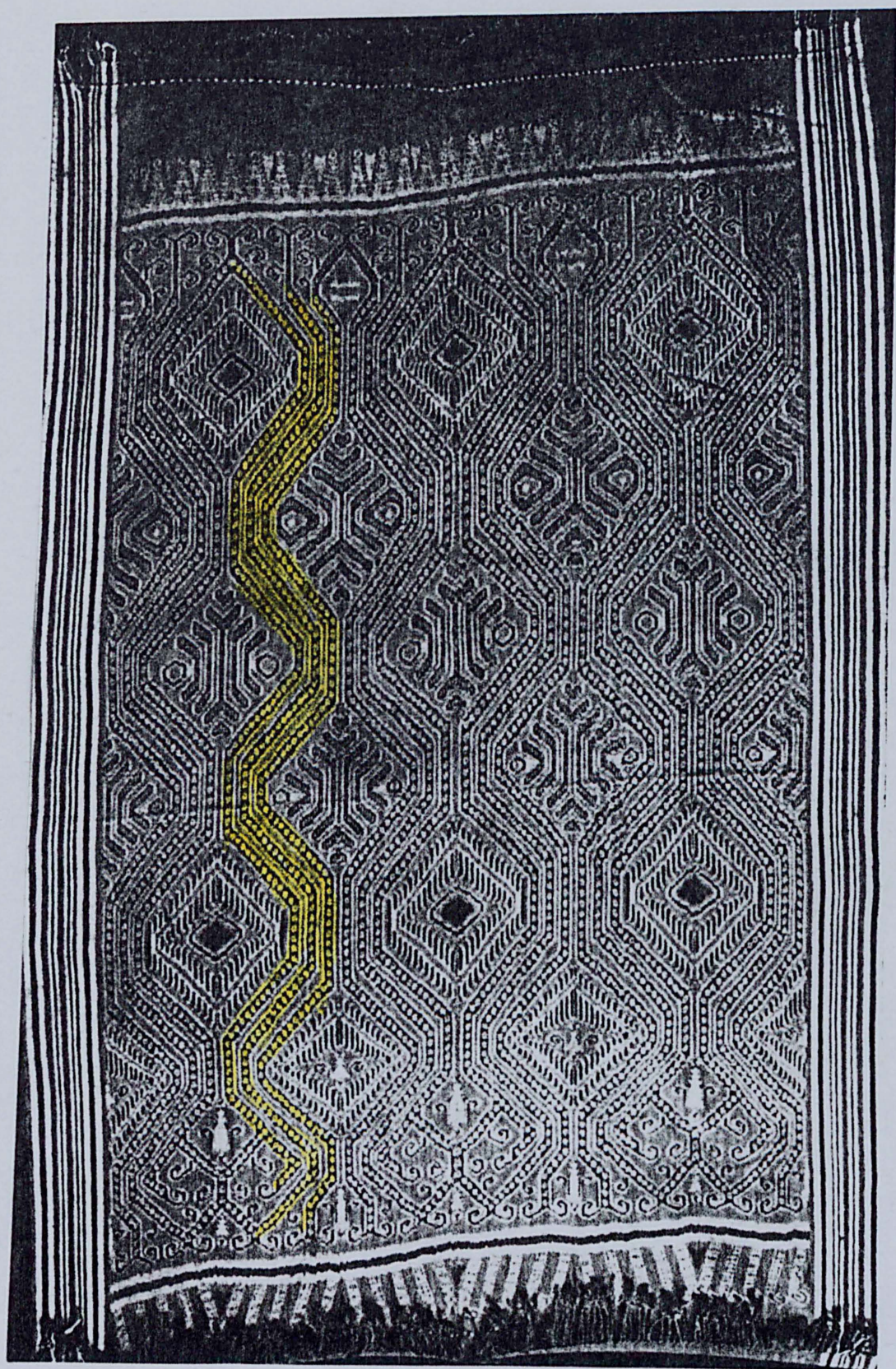


Fig.33



Fig.34

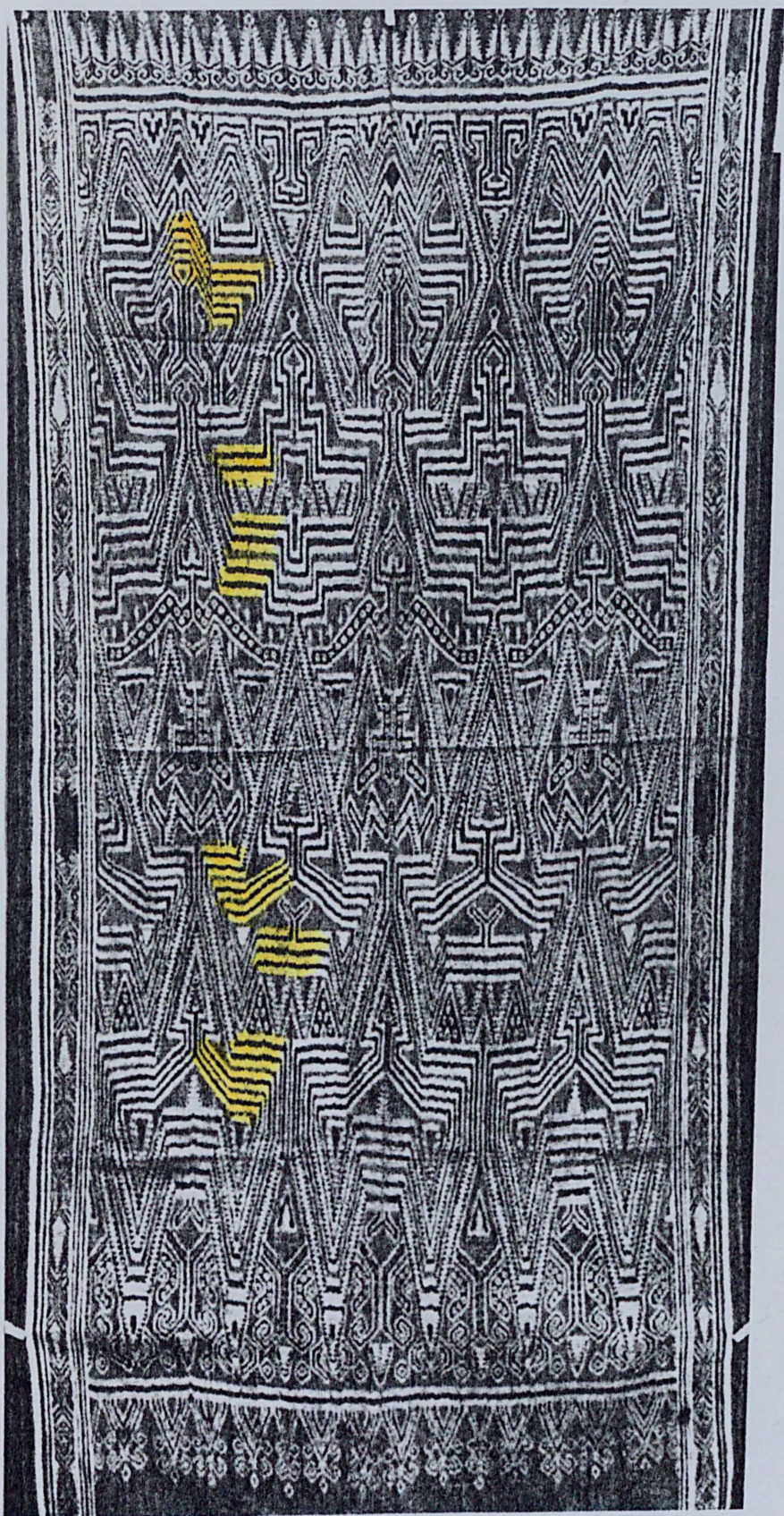


Fig.35



Fig.36

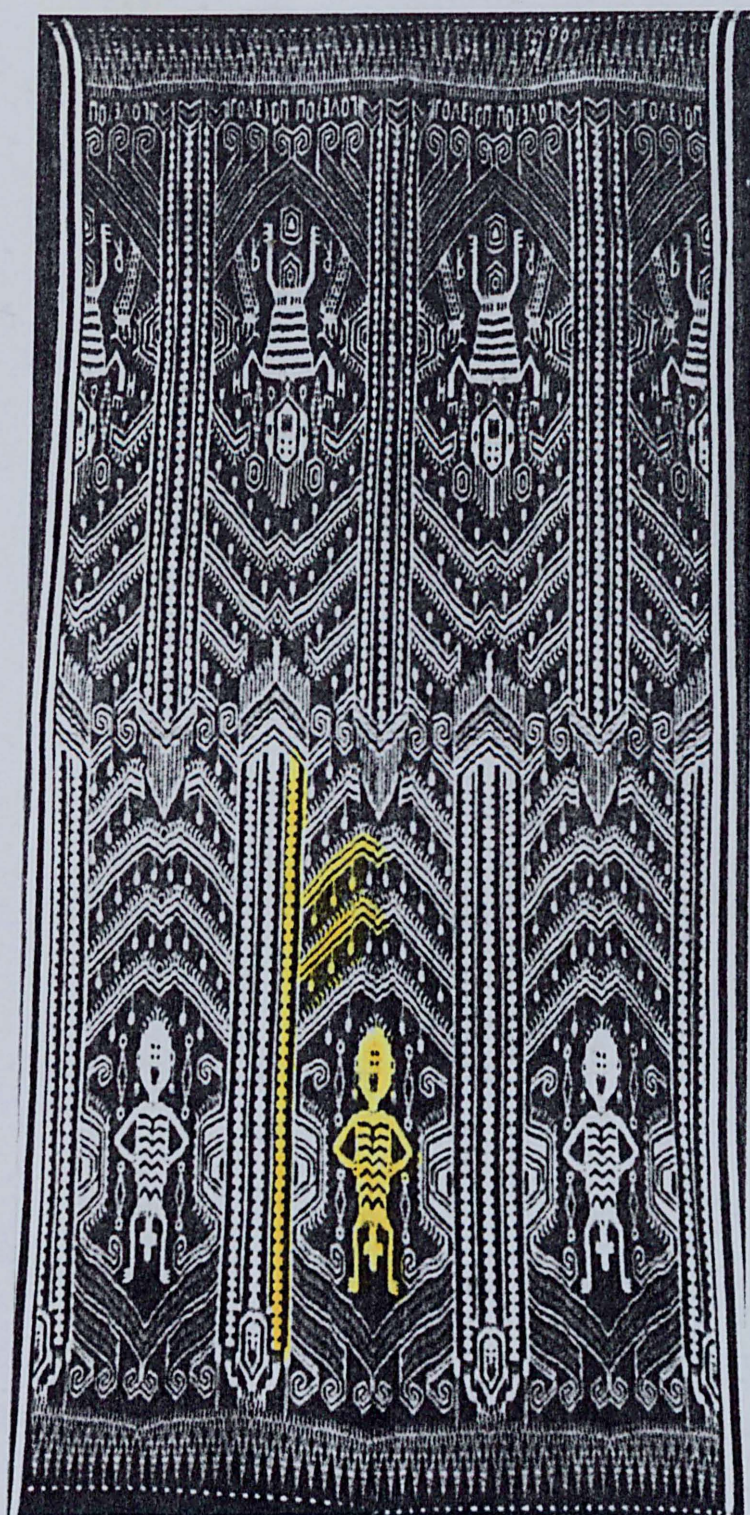


Fig.37

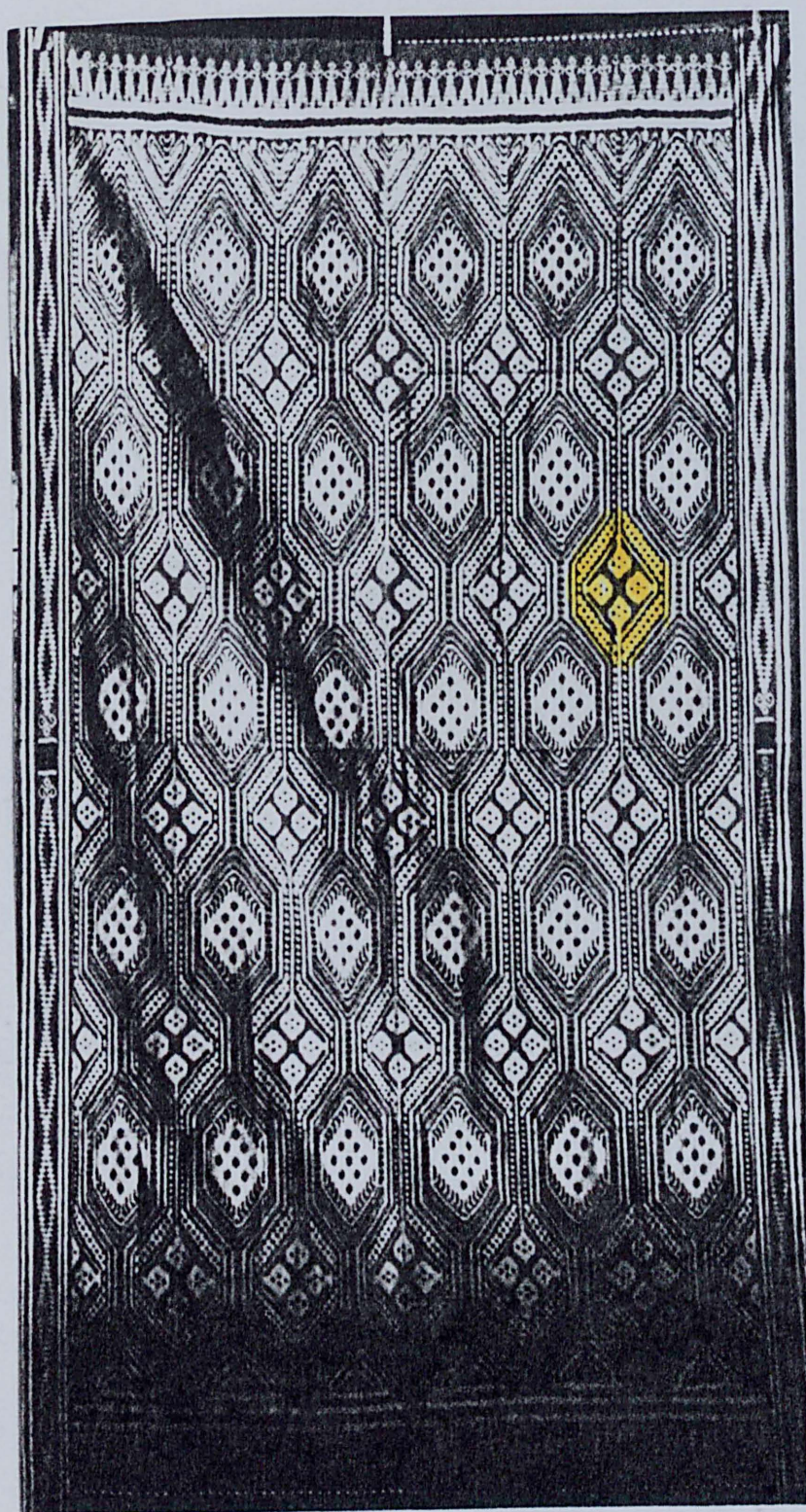


Fig.38

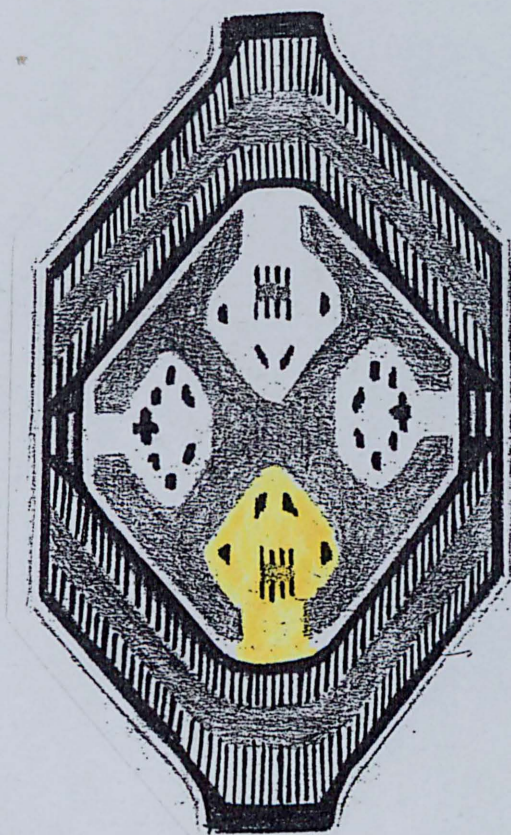


Fig.39

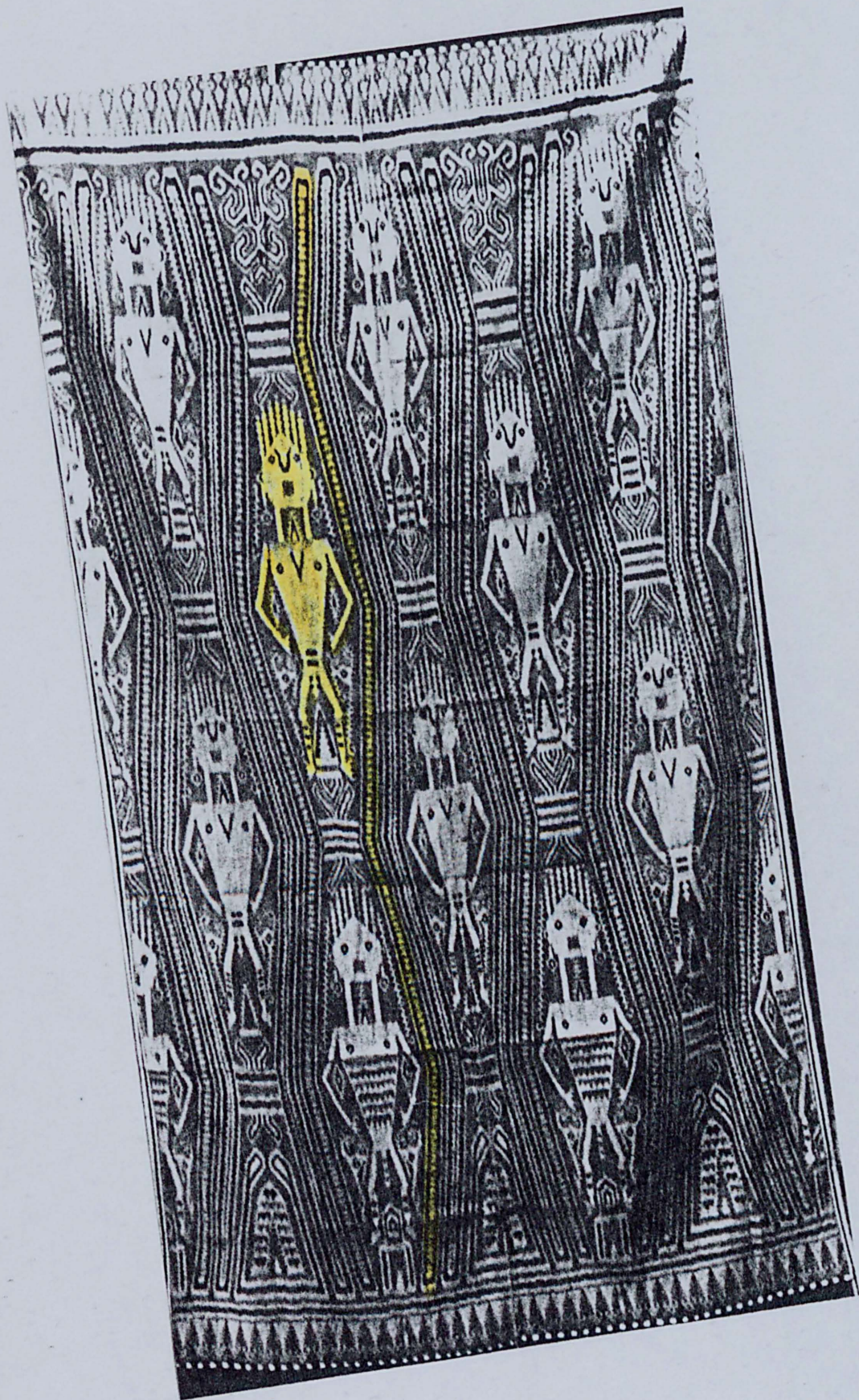


Fig.40

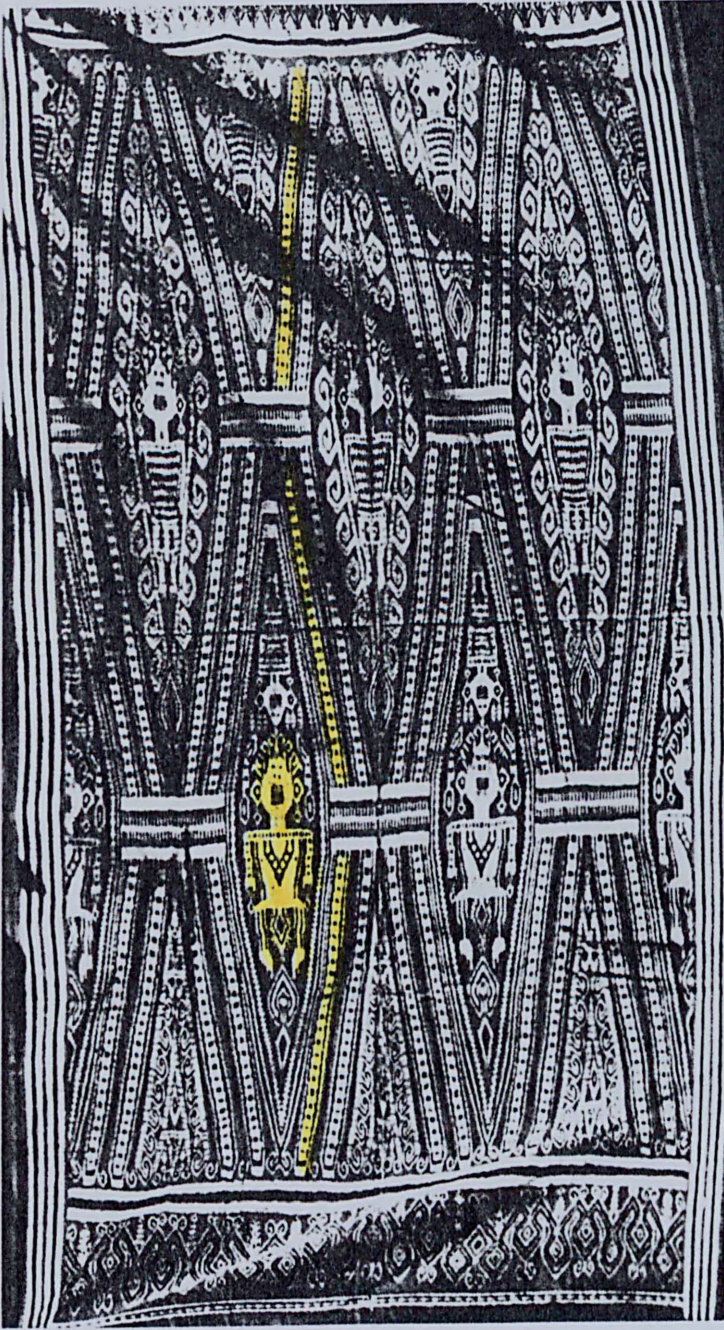


Fig.41

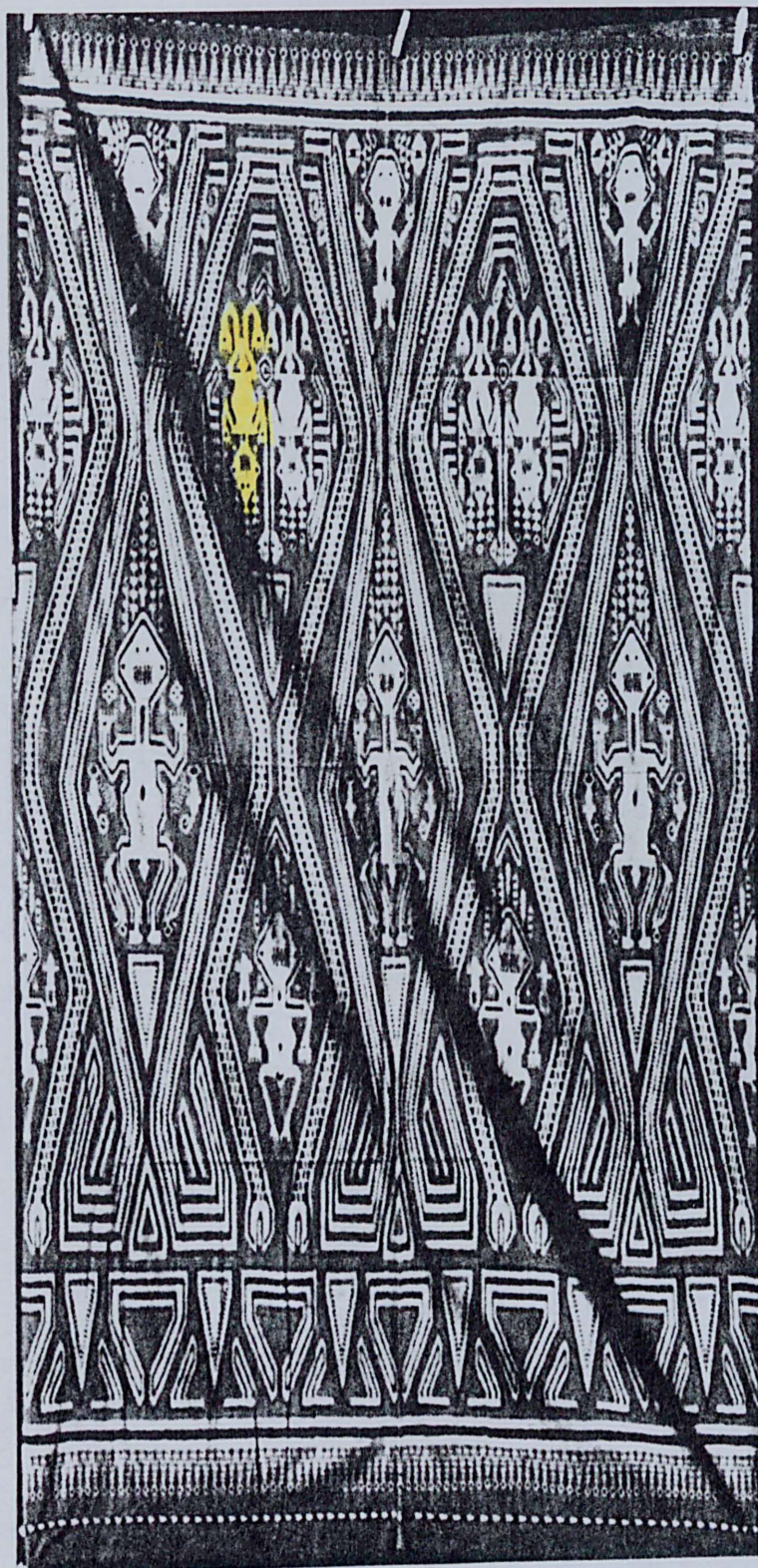


Fig.42



Fig.43

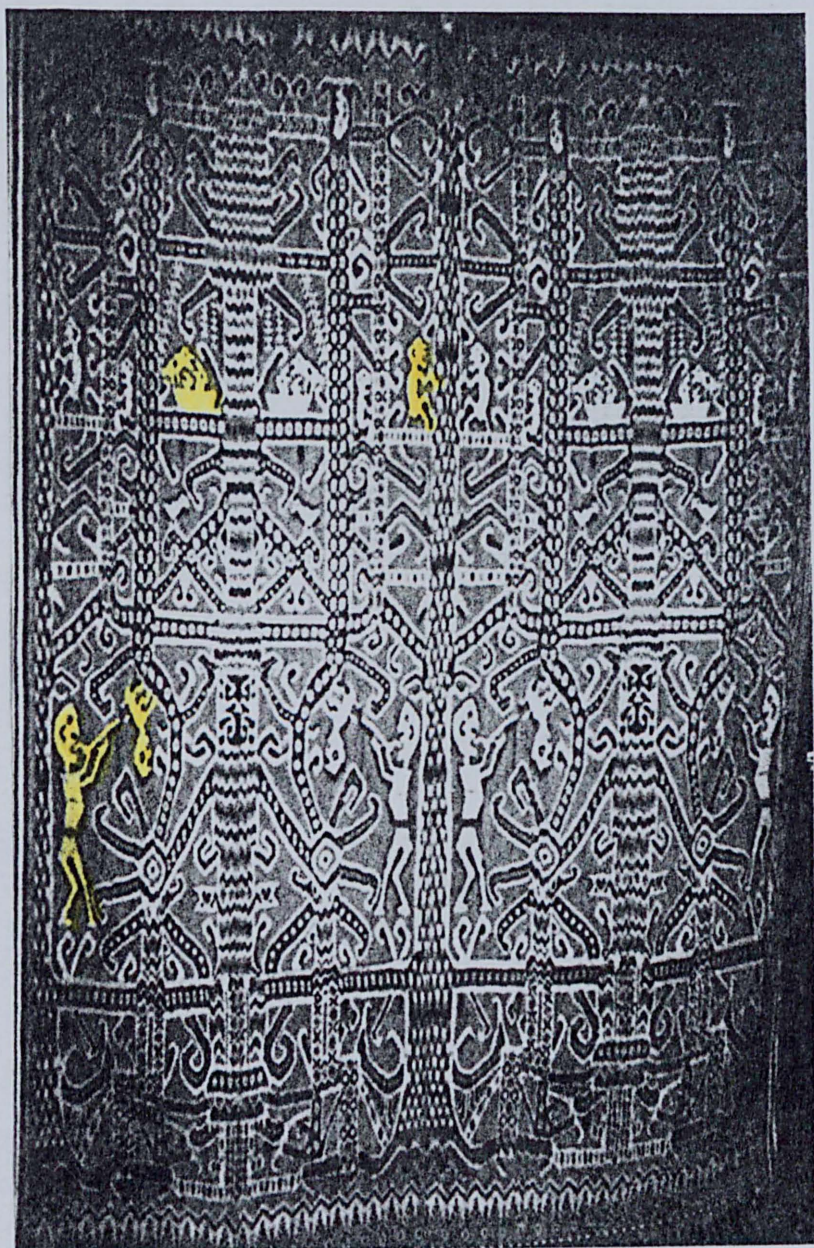


Fig.44

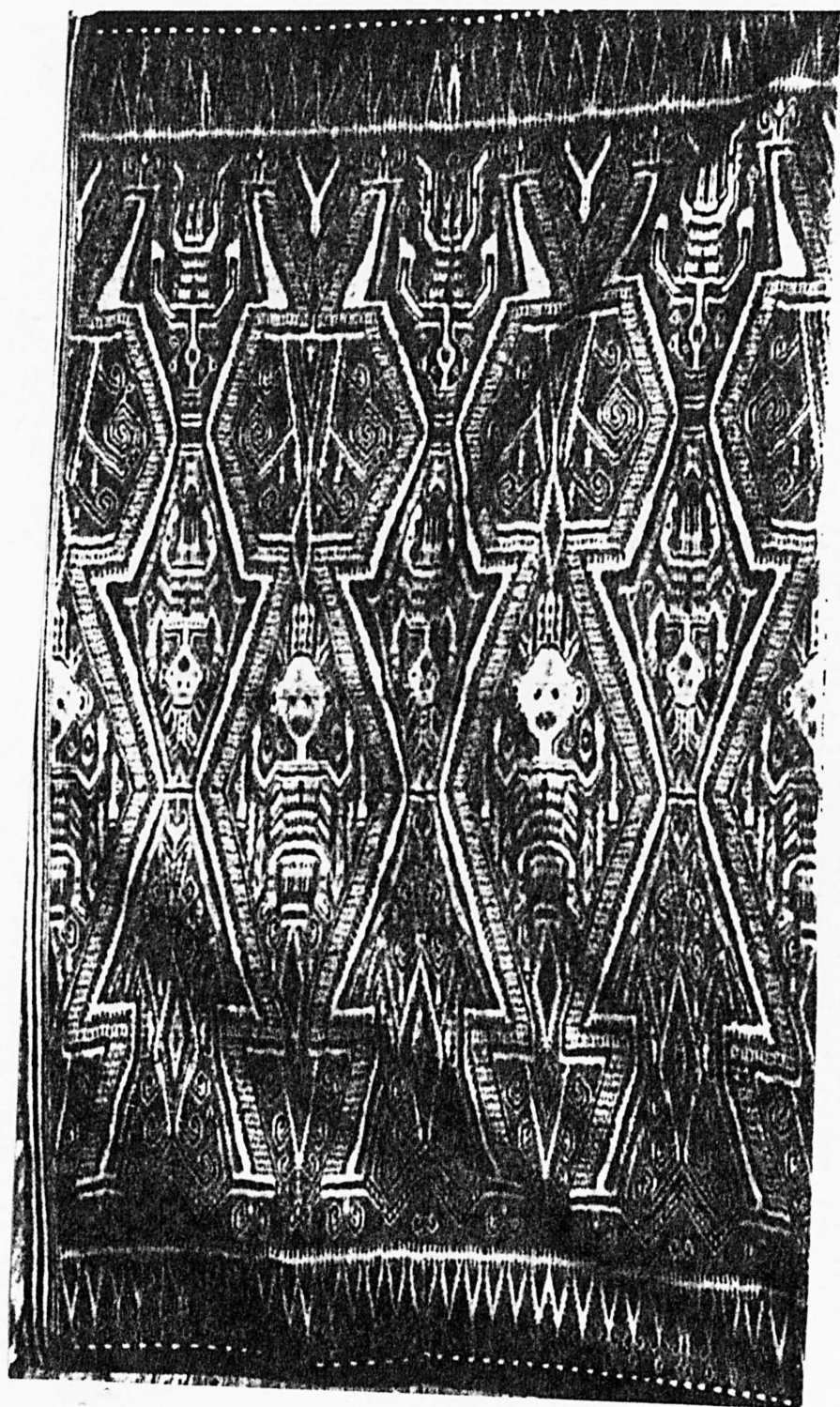


Fig.45

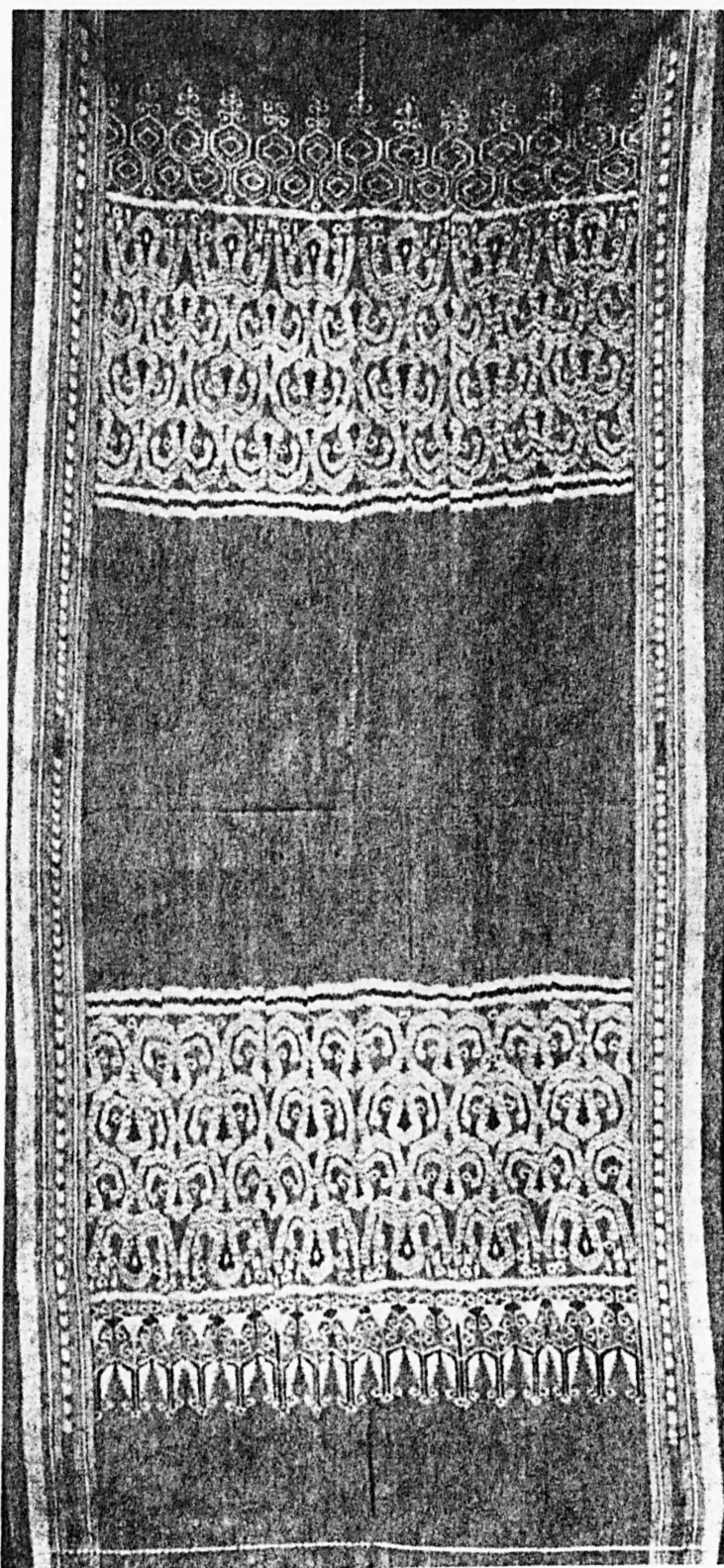


Fig.46

