Lamak : ritual objects in Bali

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Chapter 4

Ephemeral and permanent *lamak*

4.1 *Lamak* makers at work

The first time I saw the actual making of a *lamak nganten*, the long and impressive wedding *lamak*, was in Padangtegal on 2 May 1983. On that day, together with my assistant, Cokorda Ngurah, I visited I Made Sadra (fig. 4.1) who lived in Padangtegal in a quiet street heading south from the main road in Ubud. The purpose of the visit was to order *lamak* for the collection of the National Museum of Ethnology, from a renowned *tukang lamak*.

Pak Sadra lived in a very traditional compound, surrounded by mud brick walls. Small buildings and pavilions were situated amidst palm trees and flowers, chickens and little pigs walked freely around. It was two days before Galungan, and together with his son, Pak Sadra was working on a *lamak nganten* for a family member who had just married and who also lived in Padangtegal. Because the *lamak* was for family, Pak Sadra received no money for his work, but only food during the days he was working on the *lamak*. It was also harvest time and busy in the rice fields, so Pak Sadra could not spend the whole day making this *lamak*.

On this first day Pak Sadra concentrated on the cutting of the motifs (fig. 4.11). He used dark green, mature leaves (*ron*) of the sugar palm (*jaka*), which he had collected from trees on his own land. He had already cut from the leaves sections of 40-45 cm in length, in accordance with the planned width of the *lamak*. With dexterous fingers he folded the leaves in special ways, and with a sure hand and just from memory he cut the leaves with a sharp knife in such a way as to form the pattern he intended. When all the leaves needed for one design were finished, Pak Sadra bound them together with a piece of coconut palm leaf and put them in a pot of water, to keep them fresh.

The next day I visited Pak Sadra again. He had already made sections of the yellowish light-green base of the *lamak* by pinning, using small bamboo pins (*semat*), lengths of young leaves (*ambu*) of the sugar palm to one another. On this second day he was busy fastening the dark green cut-out ornaments onto these sections of base (fig. 4.1). He did this by pushing, from the upper side, a pin or *semat* down through the layer of leaves and then back through again, breaking off the *semat* just above the leaf.

Early on the morning of Galungan (4 May 1983), Pak Sadra completed the *lamak* he had been working on the past two days. On the ground inside the courtyard, the separate sections of the *lamak* were laid down in the right order, and then Pak Sadra, his son, a daughter and another boy fastened the sections to one another (fig. 4.2). They fastened a piece of the dark-green *ron* along the length of the *lamak*, and then between each of the different sections, they added lengths of decorated *ron*. The total length of the *lamak nganten* was 7.5 meters, and its width 45 cm.

Finally the *lamak* was carefully folded up ready for transporting. Everyone helped set up the *sanggar nganten* which was made of bamboo, and with fastening the *lamak* to it by placing it on a bamboo frame resembling a ladder.

More than 30 years later (31 October 2013), I happened to pass the house of Pak Sadra again on Jalan Hanoman. Already in 2001 I had learned that he had passed away as a consequence of an accident in the rice fields. Padangtegal had changed beyond recognition, and so had the courtyard of Pak Sadra. Eight days earlier had been Galungan, and in front of the house of Pak Sadra, hanging from the shrine of one of the few *penjor* in this urbanized narrow street, was a withered palm leaf *lamak*. The motif was still recognizable, a *gebogan* motif, the 'offering' motif in the typical style of Padangtegal, of which Pak Sadra must have made hundreds, years ago, when he was one of the best known *tukang lamak* in his village.

Away from the artistic centre of Ubud, in the far east of Bali, I paid a visit one day (28/10/2013) to a young woman I already knew, Ni Wayan Suartini, in the market town of Bebandem in Karangasem (fig. 4.3). Just 25 years old, she was then an employee of a business specializing in palm leaf objects (*jejaitan*), and she spent her days, mostly by herself in a shop-cum-workplace, making *jejaitan* out of the leaves of the *lontar* palm. The floor of the little space, only about five by five metres, was covered with bundles of *lontar* leaves, some dyed in bright colours, and plastic bags full of completed *jejaitan*. Stored in a cupboard were various other materials she needed for her work: cotton strings, coloured paper, little packets with small coloured plastic ornaments in the form of butterflies and flowers, brightly coloured plastic strips from China, and boxes full of staples. From the ceiling hung large *jejaitan* to be used as decorations for *penjor*. One side of the shop is open to the street, opposite the market, which operates every third day. Since the day of my visit was not a market day, during the four hours of the visit, only a few people came along, to buy *lontar* leaves, to order *jejaitan* for a ceremony, or to pick up orders.

Wayan finished only three years of secondary education (SMP) and after trying in vain to find work in Denpasar, in 2009 she took a job in the business (*perusahan)* of Ibu Suriani who started the workshop in 2007 with members of her own family. It is purely a *jejaitan* workshop, no complete offerings are sold here.

In 2010 I had bought from Wayan a pair of small *lontar lamak* with flower motifs cut from coloured *lontar* leaves. At that time she had stacks of them, made in advance for upcoming rituals. But on this day she had none left, all sold for Galungan which had taken place just a few days earlier. Even while talking to Wayan, she worked non-stop on her orders, which included *ceniga*. From a complete 'fan' (*pucuk*) of *lontar* leaf as cut from the tree, she cut bundles of leaves to the right length with a big cutting instrument (fig. 4.4), cut motifs out of the separate leaves with an ordinary knife and fastened them with staples. She said that *lontar* leaves are far too tough (*keras*) to fasten with the bamboo 'pins' (*semat*) she used when as a young girl she helped her mother at home making *jejaitan* from the leaves of the coconut palm.

Wayan used and sold in her shop three kinds of *lontar* leaves. The best leaves, she said, came from Bali, the areas around Kubu, Tianyar, Seraya (all in Karangasem). She preferred this variety when she made *lamak* and *ceniga*, since these leaves are "stronger, with their own natural colour". The second kind, selling at the same price, are leaves from Sumba. They are narrower and more supple. The most expensive leaves are from Madura; being the widest of the three, this variety is used for the decoration at the tip of a *penjor* (*sampian penjor*) and other *penjor* decorations. The *lontar* leaves imported from both Sumba and Madura "are treated with chemicals to make them more durable and whitish in colour", she explained, "and to reduce mould (*jamur*) caused by shipping the leaves to Bali before they are completely dry." However, these chemicals were bad for her health, so when Wayan worked with these kinds of leaves she had to use gloves and a mouth and nose cap.

Instead of *semat*, the traditional bamboo 'pins' or slivers, Wayan always used staples to fasten motifs or different leaves to one another (fig. 4.14). Besides being cheaper, staples are easier to work with, especially in the case of *lontar* leaves. But her right hand usually hurt a lot after a full day of handling the stapler. She also preferred to use ready-made coloured plastic decorations, instead of cutting them herself from coloured *lontar* leaf, which was much more time-consuming.

Figure 4.3: Ni Wayan Suartini in her workshop in Bebandem, 28/10/2013.

Figure 4.4: Ni Wayan Suartini cuts lontar palm leaves. Bebandem, 28/10/2013.

4.2 Ephemeral and permanent *lamak*

In this introduction I presented two accounts of the materials and techniques used in creating *lamak* by two different *lamak* makers, in different areas in Bali, 30 years apart from one another.

As discussed in Chapter 2, a *lamak* serves as a base for offerings and to decorate shrines and altars. In a more metaphorical sense, a *lamak* is regarded as a bridge, path or staircase between the worlds of deities and humans, between heaven and earth. The ritual purpose of a *lamak* is to attract invisible beings to the offerings, and to let their blessings come down from heaven to earth via the *lamak*. In Chapter 3 I pointed out that not only does the *lamak* itself, as ritual object, act as 'channel' or medium, but that also its motifs (the blessings of life) and vertical structure strengthen its purpose of mediating between the human and divine worlds.

In the present chapter, I explore the connection between the ritual purpose of a *lamak* and the material and techniques with which it is made. I focus first on the materials that palm leaf *lamak* are made of and the details of the techniques used for making them, and then explore further whether the structure of the motifs and the natural characteristics of the leaves might be related to other aspects of Balinese culture. In the second part, I present an overview of the many varieties of *lamak* made from materials other than palm leaves, and investigate whether their ritual purpose differs in any way from that of palm leaf *lamak*. Finally, I discuss the relationship between 'ephemeral' and 'permanent' *lamak*, in connection with the purpose of a *lamak*.

4.3 Palm leaf *lamak*

4.3.1 Natural materials

From the opening accounts of two very different *lamak* makers at work, the different kinds of natural material – leaves in different stages of maturity and from different kinds of palm trees – have already been introduced. The leaves of three palms, coconut palm, sugar palm, and Palmyra or *lontar* palm, all native to Bali, are of special importance; the use of leaves of the fourth, the oil palm, is a recent introduction.

All these varieties of palm leaves have in common that they are attached to a strong central spine or midrib, called *lidi*, which is of crucial importance for the construction and structure of the motifs on a *lamak*.

The coconut palm is a tree with such a myriad of uses that even now it is still a major source of livelihood for the Balinese, one of the foundations of Balinese (material) culture, and this is widely acknowledged by the Balinese themselves (Taman 2009:87, Putra 1985b:16).[1] The coconut palm (*Cocos nucifera*) is called *punyan nyuh* in Balinese and *pohon kelapa* in Indonesian. Every part of the tree is used; besides the nut, the sap of the florescence is drank as palm wine, the wood of its trunk is an important building material, and even its root is used (for medicine), and formerly its bark was made into brushes (for painting) and colouring material (*talok*) (Taman 2009:88). Its leaves are fashioned in various ways to make a wide range of objects for household and for religious purposes. The young, light-green leaves are called *busung* in Balinese and *janur* in Indonesian. The mature dark-green leaves are called *slepan* in Balinese (fig. 4.5).

The sugar palm (*Arenga pinnata Merr*) is another palm variety with a multitude of uses, though not to the same extent as the coconut palm. It is called *punyan jaka* in Balinese and *pohon aren* or *pohon enau* in Indonesian. Other than its palm wine which is highly regarded, its products often have religious purposes. The coarse tough fibre (*ijuk*) around the base of its fronds is used only for shrines and buildings in temples, and its leaves and fruits are widely used in ritual (Taman 2009:59-60). The young, yellowish leaves are called *ambu* in Balinese, and the mature dark-green leaves are called *ron. Ambu* and *ron* are the favourite materials for making *lamak*, because these leaves are both strong and very supple and 'refined' (*halus*). However, *ron* does not stay fresh as long as *slepan* (from the coconut palm) (Putra 1985b:10,11). From the Balinese love of word play, I once heard the association between *ambu* and purification, since the word *ambuh* means shampoo, and so *ambu* is the pre-

1 See Eiseman (2005:47) on average measurements of coconut palm leaves and other aspects of the coconut palm.

Figure 4.5: Lamak made from leaves of the coconut palm. Banjar Gulingan, Sanur, 12/5/2010.

Figure 4.6: Lamak made from leaves of the sugar palm. Banjar Pujung Kelod, Sebatu,12/5/2010.

Figure 4.7: Lamak made from leaves of the lontar palm. Pura Bale Agung, Bebandem, 11/2/1989.

Figure 4.8: Lamak made from the leaves of the oil palm. Ngis (Manggis), 1/2/2012.

ferred leaf for ritual usage (pers. com. Ida Made Oka, Komala, 30/4/2015) (fig. 4.6).

According to *lamak* maker I Gusti Putu Nonderan (pers. com. 3/4/1994), these palm trees have mythical connotations: "All ceremonies are witnessed by Brahma, represented by fire and the coconut, and by Wisnu, represented by water and all plants, including the coconut palm and sugar palm."[2] "There is also a story about this. Brahma had in fact five heads but only allowed four of them to be visible. Gana discovered the hidden fifth head, which made Brahma angry. The earth heated up and in his anger Brahma discarded his fifth face onto the earth at Semara Giri (Mountain of Love). From this face sprouted the coconut and sugar palm trees. Thus the leaves of these two trees (*ron, ambu, slepan* and *busung*) are used in ritual decorations and offerings."[3]

A complete palm frond is called a *papah* when the leaves are older and spread out, and *pucuk* when the leaves are still unfolded. A *katih* is one single leaf cut from the frond.

