

The Return of Pua Kumbu: The Struggle of the Iban Traditional Weaving in Kapuas Hulu, West Kalimantan, Indonesia

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Abstract: The paper describes struggle of a local tradition to survive in a changing of complex and rapid social and cultural context. *Pua kumbu* as part of the old Iban culture was overlooked, as was the case with the Iban tribe who were regarded as underdeveloped. Despite of many changes, *pua kumbu* is still very popular and widely spread in the Iban communities in Batang Lupar Sub-district, Kapuas Hulu District, West Kalimantan, which became the site of our two months observation early in 2018. While many experts believe that the growing contribution of local culture in current Indonesia was related to the launching of the Law of Regional Autonomy Indonesia, we argue that the process is more complicated. Our research shows that Iban weaving or *pua kumbu* was basically never completely disappeared from the life of Iban people. It is last for centuries since the Iban still considers it as sacred and a part of their custom-bound life. As there also some NGO facilitations to conserve traditional weaving and the commercialization of them, we conclude that the continuity of *pua kumbu* is contain with social and cultural narrative to include adat, close interaction with development agents, and market.

1 INTRODUCTION

Although it had long been known as related to the Chinese ancestors that arrived about 1500 BC (van der Hoop 1949), Indonesia people have developed their own unique weavings. From the basic pattern of braiding a straight or vertical pattern with a transverse or horizontal pattern (Kartiwa, 1987: 1), it then became more complex with the decorative motifs emerged along with the migration of ancestors from Dongson (Indochina) and Annam North about 700 years BC (Kartiwa, 2007; Van der Hoop, 1949; Gillow, 1992).

The Iban of Kapuas Hulu district in West Kalimantan is a community that has been using traditional weavings for their daily use. *Pua kumbu*, one of Iban's typical weaving types, has always been an important part of Iban's culture. But from time to time, its existence rises and falls in accordance with the socio-political conditions that take place. This paper highlights the dynamics of the last ten years when *pua kumbu* again attracted Iban people.

A study was conducted to explain the revitalization of ethnic or local traditions in Indonesia during the last 20 years have been related

to the changing of political systems (Aspinal, 2011). Post-1998 reformation that followed by the launching of the Law No. 22 of 1999 on Regional Autonomy had led to the rising of local sentiments in a wider context, not only on the political setting. It also triggered the return of *adat* (customary law) and local leadership into the main discourse in the post-Suharto era (Harvey & Davidson 2008, Duncan 2009). Along with the trend, efforts to rediscover local identity for the local groups have also arisen (Adams, 2003).

We see, however, that the case of the revitalization of *pua kumbu* is not a merely political but also a social and cultural process involving various events and interest parties. The role of external organizations, namely ASPPUK, in the effort to revitalize *pua kumbu* in Kapuas Hulu relatively large. In addition, the environment movement to conserve Kalimantan forests has also influenced the cultural conservation to include traditional weavings.

2 METHODS

Our research shows that Iban weaving or *pua kumbu* which has been considered forgotten was basically never completely disappeared from the life of Iban people. Despite many changes, *pua kumbu* is still very popular and widely spread in the Iban communities in Batang Lupar Sub-district, Kapuas Hulu District, West Kalimantan, which became the site of our two months observation. Data collection was conducted for six weeks from February to mid-March 2018, using qualitative methods. Primary data collection was conducted using in-depth interview techniques to the heads of women's weaving groups, weavers, and community leaders. Interviews were also conducted to *tuayrumah* (*betang*'s leader), village heads, hamlet heads, and other informal leaders who mastered the Iban Dayak customs and social issues by coming to them in *betang* (Ibanese longhouse). The study area covers 10 hamlets in 4 villages: Kampung Tekalong (Lanjak Deras Village), Kampung Sawah, Sungai Sedik, Sungai Long, Sungai Luar (Sungai Abau Village), (Dusun Entebuluh, Enkadan, Keluin and Dusun Kelawik (Mensiau Village), and Ngaung Keruh (Labian Village).

3 RESULTS

3.1 The People of Villages Studied

The ten hamlets that become our research area are settlements inhabited by the Batang Lupar Dayak group which is an Iban Dayak sub-ethnic group. However, due to migration and marriage with outsiders, there are also residents in the hamlet who come from Java, Malay, Ahe Dayak, Embaloh Dayak and others. The Malay, Javanese, Minang, Batak and Bugis are migrants who have existed since the early 1960's and live in Lanjak, the capital city of Batang Lupar subdistrict, to trade, serve as teachers, civil servants, and the military or police officers. While other parts of Dayak are people from surrounding like Ahe, Embaloh, and Kayan.