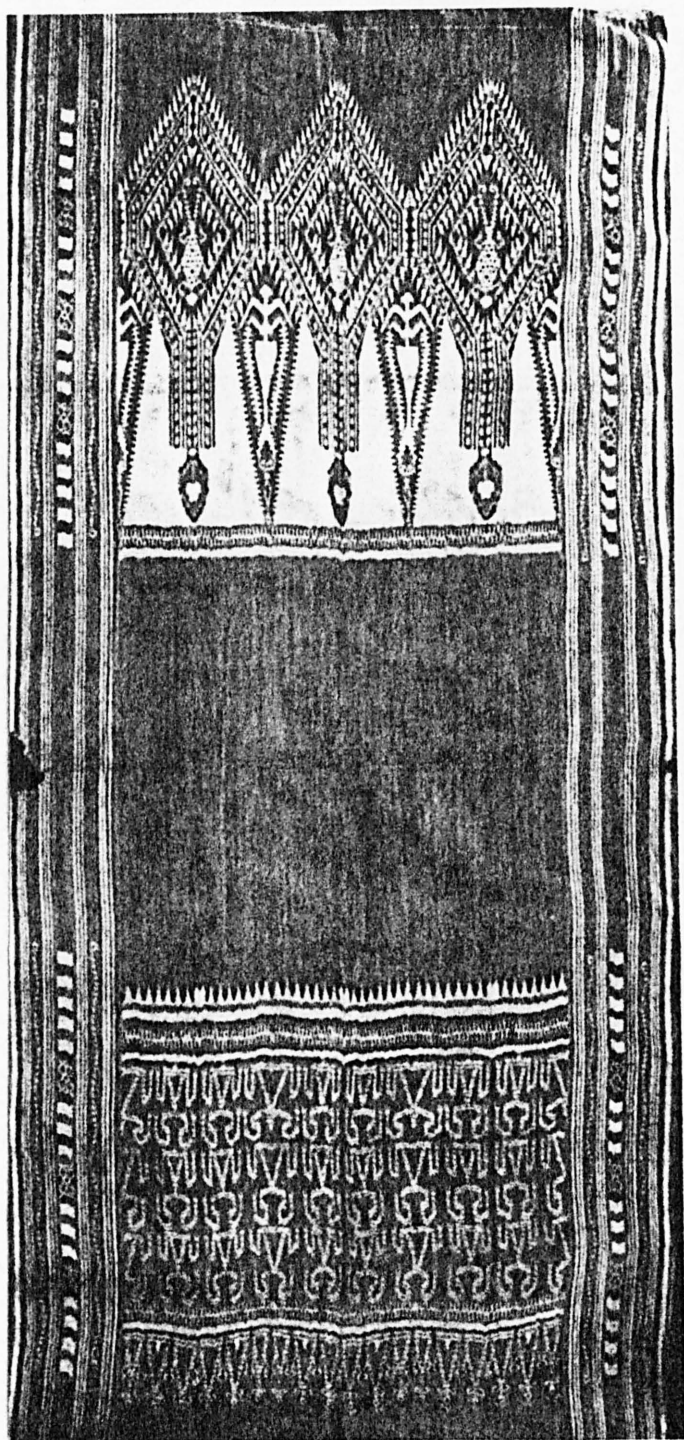


Fig.47

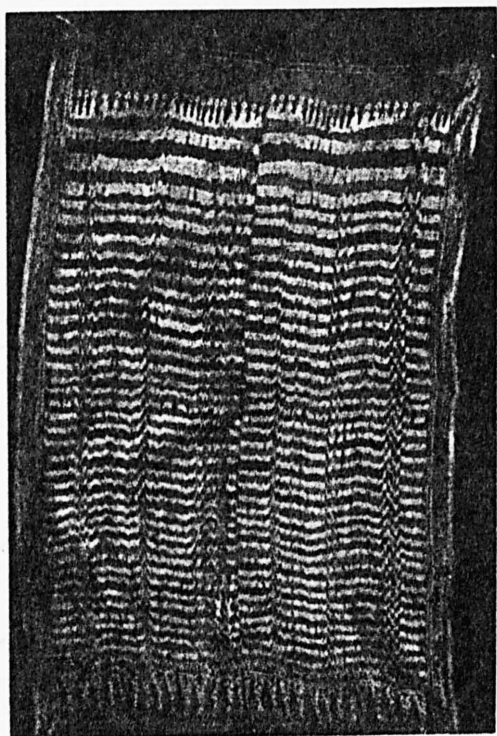


Fig.48

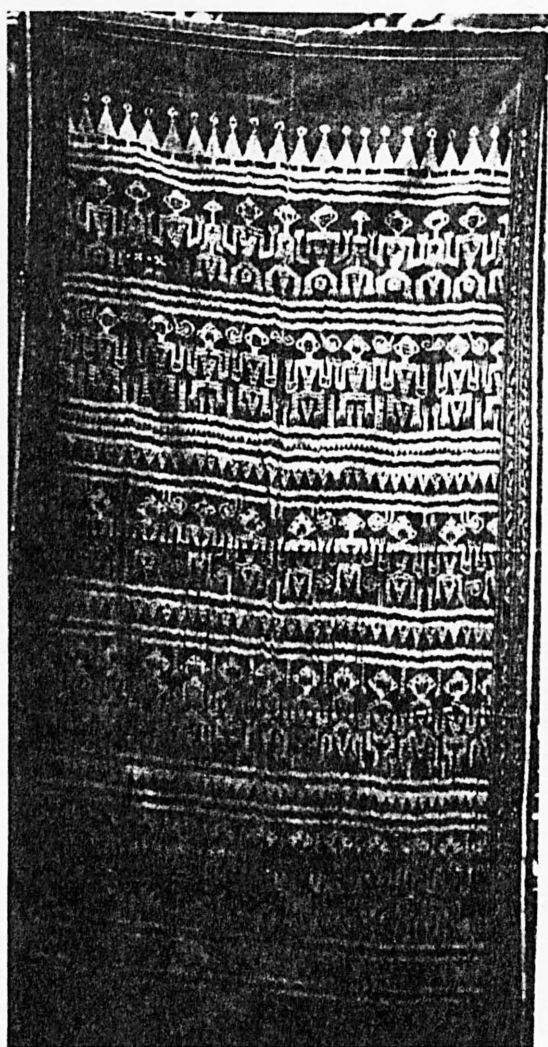


Fig.49

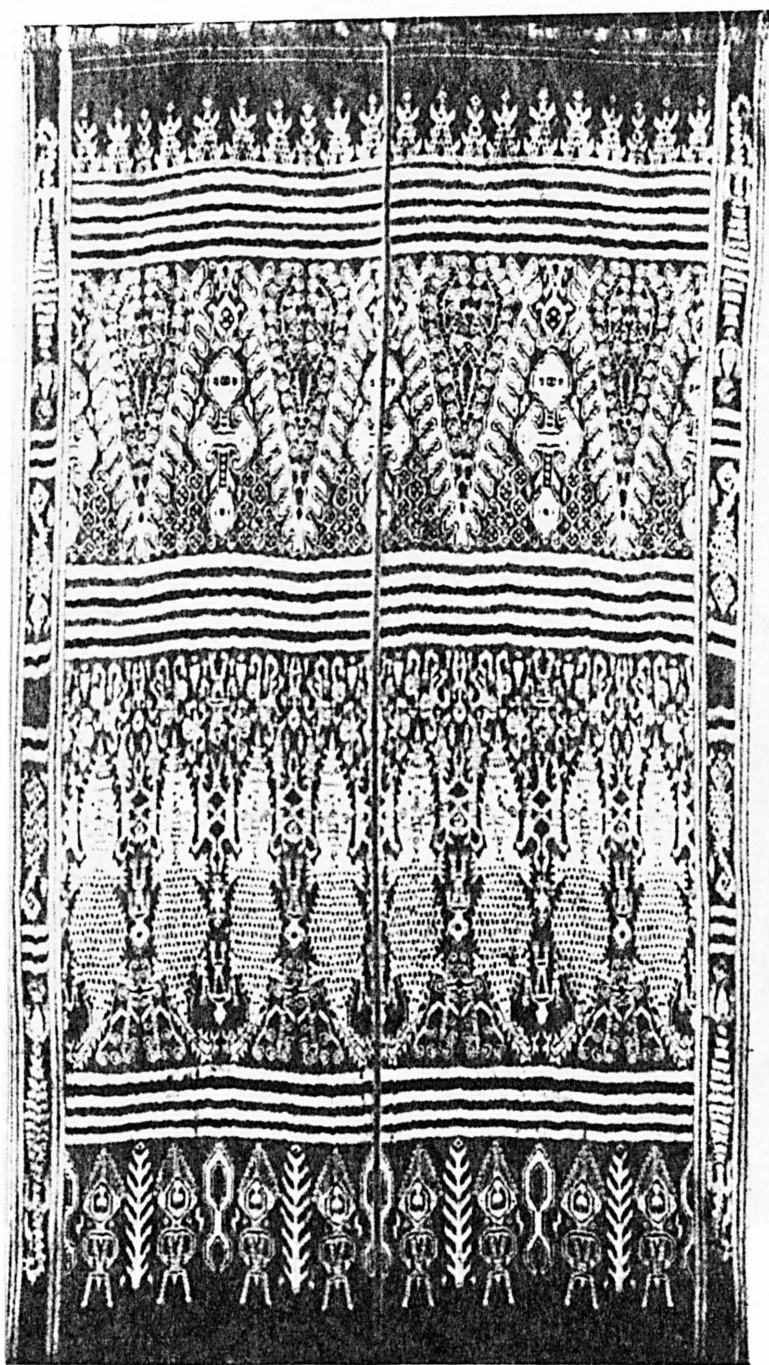


Fig.50

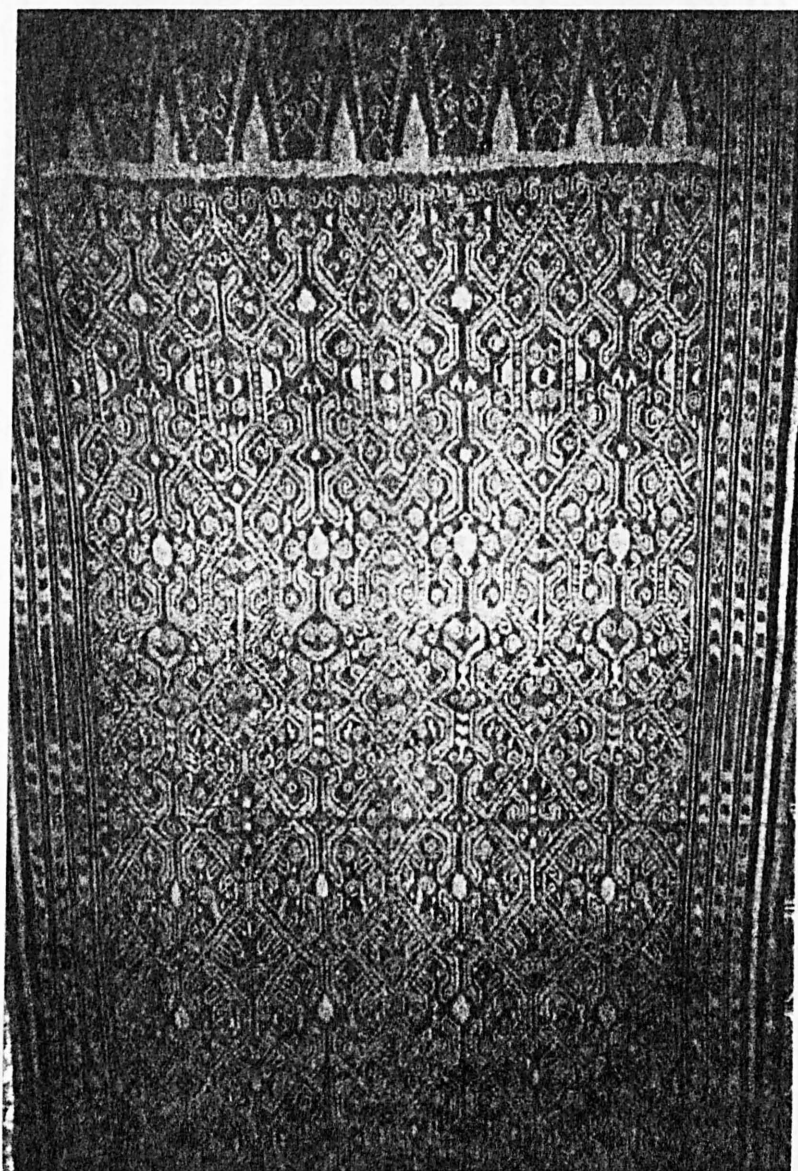


Fig.51

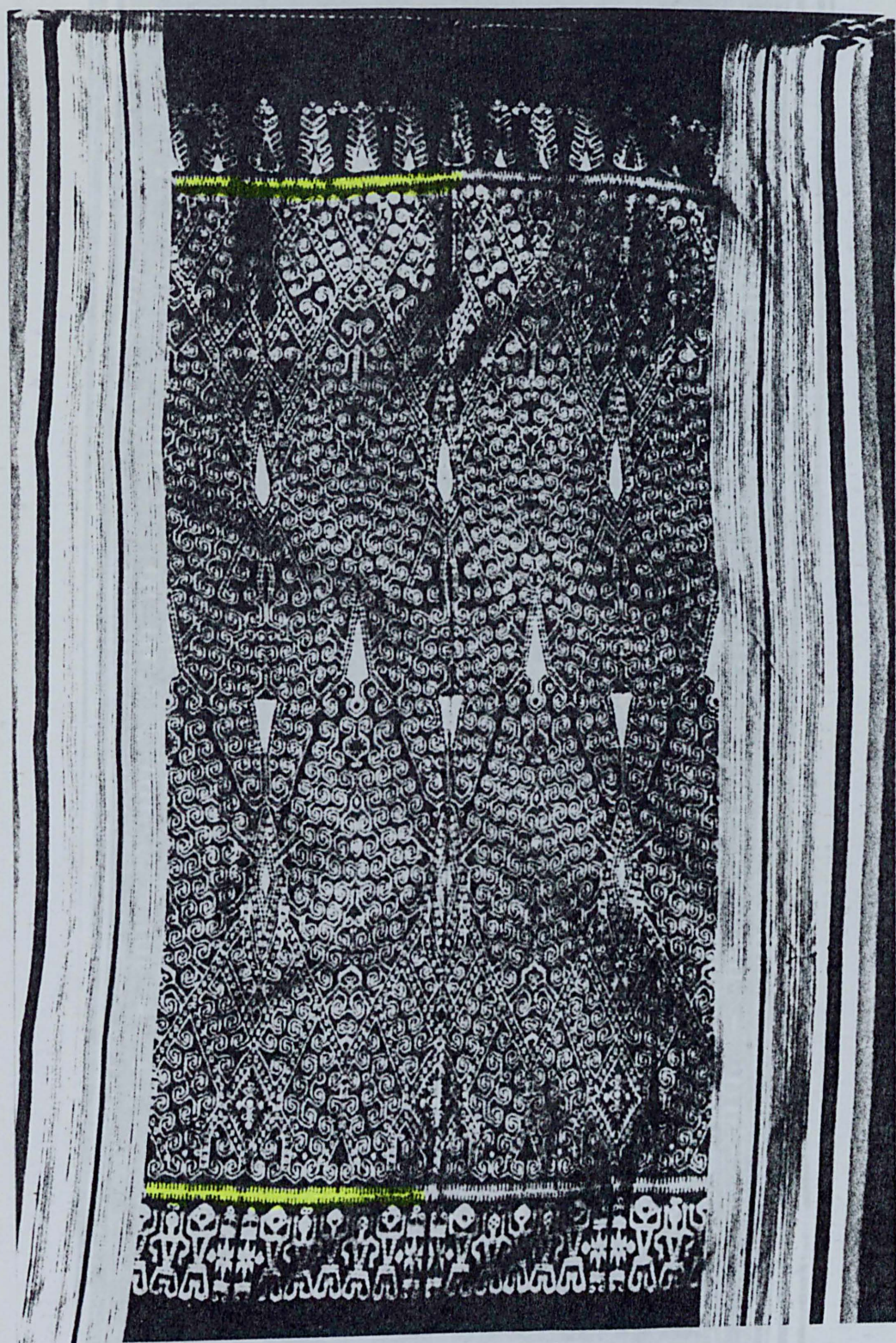


Fig.52

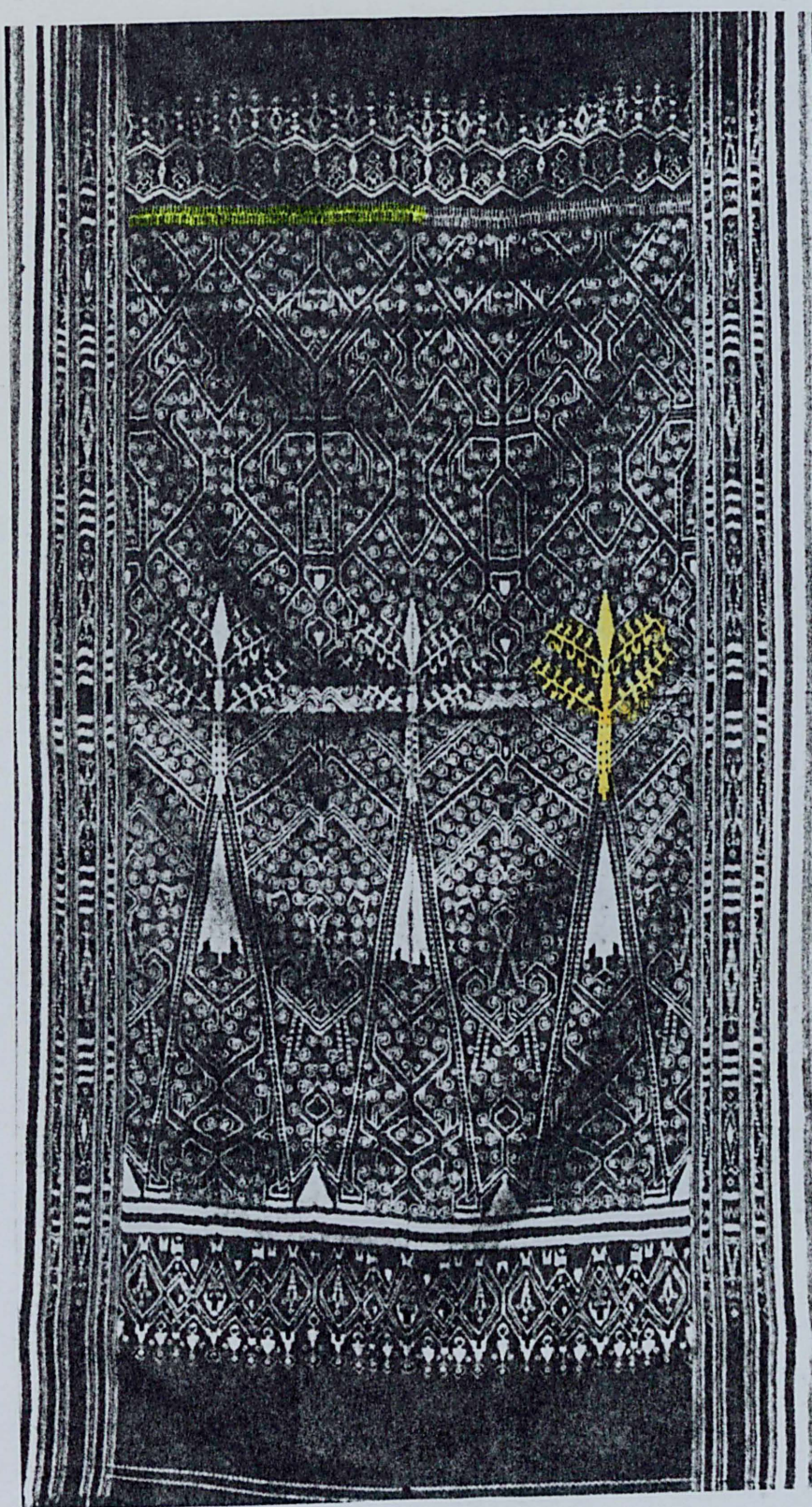


Fig.53

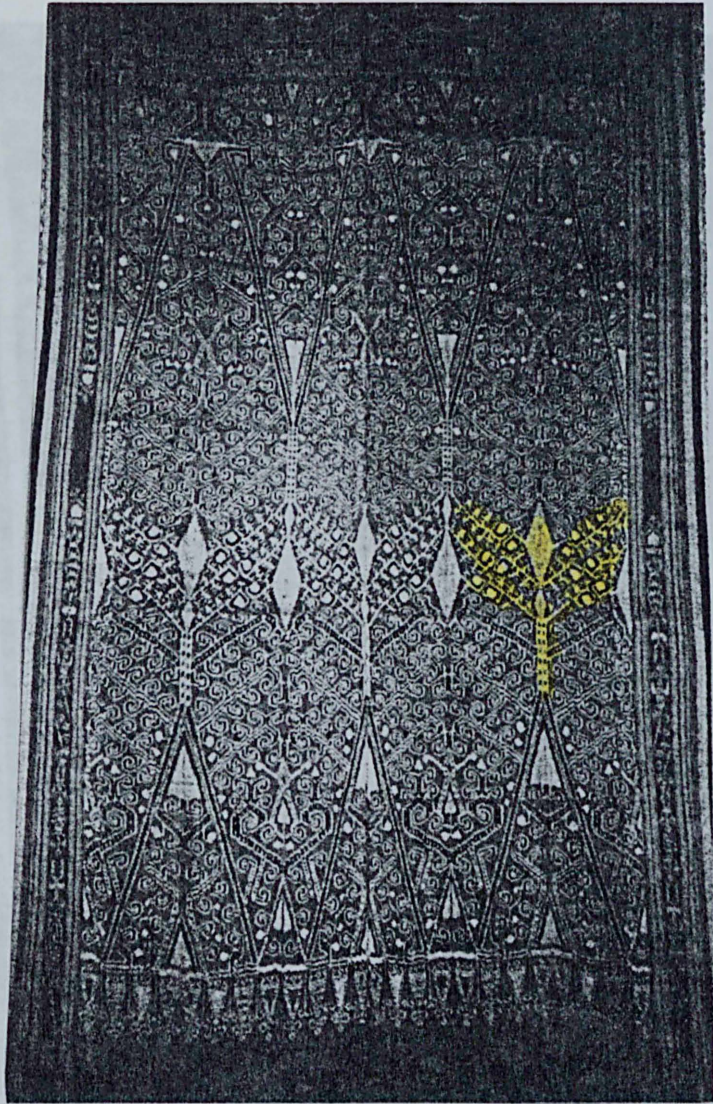


Fig.54



Fig.55

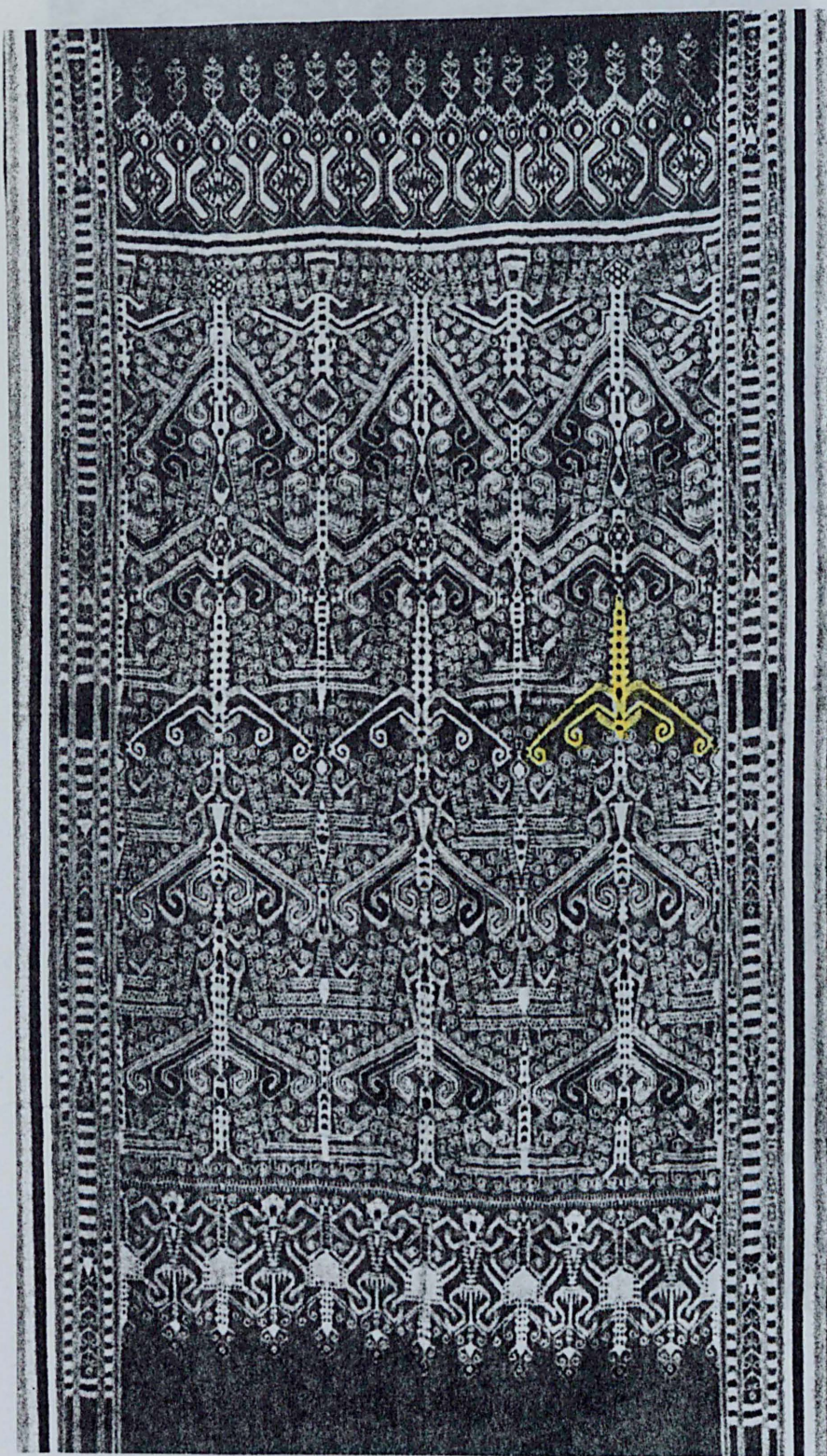


Fig.56



Fig.57



Fig.58

Fig.59



Fig.59



Fig.60

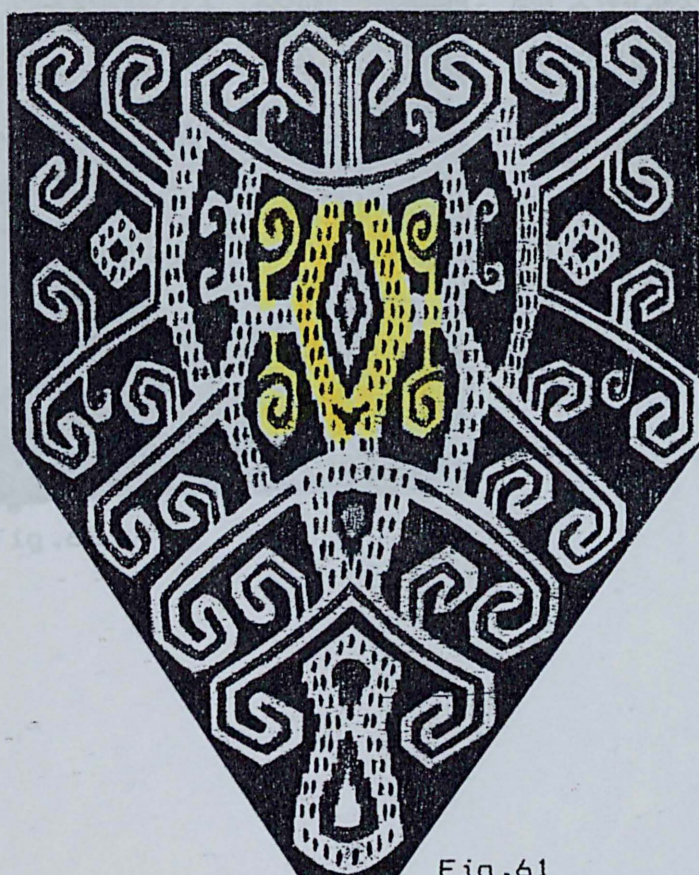
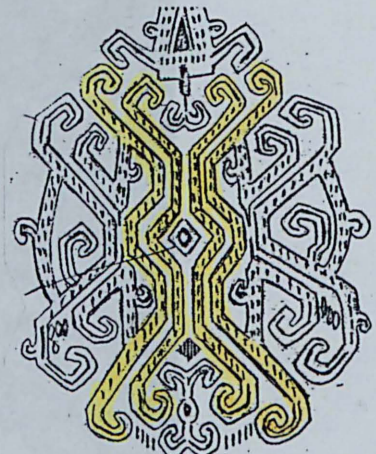