The third tree that is increasingly used for making *lamak* is the *lontar* palm, in English usually called Palmyra palm (*Borassus flabellifer*), a kind of fan palm. It is called *punyan ental* or *rontal* in Balinese and *pohon lontar* in Indonesian. Here there is no significant difference in colour between younger and older leaves, they both turn white when dried in the sun (fig. 4.7). The advantage of these leaves is that the *jejaitan* made from them can be kept for a long time (Putra 1985b:11). In Karangasem *lontar* and young coconut palm leaves are generally classified as yellow, *kuning*, and therefore a suitable material for the *ceniga jan banggul,* the *ceniga* in the form of a 'bamboo ladder' the ancestors use when they go back to heaven at Kuningan, ten days after Galungan (see Chapter 2). In contrast, for Galungan one should use dark-green *ron* or *slepan* to make *lamak*. Also in Karangasem, very often a banana leaf is placed underneath a light coloured *ceniga* to give these leaves and the cut-out spaces formed by the patterns an attractive colour contrast. The preferred banana leaf is that of the *biu keladi*, which is the variety of banana most often used in offerings (for example *banten suci*) (pers. com. Ida Nyoman Oka, Komala, 3/2/2016).

In 1982 in the 'offering workshop' of Dayu Made Putra in Gria Puseh, Sanur, the light-coloured leaves of the *lontar* palm were often used for making tops of offerings when they had to be made long in advance, instead of *busung* and *ambu*, which were much less durable. Although Dayu Made at that time already remarked on the growing shortage in Bali of *busung* and *ambu*, in Sanur most *lamak* were still made of these young leaves of the coconut and sugar palms. She said that in Sanur *ambu* was mostly used for *lamak*, since it is supple to work with.[4]

The kind of leaves most commonly used is any region is largely dependent on ecological factors. In dry areas like east Karangasem or along the north coast of the island, *lontar* palms grow better than other varieties of palms, so there is a tendency to use *lontar* leaves in these areas. And since there are more sugar palms in central Bali than in Badung (south Bali), the *lamak* (especially the *lamak nganten*) in Gianyar are more often made from *ambu* and *ron* than in, for example, Sanur and Denpasar, where coconut palm leaf is more usual.

The fourth kind of leaves used for *lamak* is from the oil palm (*Elaeis guineensis*) which is not indigenous to Bali. The leaves are imported from Sulawesi. In Bali, these leaves are called '*busung* Sulawesi', because the young, almost white leaves are used, which are rather like the *busung* from the coconut palm. Already in 2010 people in Ubud were increasingly using *busung* Sulawesi. "Ida Pedanda approves. Formerly people didn't dare. The advantage is that it can be made into *jejaitan* well before the ceremony, and it's pleasant to work with" (pers. com. Cokorda Sri 13/7/2010). And in various markets, among them Kerambitan and Tabanan, large bundles of *busung* Sulawesi were available in various colours, even blue, a colour I had never formerly seen used for *jejaitan*. According to Ni Nyoman Murni (Sanur) (pers. com. 13/2/2012), the reason

2 *Semua upacara disaksikan Brahma, lewat api dan kelapa, dan Wisnu lewat air dan semua tumbuhan, seperti pohon kelapa dan jaka.*

3 A similar story is referred to in Putra 2009:101-103.

4 Formerly, at least in the southern Sanur region, *bakung* (*Crinum asiaticum*) was used, also called "coastal pandanus" (*pandan di pantai*), its long white leaves more beautiful than *ambu* or *busung*, and more durable (pers. com. Dayu Made Putra 8/11/1990).

for buying imported leaves is that it is increasingly a problem to find someone who will climb the coconut trees to harvest the young leaves. "One bundle of *busung nyuh* is Rp 7000, at festival time rising to Rp 10.000. *Busung* from Sulawesi is the same price, but can be used earlier, one can begin work earlier for it lasts longer" (fig. 4.8).

In Budakeling too, in the east, for Galungan 2012 Made Sudarmi made dozens of *jejaitan* from *busung Sulawesi* which she had bought in Denpasar, and for the same reason, because "it lasts longer." This material, however, is according to her not really suitable for making *lamak*, because it is less strong than *ron* or *lontar* leaf.

Another important factor nowadays is the increasing shortage of the natural materials necessary for ritual objects in Bali, due to the ever-expanding building activities on the island. In the 1980s the sugar palm tree itself was already getting scarce, but in 2001 even leaves of the coconut palm were being imported from Java[5] and from as far away as Lampung, South Sumatra, by the truckload. Women prefer to work with the softer and broader Balinese palm leaf, but this is much more expensive (Sajana 2000:58-59).

In Ubud, already in December 1987, people were complaining about the shortage of the natural materials, such as bamboo for making *penjor*. There used to be always two *penjor nganten*, male and female, "but now raw materials are scarcer". And *tukang lamak* Pak Sadra remarked that when he married, there were even two *lamak nganten* instead of one (pers. com. 26/2/1990). In the 1980s there were still many double *penjor nganten* to be seen in the Gianyar area. However at Galungan July 2010 I no longer saw double *penjor nganten* in this area.

Although most *lamak* patterns are formed by palm leaves in their natural colours, different shades of green, sometimes the leaves are dyed in other colours as well. As I observed in the 1980s, especially in Tabanan the colours red and yellow were used on a rather large scale. These synthetic colours, derived from dyes sold in powder form at the markets, were the same as those used for dyeing rice dough for cakes. These colours, commonly called *kesumba*[6], have been around a long time. One specialist in the making of offerings (*tukang banten*) in Sanur, Dayu Made Putra (pers. com. 5/5/1994) told me that she remembered using *kesumba* already in the late 1930s.

Natural colours can also be made from plants, such as green from *kayu sugih*, red from the leaf of the teak tree (*daun jati*), orange from the leaf of the teak tree mixed with lime, blue from *kembang teleng*, and yellow from curcuma (*kunyit*) and lime. Nowadays all kinds of colours are used, in all areas of Bali. The leaves, especially *busung Sulawesi* but also *lontar* leaves, are now sold ready dyed in many different colours.

4.3.2 Techniques

Although in the opening section the making of a *lamak* – cutting the leaves and pinning the motifs – has been introduced, the whole process is rather more complex, which I discuss here in more detail. One can distinguish five main stages: the initial process of cutting the leaves into the right length is called *nues* (Bal.) or *potong* (Ind.); cutting the motifs themselves is called *ngringgit* (Bal.) or *mengukir* (Ind.); the process of pinning the base layer of a *lamak* is called *nyait* (Bal.) or *menjahit* (Ind.), literally meaning 'to sew'; the fastening of the motifs onto the background is called *masang* (Bal.) or *memasang* (Ind.); and finally, to complete the *lamak* as a whole, to fasten the different parts to one another, is called *mabarengan* (Bal.) or *magabung* (Bal.). The natural material is in this way transformed, recreated into a cultural artefact.

I often returned to watch I Made Sadra, I Gusti Putu Nonderan, and other people making palm leaf *lamak*, and always they used the same basic techniques. Even for the smallest kind of *lamak*, the *tlujungan*, which does not have additional decorative motifs, leaves are cut to the right size and then fastened together. Since my first periods of fieldwork in the early 1980s, several "How to do" books about the making of *jejaitan* (palm leaf

5 As also reported by MacRae (1997:452).

6 This usage of the word *kesumba* is uncertain, but probably derives from the name of the safflower (*Carthamus tinctorius*), a yellow dye plant with a long history in Bali (Stuart-Fox 1993:89). Perhaps the earliest chemical dyes in Bali were yellowish or reddish in colour.

Figures 4.9-4.10: I Gusti Putu Nonderan cuts into (ngringgit) the folded packet of palm leaf in order to make the basic unit of pattern. Banjar Padangtegal Kaja, Ubud, 3/4/1994.

Figure 4.11: I Made Sadra cuts (ngringgit) a timpasan pattern. Banjar Padangtegal Kaja, Ubud, 2/5/1983.

Figure 4.12: I Gusti Putu Nonderan pins (nyait) to one another the leaves of the base layer of a lamak. Banjar Padangtegal Kaja, Ubud, 3/4/1994.

Figure 4.13: I Made Sadra fastens to one another (magabung) the different sections of a lamak nganten. Banjar Padangtegal Kaja, Ubud, 4/5/1983.

Figure 4.14: Ni Wayan Suartini fastens lontar leaves to one another with staples. Bebandem, 28/10/2013.

artefacts) have been published in Bali, in which the making of *lamak* and *ceniga* is explained step by step, illustrated by drawings and some photographs (for example, Putra 1983:41-53 and Raras 2006:66-72).

The following section is based on my own observations and information from informants, but these are similar to the prescriptions in these publications.

As has been discussed in Chapter 3, the motifs on a *lamak* are both representational and geometrical. One of the most important characteristics of the motifs on a *lamak*, both representational and geometrical, is that they are always composed from a number of leaves, which together form the total design.

4.3.2.1 *Nues*

Before one starts cutting leaves for making a *lamak*, one must first decide on the size and number of motifs. For a *lamak nganten* this is discussed with the person ordering it. According to Pak Sadra (pers. com. 26/2/1990), the breadth of a *lamak nganten*, in accordance with that of the *sanggar nganten*, is usually two *cengkang*, a Balinese measurement equivalent to an outstretched hand span, from tip of thumb to tip of little finger. In terms of length, if a *lamak* of five metres is ordered, the bottommost geometric motif often consists of five or six *ron* leaves sewn together, reaching a maximum of 16 leaves for a *lamak* measuring ten metres. For a *lamak* of seven metres, seven or eight pieces of *ron* are used for each motif, making the *lamak* that much longer, and allowing the possibility of additional kinds of *ringgitan*.

In terms of length or height (when hung), particularly important in making a *lamak* is the relationship between overall length and the number of leaves required in terms of the number of leaves per motif. For example, I Gusti Putu Nonderan (pers. com. 3/4/1994) explained that for a *lamak* with the height of seven metres, the following number of leaves are required for each motif, listed from bottom to top: 24 for *timpasan*; 7 for the body of the *cili* plus 2 for its head; 9 for *candigara merpat*; 7 for the *kekayonan*; 9 for *candigara bunder*; 7 for *gebogan*; 9 for *kapu-kapu*.[7] The width of an opened-out *ron* leaf is about 9 cm. The breadth of a geometrical motif is four times the width of the leaf, about 36 cm. The breadth of a *lamak nganten*, including the two side borders, is thus about 40 cm. This is indeed, according to him, equal to two *cengkang*.

Once the size of the *lamak* has been decided upon and the leaves cut to the required size, a *lamak* maker first has to cut away approximately half of the strong central ribs of the palm leaves, but in such a way that the two halves of one leaf are still attached to one another. This is done so that the leaves are easier to fold over.

4.3.2.2 *Ngringgit*

For the representational motifs, the *tukang lamak* first determines the outline of the design by folding in half the lengths of leaf that will constitute the motif (for example seven for the *gebogan*), then placing these lengths next to one another, and then cutting away the superfluous leaf outside the border of the motif. Then for the internal patterning he cuts out separately the different consecutive lengths of leaves, still folded, so that the motif is symmetrical on either side of the central axis.

Also, if the *tukang lamak*, Pak Sadra for example, had orders for more than one identical *lamak*, then he cuts out at the one time as many of the same motif as possible, working with many layers of leaf at once. For all this cutting work, the *tukang lamak* uses just the one tool, a sharp knife (*tiuk*). Only for the outline of certain representational motifs Sadra made use of an auxiliary implement: for the oval border of the *kekayonan* motif an iron template (probably the blade of a kind of knife) for the straight side of the *gebogan* a kind of ruler; everything else he does out of his head. Only if he feels unsure does he draw the motif on the leaf with a pencil or the point of his knife. The cutting of the motif is the most difficult part, and that he always does himself. A major motif like the *kekayonan* takes him about an hour.