According to Tumenggung Sumpit, head of the Iban Dayak community in Batang Lupar Subdistrict, naming the Batang Lupar Dayak was at the request of King Brooke, the ruler of the British Borneo region. Batang Lupar is the place where the Dayak group originated before being classified as Iban. King Brooke specifically asked the Dutch Borneo to keep calling their citizens who moved around Lanjak as the Dayak Batang Lupar.

The Dayak Batang Lupar naming continued until the identity of the Dayak group changed to the Iban

Dayak in the 1930s. The word Iban itself is said to have originated from the Dayak Kayan language which means 'migrant' or another version means 'wanderer'. The Iban themselves do not agree on the mention of Iban which comes from the Kayan's term, they claim that they have long used the name Iban.

Population settlements are in hilly areas and are close to rivers that have long been the backbone of people's lives. Access and road conditions to hamlets differ from one another. The hamlets of Ngaung Keruh, Sungai Sedik and Kampung Sawah are located on the edge of a cross-provincial asphalt road with good conditions. Road access to Tekalong Village, Sungai Luar Village and Long River is still in the form of land that is rather difficult to pass when it rains. While the hamlets of Engkadan, Kelawik, Entebuluh and Keluin can be accessed from the same route, namely the Kelawik Ring Road which is planned to be a cross-provincial road to Central Kalimantan and towards the borderline with Malaysia in Nanga Badau. The next hamlet of Kelawik has the condition of a flat dirt road covered by sand ready for paving, while the access road to Entebuluh and Keluin is partly still in the form of land and some are rocky which are rather difficult to access under any conditions.

The hamlets in Batang Lupar Subdistrict, especially those that are under study are located in conservation areas such as protected forests and national parks. Hamlets in the southern part such as Tekalong, Luar River and Long River are adjacent to Danau Sentarum National Park (DSNP). Whereas the hamlets that are more to the north area such as the hamlets in Mensiau Village, Ngaung Keruh Hamlet and Kelayam Hamlet, are close to the Protected Forest and Betung Kerihun National Park (BKNP).

3.2 The Dynamic of Iban Weavings in Kapuas Hulu

We will begin our description by exposing the trajectory of Iban weaving from time to time, starting from colonization, post-independence, to the recent days. The history of weaving, we believe, can not be separated from the economic, social and political dynamics that occur locally, nationally and globally.

In this paper, the colonial period begins with the Dutch colonial presence as a result of the London Agreement of 1814 between England and the Netherlands. In 1816 the area of West Kalimantan which was originally occupied by the British handed over to the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In the early Dutch era, *pua kumbu* served as an important part of the Iban rites. *Kain tenunis* present in every circle of Iban people's life. Yet, one of *pua kumbu*'s important role was taking part in the process of

pengayauan (headhunting) that greatly disturbed the rulers and the Christian missionaries at the time. Both the Dutch rulers in Kapuas Hulu and British ruling in Sarawak strive to eliminate the tradition.

In the head-hunting tradition, *pua kumbu* used to cover the head of the headed enemy. Going forward is a high achievement for Iban and his clan. The attempt to eliminate headhunting was achieved in 1894, when the Dutch succeeded in gathering Dayak chiefs and establishing a peace agreement called the Tumbang Anoi Agreement. One of the key points resulting from the treaty is to stop the tradition of headhunting. After the peace agreement, the headhunting practice disappeared, and this meant that some of *pua kumbu's* roles of the had disappeared. From that moment on, the *pua kumbu* was finally only kept as an heirloom and was expelled at major events such as *gawai*.

When Japan came to Indonesia In 1942, according to our informant namely Tumenggung Sumpit, in Batang Lupar Sub-district, the community experienced the most difficult period, including in the clothing fulfillment. During those days, the Malays used the burlap sack as clothing, while the Iban people were still in a better condition because they already had the knowledge and technology to make woven fabrics. As a result, Iban people are increasingly active in making woven fabrics from cotton plants which they plant themselves, and make it into clothing, *kelambik*(shirts) and *cawat*(loincloths). After the Japanese occupation ended in 1945, there was a vacuum of power, including in Lanjak and surrounding areas. Many Iban people went *forbajalai* (wandering) to Malaysia for work or just to visit their relatives. The Iban people began to recognize the yarn came from the factory obtained from Malaysia. They also could easily buy clothes. *Bajalai* to Malaysia was often done and work seemed to be easier to get, but getting cash money was not easy. Many Iban workers were paid with only rolls of yarn. The yarn was brought back to their hometown for fabric material, during those days yarn started to become an alternative to substitute the home-made cotton yarns.