Fig.61



Fig.62



PENDALIT

Fig.63



Fig.64

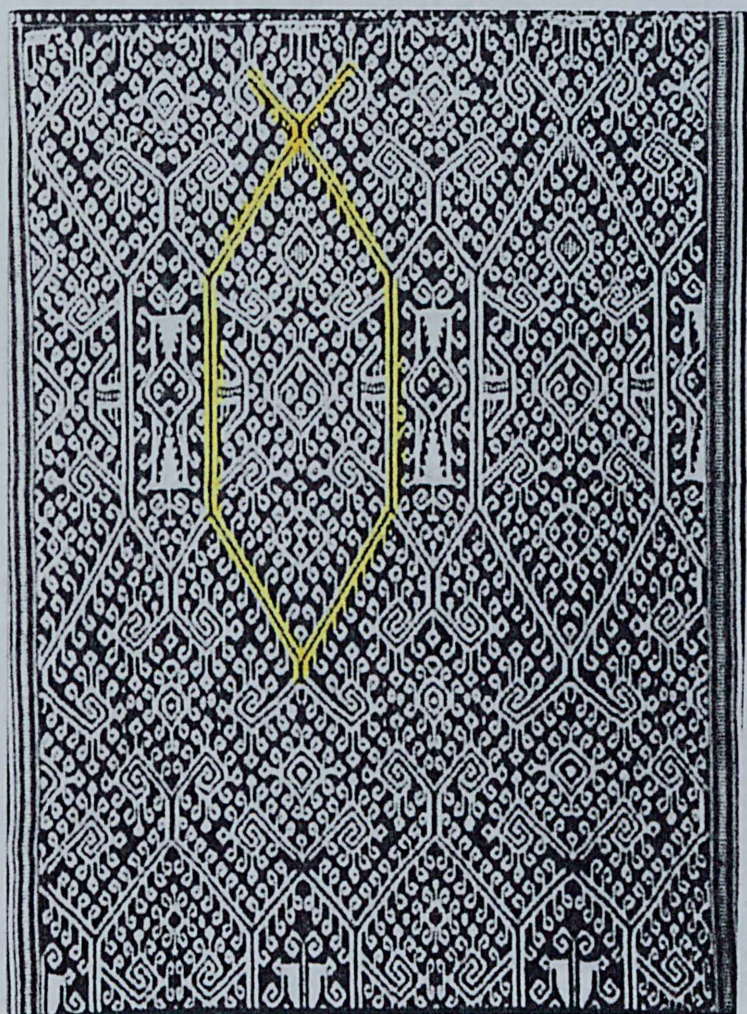


Fig.65



Fig.66



Fig.67



Fig.68

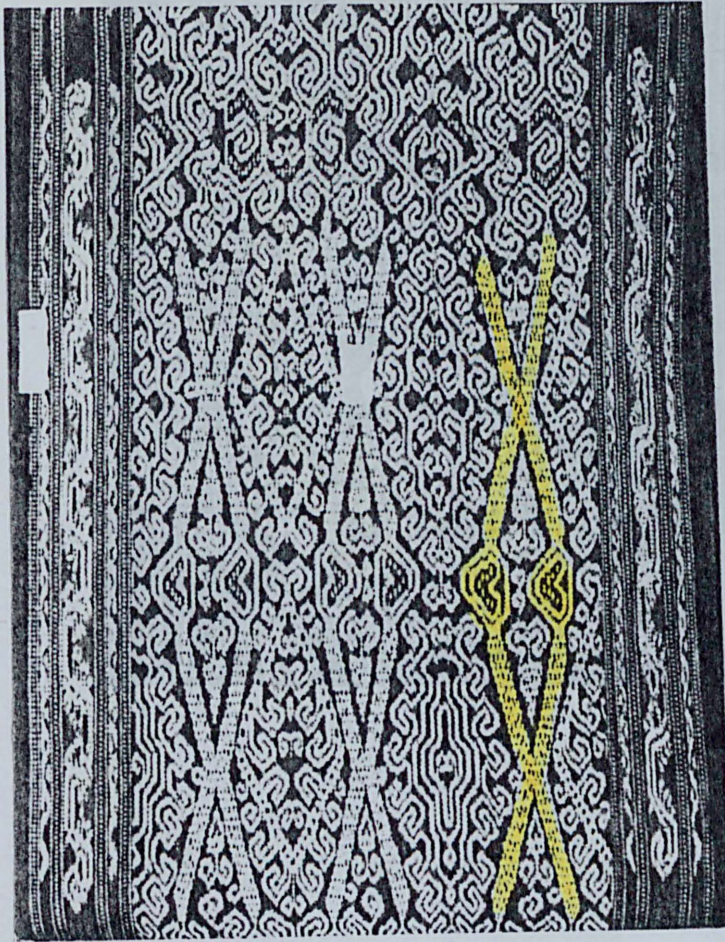


Fig.69



Fig.70



Fig.71

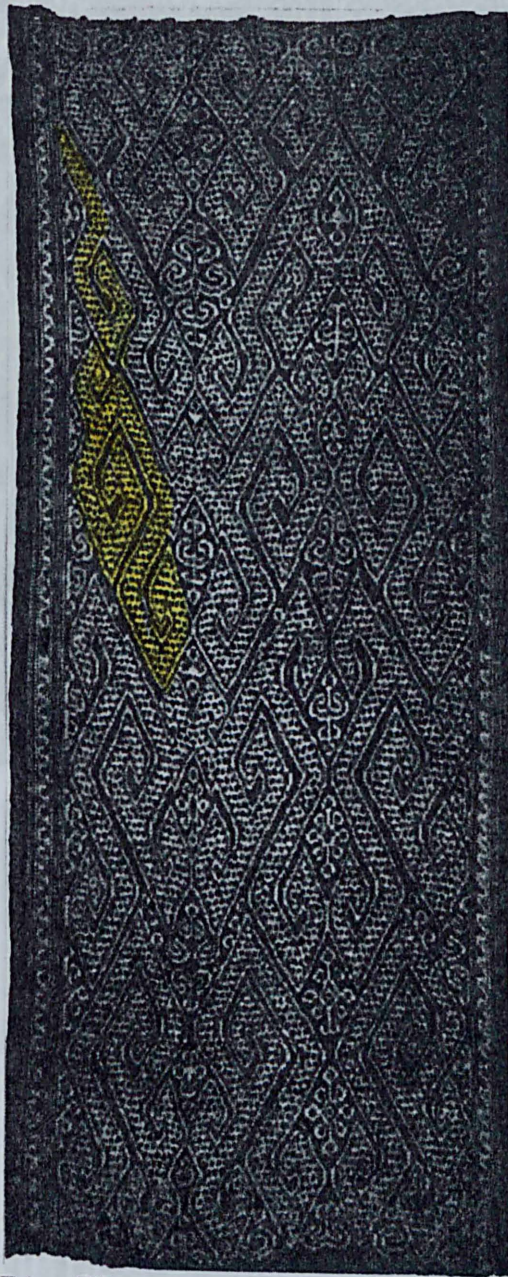


Fig.72

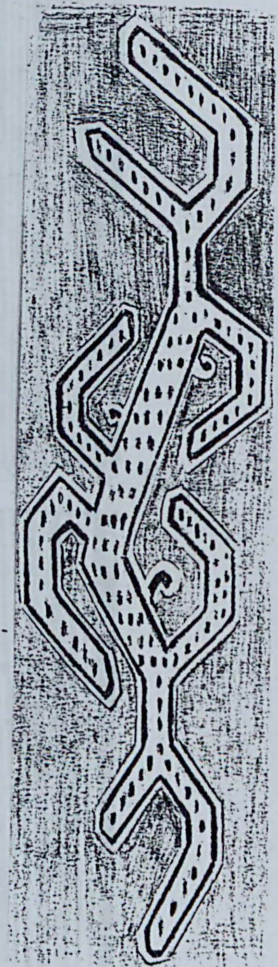


Fig.73



Fig.74



Fig.75

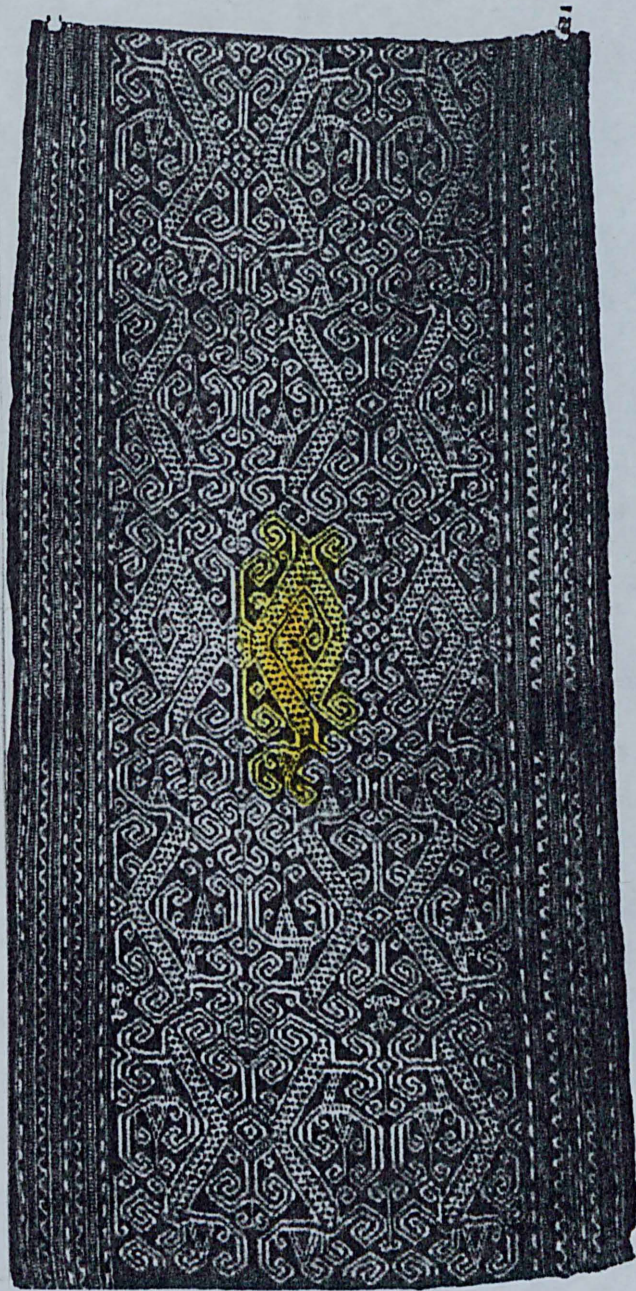


Fig.76

Fig.77

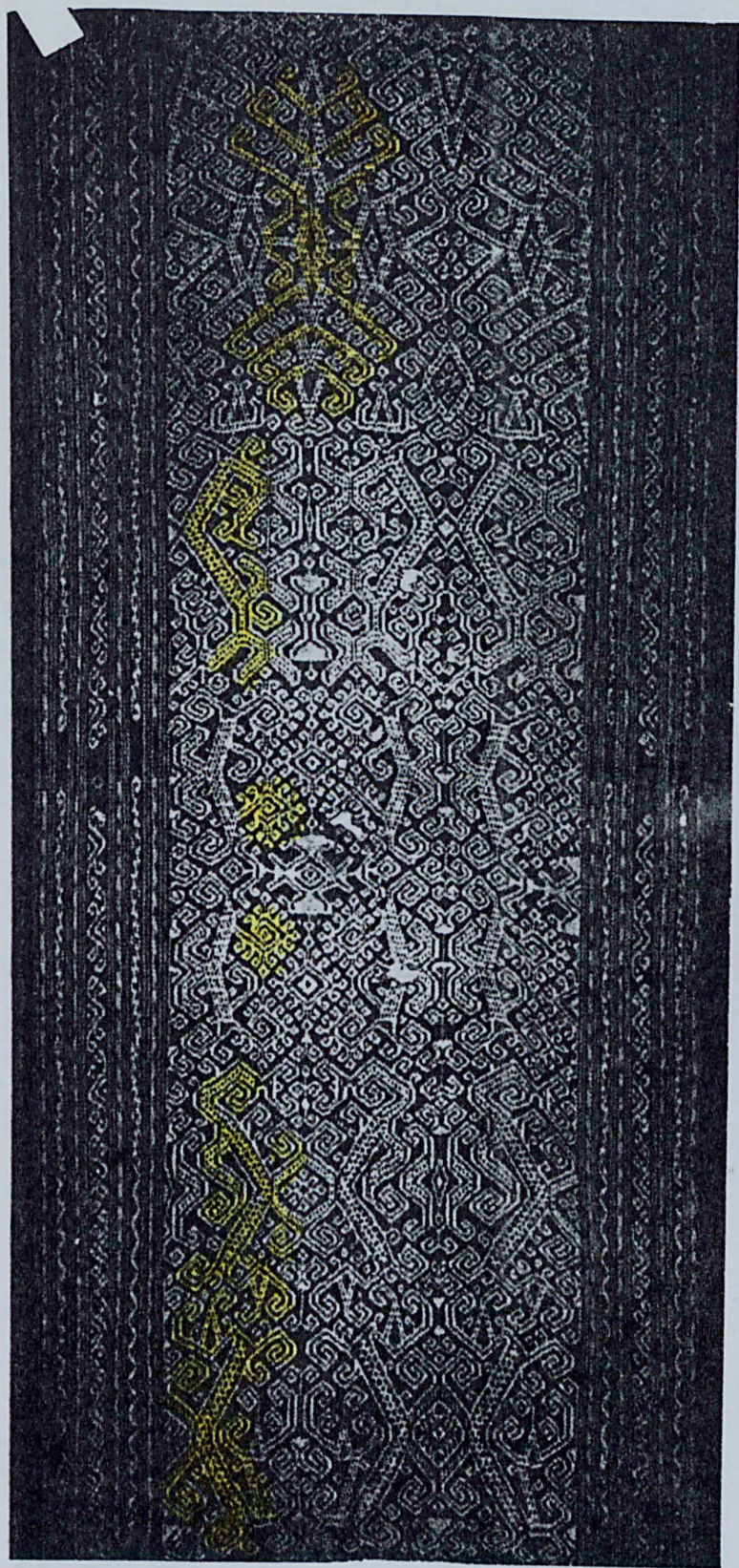


Fig.77

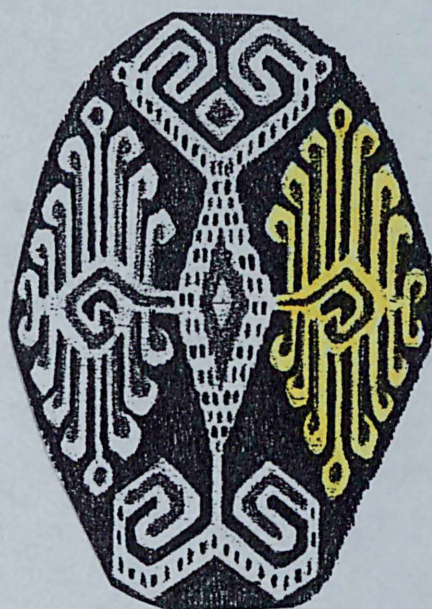


Fig.78

Fig. 79

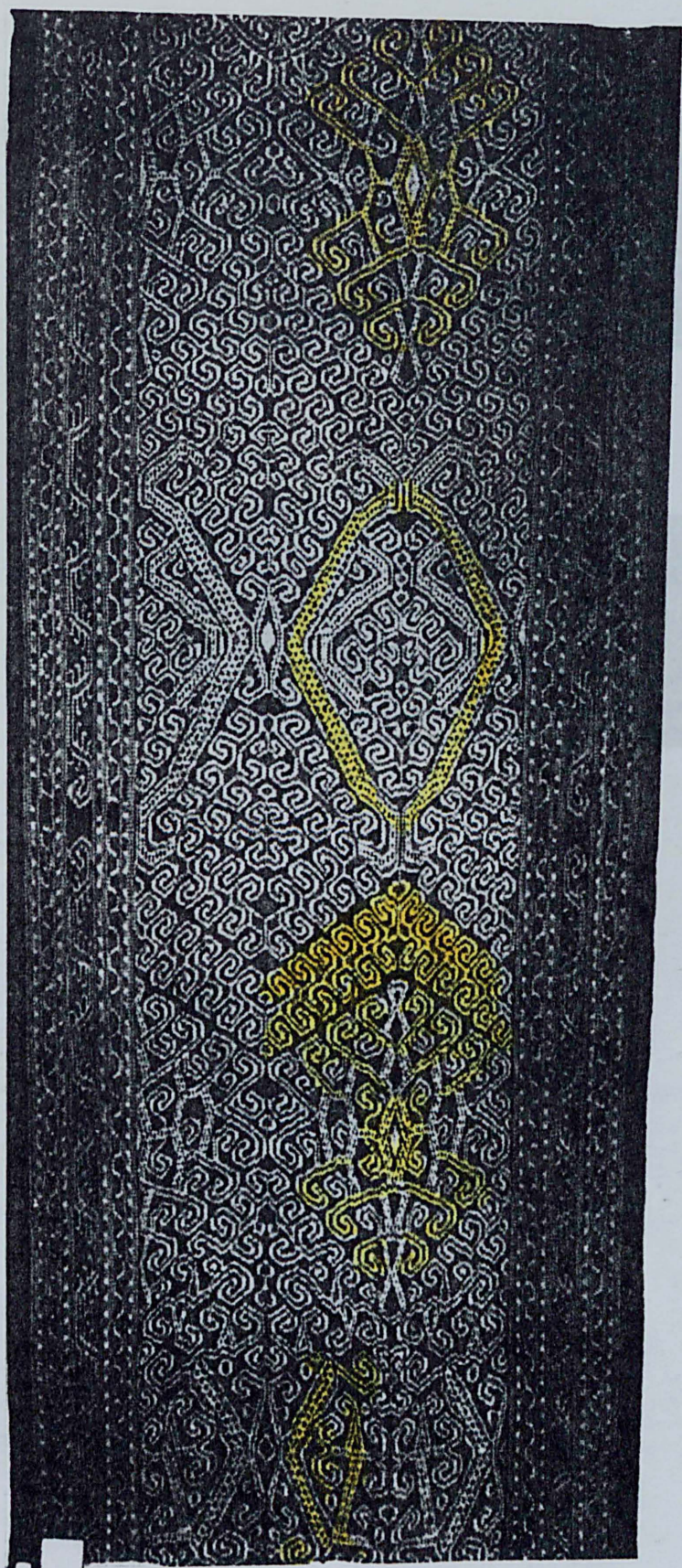


Fig.79



Fig.80



Fig.81



Fig.82



Fig.83



Fig.84



Fig. 85



Fig. 86



Fig. 87



Fig. 88