The geometric patterns are composed of several leaves whose length is equivalent to the width of the *lamak*. I Gusti Putu Nonderan, for example, when making geometric patterns opens out the leaf

7 See Chapter 3 for the meaning of these motifs.

(sometimes several leaves at once) along the axis of the rib (*lidi*), and then folds this opened-out leaf two times in the opposite direction. Because the width of the leaf is more or less equal all over, and the rib holds the two parts of one leaf together, in this way he makes a little square packet of four parts of the leaf on top of one another (fig. 4.9). This he makes fast with a bamboo sliver in the corner. Then, he determines the centre of this basic packet. Pak Nonderan usually estimated this by eye, but Ayu Pugeg, a female *tukang banten* from Tegallalang (pers. com. 26/2/1990), demonstrated how she folded the little packet yet another time, and opened it again.

After these preparatory actions, the real work of creating the pattern begins, known as *ngringgit* (from the root *ringgit*). Often the first cuts are towards the centre, either straight from the four sides, or diagonal from the corners. When working from the diagonal, some *lamak* makers first fold the leaf along the diagonal. Pak Nonderan, with his long experience, is able to cut directly into the middle of the packet, without having first to fold along the diagonal (fig. 4.10). With such a sharp knife he can cut directly through four layers of leaf. He is extremely attached to his knife, and never lends it out, he says. Some parts of the *lidi* can be cut away in the process, but save for one or two exceptional cases enough is left over to hold the remaining parts of the leaf together. I will refer to the element of the pattern cut into the folded packet of palm leaf as the 'basic unit' of the pattern. Figures 4.15-4.18 show four of these 'basic units' used to create four different geometric patterns, with the *lidi* or rib visible in the middle of the leaf.

Pak Sadra, with the tip of a very sharp knife, sketched the contours of the basic unit of the pattern on the top leaf of the little packet, just from memory, without looking at an example. Then, quickly and with a sure hand, from below upwards, he cut the motif in the folded leaves of the packet, so through four layers of leaf at the one time.

Once the required bits are cut out, the leaf is opened out again, and the pattern element appears repeated four times in a horizontal row. The total pattern is constructed by vertically placing one above the other two or more leaves with the same pattern, as figure 4.18, of a pattern consisting of six leaves, shows. In the case of a narrower *lamak*, the leaf is only folded once, and the basic unit is a little longer than it is wide (fig. 4.19).

In some cases the basic unit is at the same time the actual element of the total pattern. Sometimes the *lidi* is retained and the leaves are folded as usual to determine the identical size and the centre of the basic units, but then opened again and cut out separately (fig. 4.20). In rare cases the *lidi* is cut completely away and the basic unit is formed in one half of the leaf only. Each of the basic units is then folded diagonally, and then one half is cut away. This principle is shown by the pattern called *batu ketimun* (seeds of a cucumber) (fig. 4.21).

In all cases the pattern is constructed by repetition of the basic units, both horizontally and vertically. This even occurs when the basic unit consists of separate little elements (fig. 4.22).

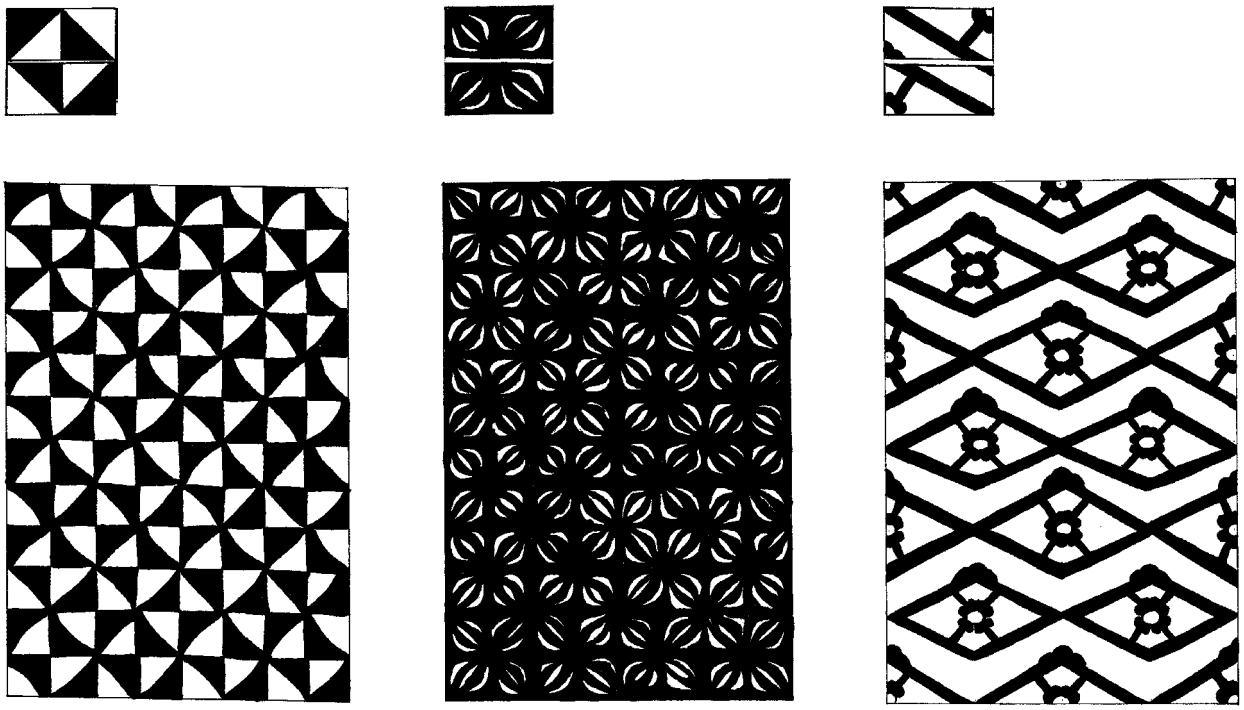
4.3.2.3 *Nyait*

Then the base layer of a *lamak* is made from lengths of the yellowish light-green young leaves (*ambu*) of the sugar palm or the coconut palm. These are opened out flat with the ribs underneath, and then from below, using small bamboo pins (*semat*), the leaves are pinned to one another, horizontally. This pinning is called *nyait*, literally to 'sew', with the small bamboo pins. In practice, any action that involves the use of *semat* is called *nyait*.

4.3.2.4 *Masang*

The next stage is to attach the separate cut-out motifs to the prepared base layer of the *lamak*. And in the case of a *lamak nganten*, Pak Sadra for example had made for each motif a separate section of base material, which later, after he had attached the motif of dark-green leaf, he fastened to one another.

After the leaves of a motif are again opened out, they are attached with *semat* onto the upper or outer side of the light-coloured base layer of the *lamak*. The *tukang lamak* performs this pinning action from above downwards through the leaf and then back up again, breaking off the *semat* just above the leaf. The different leaves which together form one motif are fastened horizontally one above the other, contrary to the vertical direction of the *lamak*, but parallel to the leaves of the base layer.



Figures 4.15-4.17: Three square basic units with the geometric lamak patterns they create. (The white part of the drawing is cut away, and the black is the leaf remaining).

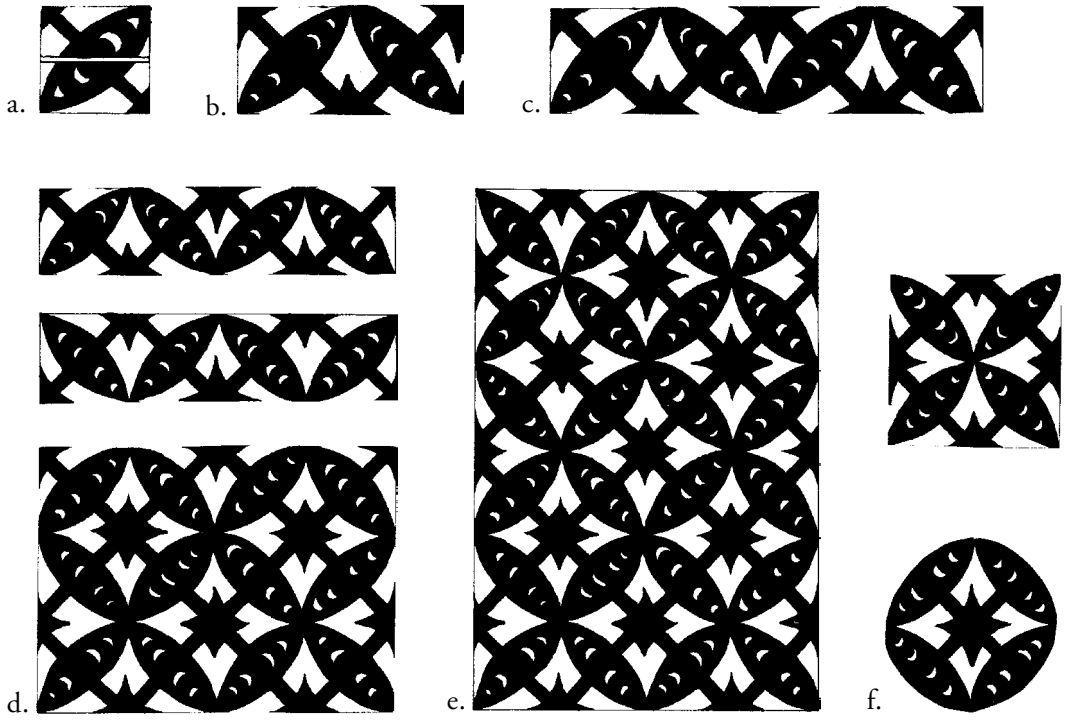


Figure 4.18a-f: To create a geometric pattern, the leaf packet in which the basic unit (a) is cut is then folded out two times (b-c), and the leaves are joined together horizontally (d) to form the complete pattern (e). Two different visual readings of this pattern are possible (f).

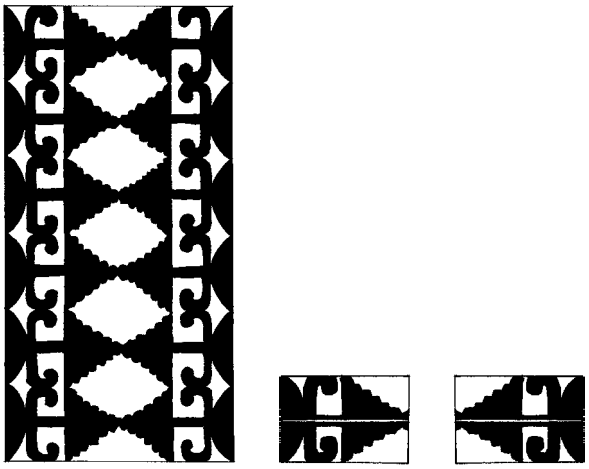


Figure 4.19: The rectangular basic unit necessary to create a narrow lamak.

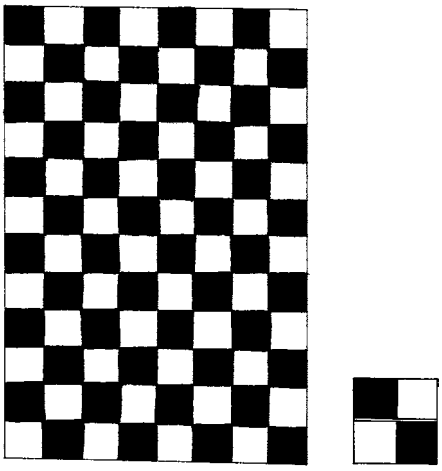


Figure 4.20: The basic unit forms the actual element of this pattern.

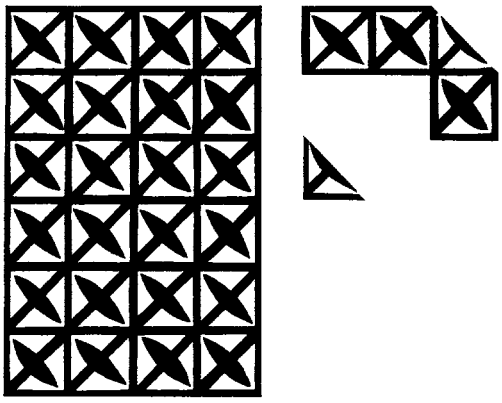


Figure 4.21: The basic unit is formed in one half of the leaf only.