Access to the free borderline lasted about 17 years. In 1963, the Indonesian first president Soekarno expressed his rejection and confrontation towards the establishment of the Malaysian state. This situation had an impact on the heating up of relations between the two countries. The border area became critical as army and militia posts established. This unfavorable situations also affect the mobility of Iban people to cross into Malaysia or vice versa. As doing *bajala* became more difficult, purchase of yarn was also getting more difficult. This impact on the decrease of the supply of the

factory-made yarn and the manufacture of the weaving was again relying on the home-made cotton yarns for its basic material.

When Soeharto became the second president in 1966, Indonesia's relationship with Malaysia improved and the confrontation with Malaysia subsided. The Indonesian army focuses on crushing militia who are considered as communist, especially on the border area. They interrogated and arrested all the suspect. This situation made it difficult for the Iban to live a normal life. The adult males were afraid to go out to hunt or to the field while women are afraid to do the weaving activities even in the house terrace. Production of weaving materials seemed to be stalled for a long time. Ten years after Suharto's rule, the impact of the national development began to be experienced in the region. Educational programs, for example, albeit slowly, began to influent people's lives in the 1980s. Children who previously had plenty of spare time to make woven fabrics at a young age, 10-14 years old, since then had become more school-oriented and most of the time did schoolwork at home. Furthermore, some people deliberately build houses in Lanjak to bring children closer to school buildings, which meant that they were away from *betang*. Weaving became no longer attractive and had been replaced by the modern clothes.

Suharto's era ended with the beginning of a national economic crisis of 1997, which made the Iban people experienced the difficulty to earn money and to supply yarn for weaving. The price of rubber fell and, practically, only rice cultivation could support their food security. While continuing to farm, Iban people look for other economic opportunities that can make money quickly, including *bakuli* (work as blue-collar labor) to Malaysia. But the most profitable is through illegal logging that rampant in 2003-2005. Temporary weaving activities stopped, all busy with logging business. As purchasing power increases, *sidan* woven from Malaysia is highly favored by Iban youth because of its bright colors. In addition, the motive is easy for young people to learn during school time. After the illegal logging, life goes as before again. Children were busy attending school with interspersed parents to the fields, while weaving is only partially cultivated by a small part of parents who are generally included in their grandmother's generation.

From 2008 to 2015, the yarn for weaving is hard to come by. To overcome this situation, several efforts were made by various parties including the district government through the PKK program by providing yarn assistance. However, this program only runs for a moment, because the purpose of the program is only to help women do weaving and not

to be sold. In addition to the government, NGOs were also assisting people to produce *pua kumbu*. Beginning in 2010, WWF consistently helped to revive the weaving activities through the program of making natural dyes. It made people realize that in addition to yarn, people also need dyes to make the weaving materials colorful. They also train people to market the Iban weaving. The other NGOs that work with the locals in Iban weaving is PRCF and ASPPUK. They also concern with the yarn supply as well as the marketing aspect of the weaving products.

3.2 Weaving: Rituals, Custom, and Economic Value

In the past, weaving cannot be separated from the tradition of head dressing. At that time adat gave high appreciation to those who succeeded in getting a number of enemy heads and made him a hero (PJ Veth, 1856). Special woven fabrics are prepared to welcome the enemy head and merge into the joy of the victory party. Pua Kumbu used to receive decapitated heads were made with certain motives, which will have higher inheritance and high sacredness when many heads have been received.

When the headhunting tradition is gone, the heroic title in Iban life is even less important. Pua Kumbu as the recipient of the head is finally only stored as an inheritance and passed on to the next generation as a family inheritance. In the end, weaving heirlooms only limited to being a sign of the greatness of his ancestors in the past. The high social position of a family is measured by the ownership of the weaving heirlooms.

Even so, until now the heirloom woven cloth still has an important meaning because of its sacred value. This is because sacred weaving still has a function in traditional Iban ceremonies. Weaving together with other heirlooms such as *mandau*, *tajau*, *gong* and others, is often part of traditional rituals.