Fig. 89



Fig. 90

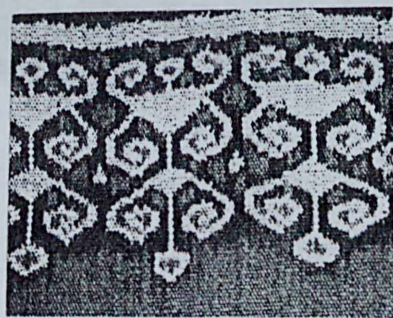


Fig. 91



Fig. 92



Fig.93

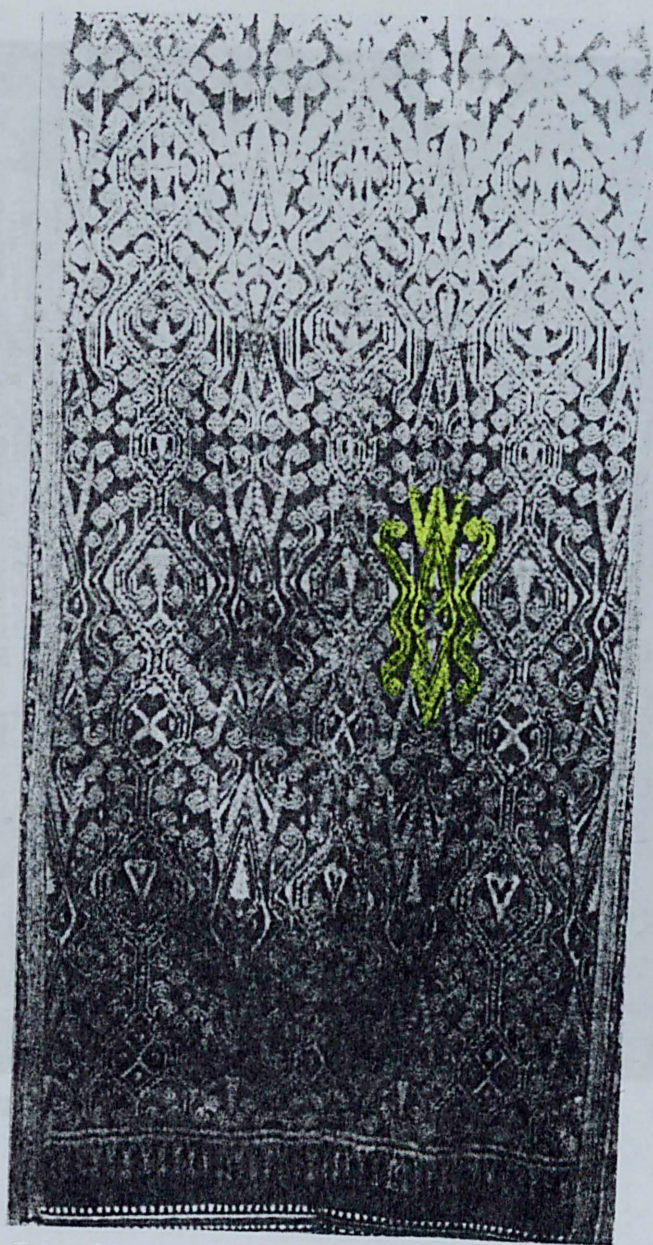


Fig.94

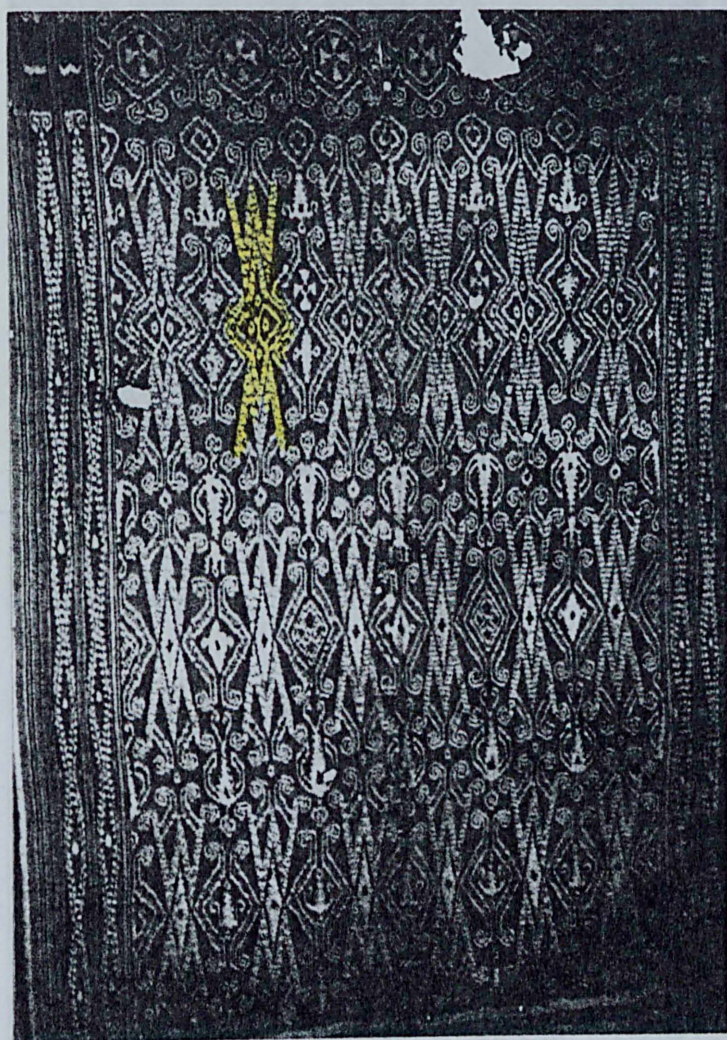


Fig.95



Fig.96

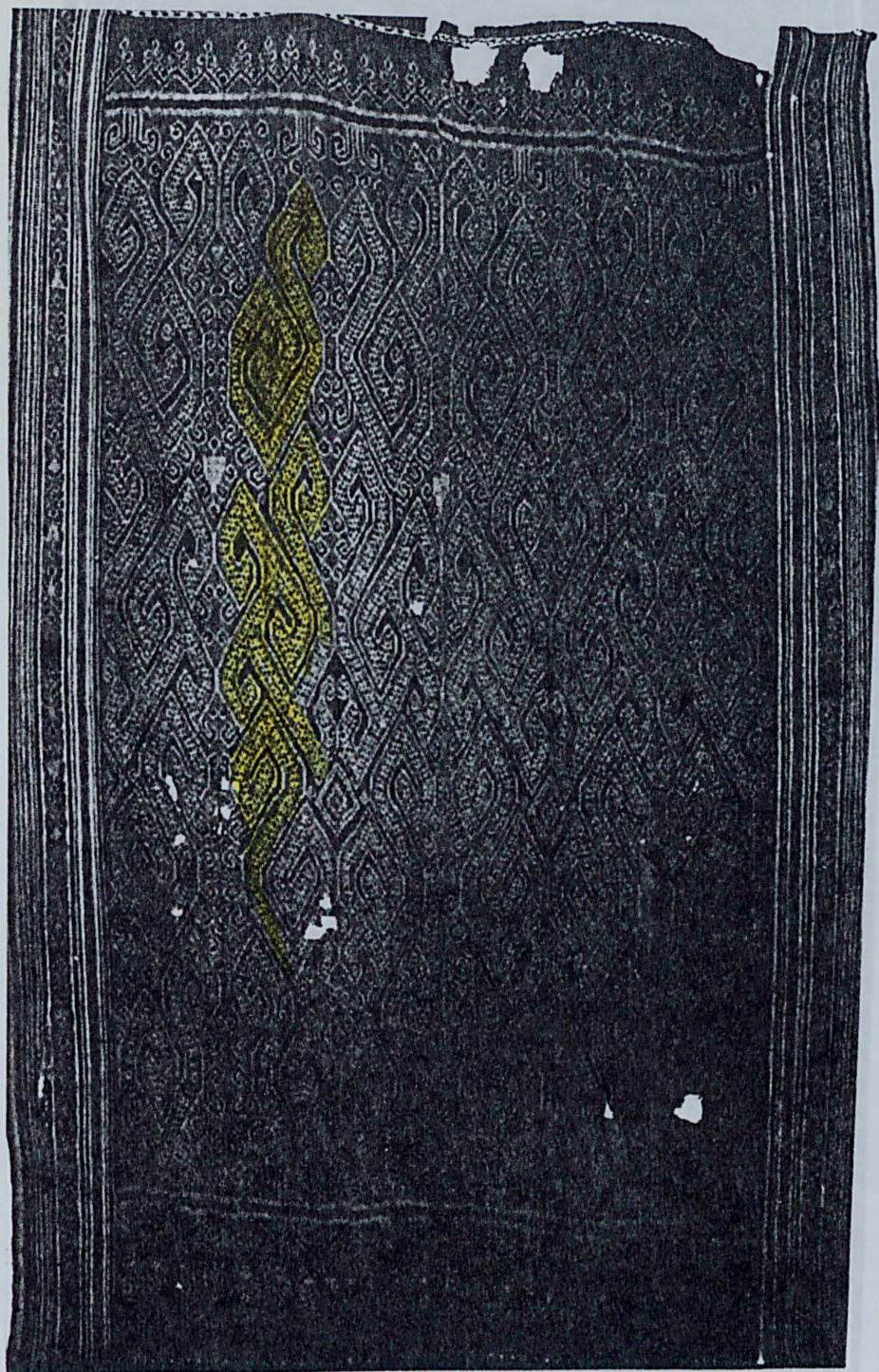


Fig.97

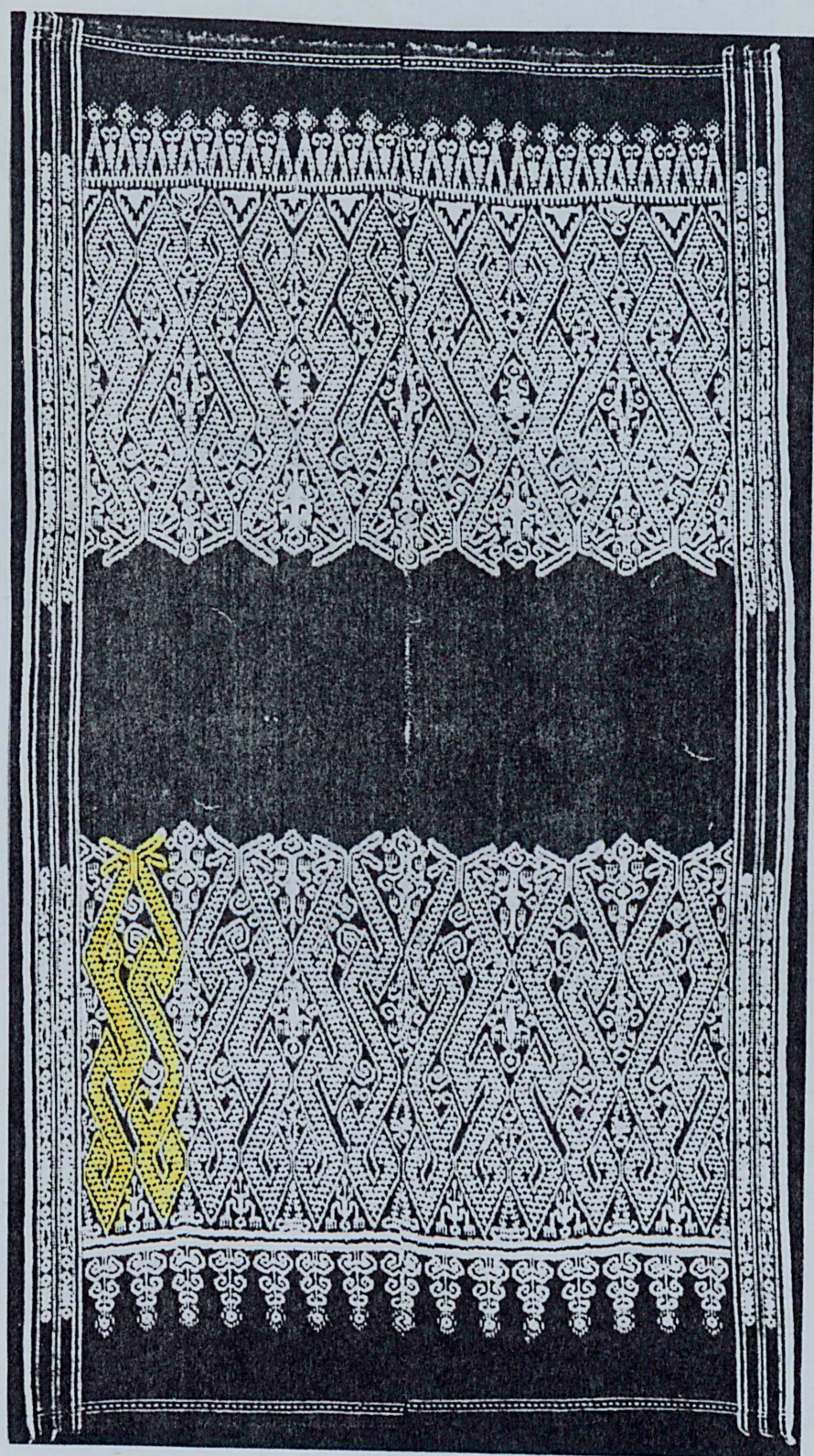


Fig.98

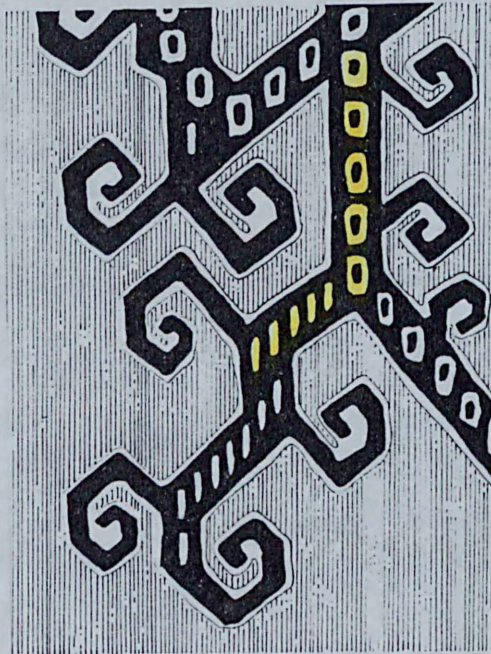


Fig.99

Fig.100

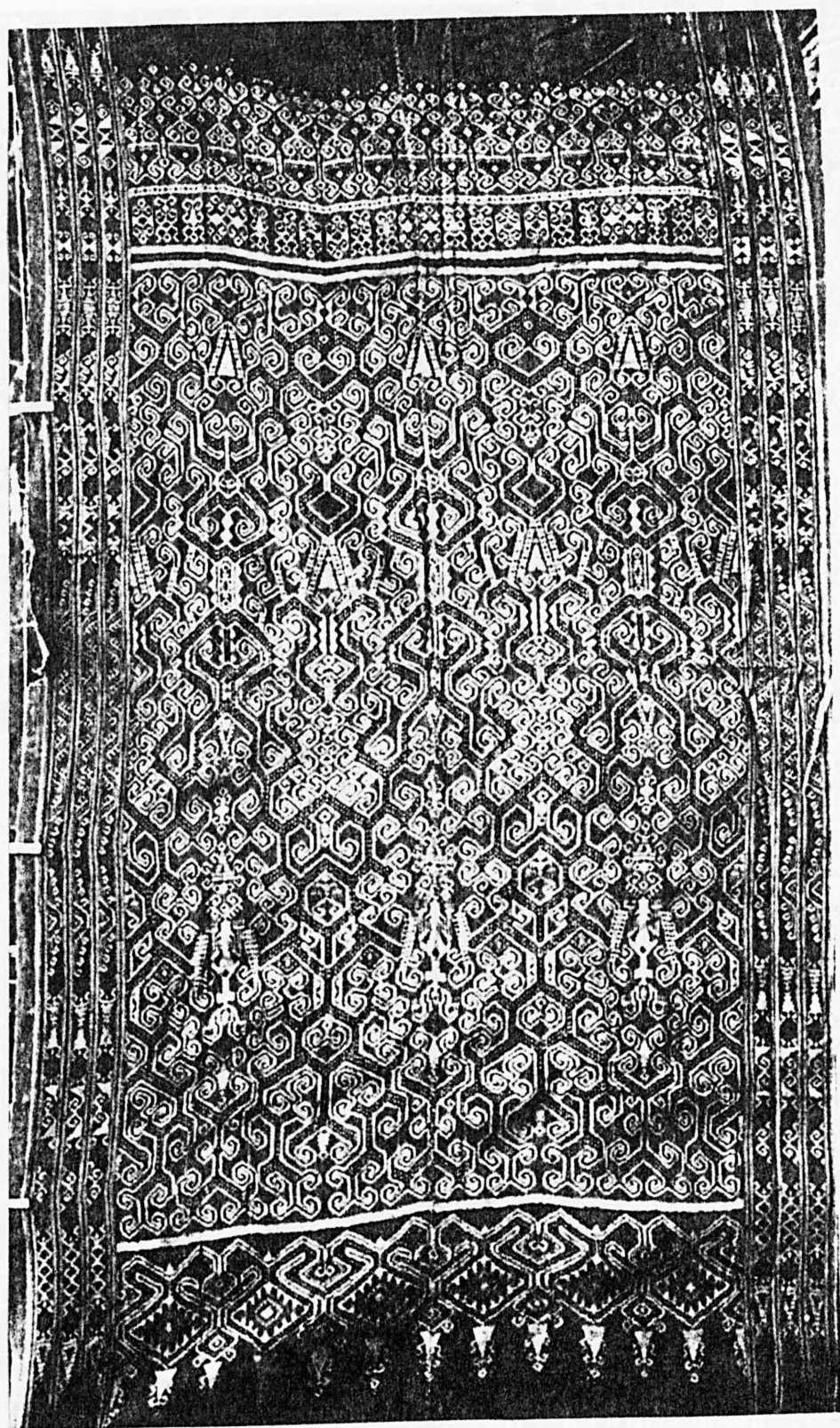


Fig.100

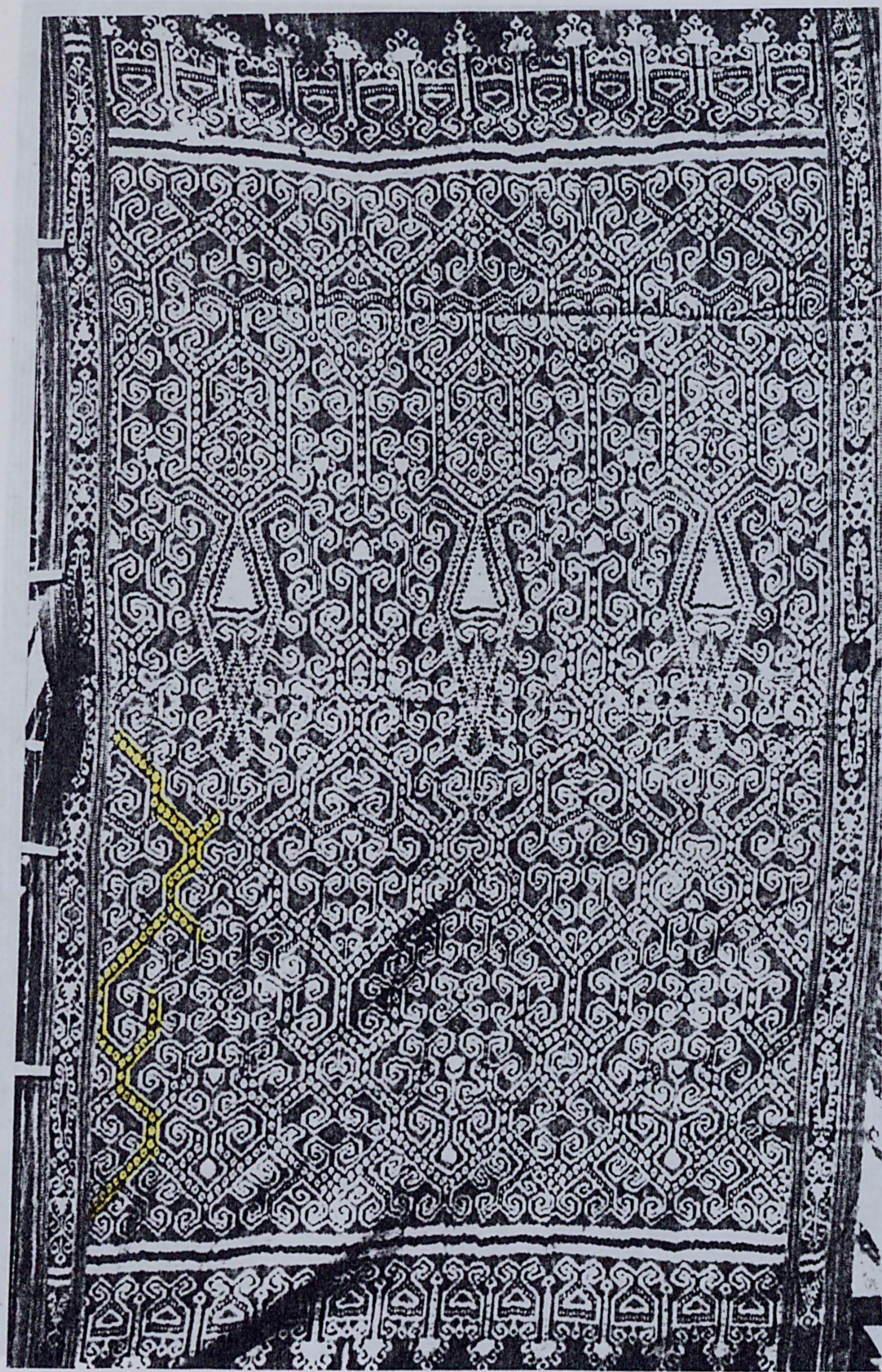


Fig.101

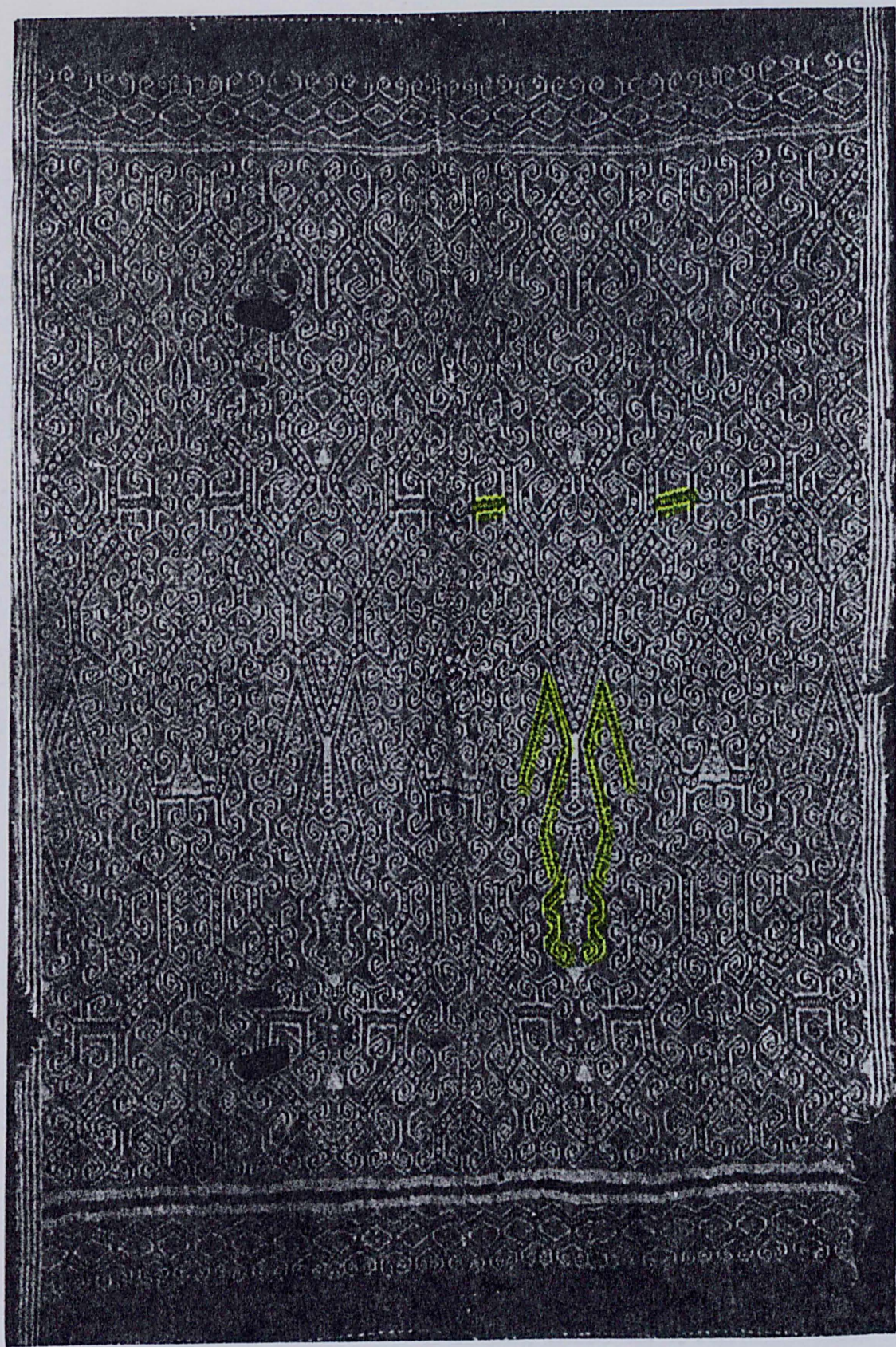


Fig.102



Fig.103

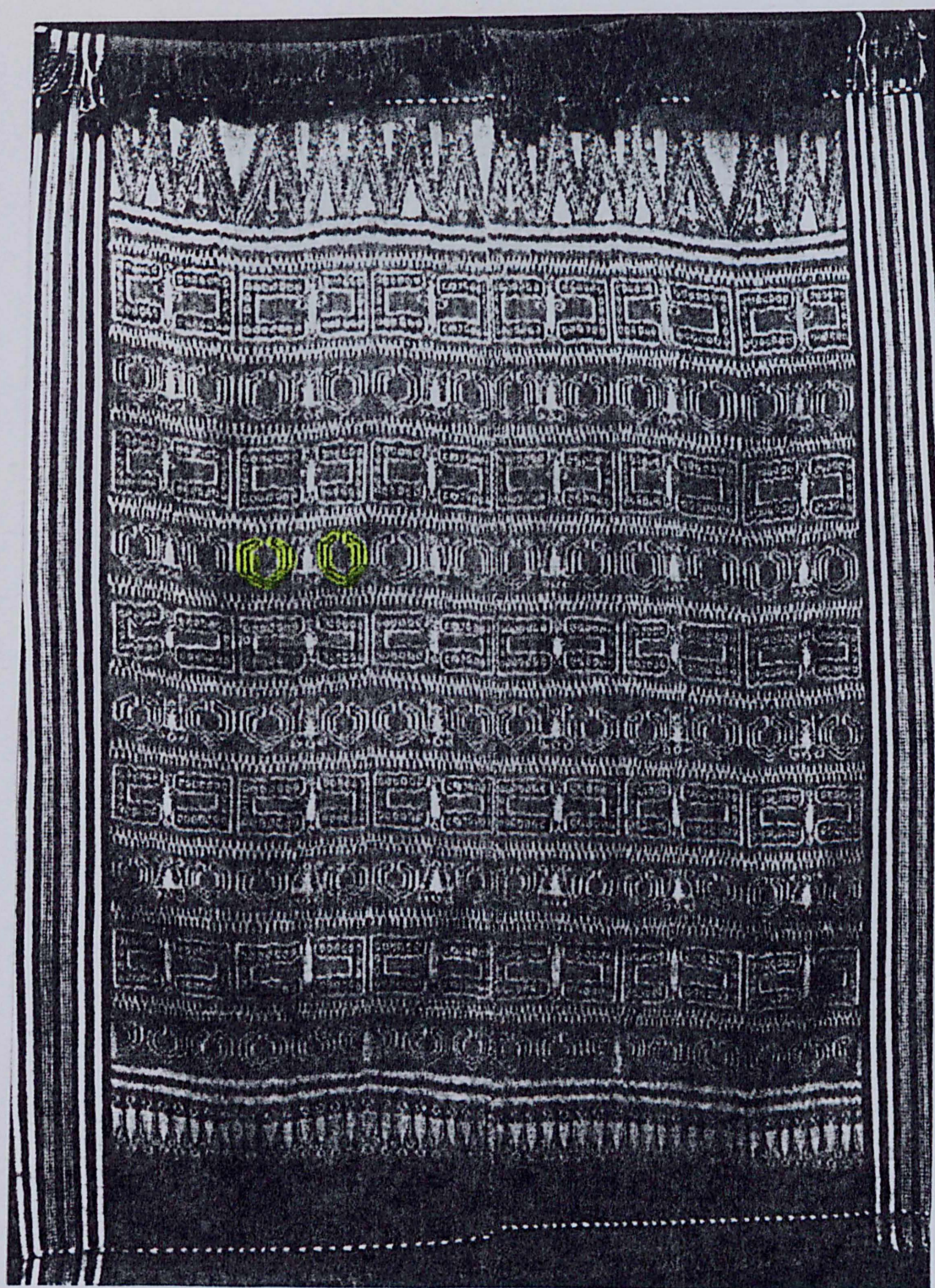


Fig.104

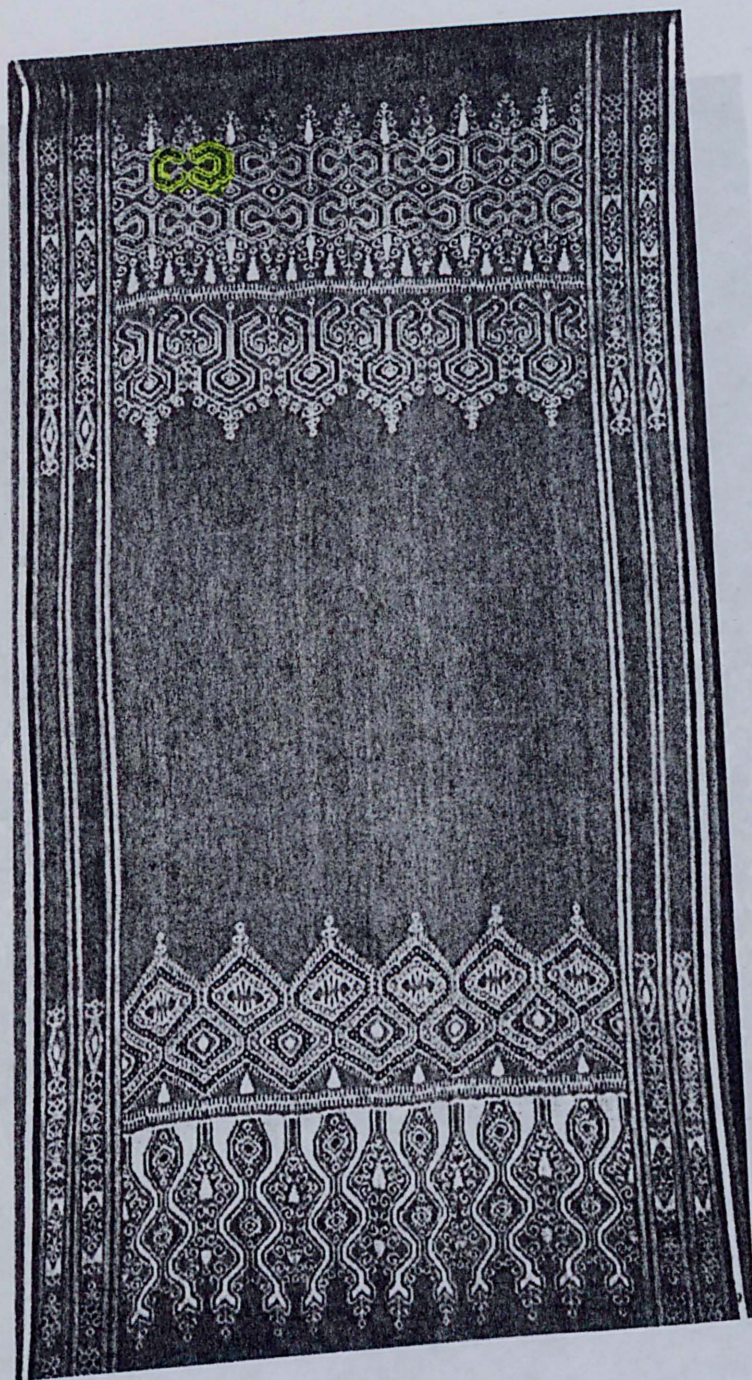


Fig.105