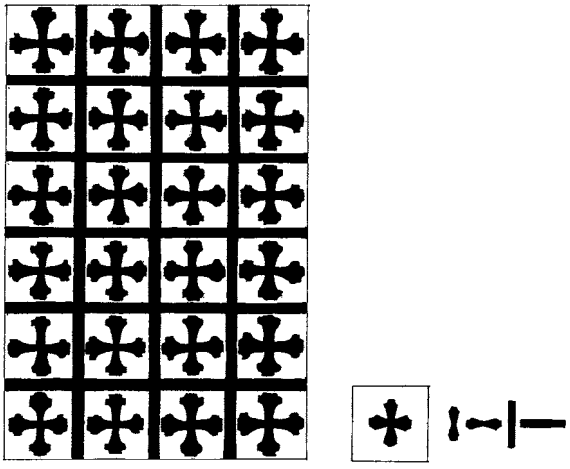


Figure 4.22: The basic unit consists of separate little elements.

Pak Nonderan explained that for a long *lamak nganten* the base of *ambu* must be made of a double layer, twice the thickness of a smaller *lamak*. The extra layer is attached at the back of the *lamak* after the motifs are attached to the front layer of *ambu*.

The sections of a *lamak nganten* that have been made ready on the day before Galungan are folded up with a banana leaf between them, until the *lamak* as a whole is assembled. They are not sprinkled with water, for that causes the leaf to burn more quickly in the sun.

As is so often the case in Bali, there are exceptions to these 'rules'. In Kerambitan and other parts of Tabanan, the long oblong form of the *cili* motif is fashioned from leaves attached to one another along the vertical axis rather than the horizontal.

4.3.2.5 *Mabarengan*

Finally, long strips of leaf are used to make a border along the sides and the lower end of the *lamak*, the side ones extending at the top sufficiently far so that they can be used to fasten the *lamak* to the shrine or to be placed underneath the offerings.

In the case of a long *lamak nganten*, the many sections must be joined together. Pak Sadra, for example, first cut to the correct length the long piece of leaf that formed the border of the *lamak* on its long sides. On the ground inside the courtyard two ropes were stretched out, parallel to one another. Between these, the separate sections of the *lamak* were laid down in the right order, and then Pak Sadra fastened the sections to one another. They fastened a piece of the dark-green *ron* around the lengths of rope, with the spine to the outside, and then attached it to the *lamak*. Then on top of the base, between each of the different sections, they added lengths of decorated *ron*.

For Galungan, the assembly work must be done quickly, especially if there are many orders and there is a risk of the palm leaf drying out. For this reason, Pak Sadra requested help from his family with the attaching of the patterns and the assembling of the *lamak.* Five *lamak nganten* of five metres length each is the limit of what he was able to do at Galungan, otherwise the material would dry out too much. Desiccation would not be a problem with *lamak* made from *lontar* leaves, but I have never seen a *lamak nganten* made of these leaves.

The *lamak* made of *lontar* leaves are based on the same principles of cutting and pinning together. The only difference is that these *lamak* often consist of one layer only (and then they are usually called *ceniga*), and the ornamentation is then achieved by the relation between the parts of the leaf that remain and the parts that are cut out. As pointed out already, nowadays wire staples are often used in place of bamboo slivers (*semat*).[8]

But 20 years ago, *semat* were still widely used to fasten *lontar* leaves to one another. In the various *lontar lamak* and *ceniga* that Ibu Komang Soka (Padangkerta) made using *semat* (22/4/1994), she created the motifs (figs. 4.23-4.25) by various methods, with or without retaining the rib, and by straight and diagonal folding. The rib was either entirely or partly removed from the leaf, but never left fully attached to the leaf. For a *lamak* with motifs, measuring about 17-48 cm in length, she fastened the leaves to one another horizontally, whereas for a smaller *ceniga*, 11-32 cm in length, she fastened the leaves vertically.

Ni Wayan Suartini in her *lontar* leaf workshop in Bebandem nowadays never uses *semat*, but always staples, and she uses a cutting machine for cutting the *lontar* leaves to the required length, but otherwise the techniques she uses are similar to those of Ibu Komang Soka.

4.3.3 Symmetry in the ringgitan patterns

As described in the previous section, all geometric *ringgitan* patterns are formed by various ways of combining (what I have called) the 'basic units' of the patterns. Depending on the shape of the basic unit and the way the motif is cut out within

8 This is the case not only when one has to work with the tough *lontar* leaves, like Ni Wayan Suartini in Bebandem, but increasingly is used also for working with the leaves of the coconut and sugar palms. In 2010 all *lamak* I photographed during Galungan in Gianyar were still made with *semat,* but for the *lontar* ones in Tabanan mainly staples had been used. At Galungan of 1 February 2012, many *lamak* I noticed in Karangasem were made with staples, also the ones made of *ambu* and *ron*. However, at the temple festival in the Pura Dalem in Budakeling on 23 March 2016 all palm leaf *lamak* were made with *semat*.

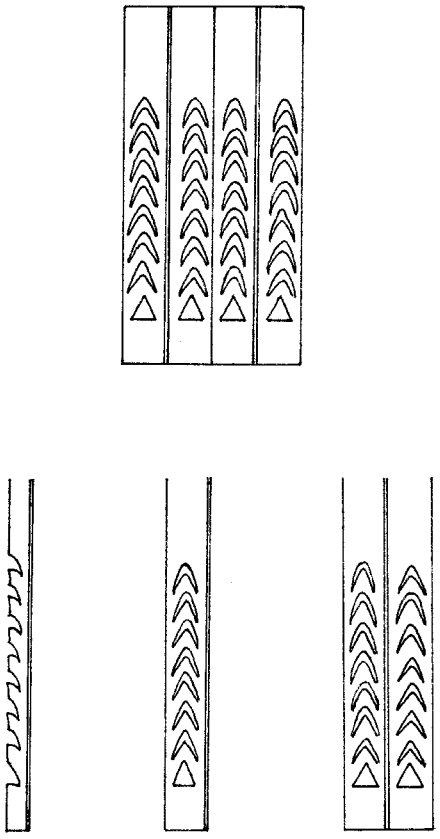


Figure 4.23.

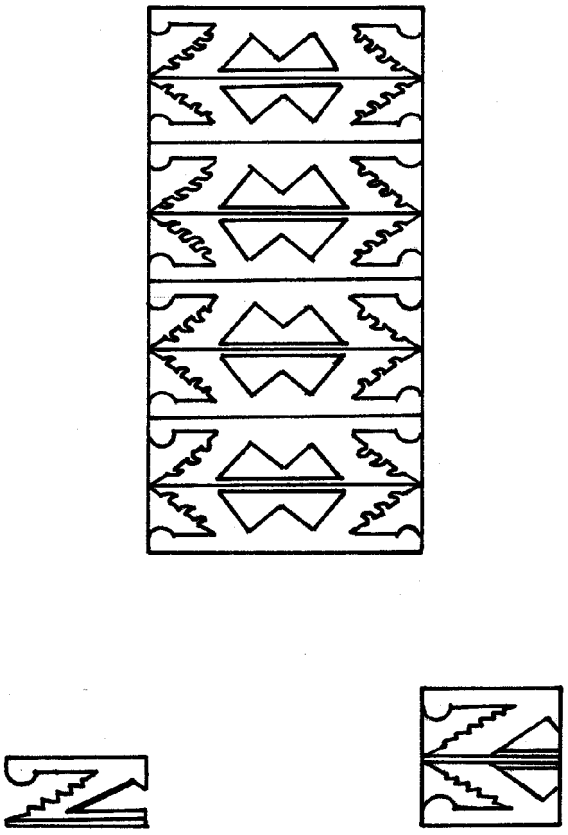


Figure 4.24.

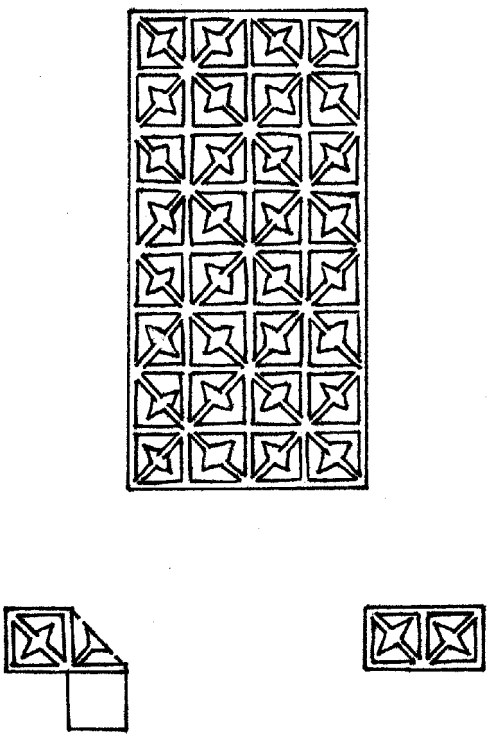


Figure 4.25.

Figures 4.23-4.25: Various ways of constructing lontar ceniga.

the basic unit, the geometric patterns which result from these operations show different kinds of symmetry.[9]

In the case of the *ringgitan* patterns, if the leaves are folded only once, the basic unit is usually rectangular. If the leaves are folded twice, the basic unit is almost always square. In the first case this results in a dominance of horizontal bands in the patterns, as figures 4.26-4.28 show.

In the first two patterns there is mirror reflection only across the central vertical axis of the pattern, which is the same as the side of the basic unit which is folded over. In the other pattern there is also symmetry along the horizontal axes, formed by the top and bottom sides of the basic unit.

If the basic unit is square, not only vertical and horizontal bands result, but also a diagonal structure is visible, as is shown by figures 4.29-4.31. Horizontal symmetry is the result of the reflecting of the basic unit when it is unfolded horizontally along the rib, while vertical symmetry takes place when the leaves are attached to one another vertically. So the four sides of the basic unit can all be axes of reflection. But also the cutting process itself within the basic unit can result in symmetry.

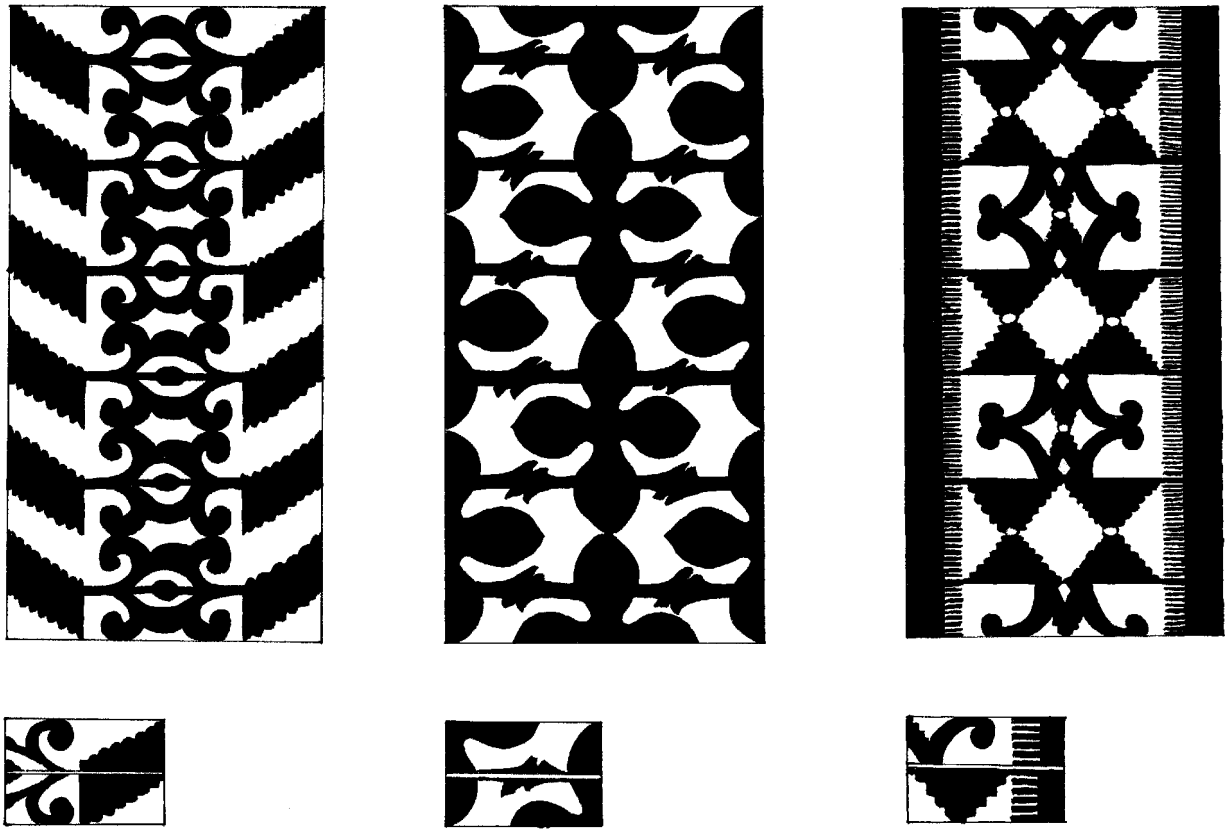
The various ways the pattern elements are cut out in the basic unit can be divided into the following operations. In all cases the centre of the basic unit plays a crucial role and the horizontal, vertical and diagonal axes go through this centre. As already explained, sometimes the basic unit is actually folded lightly along these axes, in order to determine the centre and to mirror elements within the basic unit during the cutting process. When half of the pattern is reflected across a virtual vertical axis in the centre of the basic unit, horizontal bands dominate the pattern (fig. 4.32). When half of the pattern is reflected across the rib, which is the horizontal axis, vertical bands dominate (fig. 4.33). When half of the pattern is reflected in both ways, the pattern consists of bands in both directions (fig. 4.34). If the pattern is not only reflected across horizontal or vertical lines but also across the diagonals, both diagonals are equally dominant in the pattern (as in figs. 4.35-4.37). When elements of the pattern are reflected only across the diagonals, the result is diagonals which only cross in two of the four corners of the basic unit (as in figs. 4.38-4.39).