Heirloom weaving has motifs that are relatively the same and not much developed anymore. Thus, to be able to have this motive, other people must borrow it through certain customary procedures, namely *hanyut teladan* or *pinjam motif* (or borrowing motives). In this context weaving heirlooms are in a high position because the content of the element of trust in the making and function of the past which is still the same is believed and carried out.

Weaving occupies a central position in Iban culture. We examine that the role of weaving can be at least categorized into the three domains: (1) at the momentum of the transition of the stage of human life (2) the great feast of customs and the instruments; and (3) the identity of kinship.

The transition of life stages occurs around the momentum of the crisis of human life. Generally, the local culture requires a series of ceremonies in new stages of life, from birth, marriage, to death. The weaving in the Iban life cycle does not merely function as an ornament and complement of the ceremony, but rather, a vital element which takes the individual from one stage to another in an unbroken circle of life. *Kain tenun* is seen as an heirloom that is able to provide protection from disturbance of spirits at the time the baby is born. For the purpose of baby protection, *kain tenun* is used for two activities, the first is as a protective shade when the baby sleeps and the second is used for the first bathing ceremony. Weaving also plays an important role during the wedding ceremony, especially at the stage of *pinah pinang*. Couples who got married at *betang* home generally still follow the customary ceremony of the Iban people. *Kain tenun* used as a wedding curtain or part of the dowry.

In the final cycle of human life, weaving is presently accompanying the dead to the grave. In Iban tradition, *kumbukumbu* accompany the corpse along with other custom items such as loincloth, *tajau*, and others to the grave. At the ceremony of death, *pua' kumbu* is placed under the feet of the corpse. *Kain tenun* used to accompany the corpse along with other clothes. Without carrying weaving, the funeral process is incomplete. Often the question arises between them, "what did your *mamak* (mother) bring when she died?"

Another use of weavings is as a marker for children or families, namely *pamaik* (inheritance rights). If the Ibanese live far away and separated from the parent, they must hold the inheritance object so as not to get reprimanded from others because it is deemed to have no identity and origin. In this case, weaving can serve as a marker of the origin of someone, *betang* origin, region, and family background. Weaving is also used as a reminder for their children and grandchildren later, hopefully, in the future it can bring them back to the *betang*.

The decoration, color, and clothing design of the weavings can symbolize the high-status of the owner which can usually be seen at the event of a *gawai*. At the *gawai*, the heirloom weavings that usually used as wall decoration or *sandung* (gravestone made up of solid woods). The guests then can estimate whether the host has met the completeness of *pedarak* (offerings) for the ceremony. *Pedarak* were prepared on a number of plates with *pua' kumbu* as the tablecloth. The more dishes are served the wider fabric is needed, and the higher respect will be received by the host.

In recent years, weaving has attracted people for its economic value. The position of the weaver began to shift from the ability to make weaving

through appropriate customs to the ability to produce weaving at a certain the quantity, selling it, and making it suitable to the market demands. Those who are able to sell the *kain tenun* in a great number will gain praise for the success of our fellow weavers. With the high price, even when sold at *betang*, then weaving becomes a commodity to get cash money. One sheet of cloth for a 5 x 80-100 cm scarf is priced up to IDR100,000; while for the size of 25-30 x 120 cm it can reach the price of IDR 500-800,000 per pieces. The highest price is for *pua kumbu*, which is in the form of blanket or wall decoration, measured around 120-160 x 200-220 cm, can reach up to 2-3 million Indonesian Rupiahs.

3.3 Some Initiative to Revive Pua' Kumbu

The supply of yarn as a raw material of weaving is the concern of many parties, among others is Association of Small Business Women Assistance (hereafter will be referred to as ASPPUK). Pioneered since 1994, ASPPUK serves as an NGO network that empowers women in small enterprises. With 54 NGO members spread across 20 provinces in Indonesia, ASPPUK is involved in business development and critical awareness through organizing, training, critical discussions, seminars, technical assistance, development facilitation, and product and market quality, etc. (<http://asppuk.or.id/>).

Through funding from the TFCA-Yayasan KEHATIASPPUK encourages the community, especially the Iban Dayak weavers to re-utilize NTFPs in the form of certain crops as raw materials of woven dyes. To ensure sustainable plants for natural dyes, weavers must not continuously take crops from the forests where the plant grow, but must also make conservation efforts for endangered dye species. The use of NTFPs of dye crops will encourage forest conservation and management.