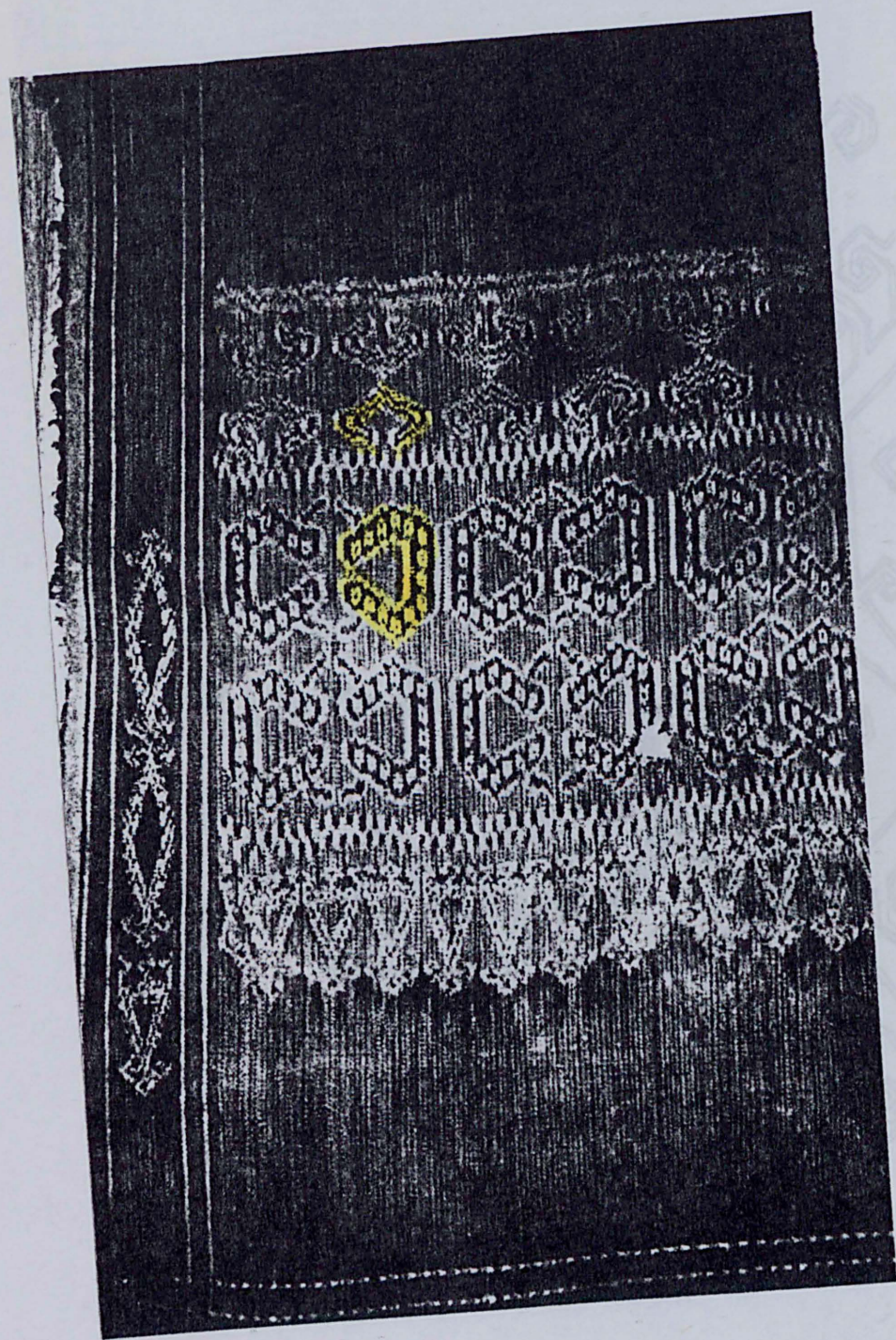


Fig.106

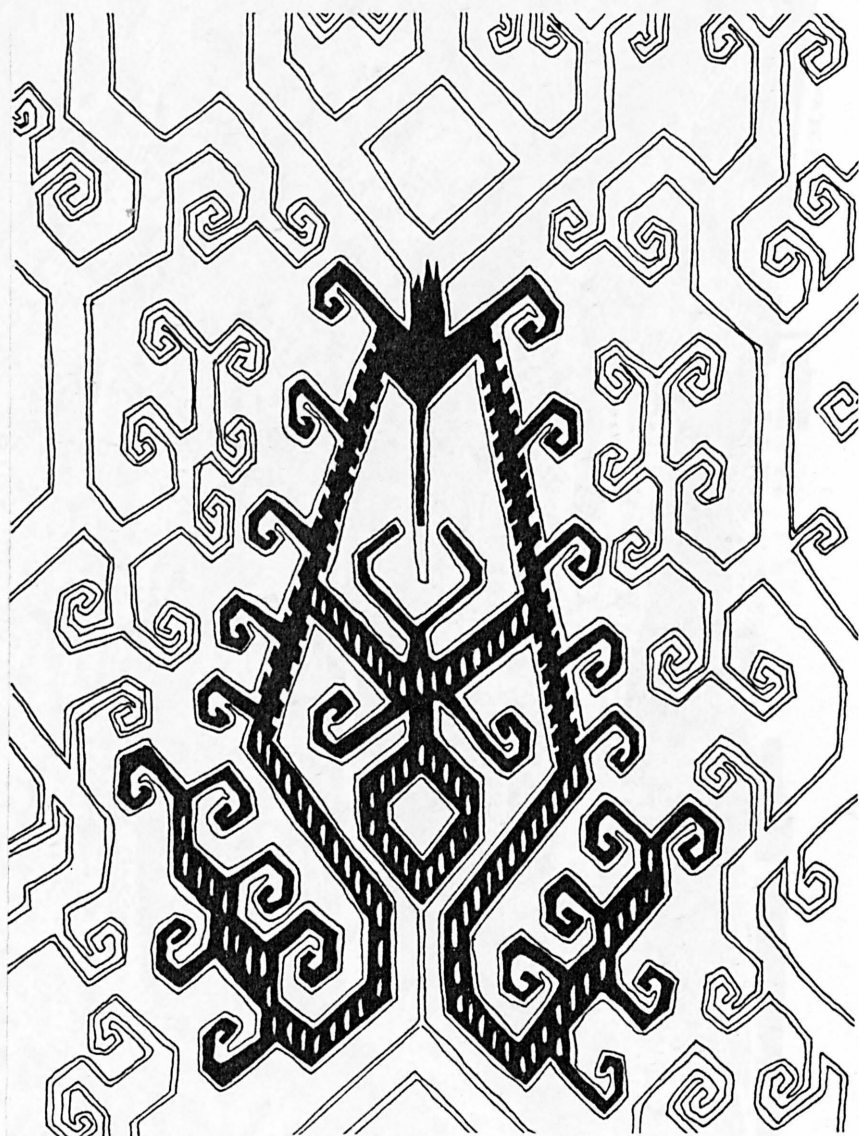


Fig.107

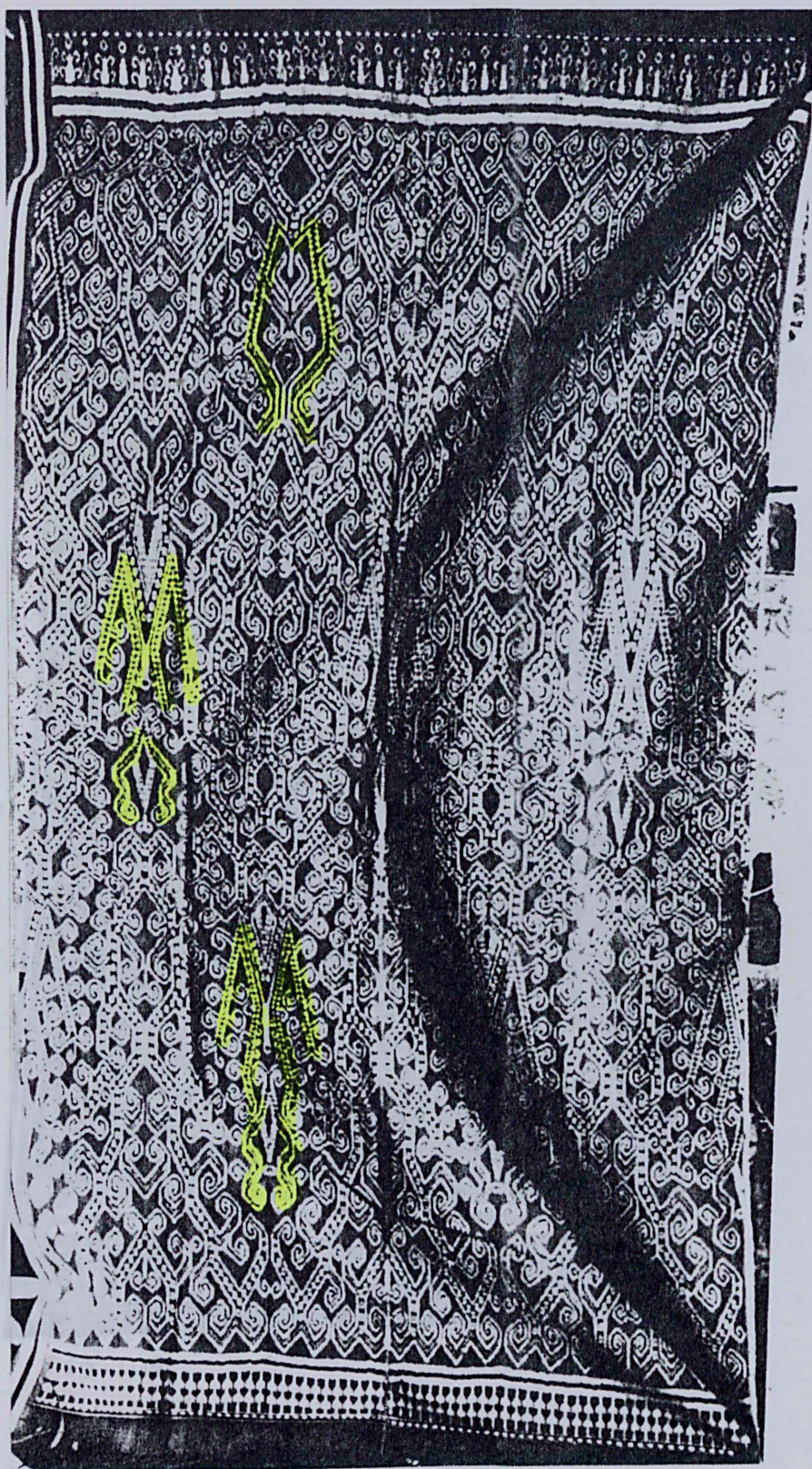


Fig.108

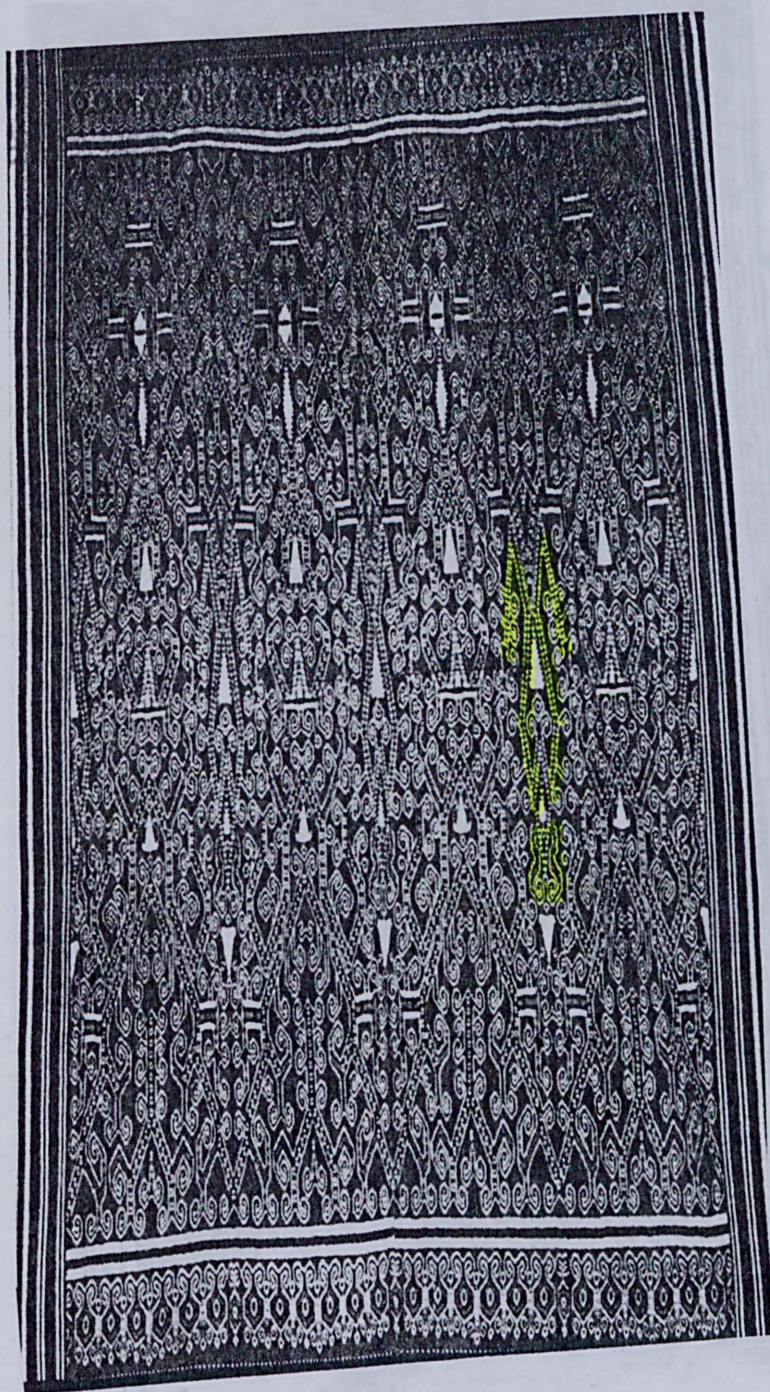


Fig.109

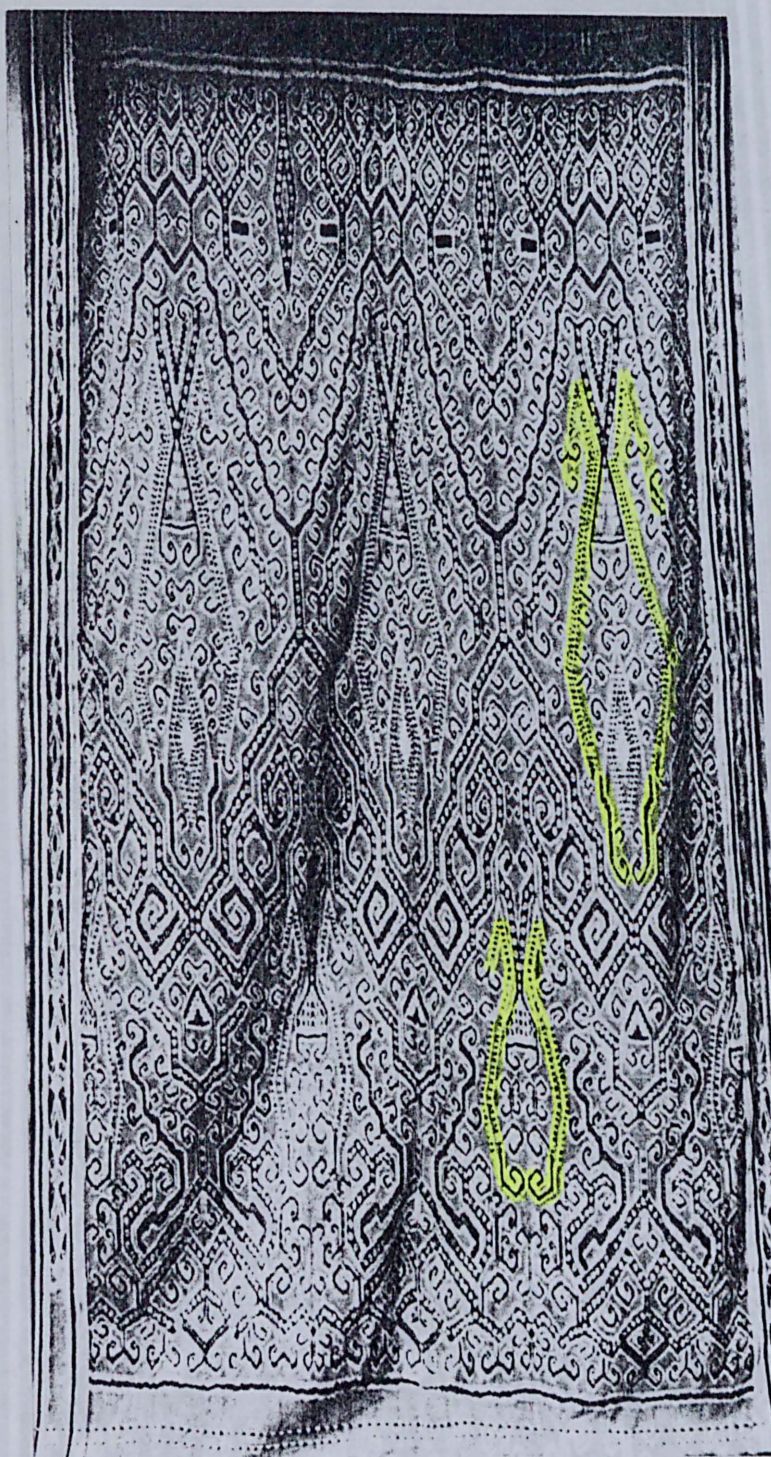


Fig.110



Fig.111



Fig.112

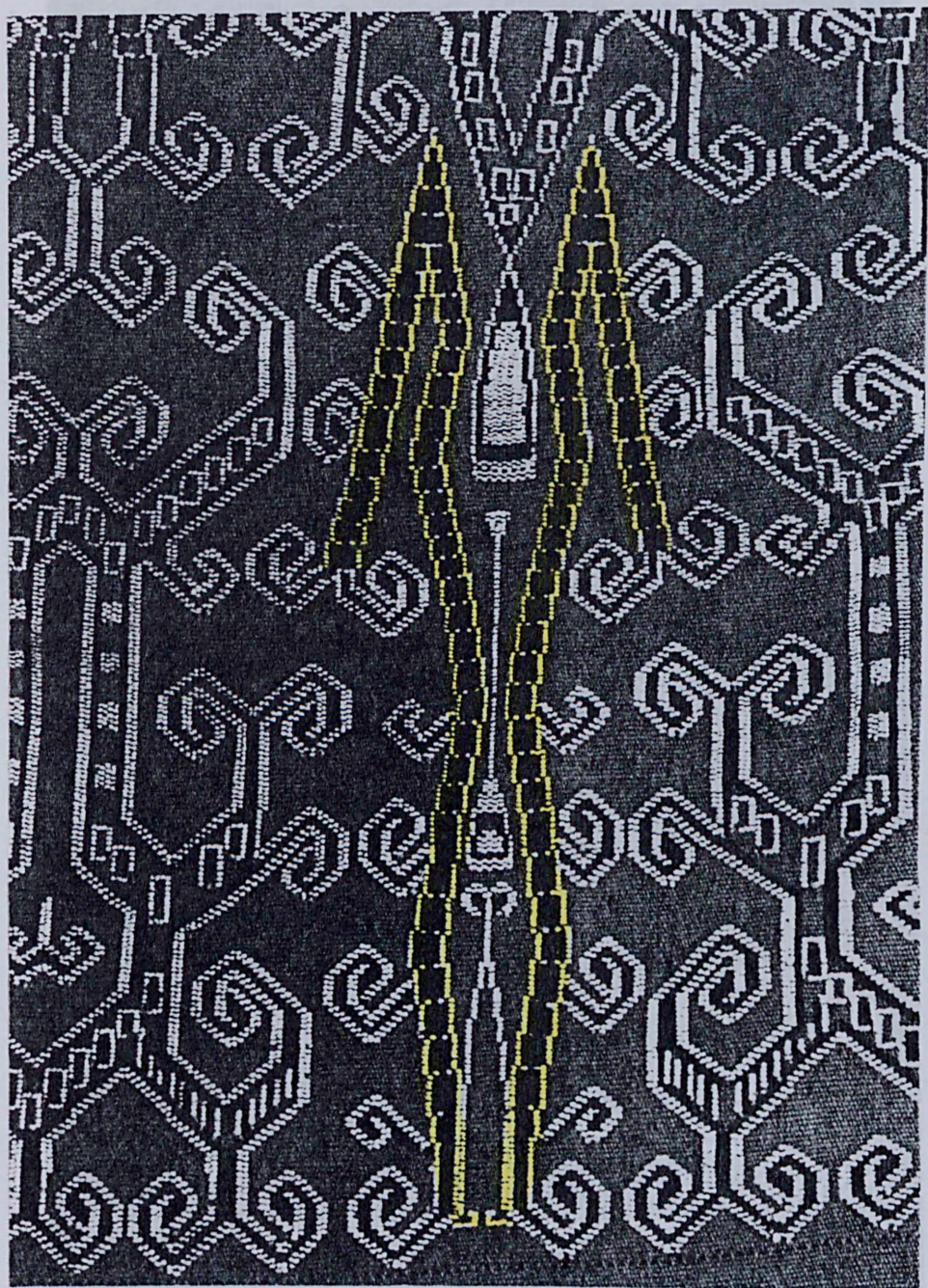


Fig.113

Fig.114



Fig.114

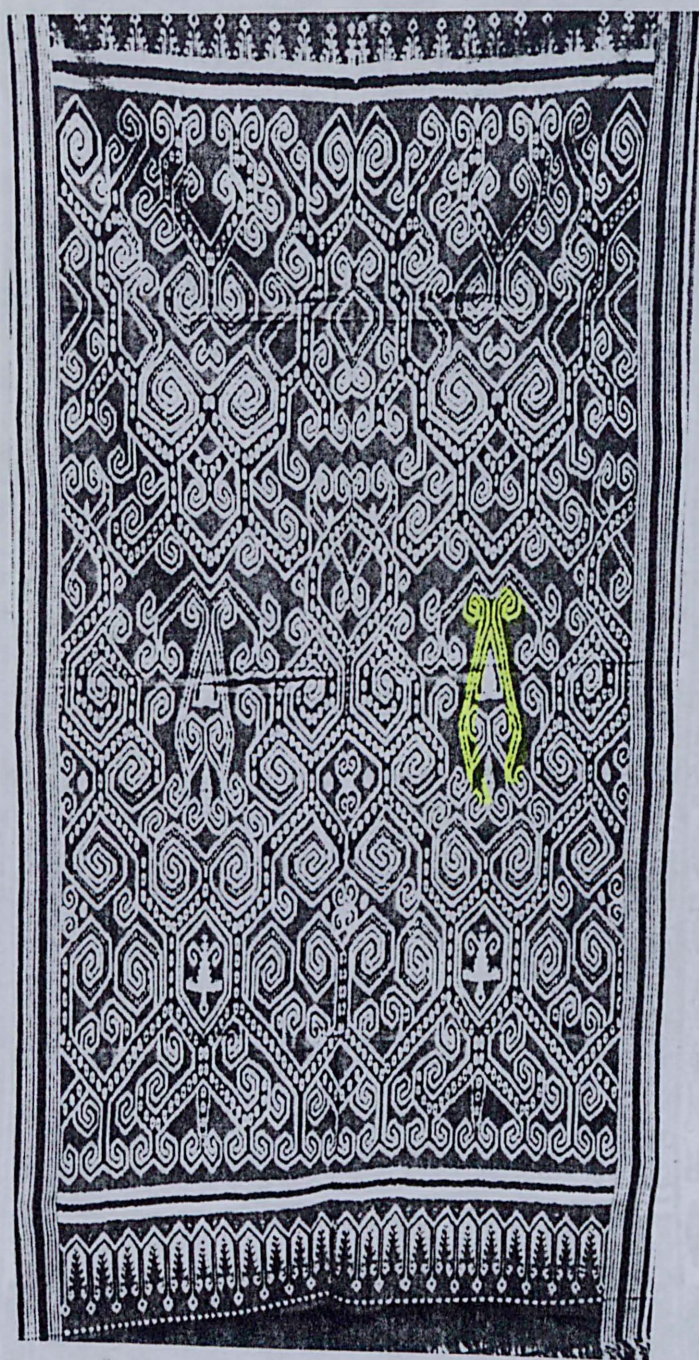


Fig.115



Fig.116

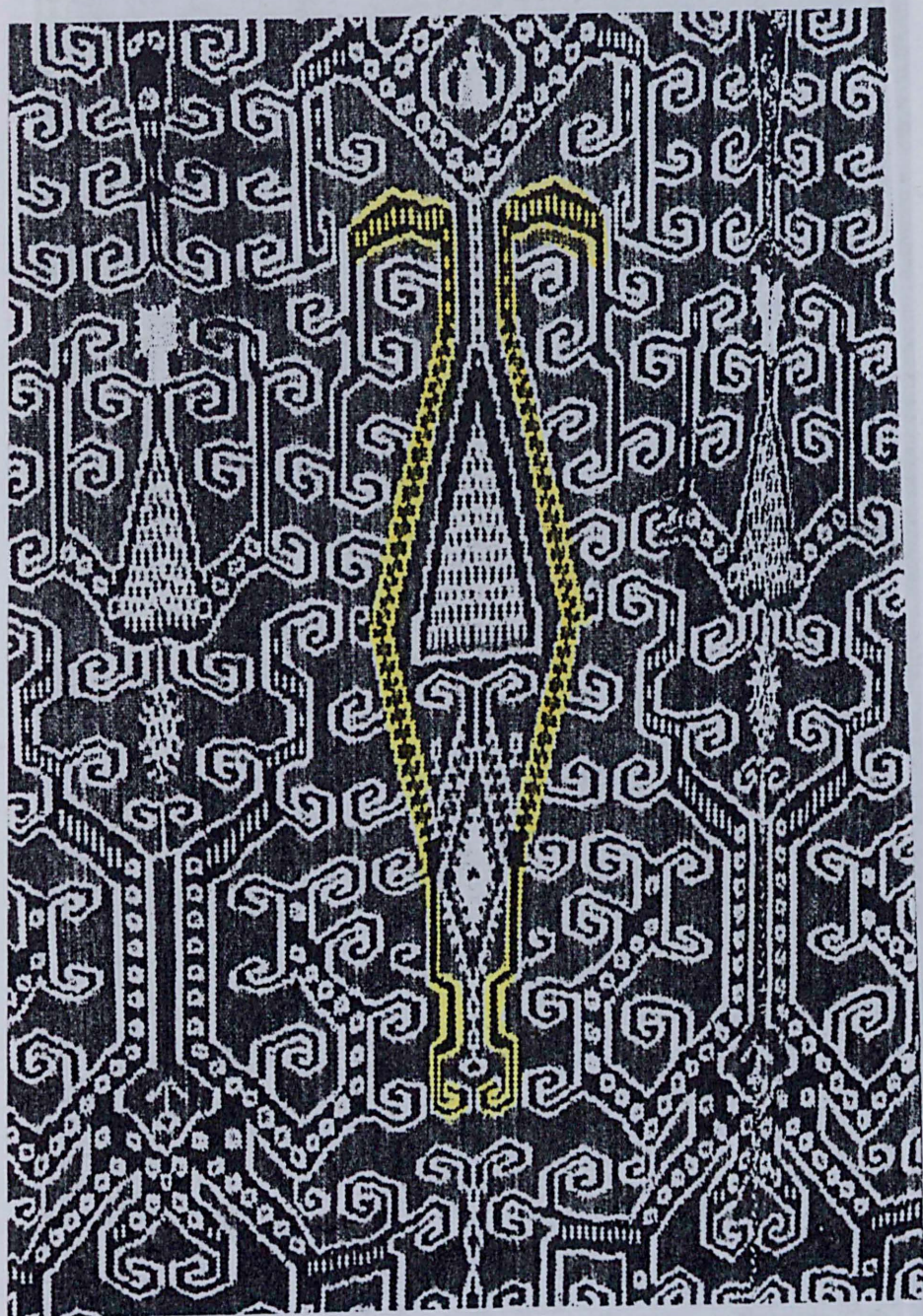


Fig.116 (detail)

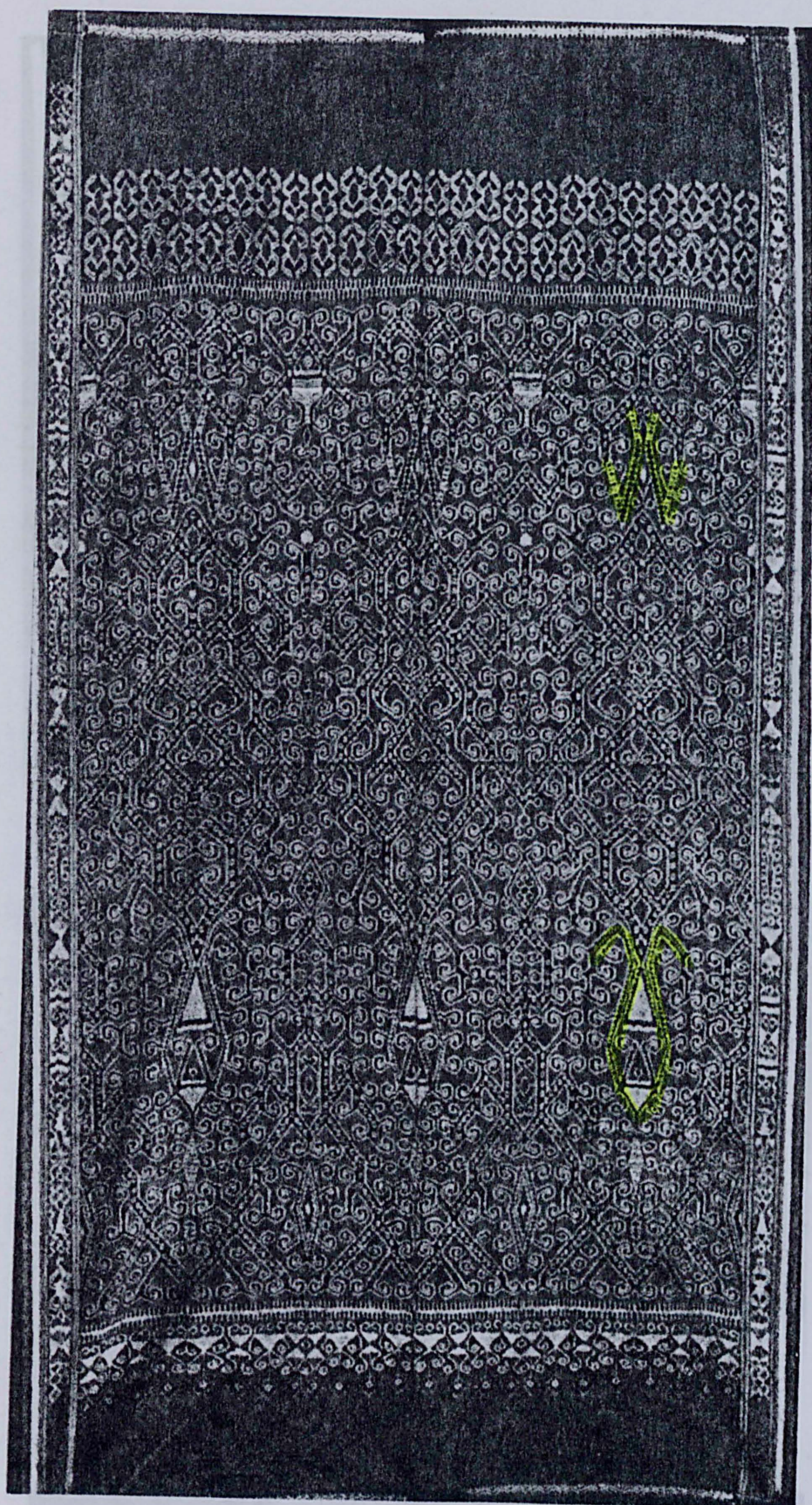


Fig.117

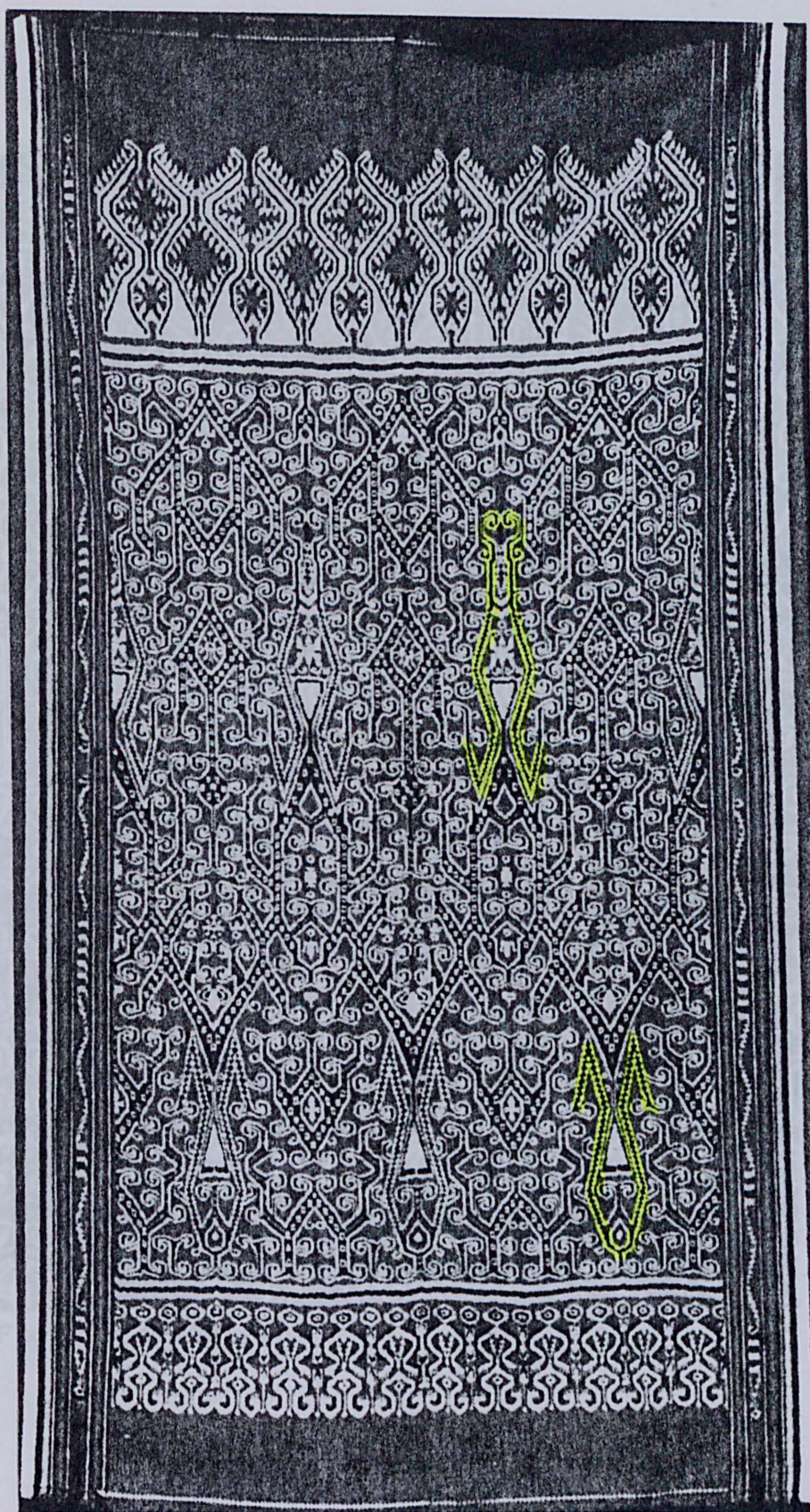


Fig.118

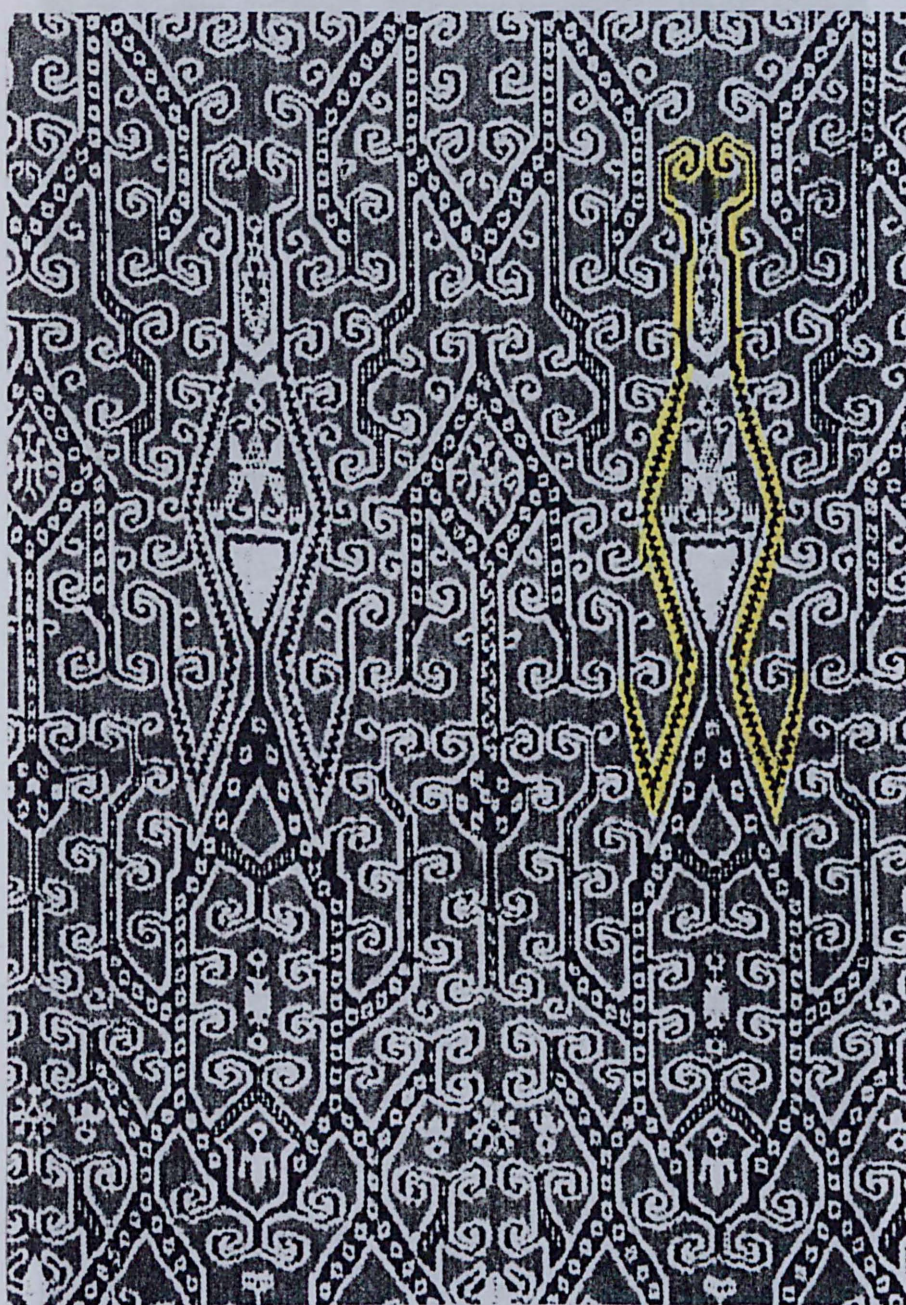


Fig.118 (detail)