Most often however, the pattern elements are not symmetrical within the basic unit, but they are rotated around the centre point of the basic unit. Also the four corners of the square basic unit can act as centre of rotation. Consequently, the pattern shows coherence by means of diagonals, which also cross at the corners of the basic unit. All these patterns are symmetrical across the sides of the basic units as well. Always the rib is crucial in holding the whole pattern together, and the processes of reflecting and rotating give coherence to the patterns in which bands and crossing diagonals are the most important features (figs. 4.40-4.46).

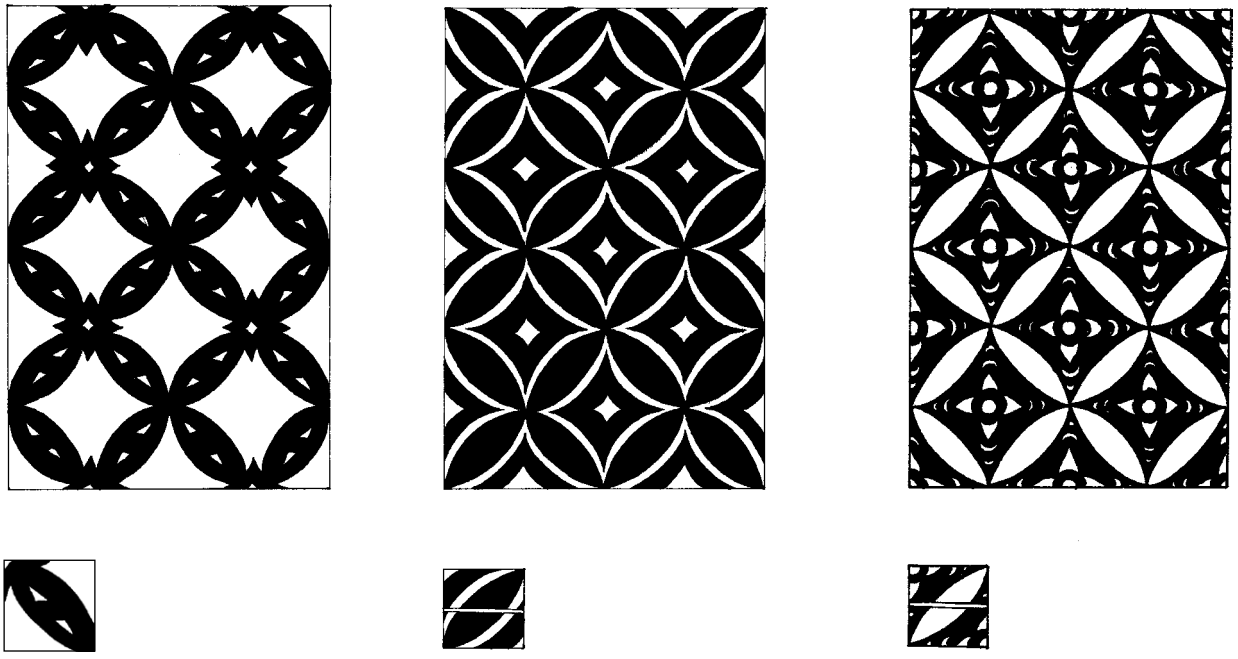
Inspired by ideas from Gerbrands (1983),[10] I wondered whether the symmetry in the *ringgitan* patterns could be related to other aspects of Balinese culture. Gerbrands (1983) questioned whether the structure of two-dimensional representations in different cultures, which are the result of processes of 'mirroring, unfolding and turning around',

9 In their studies on symmetry in plane patterns, Washburn and Crowe (1988 and 2004) define 'symmetry' as a "distance-preserving transformation of the plane onto itself" (Washburn & Crowe 2004:3). Of the different motions or symmetries they distinguish, the three that are relevant for the study of the *ringgitan* are reflection, rotation and translation. Reflection in or across a line (the axis of reflection) is called mirror reflection, resulting in vertical or horizontal band patterns. Rotation has always a fixed point in the plane (the centre of rotation), an angle of rotation and the movement is either clockwise or counter-clockwise. Translation is a displacement or shift by a certain distance along a certain line (Washburn & Crowe 1988:46-48). It is worth noting that these motions of symmetry are not really equivalent to the physical handling of the basic packet of palm leaves when making *lamak*.

10 These ideas were partly based on the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss (Gerbrands 1983:214). Boeren used these ideas in a formal stylistic analysis of the Asmat shields in the collection of the National Museum of Ethnology. He found that all motifs on these shields were based upon different combinations of a single basic element, a comma. Various forms of symmetry were applied, like rotation, reflection (what he calls inversion) and translation (what he calls transportation), resulting in transformations of designs. He concludes that "there exists a strong homology between the visual transformation system of the ornamentation and the conceptual transformation system which allows the exchange of identity between human and animal head-hunters" (Boeren 1995:279).



Figures 4.26-4.28: Horizontal bands dominate lamak patterns if the basic unit is rectangular.



Figures 4.29-4.31: If the basic unit is square, not only vertical and horizontal bands result, but also a diagonal structure is visible.

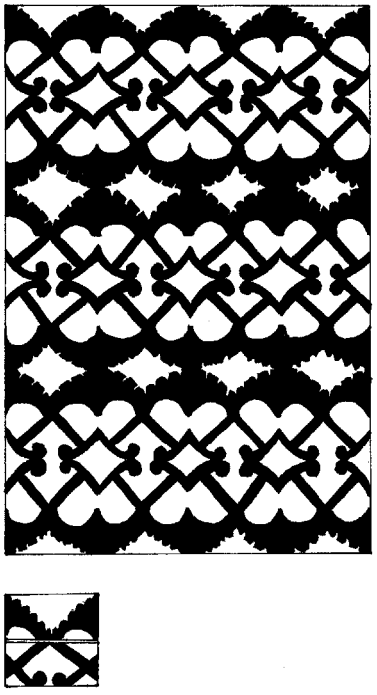


Figure 4.32: When half of the pattern is reflected across a virtual vertical axis in the centre of the basic unit, horizontal bands dominate the pattern.

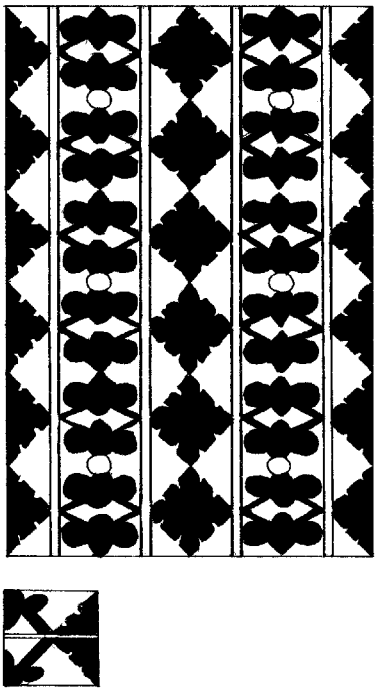


Figure 4.33: When half of the pattern is reflected across the rib, which is the horizontal axis, vertical bands dominate.

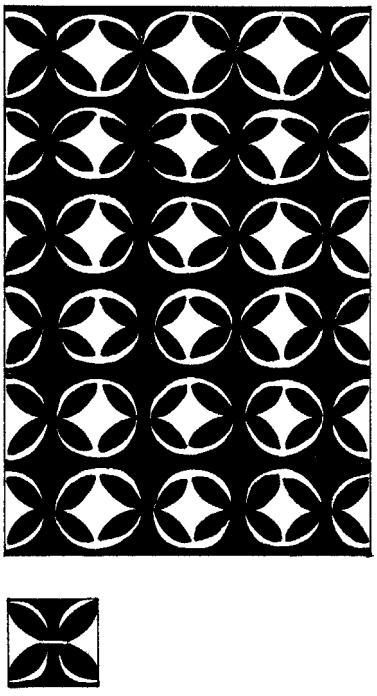
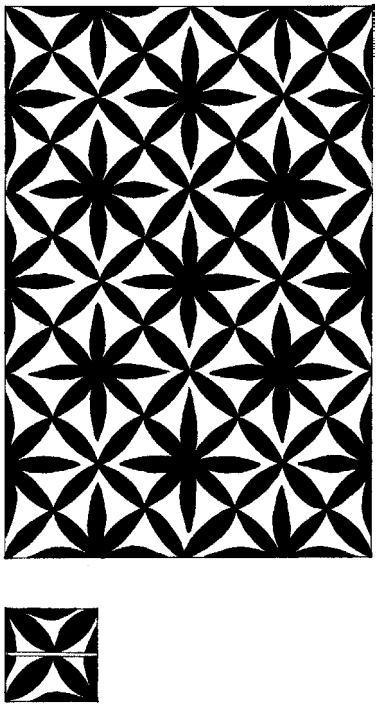
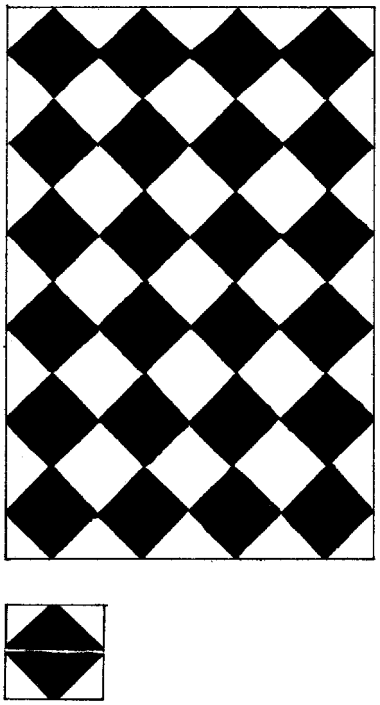
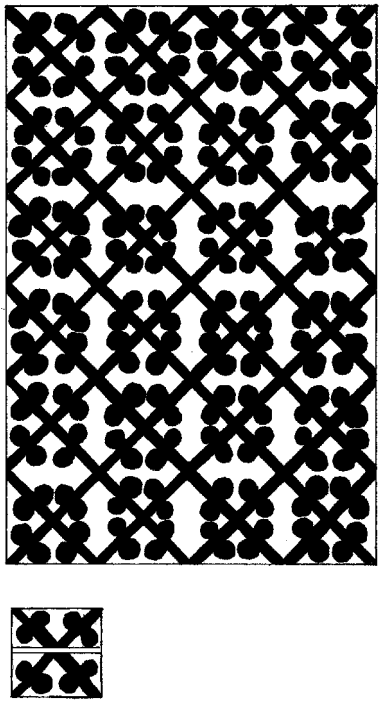


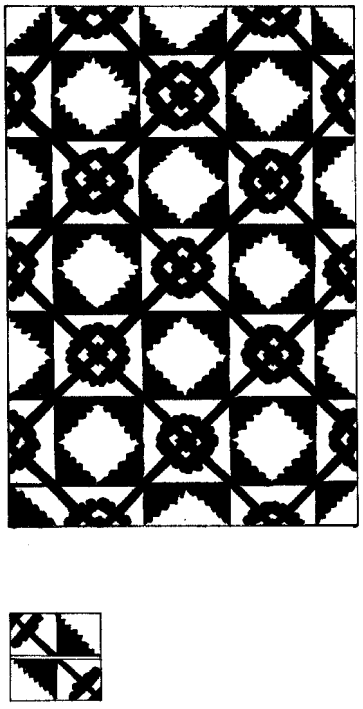
Figure 4.34: When half of the pattern is reflected in both ways, the pattern consists of bands in both directions.