The knowledge and utilization of plants for natural dyes have been owned and recognized by most communities living in and around forests for generations, however, the community has not yet had the ability to inventory and identify such knowledge. Through the facilitation of ASPPUK, residents in 5 villages and 10 hamlets in Batang Lupar and Embaloh Hulu sub-districts begin to identify and process natural dyes. Most of the population in these two sub-districts are traditional farmers with shifting cultivation systems. These agricultural products include rice and vegetables that are also the source of food. In addition, the community also became farmers and rubber tappers.

Agricultural work is done by both men and women. Outside of agricultural work, women do weaving activities; weaving baskets from rattan and weaving mats. These works are generally done on the sidelines of agricultural work to add family income. Income from agricultural products is very low, hence, can only meet the needs of daily meals.

In terms of weaving, women specifically get their own place in the Iban community. When weaving is still a part of adat, women have a world of self-respect for those who have expertise. Appreciation is not only because of the achievements they achieved but also the intelligence they believe to come from *panggau*, the heavenly creature.

Almost at every stage weaving the expertise of a person gets his own designation or title. So many titles are given to smart women who are able to master weaving skills. Those who are expert in one stage are usually called *indu* or mother in Iban language, which is placed in front of the area of expertise such as *indu gar* or *ibu benang* means she is good at making yarn from cotton, *indu nakar* which is a degree for those who are good at measure the ingredients to color the thread.

The main program of ASPPUK is to raise the role of women in small business. This has been proven by the emergence of the interest in weaving production in the assisted location. The number of hamlets requested to be accompanied by ASPPUK increased from 6 to 11 hamlets and villages. In 2017, new opportunities from this weaving craft are well responded by some village heads like Mensiau Village and Sungai Abau Village. Some activities concerning the empowerment of women in weaving are included in the village program with the allocation of the *Dana Desa* (village fund) budget. *Kain tenun* are displayed in various expo events at district, provincial and national levels with ASPPUK facilitation.

To campaign for the environmentally friendly weaving skills of Iban women, ASPPUK helps promote by opening local, national, regional markets at the ASEAN and global level through exhibitions, fashion shows and workshops. Two of the events to promote Iban weavings facilitated by ASPPUK were *New York Fashion Week* and the *Jakarta Fashion Week* in 2017. The market is very enthusiastic, welcoming the products of the Iban women, an extraordinary appreciation. Certainly, this appreciation must give simultaneous effects at the grassroots level, to the weaving women. Assistance and empowerment efforts are still being carried out, strategies must be expanded by involving other stakeholders with the same long-term goals.

Awareness of the importance of maintaining knowledge, skills and expertise is positively correlated with the wishes of Iban Dayak women to improve family welfare. The assistance of ASPPUK inspired Iban Dayak women to conserve natural coloring plants, because weaving is a life for them. The knowledge and skills of the Iban to produce natural color have been documented in a catalog of colors. This catalog is an oral knowledge which is outlined in practice, and with assistance of ASPPUK, is compiled together in writing documents. The catalog is now displayed on the *betang* houses. It is hope that it can be learned by children, women and men, who live in *betang*.

3.4 Competition with Malaysian Iban

For Iban people in Malaysia and in Indonesia, weaving has become an inseparable part in all kinds of socio-cultural activities of the people. Weaving has become a part of everyday life which has many uses from only clothes, decorations, to being a substantive part of the traditional celebrations and great celebrations of the Iban people. Comparing different characteristics between Iban Malaysia and Indonesia is not easy, especially for those who are laymen and do not understand the woven fabric in depth. We think that there is a kind of competition betwe the Indonesian and Malaysian Iban in weavings.

Unlike the dynamics that occur in Indonesia, Malaysian weavers are arguably rarely having difficulty in supplying yarn and factory dyes for a long time. Even around the 1940s in Malaysia there was an abundance of thread stock which was abundant where thread had become a means of wage for Indonesian workers who *bakuli* there. The stability of the economic situation in Malaysia makes the tradition of weaving with manufacturer (synthetic) dyes consistently maintained until now. Our informant from Betang Tekalong explained that Malaysian woven fabrics rarely use natural colors but chemical dyes or wantex even though they know natural dyes from the same ancestors.

Another difference between Malaysian and Indonesian Iban woven fabrics is in visual appearance. Visual display is a variety of colors that exist in woven fabric products that can be observed. In addition to color, another visual appearance is the structure of the constituent yarn. Our informant from Betang Kelawik said that the most easily seen difference was the shape of the motif where Malaysian woven cloth had a large motif while Indonesian woven cloth was smaller. Indonesian

Iban motifs are thought to be neater while Malaysian motifs look thicker and bigger so that they look less neat.