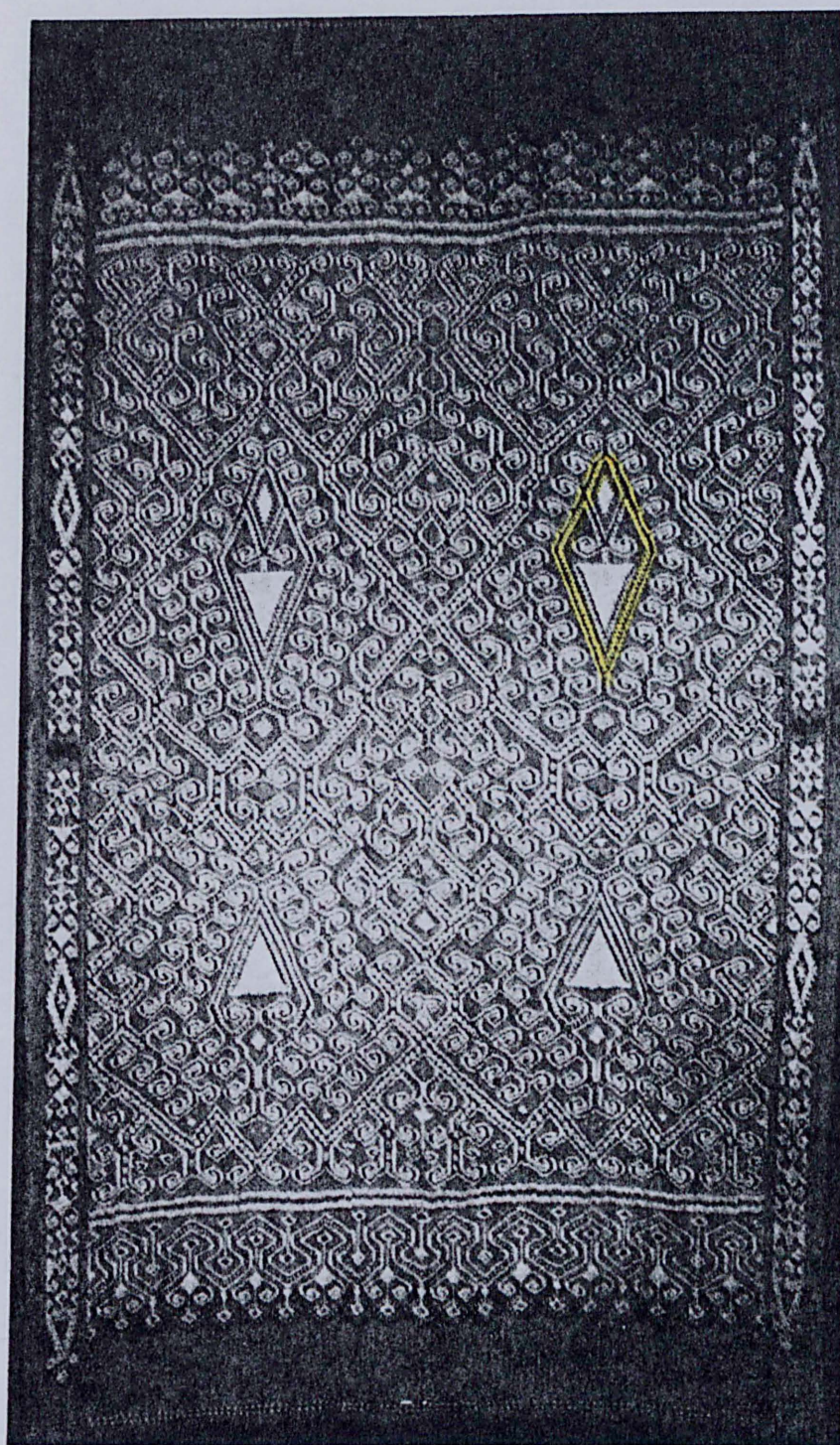


Fig.119

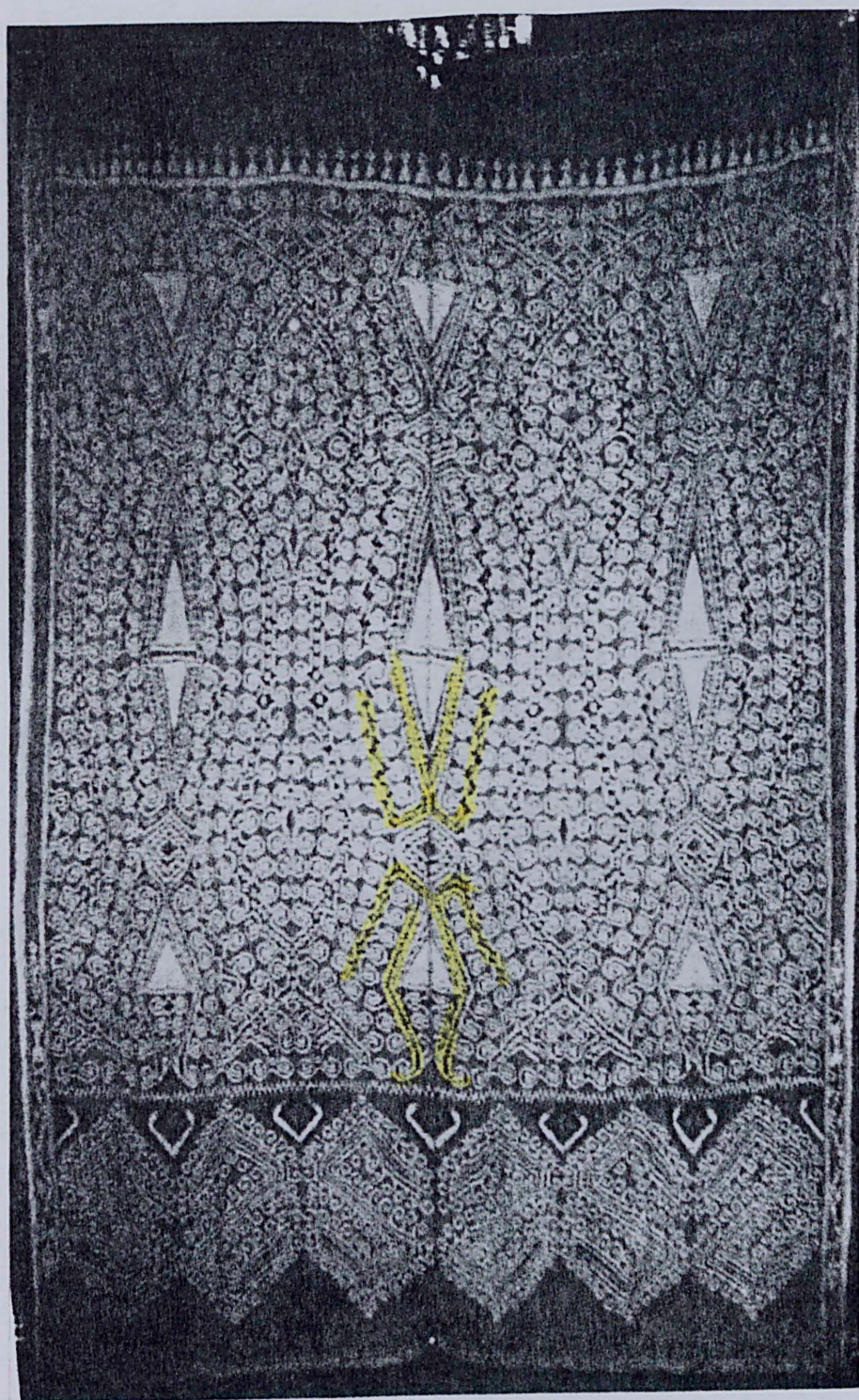


Fig.120

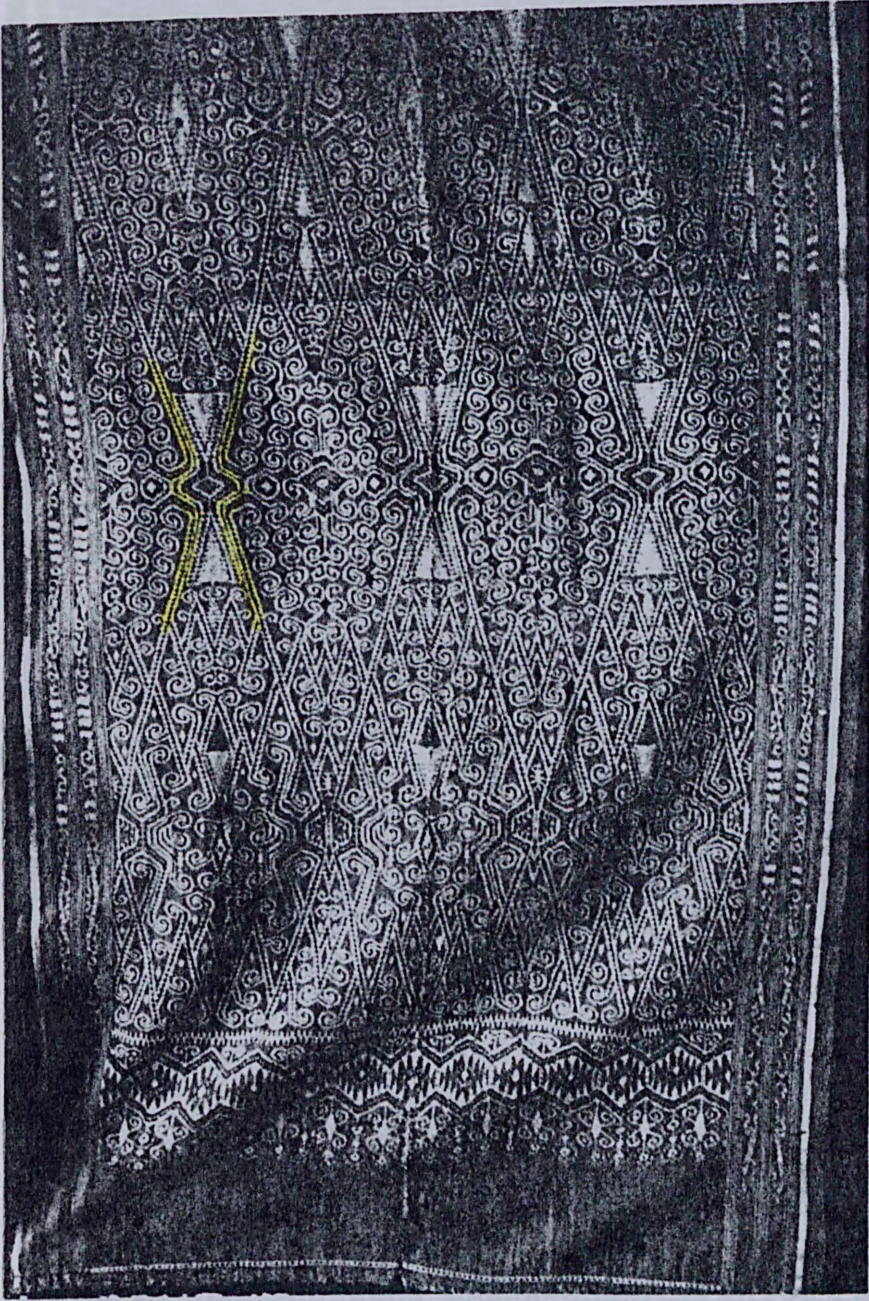


Fig.121

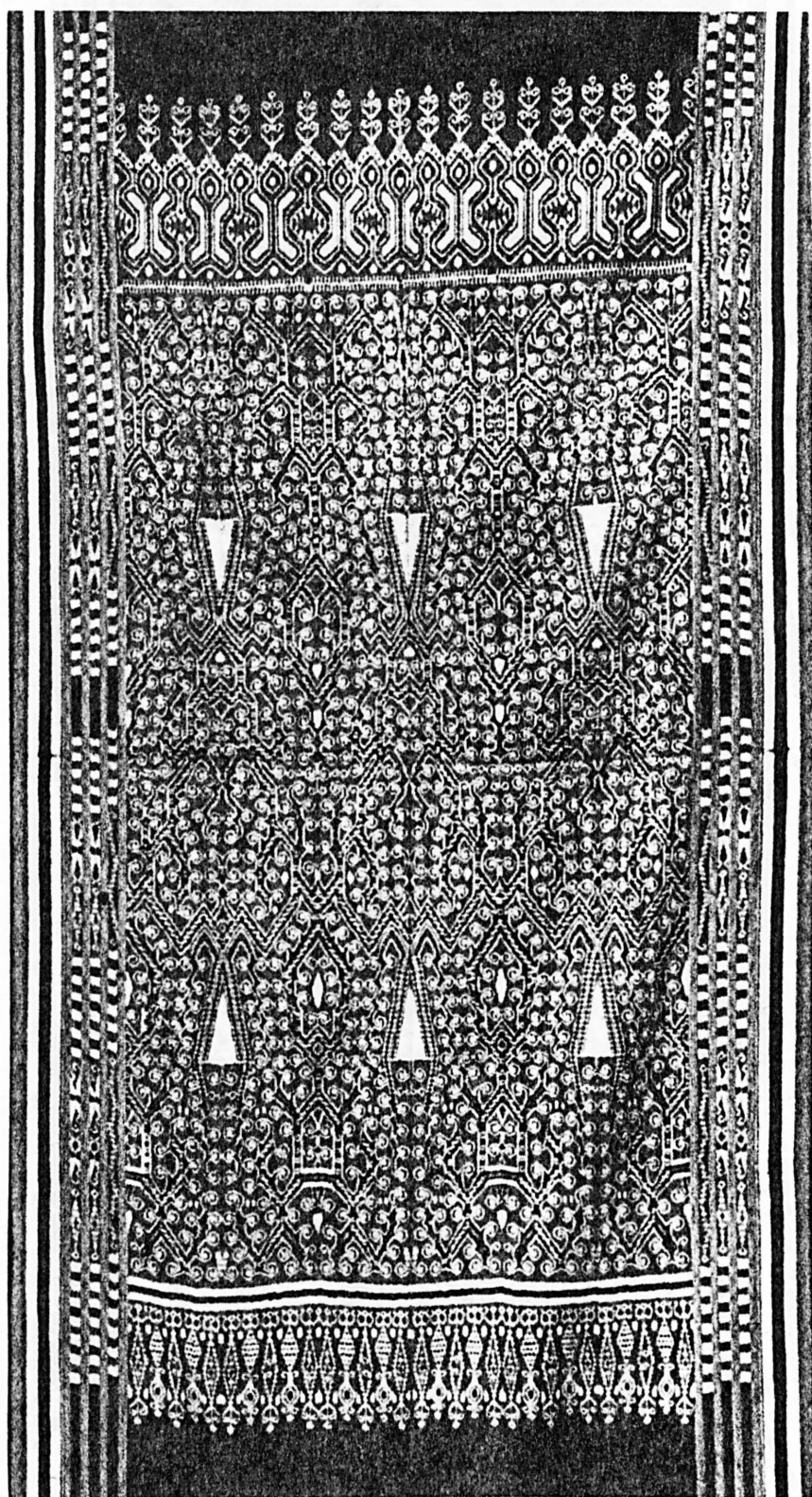


Fig.122

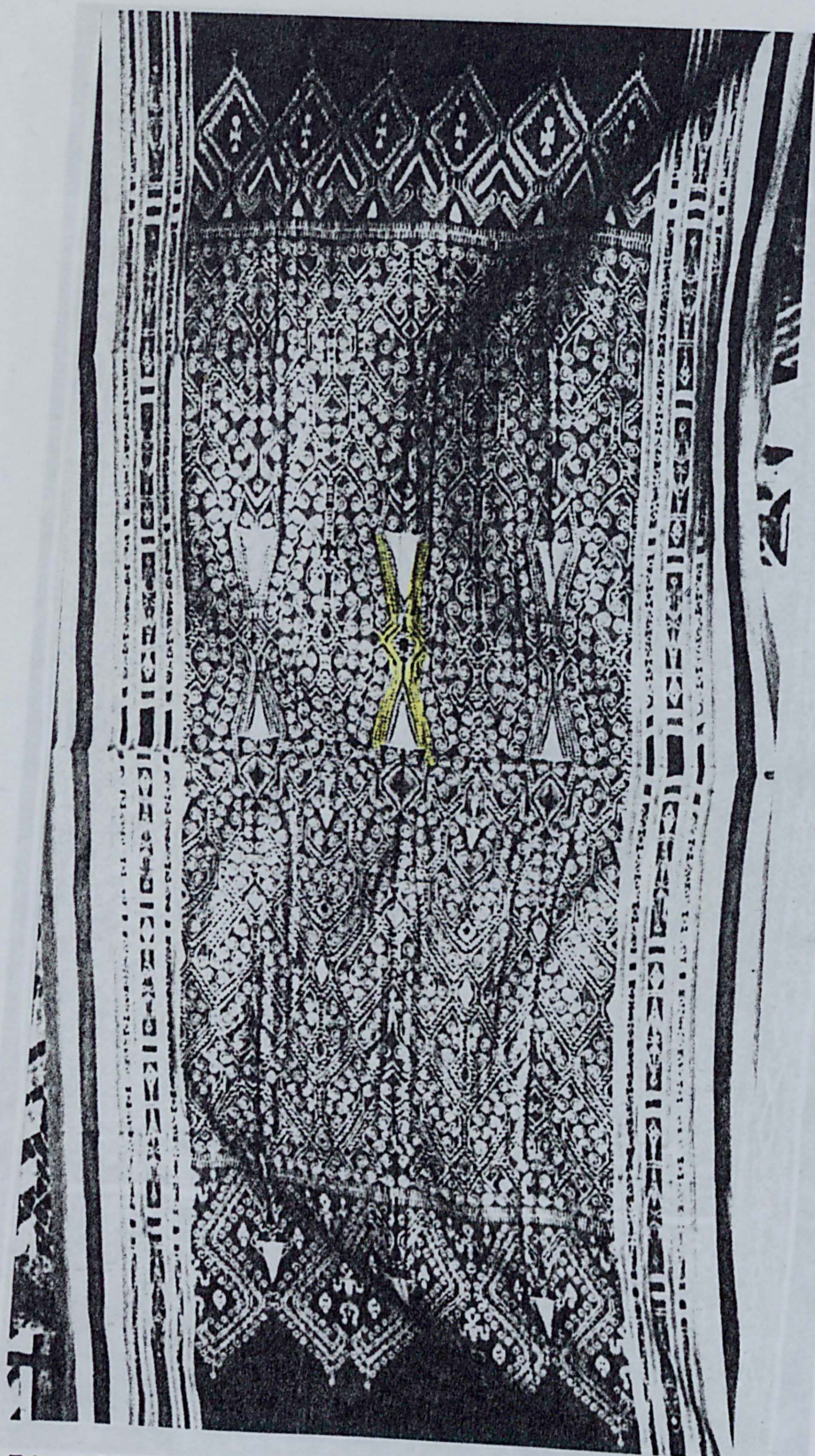


Fig.123



Fig.124

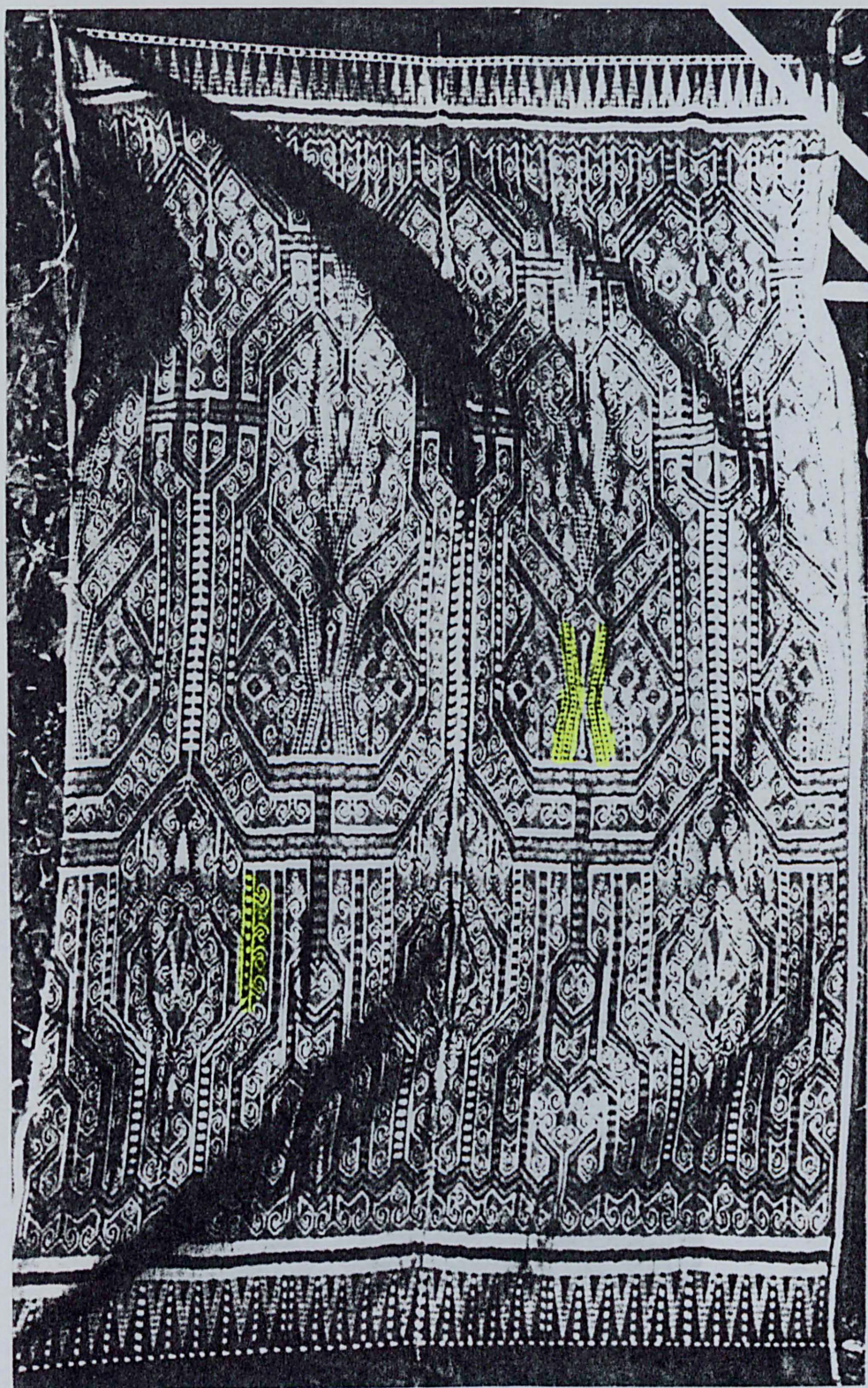


Fig.125



Fig.126



Fig.127

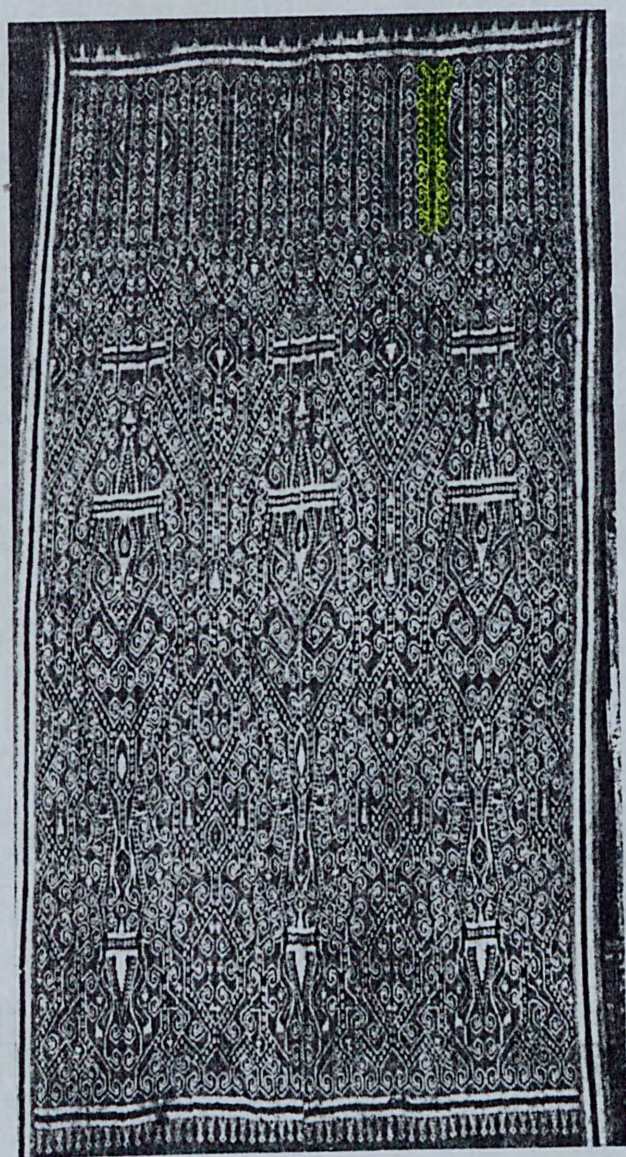


Fig.128

Fig.128 (detail)

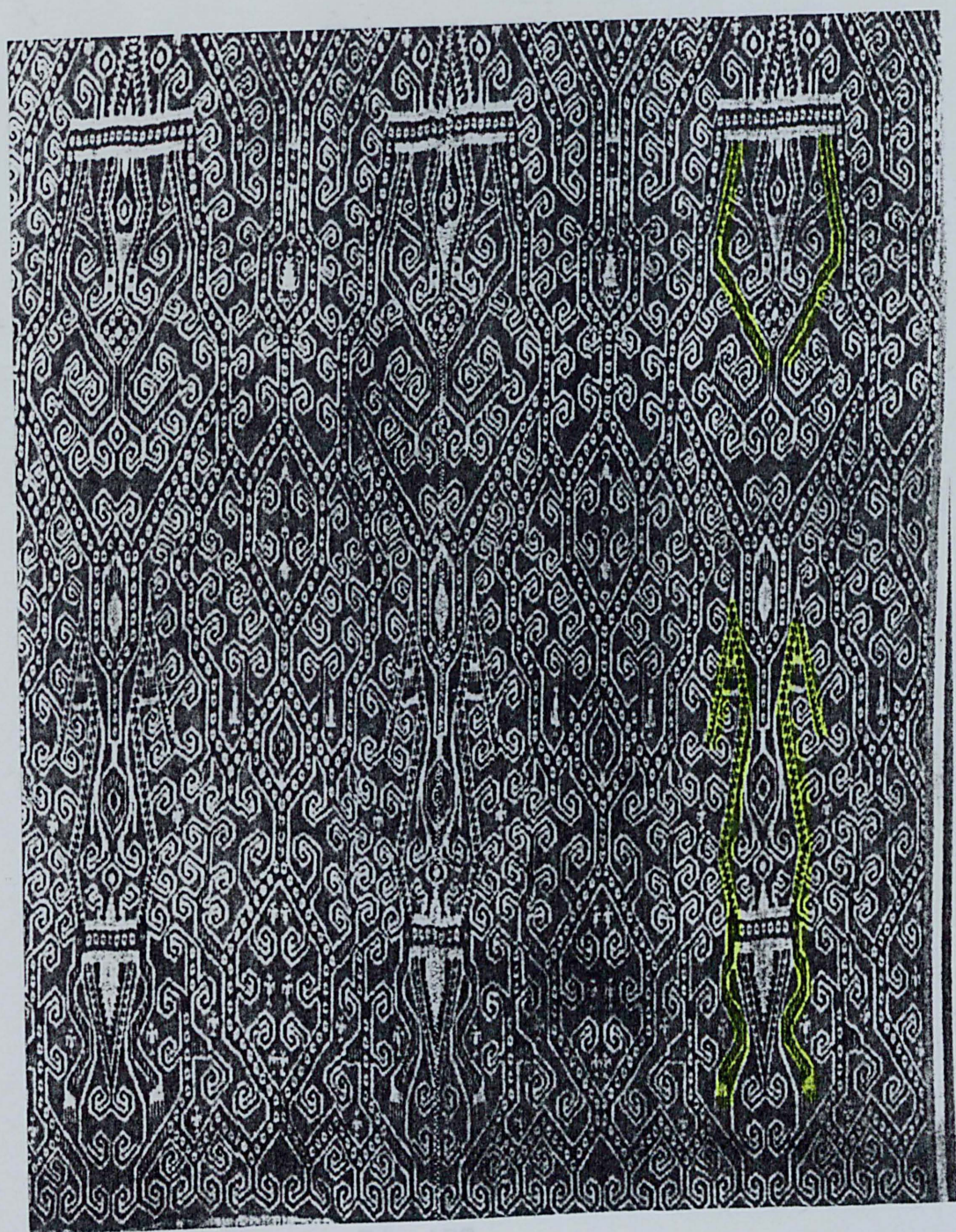


Fig.128 (detail)