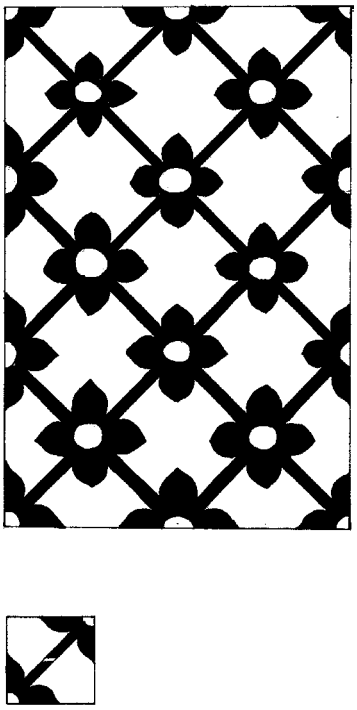


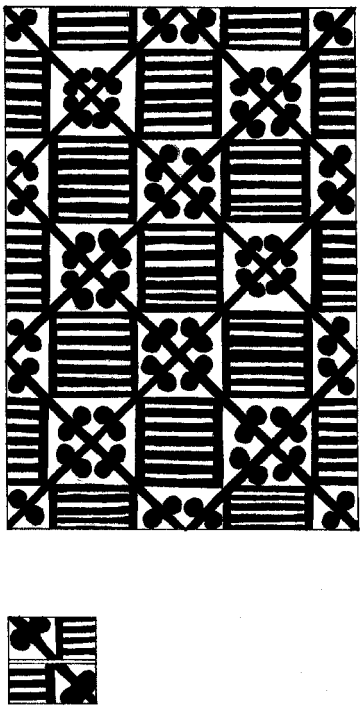




Figures 4.35-4.37: If the pattern is reflected not only across horizontal or vertical lines but also across the diagonals, both diagonals are equally dominant in the pattern.

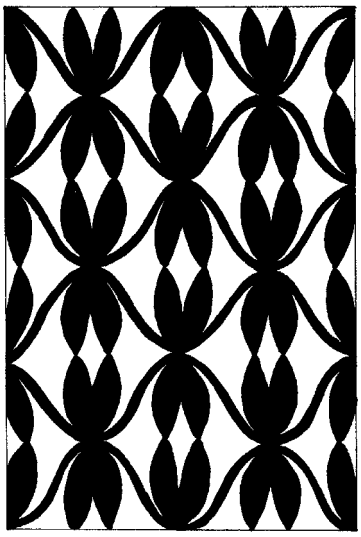


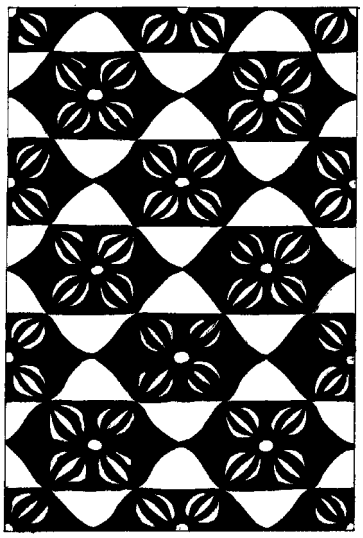


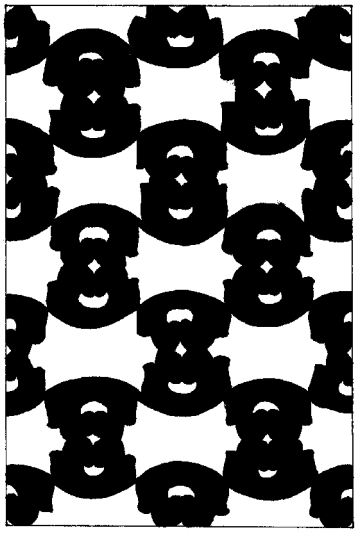


Figures 4.38-4.39: When elements of the pattern are reflected only across the diagonals, the result is diagonals which only cross in two of the four corners of the basic unit.

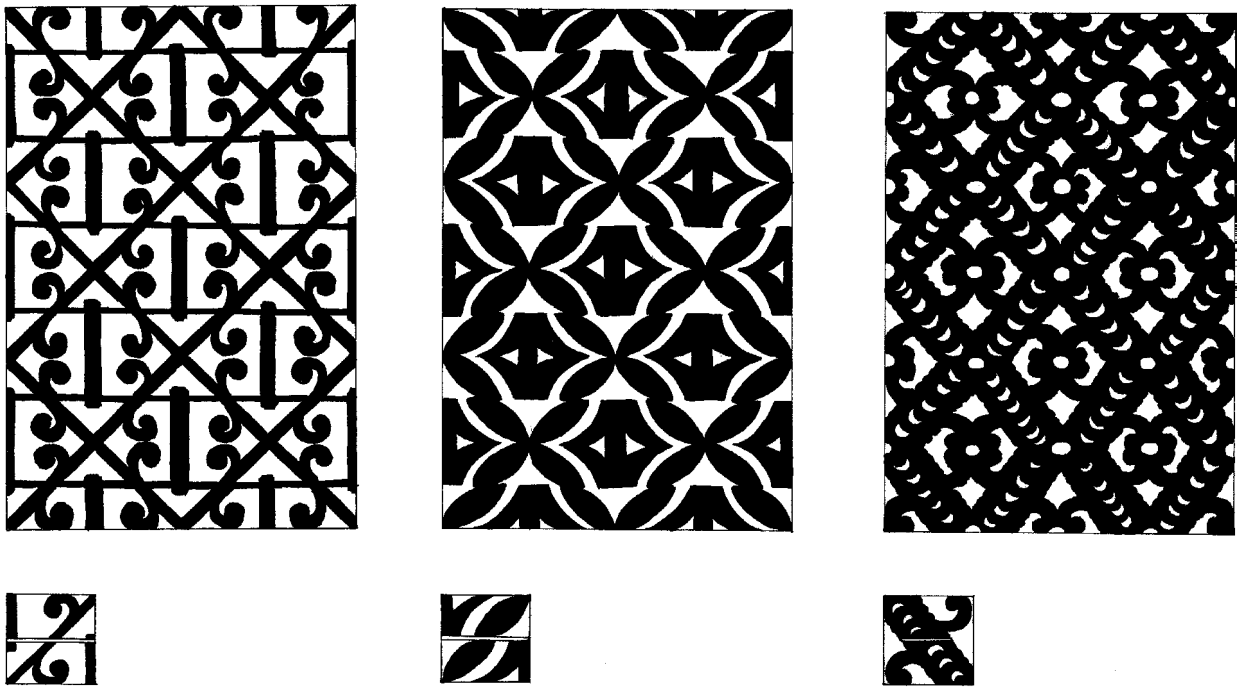
Figure 4.40.



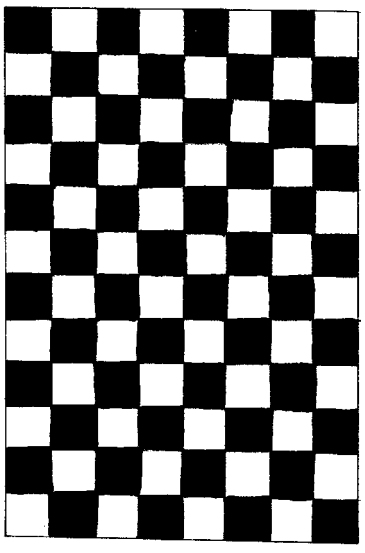


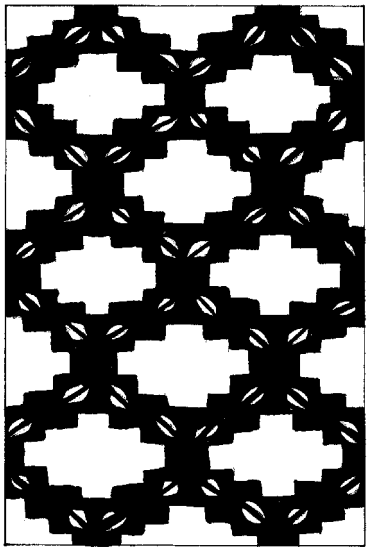


Figures 4.40-4.43: Lamak patterns in which bands and crossing diagonals are the most important features.



Figures 4.44-4.46: Lamak patterns in which bands and crossing diagonals are the most important features.





Figures 4.47-4.48: Lamak patterns called compang banggul, which means 'bamboo ladder'.

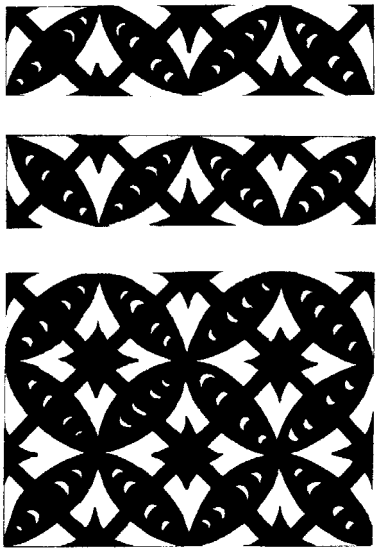


Figure 4.49: The rung construction of a lamak pattern by joining leaves horizontally.

might be regarded as a visualization of other binary opposites in the particular culture, which, however, mostly are not explicit. Also my Balinese informants were not explicit about such possible cultural meanings. They did not relate their ways of manufacturing palm leaf *lamak*, nor the symmetry of the patterns, to any other cultural values other than to the result desired, a completed *lamak*. But although they did not verbalize it, could it be possible to regard the processes of cutting and fastening, folding and unfolding, rotating the elements of the basic unit around a centre point or reflecting them across axes as a visual expression of meaningful structural principles?

For example, in the making of almost all geometrical patterns the centre of the basic unit seems to be crucial, and rotation of the elements within the basic unit results in a form that is reminiscent of the swastika, the symbol of the rotation of the sun or of the earth and related to the cycles of life (as discussed in Chapter 3). The patterns with crossing diagonals could perhaps also be visually related to the so-called *nawa sanga* system of horizontal cosmological order, an important Balinese symbol of the totality of the universe in the form of the eight directions of the compass around the centre, all guarded by different deities.

Other aspects of the structure of the *ringgitan* might perhaps be related to the ritual purpose of a *lamak*. The bands, resulting from reflection of the basic unit across horizontal axes, could then be interpreted as steps of a staircase or rungs of a ladder. As explained in the previous chapters, some Balinese informants called a *lamak* or *ceniga* a path or ladder between heaven and earth and some of the geometrical patterns are in fact called *compang banggul*, which means bamboo ladder (figs. 4.47 and 4.48). In Karangasem, on the festival day of Kuningan when the ancestors return to their heavenly abode, for this purpose the shrines are decorated with a special *ceniga banggul*, which has square openings cut out in the leaves, like an actual small ladder. In the patterns of figures 4.47 and 4.48 the ladder structure can be recognized, but in fact all motifs on a *lamak* are applied to the background as it were step by step, one leaf above the other, in a structure like the rungs of a ladder (fig. 4.49). Even the representational designs, like *kekayonan* or *cili*, are usually built up horizontally. Also the background or base of a *lamak* is fashioned in this way, with the leaves being fastened to one another in a horizontal way, in opposition to the vertical direction of the *lamak* itself.