Weavers in Malaysia, according to our informants, prefer to use new motifs and do not want to use old motifs from ancestors because they still believe in the taboo. New motifs for woven fabric can easily be made into finished products, such as clothes or skirts. While the old motifs, like the motives of humans, crocodiles and all other living things, should not be cut. While the price of Malaysian products is generally perceived as higher, the Indonesia Iban told us that their natural colored weavings are priced cheaper by Malaysian buyers. The product are thought as too dull as they prefer the brighter ones.

From the competition with the Malaysian weavings, the Indonesia Iban in the research areas believe that their weaving are much more authentic than the Malaysian. We are not in the position of judging which one is true, but that perception has in practice made the Indonesia become more proud to their weavings.

4 DISCUSSION

Natural dye materials promoted by ASPPUK is expected to answer the issue of availability of dye. In addition to cheaper, natural dye materials are also in line with market trends that give more appreciation for natural products. Our research shows that the Dayak community in Batang Lupar Sub-district extract natural dye in three ways: (1) direct picking from nature, from plants and minerals in the forest, (2) taking from plants originating around the village or cultivation and 3) taking from the remain of the unused timber or logs. Nevertheless, they take more raw materials directly from the forest. As we show in Table 1, natural dye appears to have the potential to interfere with the survival of the plant. The main ingredient is in the form of leaves often must be taken in large quantities which can damage the plant. There is even a material taken from its roots, which of course turns the plant to die. On the other hand, there are plants that have become increasingly difficult to find, such as *engkerebai*, which is also sought by the local people as ingredients for traditional medicine.

It is fortunate that the Iban people, for example, the community live in Sungai Long, still live in groups and uphold *adat* (the customs) by always putting harmony with nature. They always start the activities of extracting nature ingredients by performing rituals and in accordance with *adat* rules.

For example, until now they still divide the land for farming activities on the basis of ancestry and kinship ties in the *betang*.

From several discussions with the Sungai Long community on the program of non-timber forest product identification which is done together with ASPPUK, the community is greatly helped by the knowledge of natural dyes. They realize and know the potential of natural dye plants that are located in the *betang* vicinity and that are in their customary gardens and forests. Natural dyes are mostly obtained from plants in forests which is used according to *betang* institutions. When ASPPUK introduces a program to produce natural dyes, the local people look at their forest potential and see how it relates to strengthening the role of *betang* in protecting forests.

Interestingly, the program initially initiated by ASPPUK for the enhancement of the role of women entrepreneurs ultimately establishes cultural conservation through the strengthening of knowledge and practice of weaving. While the choice to focus on the use of natural dyes, not primarily on motives and weaving skills, ultimately brings this ASPPUK program to the issue of natural resource conservation. When the research was carried out, the weaving business began to be conducted in *betang* again to help people to get cash money. Some NGO activists who come to do their jobs in the villages often buy *kain tenun*; in addition, they also help to market Iban weaving in exhibition events at district and provincial levels. ASPPUK even once brought Iban weaving products in the event of a national clothing festival in Jakarta.

5 CONCLUSION

Our research has shown how the facilitation process by an NGO based on women's empowerment, in practice, has led to a variety of effects. The case of ASPPUK's local economic strengthening program in Kapuas Hulu through *pua kumbu* production and sales, provides an overview of the increasing appreciation of the *pua kumbu*. In addition, the use of natural dyes also resulted in the intensification of certain crop cultivation in the forest, which in turn led to conservation awareness of forests and nature.

As a product of cultural processes, the survival of the Iban *pua kumbu* is colored by and related to many factors and interests. Some scholars have pointed out that the policy of regional autonomy launched in 1999 has a lot of influence on the increasing role of the local government and community. At the same time, they also notice that the policy also pushes some local authorities to

revitalize their old tradition to show their uniqueness compared to others. *Pua kumbu*, that its popularity was up and down through history, gets its momentum in this period. However, since cultural processes are always fluid and in the making, we can only judge the increasing of communities' appreciation of *pua kumbu* by describing the context first. In the case in Kapuas Hulu, it is more due to the NGO's activism. We have already pointed out that the type of activism associated with this rise in appreciation is not simply because the program is linked to economic benefits alone, but there are also aspects of gender, cultural conservation, and nature conservation.

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