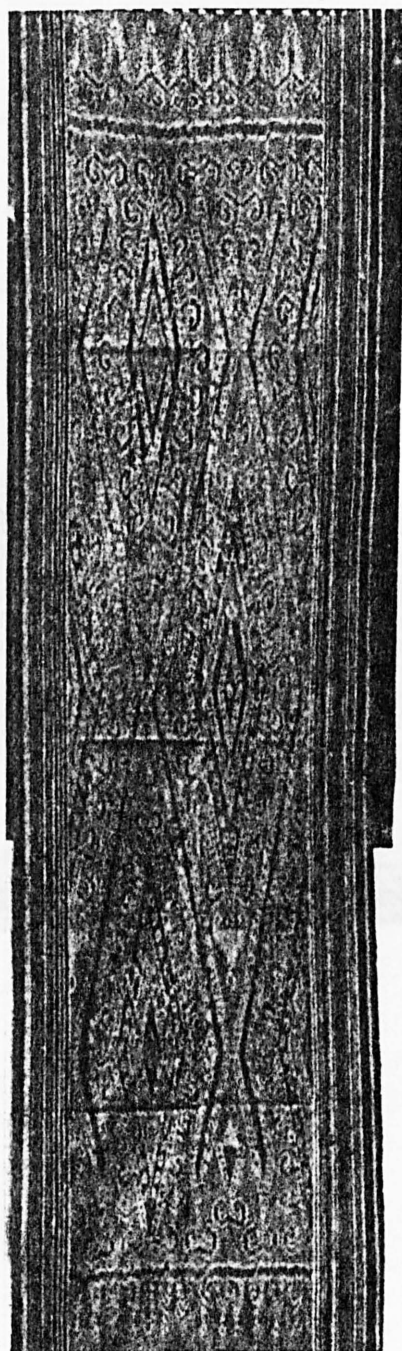


Fig.129

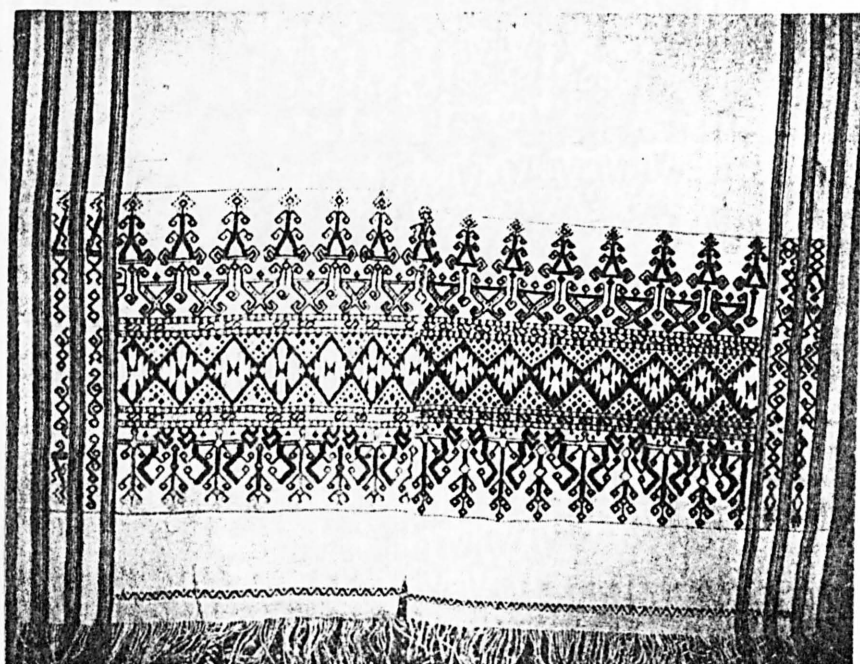


Fig.130

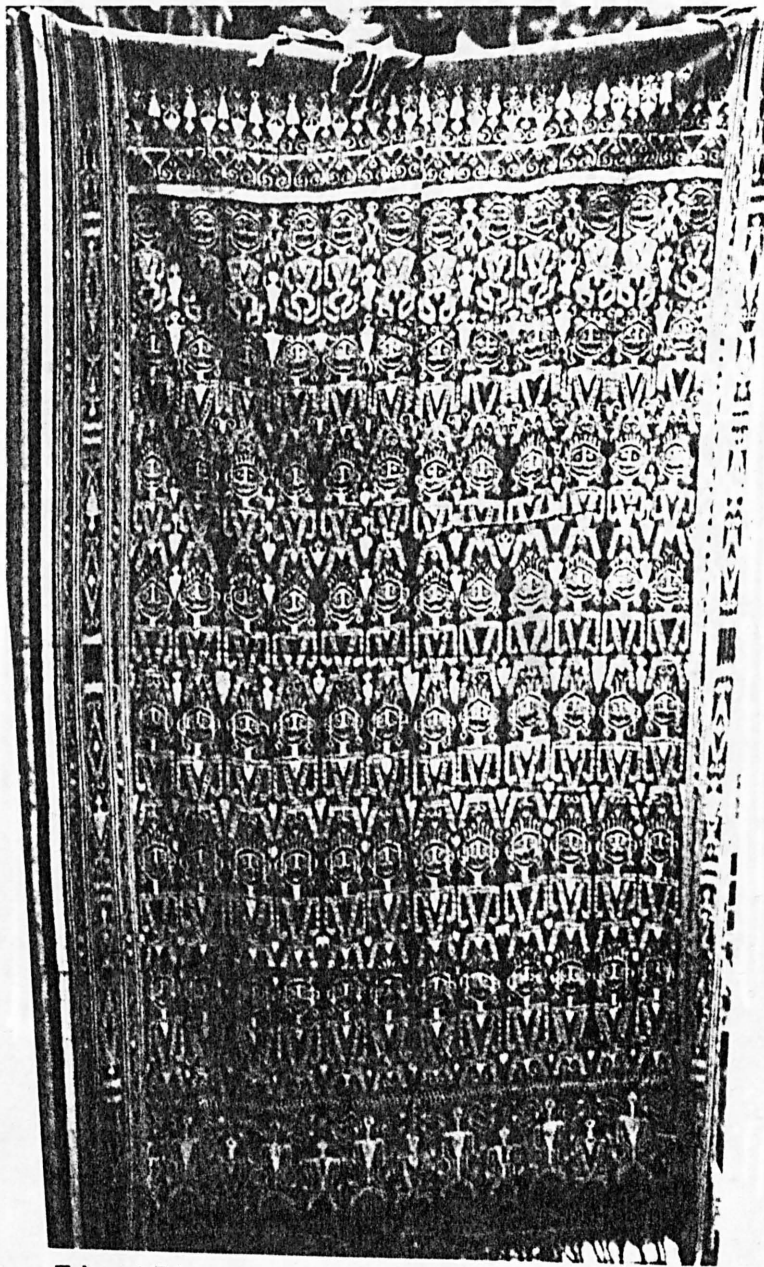


Fig.131



Fig.132

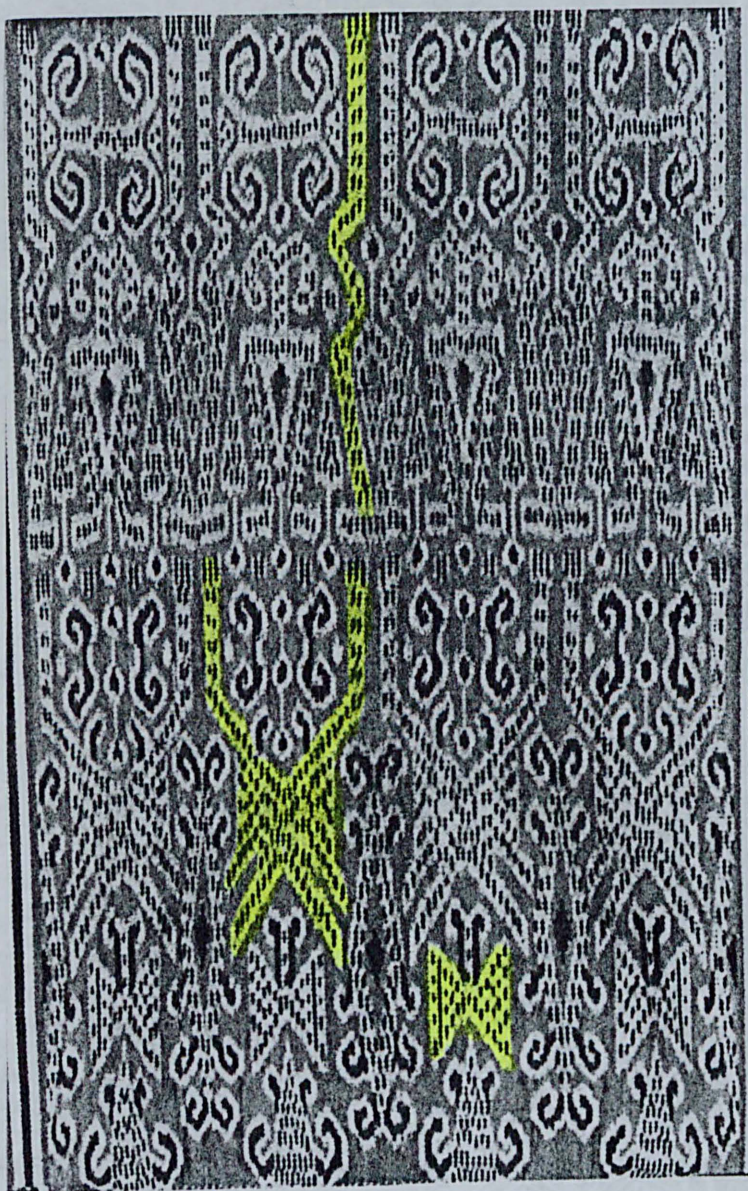


Fig.133



Fig.134



Fig.135



Fig.136



Fig.137

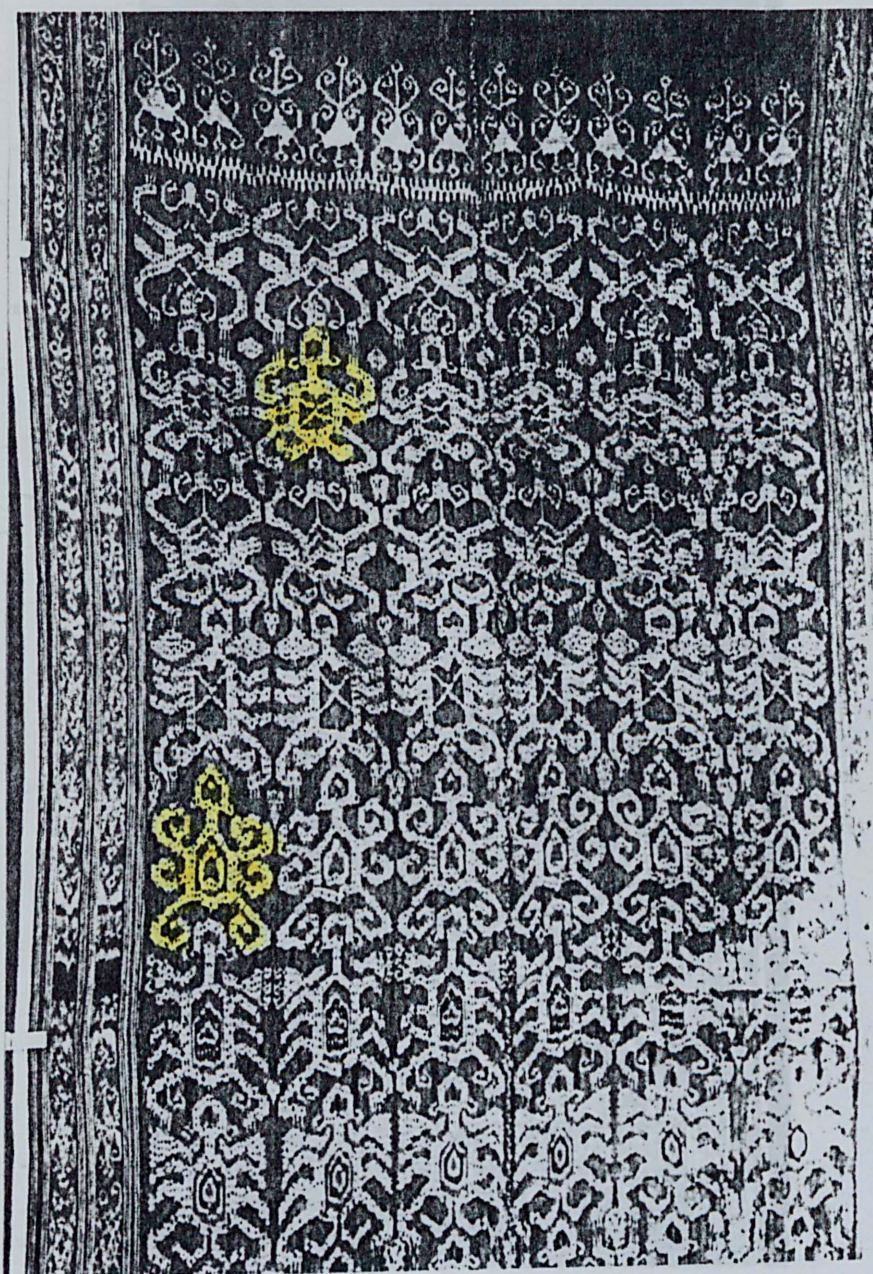


Fig.138



Fig.139

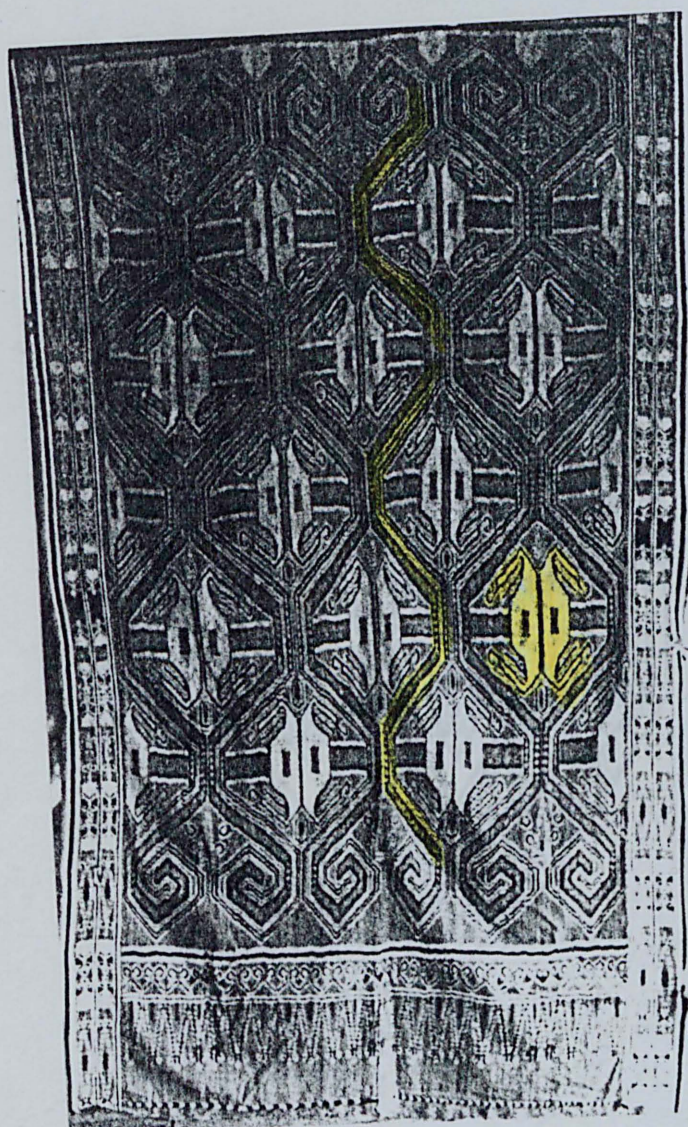


Fig.140

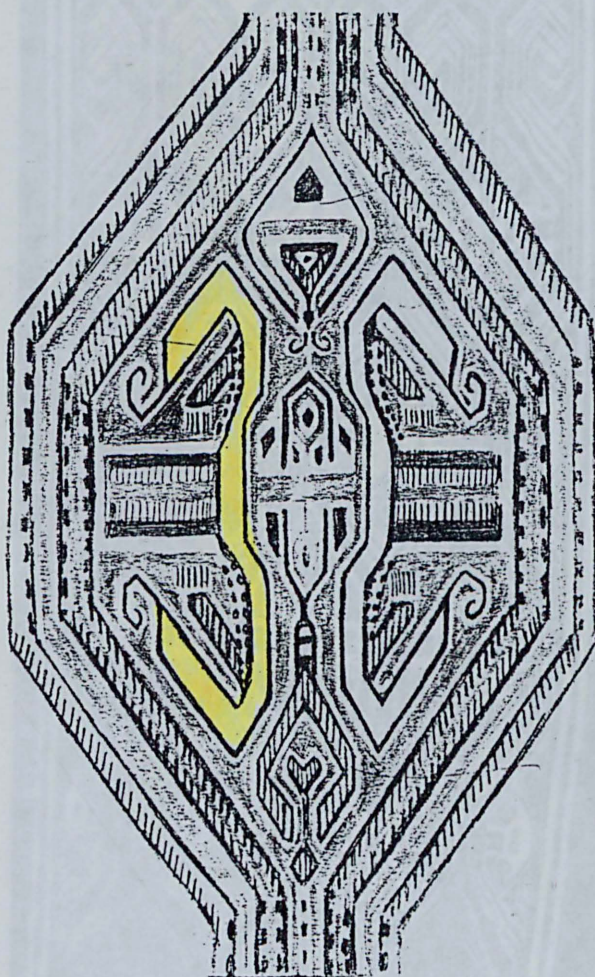


Fig.141



Fig.142

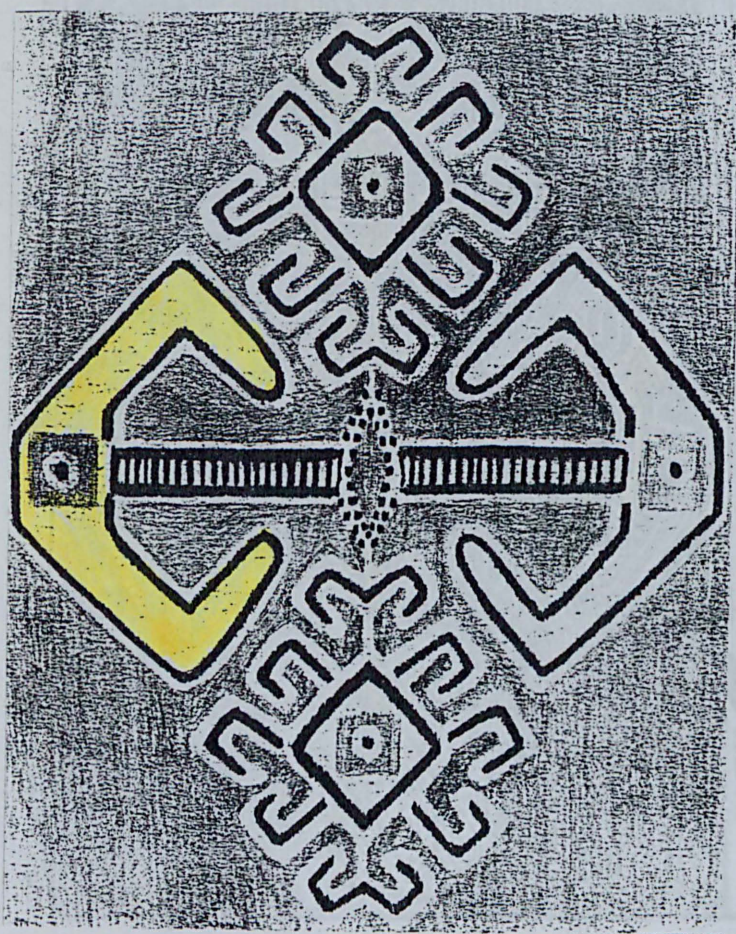


Fig.143

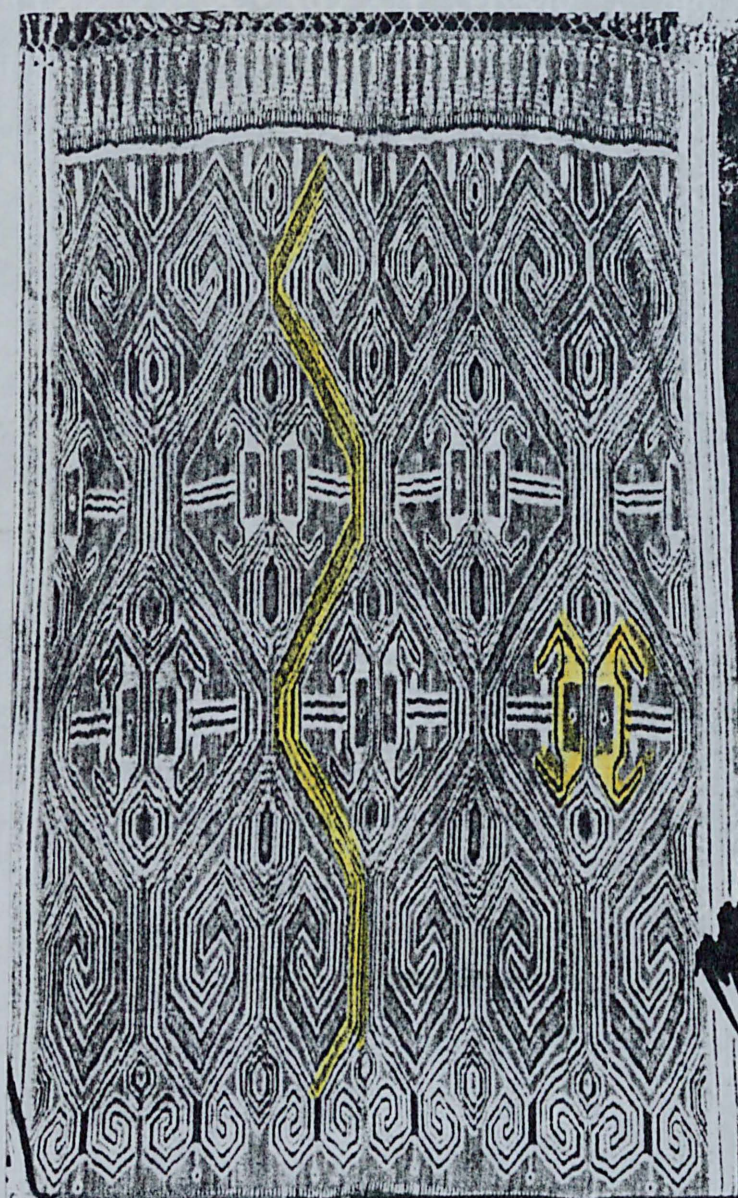


Fig.144



Fig.145



Fig.146

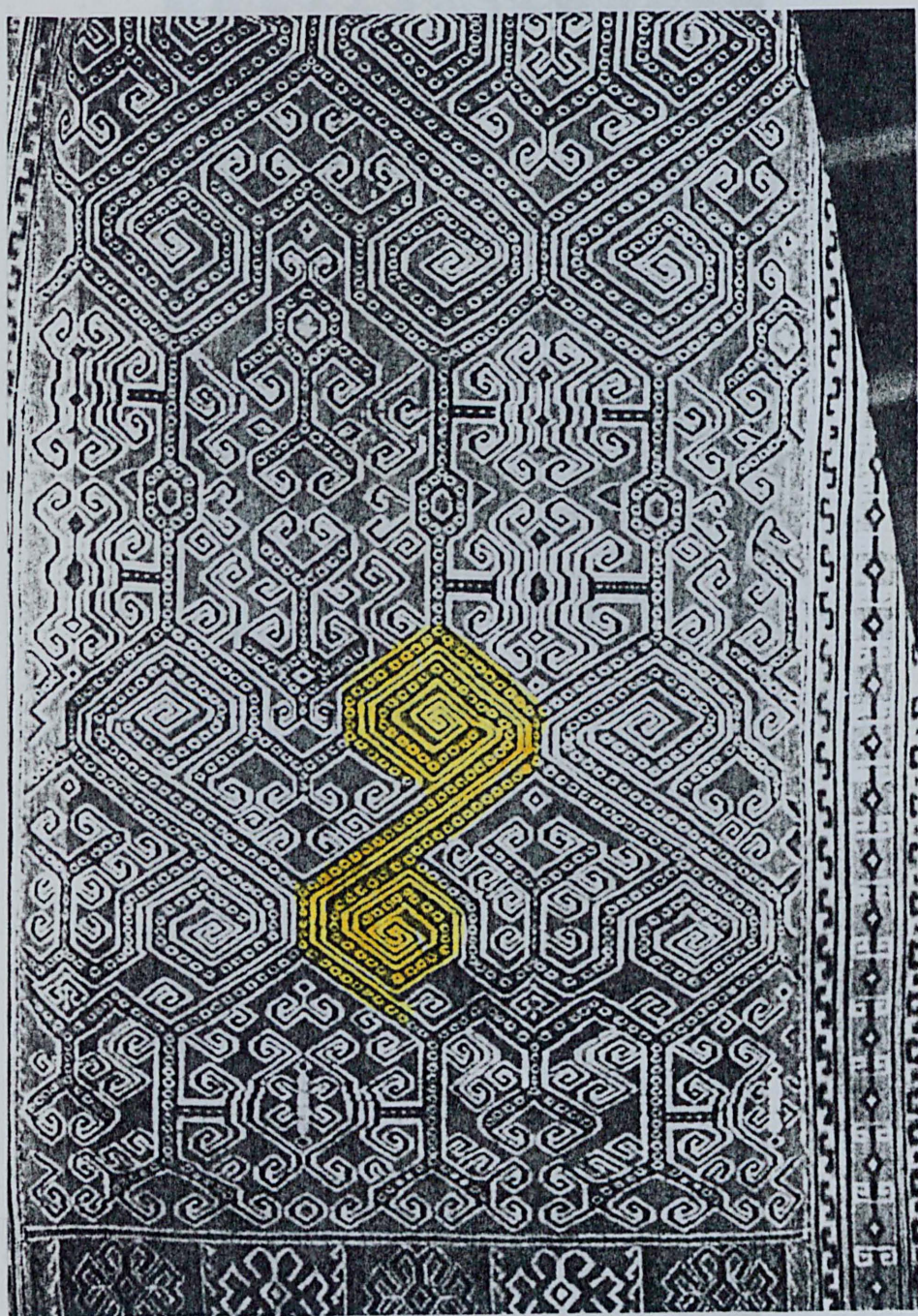


Fig.147

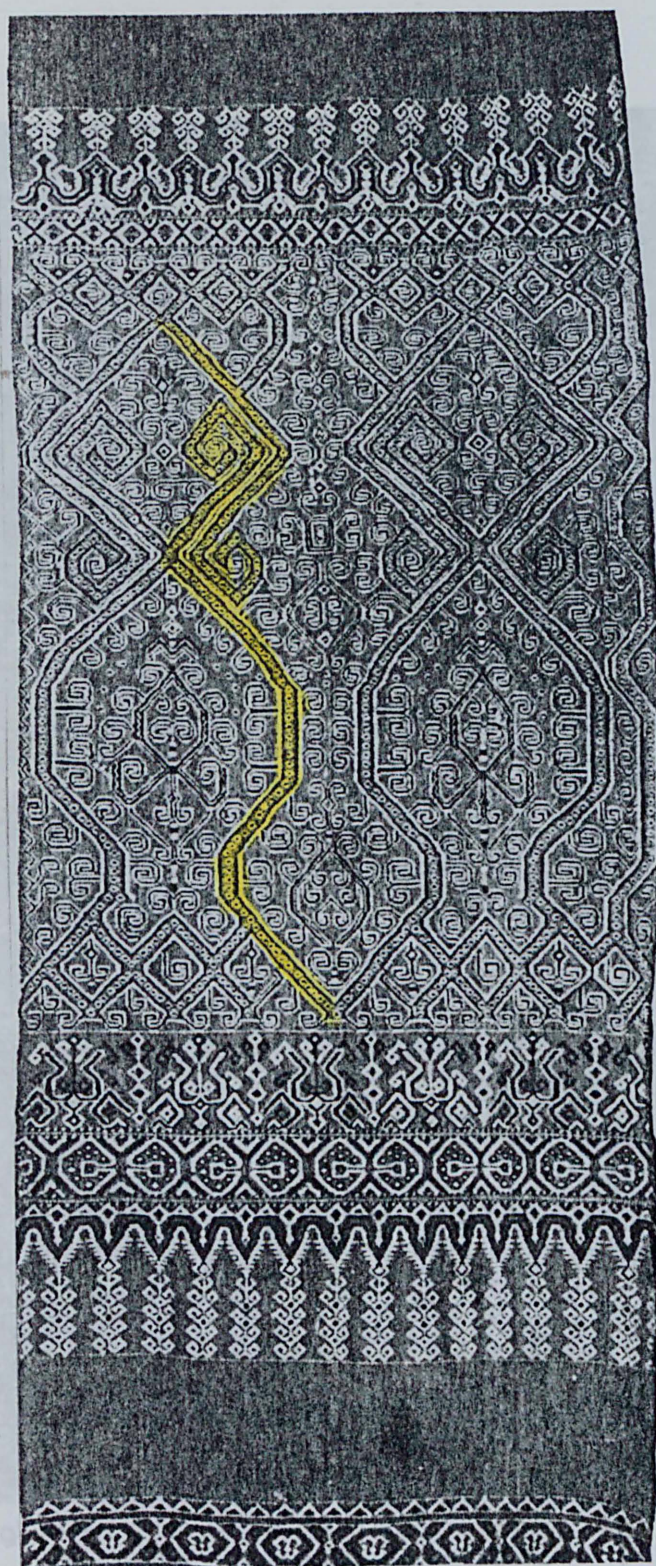


Fig.148

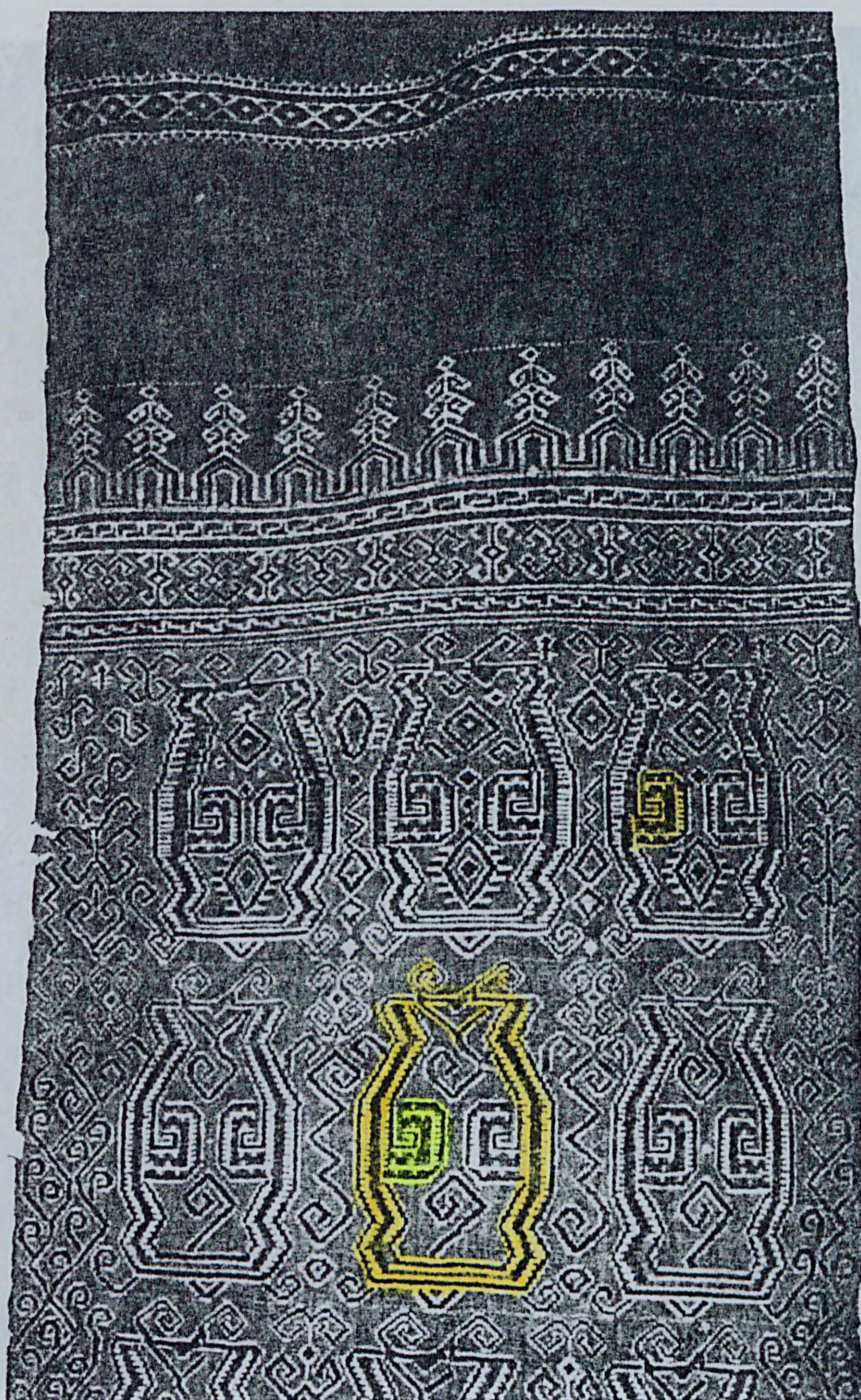


Fig.149

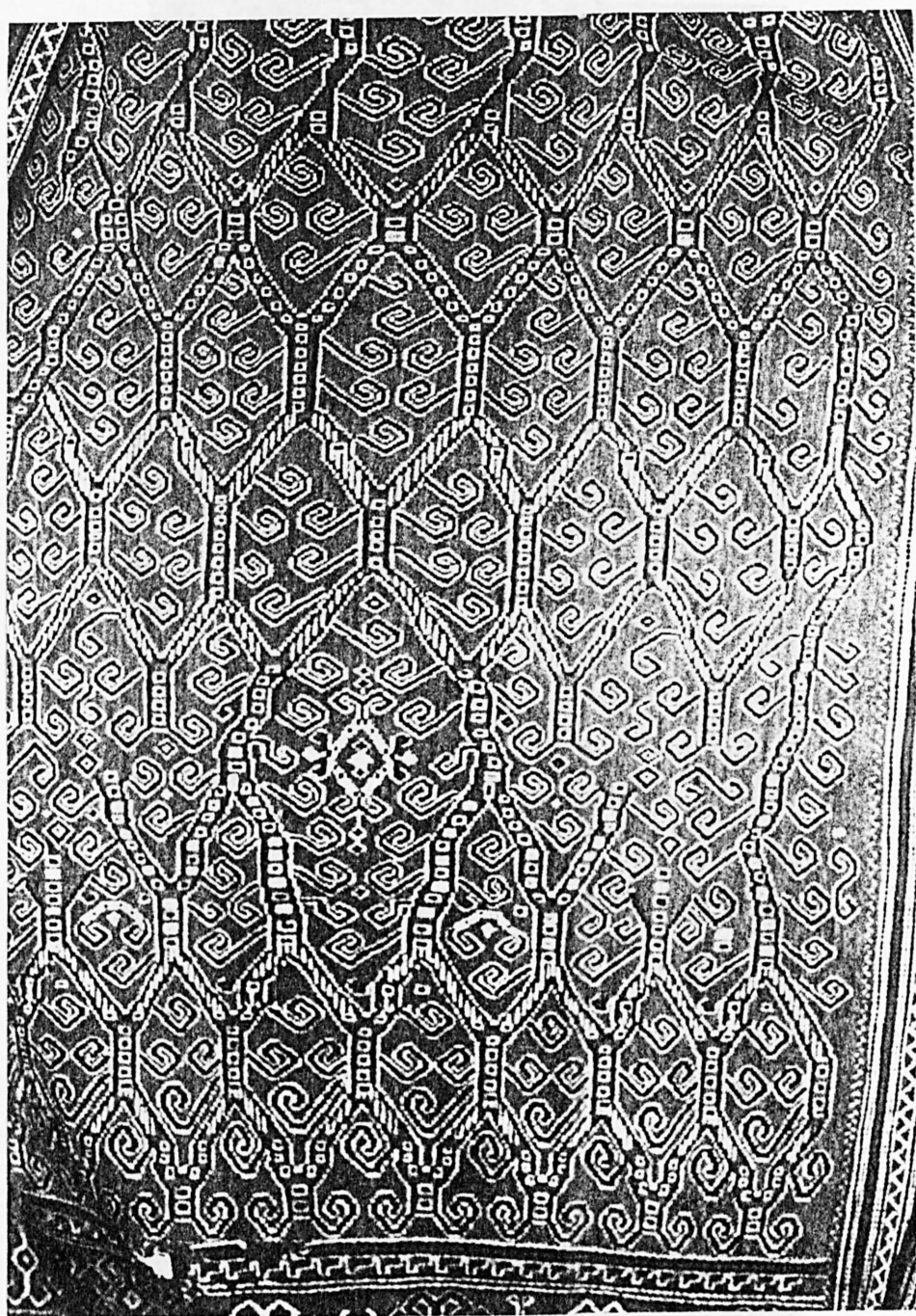


Fig.150

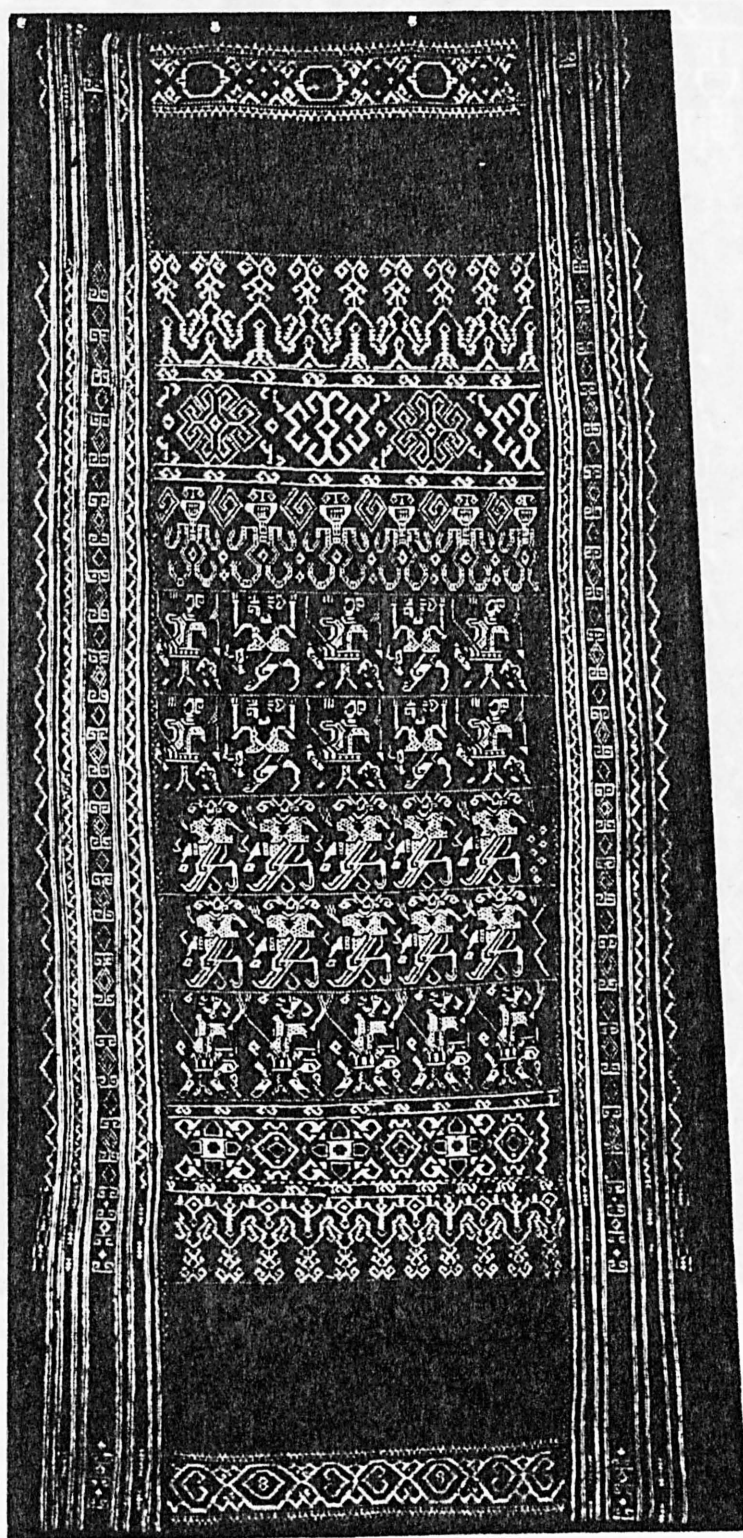


Fig.151

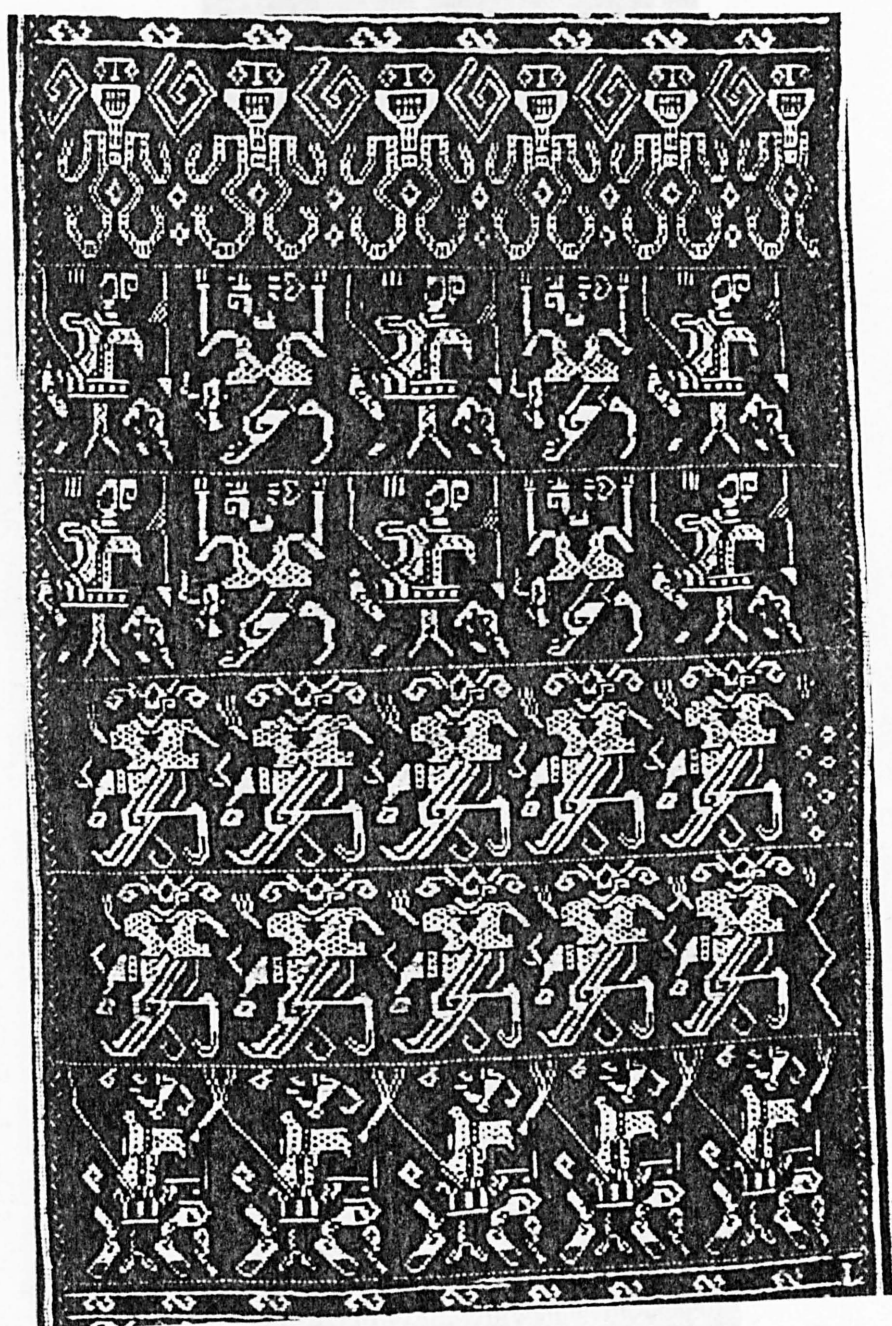


Fig.151 (detail)