4.3.4 Dual structures

Not only the geometric *ringgitan* patterns have a dual structure because of the principles of symmetry applied in their construction, but also the representational *raka* motifs are almost always symmetrical. The two identical halves of one motif are made by folding the leaves that are used, and then cutting out the patterns in the folded leaves at the one time. Or an even number of separate leaves are temporarily pinned together and the patterns are cut out together so that they are identical. Then the leaves are unfolded and fastened to the background in such a way that the two halves of the motif are reflected across the vertical axis of the centre of the *lamak* as a whole. Instead of reuniting the two halves of a motif into a whole, they also can remain separate as in the case of the *bulan sibak* (fig. 4.50), the two halves of the moon.

A related process is repetition not only of the two halves, but of the total motif. The clearest example of this process is the design of the *cili nganten*, which is also called *cili kembar*, twin *cili* (fig. 4.51). But mountain, tree and *ibu* also appear in *kembar* or twin form (see Chapter 3). The stars that accompany the sun and moon motifs are symmetrically ordered around the centre, and so are little motifs that are used to fill empty space around the main designs, such as those next to the body of the *cili* in figure 4.52. The patterns along the sides and lower end have a simple structure. They have the same width as a folded palm leaf and are formed by repetition of one little motif, as figures 4.53-4.55 show.

Although most informants did not reflect on structural principles as such, they always remarked on the dual structure of the double motifs. Of course the *cili nganten*, the wedding couple, but also other double motifs like the two half-moons (*bulan sibak*) are seen as an expression of the complementary opposition between man and woman, male and female, an important structuring prin-

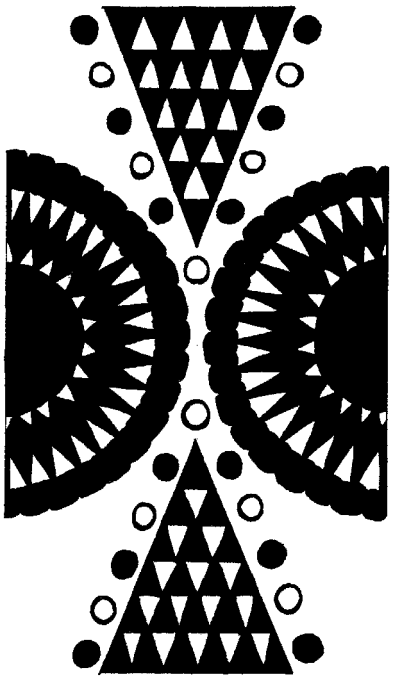


Figure 4.50: Bulan sibak, the two halves of the moon.

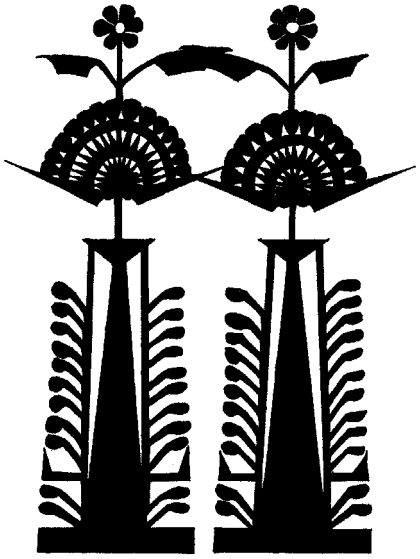


Figure 4.51: Cili nganten, or cili kembar.

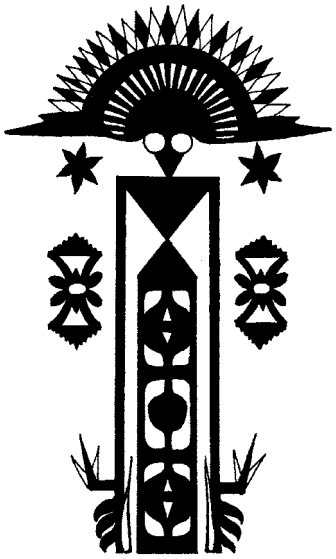
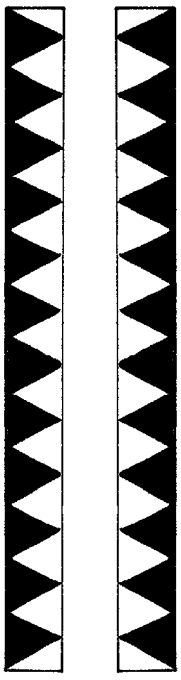
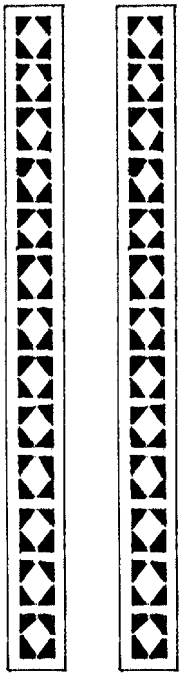
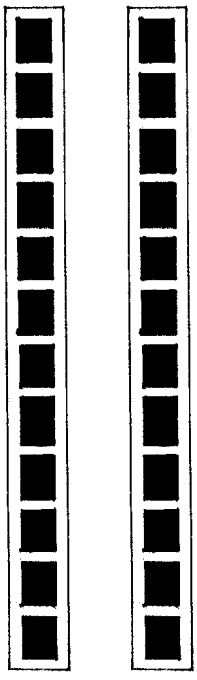


Figure 4.52: Cili figure.







Figures 4.53-4.55: The patterns along the sides and lower end are formed by the repetition of one little motif.

ciple in Bali as it is in many other Indonesian cultures.[11]

Moreover, as Ida Wayan Jelantik, *klian adat* in Budakeling (pers. com. 25/4/2014) explained, in principle any *lamak*, even the most simple one and whatever its motifs are, has a dual structure, because it always consists of two kinds of leaves. These are the young and mature leaves of the coconut or sugar palms, or their light and dark sides, or, in the case of a *lontar lamak*, white leaves with a dark background (of the green banana leaf placed underneath) showing through the holes in the pattern. In the *ringgitan* patterns, sometimes either the light background (as in fig. 4.17) or the dark leaves (as in fig. 4.16) are dominant, but usually light and dark are equally prominent (as in fig. 4.15). In this last group, because of this balance, it is not always clear whether the pattern is formed by the dark or the light parts of the pattern, or which motif is the main part of the pattern. Figures 4.18 and 4.29-4.31 are examples of more or less similar patterns in which either dark or light dominates. Figure 4.18f shows that one particular pattern can also be 'read' in different ways. According to Ida Wayan Jelantik, dark and light, 'black' and 'white', is symbolic of female and male, the combination of which is a precondition for the continuation of life.

What he pointed out is indeed one of the numerous examples of the complementary opposition of female and male (in Balinese, *luh muani*), in the context of Balinese offerings and ritual decorations (see Brinkgreve 2002). One of the relationships between colours referring to male and female is that between white and black. The two sides (dark green front and light greyish-green back) of mature leaves of the sugar palm are often called black and white, and when they are used in combination they often have a male and female connotation. A clear example is found in the important offering called *bebangkit*. The base of this offering consists of two palm leaf discs on top of one another. On this base a four-sided bamboo construction is placed, to which cookies are attached that depict all kinds of cosmic and human phenomena. The bottom disc shows the dark, 'black' side of the leaves, whereas the one on top shows the light, 'white' side. Since a *bebangkit*'s base may also be a double rice winnow, in which a female and a male figure are laid out in rice grains, the white and the black discs have the same male-female connotation. Moreover, the two sides of the leaf are also called the back-side and the belly-side, respectively. They are associated with lying prostrate and lying on the back, which are called the male and female postures. This notion refers not only to the sexual act but also to new life arising from the union of bright Father Sky, Bapa Akasa and dark Mother Earth, Ibu Pretiwi, who together procreate and sustain life. Acting as a base for the cosmic *bebangkit* offering, the two discs also indicate that the union of male and female is the origin of all kinds of life forms.

Another example of 'white' and 'black' leaves being used in a complementary way is formed by the pair of very complicated *pering* figures, which consist of dozens of different palm leaf artefacts all with their own names and meanings, fastened together in the form of a pair of human beings. The male half of this pair is made from 'white' leaves, the female half from 'black' leaves. These special figures are said to act as a kind of witness during major rituals.[12]

This dualistic structure is a manifestation or enactment of the so-called *rwa bhineda* principle, 'the unity of two separated', an expression of the idea that all phenomena consist of two complementary parts, of which one part cannot exist without, or only derives its value from, the other part. Male and female, day and night, dark and light, sun and moon, water and fire, right and left, top and bot-

11 Symmetry and duality in encompassing socio-cosmic classifications and their expression in myth, ritual and material culture are found in many Indonesian societies (Fox 1980:6). As Adams remarked about East Sumbanese decorated textiles, "I am not suggesting that art reflects society, but rather that both art and society respond to the same structural principles", among them "dyadic-triadic set" and "mirror image" (1980:219).

12 See Stuart-Fox 1982:52 for a photograph of these offerings in use at the Eka Dasa Rudra festival in Besakih in 1979.

tom are all related in this all-encompassing system of cosmological order.[13]

According to Ida Pedanda Gede Oka Timbul (pers. com. 28/8/1989), the principle of *rwa bhineda* means that life is made possible because of the coming together of two complementary principles. "The one element cannot act without the other, they are always together. Like the god and goddess of love Semara and Ratih are everywhere, they are the source of all creation." Also the almighty god Siwa, and his spouse the goddess Uma (combined into one figure, known as Ardanareswari), are regarded as all-encompassing divine couple, the origin of all existing phenomena. Therefore they reside in the centre of the cosmos.

4.3.5 "Dari alam"

As explained, the combination of the light and dark coloured leaves can be associated with the dual opposition male and female, as manifestation of the all-encompassing system of dual cosmological order, *rwa bhineda*. But what is the reason that *lamak* and *ceniga* are made from leaves in the first place?

In the magazine *Sarad*, Ngurah Nala explained the relation between the purpose of a *lamak* and its natural materials:

> "*Lamak is a symbol of the road or bridge for the prosperity that is brought down to earth, so that it connects swah loka (the abode of the gods) with bwah loka, where human beings reside. Via the bridge in the form of a lamak, the gifts or blessings bestowed by the gods are channelled downwards, gifts of well-being, prosperity, security and peace for humankind. The use of a lamak made of cloth, from the point of view of Hindu teachings, is surely not appropriate. Because the lamak is the bridge which gives birth to the prosperity of humankind, because of that it must be made of leaf. The leaf is a symbol of the coming into existence, a symbol of the power of birth, the act of creation of god Brahma. Thus the leaf is the symbol of creation, birth, or growth, which will give birth to prosperity and bring about peace on this earth"* (Nala 2003:44).[14]

Most informants agreed that the materials of a *lamak* must come from living nature, "*dari alam*", or from God's creation, "*dari penciptaan Tuhan*", or from Mother Earth, "*dari* Ibu Pertiwi". And not only the leaves, but according to Ida Wayan Jelantik, *klian adat* of Budakeling (pers. com. 25/4/2014), ideally also the dyes which are sometimes used to colour the leaves red or another colour, should come from nature, "*dari alam*". As Ida Made Yudana, from Gria Demung, Budakeling, stated (pers. com. 14/4/2014): "plastic (or other materials) may not be used because they are unable to disintegrate or dissolve. Nature must become fertile again, plants must grow again, and so the *lamak* must be made again."[15]

As we have seen before, in rituals a *lamak* serves as a base for offerings. According to many informants, because a *lamak* is directly related to an offering, the *lamak* too should be made from leaves, because the offerings (*banten*) are themselves "*dari*

13 According to a dictionary of Hindu terms, Ragam Istilah Hindu: "Rwa Bhineda = Two elements that oppose one another, but possess similarities and constitute the origin of everything that exists, that is: 1. Purusa = Father = Spirit; 2. Predhana/Prakerti = Mother = materiality (Tim Bali Aga 2011:10). As Reuter noted, "In Balinese theories of conception it is proposed that the man's seed and soul-substance (*purusa*) will be nourished or cooked in the woman's womb until it has acquired a physical body (*pradana*) and is born" (Reuter 2002:267).