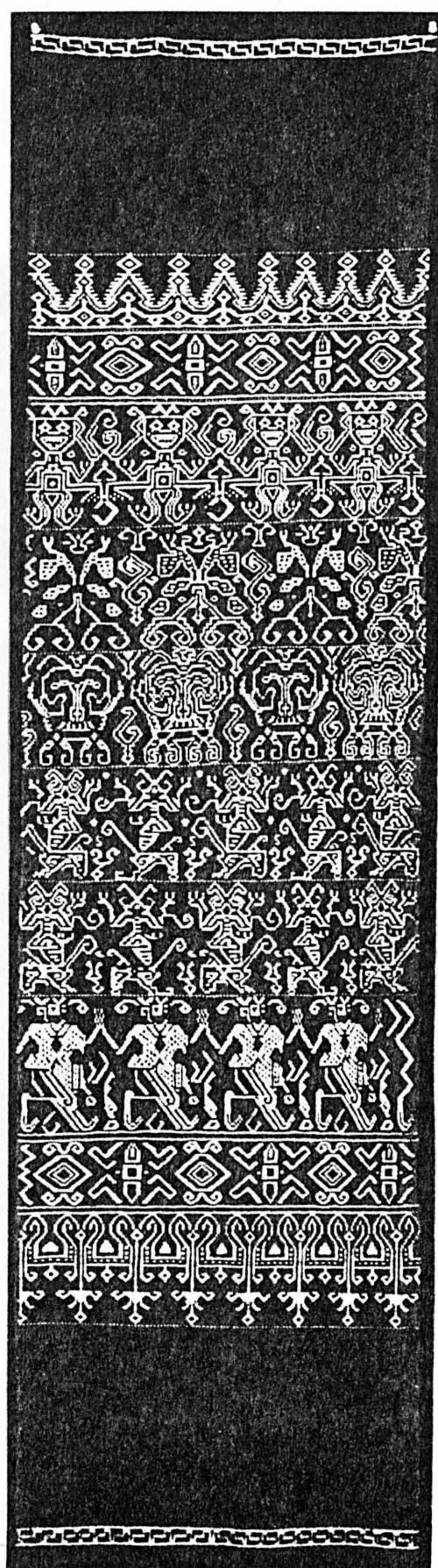


Fig.152



Fig.152 (detail A)

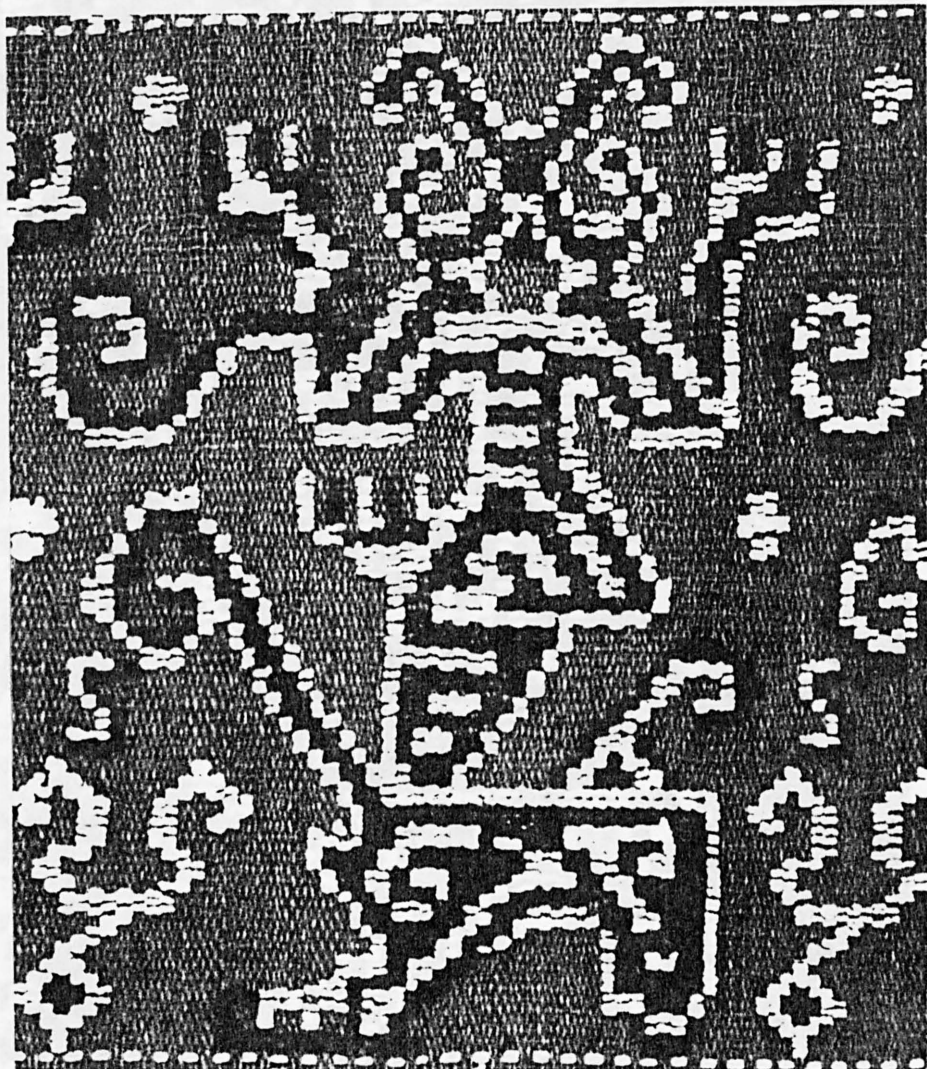


Fig.152 (detail B)

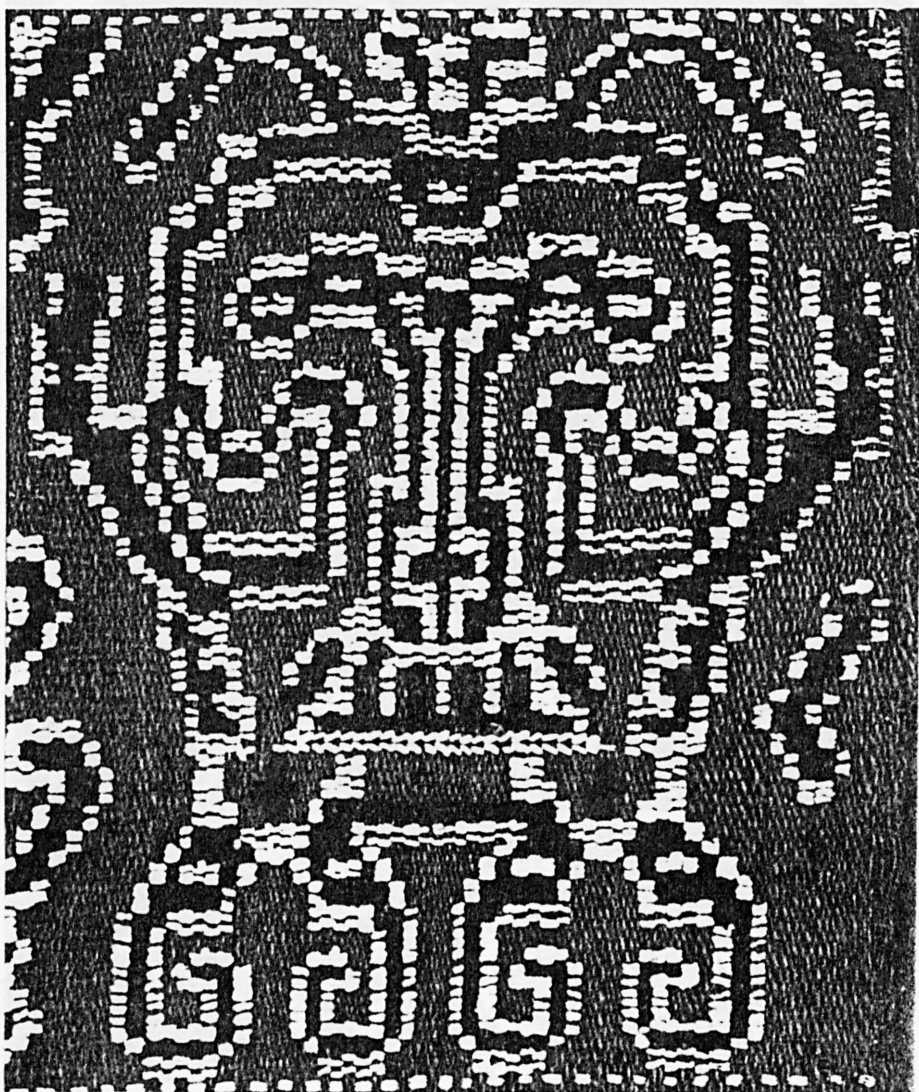


Fig.152 (detail C)



Fig.152 (detail D)

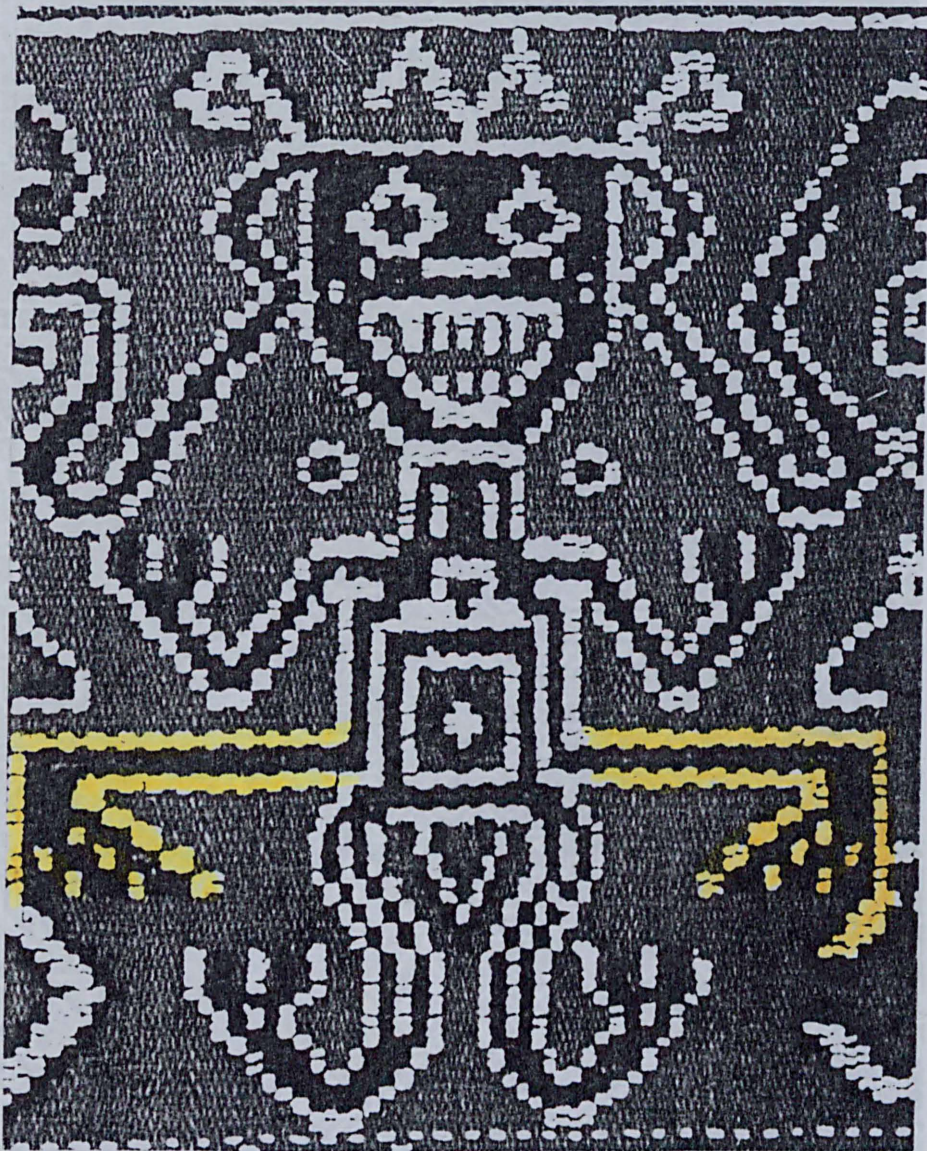


Fig.152 (detail E)

Fig.153

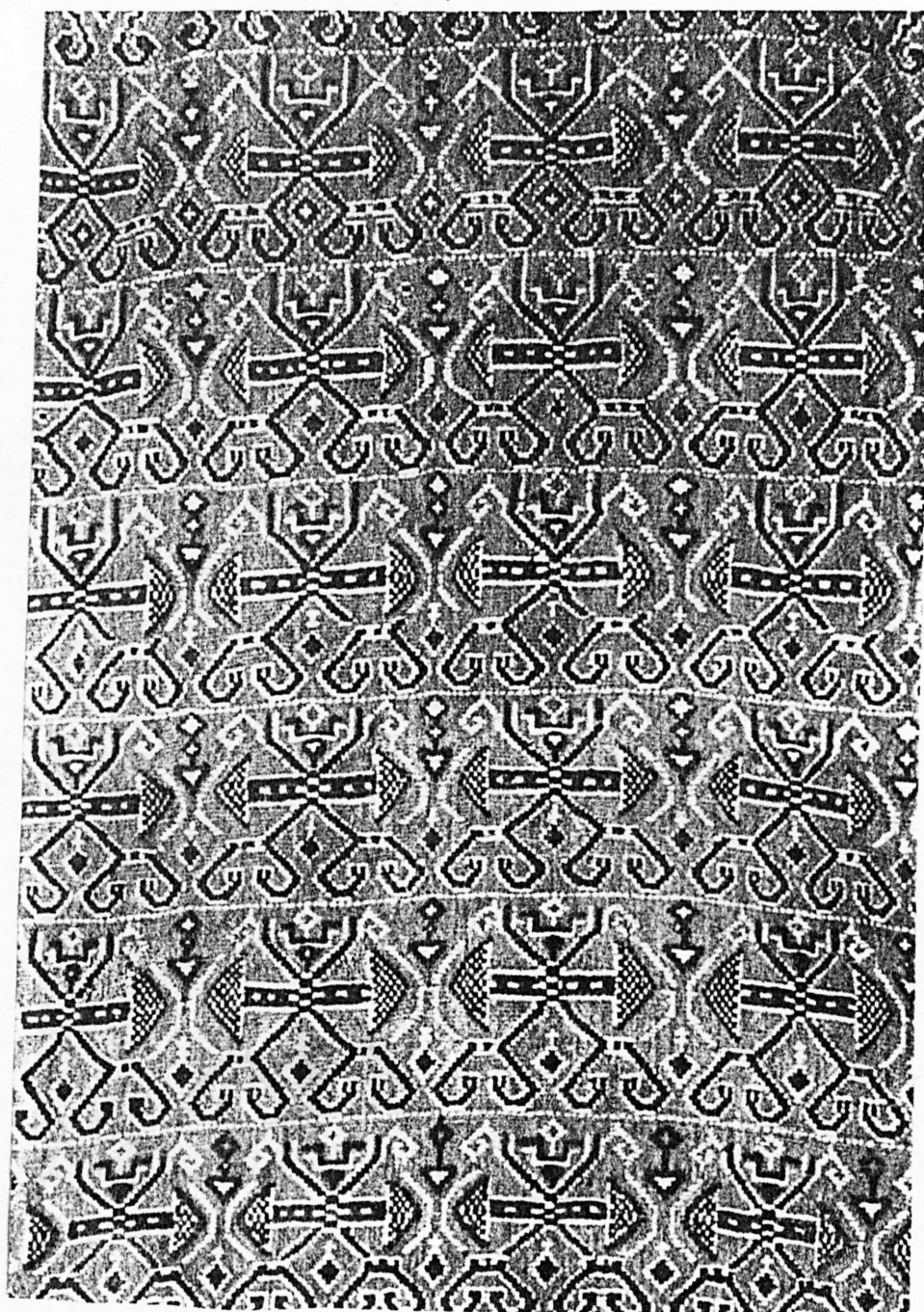


Fig.153



Fig.154 (detail A)



Fig.154 (detail B)



Fig.154 (detail C)



Fig.155

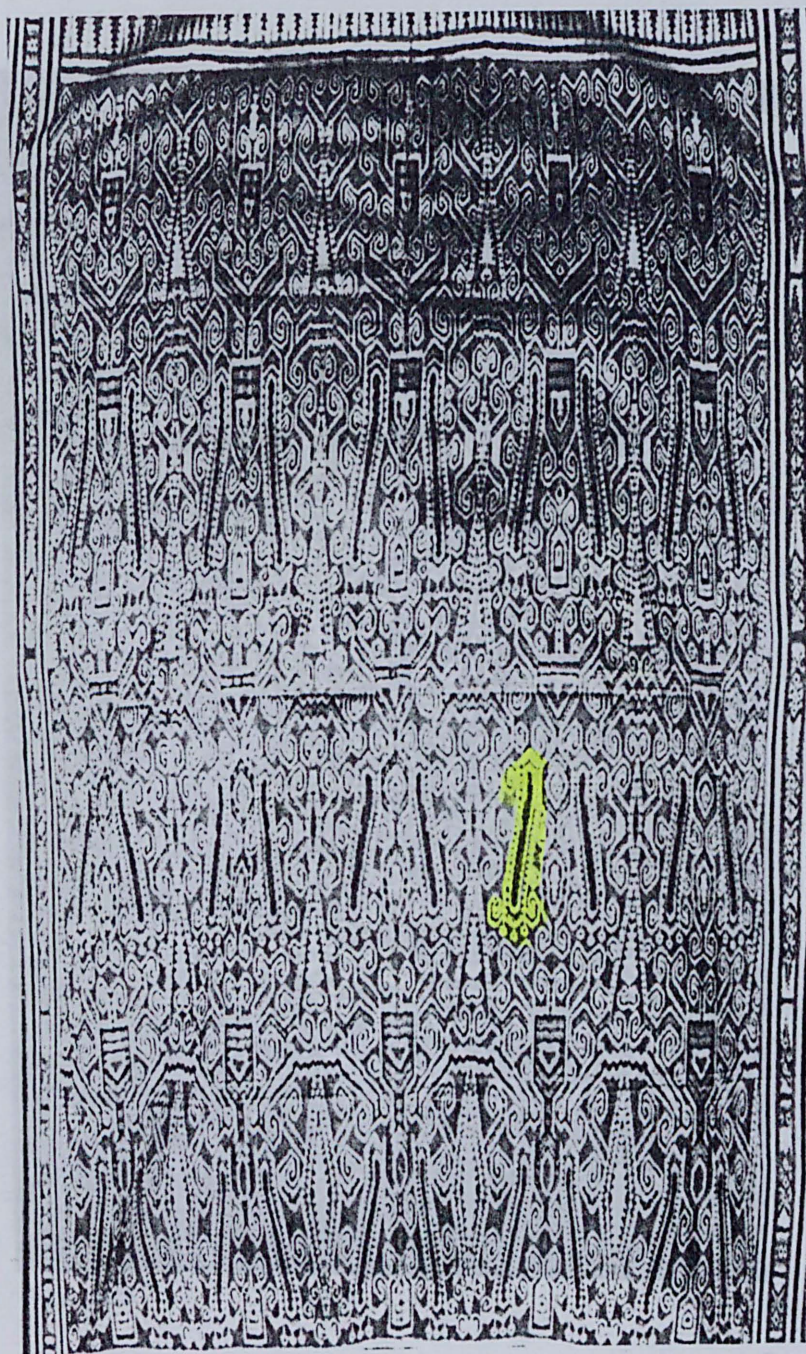


Fig.156



Fig.157



Fig.158



Fig.159

Fig.160

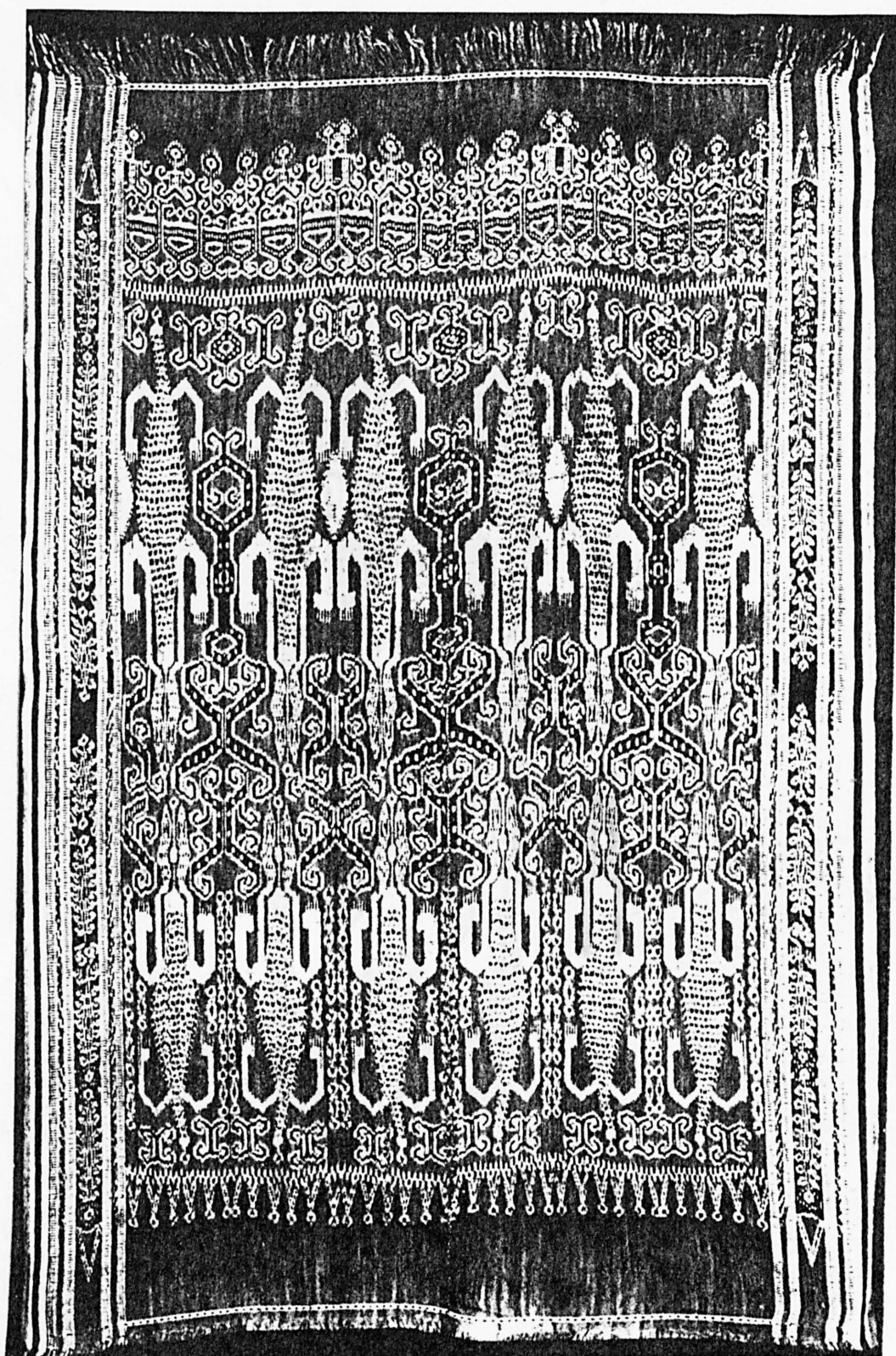


Fig.160



Fig.161

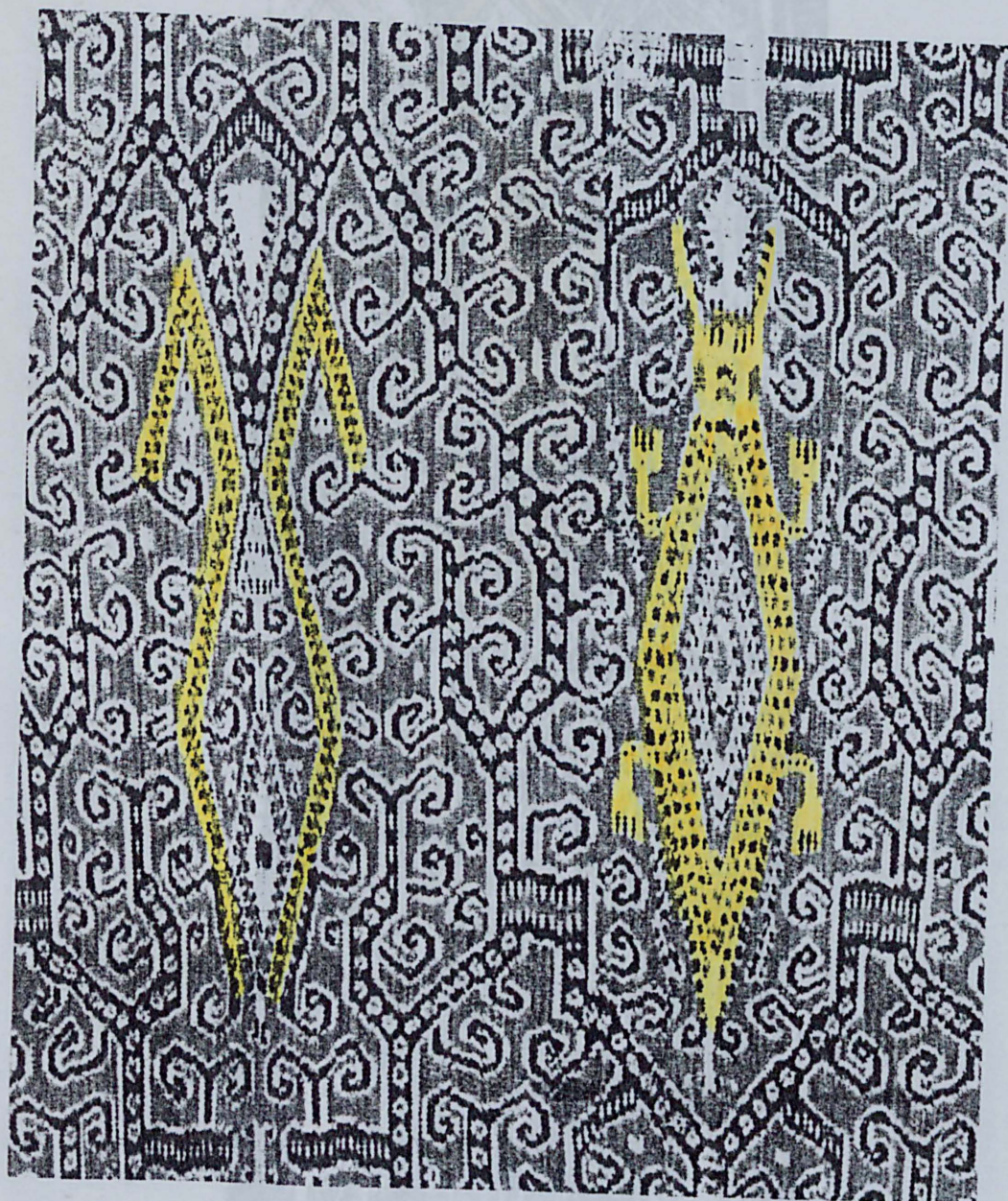


Fig.162

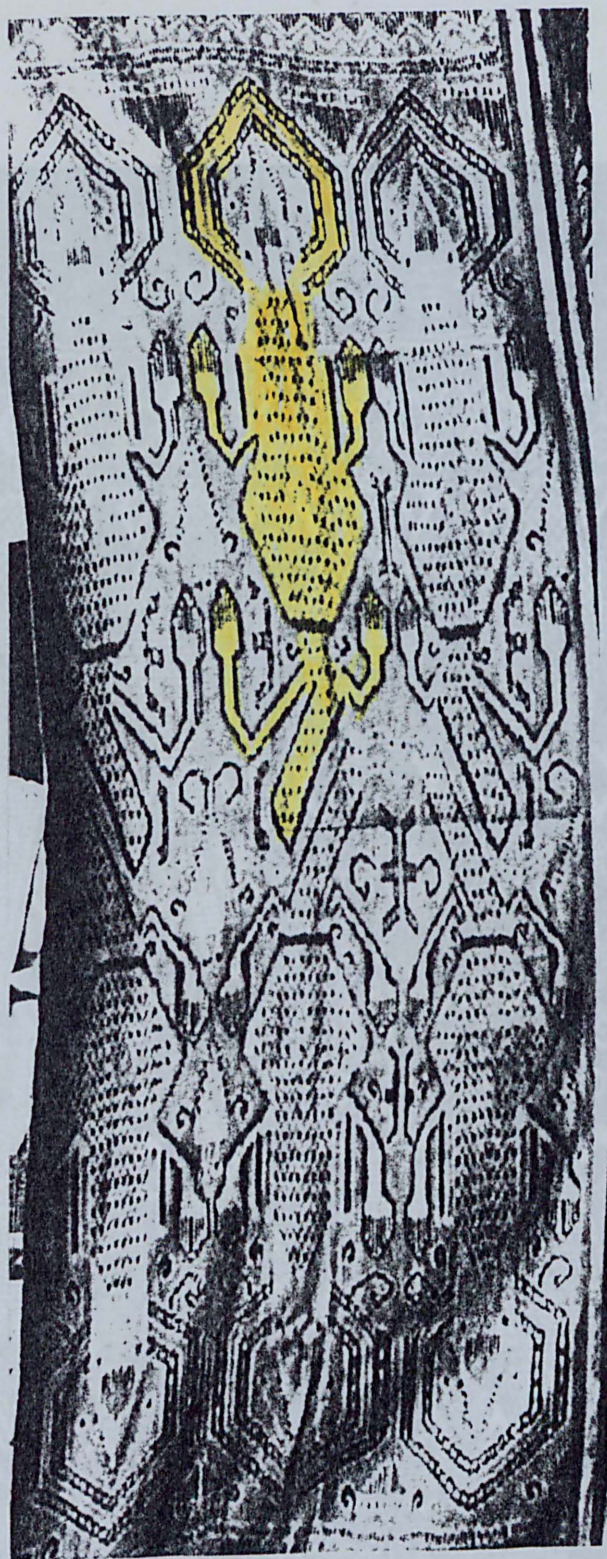


Fig.163



Fig.164