14 "*Lamak adalah lambang dari jalan atau jembatan kemakmuran yang diturunkan ke bumi, sehingga menghubungkan antara swah loka (sthana para dewa) dengan bwah loka, tempat hunian umat manusia. Melalui jembatan berupa lamak ini, akan disalurkan anugerah dari para dewata (Hyang Widhi) berupa kesejahteraan, kemakmuran, keamanan dan kedamaian bagi umat manusia. Penggunaan lamak dengan bahan dari kain ditinjau dari segi tatwa agama Hindu, tentulah kurang tepat. Sebab lamak itu lambang jalan yang akan melahirkan kemakmuran bagi umat manusia, karena iti dibuat dari daun. Daun itu merupakan lambang dari utpatti, yaitu lambang kekuatan melahirkan, mencipta dari Dewa Brahma. Jadi daun adalah simbol penciptaan, kelahiran, atau tumbuh, yang akan melahirkan kemakmuran dan menumbuhkan kedamaian di bumi ini*" (Nala 2003:44).

15 "*plastic (atau bahan lain) tidak boleh dipakai karena tidak bisa hancur. Alam harus subur lagi, tumbuhan harus dibuat lagi, jadi lamak juga harus dibuat lagi*."

alam", from the natural world. "The *lamak* belongs to the offerings", they said.[16]

In almost any Balinese publication on offerings (e.g. Putra 1982:4) this idea is reflected in a popular passage from the Bhagavad Gita (IX.26): "He who offers to me with devotion only a leaf, or a flower, or a fruit, or even a little water, this I accept from that yearning soul, because with a pure heart it was offered with love" (translated by Juan Mascaró (1962)).

In fact a *lamak* is never the base of the actual contents of any offering, but, as discussed in Chapter 2, it partly acts as an underlay; the offering is placed on top of the upperpart of the *lamak.* The actual base of an offering, whatever its size or contents, is itself usually fashioned from 'sewn' palm leaves, usually the dark green, older leaves of the coconut palm (*slepan*). Its form may be square, circular or triangular, with or without a rim. The size and the type of offering determine the kind of base that is used. For bigger offerings a permanent base might be used as well, such as a metal bowl (*bokor*) or a footed wooden dish (*dulang*), but these are then usually covered by an extra palm leaf base.

On the palm leaf base the content of the offering is arranged, as a kind of meal. This consists of mainly rice, side-dishes of meat and vegetables and spices, fruits and cakes. Various other ingredients such as leaves and seeds, pieces of thread or cloth, and some money are also often part of an offering. Some of these ingredients are placed in separate palm leaf containers. It is the enormous variety of these main ingredients that gives offerings their numerous different names.

Almost all offerings are crowned by another palm leaf artefact, for which usually the young, light green coconut palm leaves (*busung*) are used. This artefact of various shapes and sizes, is called *sampian*, and contains betel-chewing ingredients (*porosan*), flowers and sometimes fragrant oil.

So just as the motifs on a *lamak* are vertically structured, also an offering with its palm leaf base, its food content and its palm leaf crown is structured according to the doctrine of the three worlds. In the macrocosm, the *Buana Agung*, these are from bottom to top: *Bhur-Bhuah-Swah*, lower, middle and upper worlds, which are represented in the human body, or *Buana Alit*, the microcosm, by legs and feet, body and head. The ingredients, contents of offerings, are almost all "*dari alam*", from the natural world. They are the fruits of the earth, the food the Balinese need themselves for their livelihood.

Ida Pedanda Gede Oka Timbul (pers. com. 28/8/1989) explained that offerings consist of "the contents of the world which we just borrow from God who owns them. Through offerings we give back what we have borrowed."[17] By means of presenting offerings, Balinese express their gratitude for the fertility of the earth, for everything that makes life possible. But it is also a request for the continuation of prosperity, the regeneration of nature, the continual renewal of life in Bali, the blessings from above.

Offerings have a life cycle of their own, which is enacted during the ritual. After they have been fashioned from natural, 'living' ingredients, which have been 'killed' during the processes of preparation, they are literally brought to life again, into action, by the priest during the ritual, when the deities are requested to come down and take their seats in the offerings. The worship community takes part in the blessings from the deities, their life-giving powers, by eating the (natural) food contents of the offerings after the ritual is over. This is not the case with the *lamak*, which are purified during the ritual, but not brought to life specifically by means of special mantras, neither are they eaten by the people. However, because they are associated physically with offerings, because they are said to 'belong to' offerings, they participate in the life cycle of offerings and therefore have to be made from natural materials as well. They are made from nature and after ritual use they return to nature, when the leftovers of a ritual are burnt or buried in the earth in a process of recycling. Just as rituals are always repeated, and the offerings always renewed, so the *lamak* too must be created and recreated time and again, because time and again they help make the offerings work, they help channel down the blessings of regeneration and renewal.

16 There exists an extensive literature on offerings by Balinese. An important early publication is Putra 1982. On Balinese offerings see also Brinkgreve 1992; Eiseman 2005; Kam 2010; Stuart-Fox 1974, and, most recently, Fox 2015.

17 *Isi bumi yang kita pinjam saja dari Tuhan yang milik. Dengan banten kita kembalikan yang dipinjam.*

4.4 Permanent *lamak*

Although ideally a *lamak* is ephemeral, short-lived, 'temporary' (*temporer*), in reality not all *lamak* are made from materials "*dari alam*", from nature. Perhaps due to its significance as a ritual object, over a long period of time Balinese have experimented with making 'permanent' (*permanen*) *lamak* out of a variety of materials. Sometimes the creations have been striking, but for reasons already explained, they have never (at least until now) replaced the palm leaf *lamak*. The existence of permanent *lamak* is of course acknowledged by the Balinese themselves; in a short article on *lamak*, Made Titib wrote: "Besides being made from the leaves of the sugar palm, the mature green leaves (*ron*) and the younger yellow leaves (*ambu*), there is also a variety of forms of *lamak* which are made to be permanent, for example using gold paint (*prada*) or an arrangement of Chinese coins (*kepeng*) in combination with various kinds of beads or stones or pieces of glass. In general the form and decoration of a *lamak*, whether temporary or permanent, are very beautiful and impressive" (Titib 1976:13).[18]

However, not all palm leaf *lamak* are beautiful, neither is that the case with all 'permanent' ones. Especially hanging from shrines outside the entrance to house yards, and from wall-shrines inside houses and shops, which are in use every day, one often sees a small *lamak* of various kinds of cloth and with different decoration, but usually they are of rather simple design. Dozens of them are for sale in the markets and shops specializing in ritual utensils and paraphernalia (*toko yadnya*). Although these kinds of *lamak* were already available for sale in the 1980s, their number and variety on the market have increased considerably over the years.

But at Galungan sometimes a fine 'permanent' *lamak* is temporarily 'on show', hanging from the shrine of a *penjor,* like palm leaf *lamak* showing the creativity of its maker. Many, especially well-to-do families have a nice set of, for example, *lamak* made of wood and Chinese coins (*kepeng*) for use during a temple festival in their house or family temple. Such *lamak* are not permanent in the sense that they are always, permanently, in use, but in the sense that they are made of materials that last and that allow them to be stored away and used again for the next ritual. In contrast to these permanent *lamak*, the *lamak* from leaves are ephemeral, they are burnt together with the left-overs from offerings and they have to be made again for each ritual.

There exists a wide range of different kinds of non-ephemeral *lamak*, though the more special ones are nowadays only found in museum collections. They are made from paper, plastic, combinations of wood, little mirrors and Chinese coins (*kepeng*), leather and cloth. Cloth *lamak* are made of such materials as cotton, felt, velvet, silk, with additions of metallic thread, sequins, beads and little mirrors, and are decorated by almost all the textile decorating techniques known in Bali: gold leaf or paint (*prada*), embroidery, couching, appliqué, weft *ikat* and supplementary weft weaving (*songket*).

In general, the overall vertical structure of permanent *lamak* and some of the decorative motifs correspond to those of the palm leaf varieties. However, many permanent *lamak*, especially the cheaper ones sold at the markets, do not have special representational motifs. These consist of a plain base, decorated with simple patterns of sewn-on sequins and beads or small bits of contrasting coloured cloth.

4.4.1 Different types of permanent lamak

4.4.1.1 *Kepeng lamak*

Kepeng lamak (figs. 4.56-4.58) are made from Chinese copper coins (*kepeng*), together with items of cloth, beads, wood, and mirrors. This variety of *lamak* often consists of different compartments (*bebalangan*), and the various 'hard' materials are fastened onto a wooden base, or sewn onto a base of soft, plain cloth, often (but not exclusively) red in colour. Wooden parts are often painted. In many cases the base cloth protrudes at the top end and serves as base for offerings. However, some of these *lamak* have a top decoration in the form of a flat wooden sculpture, often a representation of

18 "*Disamping terbuat dari daun ron (daun enau hijau) dan ambu (daun enau kuning/lebih muda) ada juga berbagai bentuk lamak yang dibuat permanen misalnya dari kain dengan lukisan 'perada' (banyumas) atau dari rangkaian uang kepeng yang dikombinasikan dengan beraneka ragam 'mute" atau permata dan serpihan 'kaca', pada umumnya bentuk atau lukisan sebuah lamak baik yang temporer maupun yang permanen sangat indah dan mengesankan*" (Titib 1976 :13).

Figure 4.56: Kepeng lamak with wooden mask on top, next to a palm leaf lamak with tree motif. Tegallalang, 21/8/1985.

Figure 4.57: Kepeng lamak and gantung-gantungan. Jegu (Penebel), 2/11/2013.

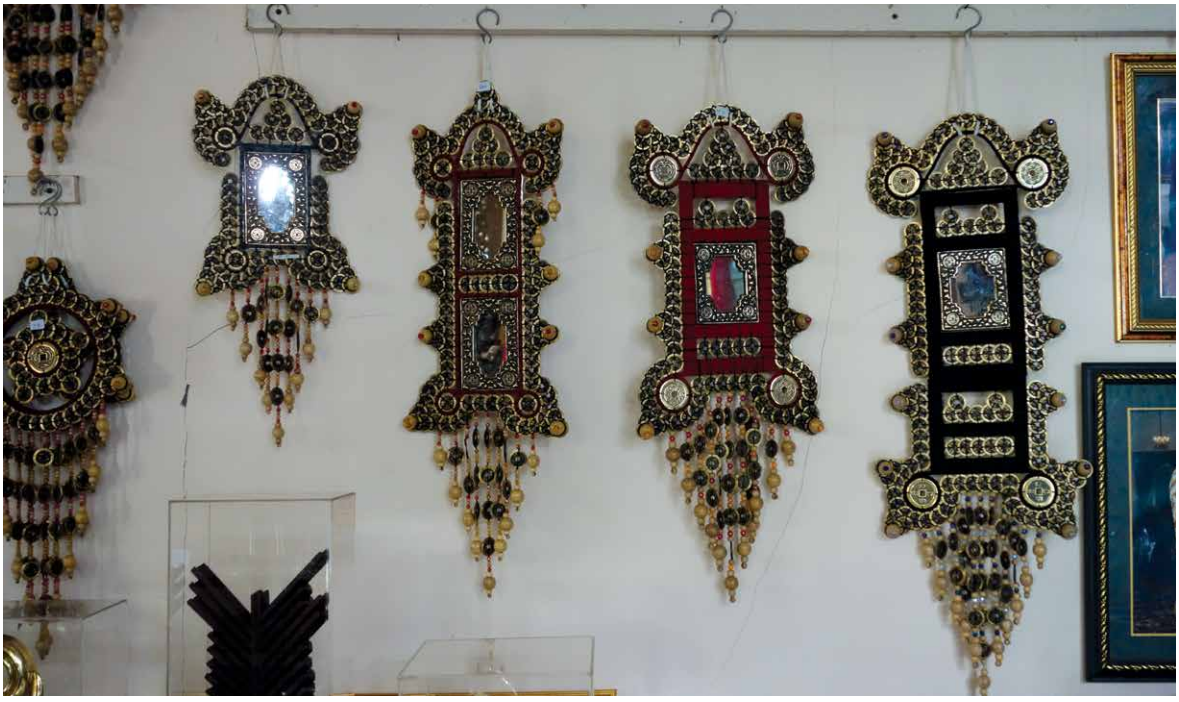


Figure 4.58: Kepeng lamak in the showroom of "Industri uang kepeng Kamasan Bali", Tojan (Klungkung), 30/5/2015.

two intertwined *naga* serpents. These *kepeng lamak* with wooden top are related to temple decorations which are also made of coins and wood, called *salang pipis* (*pipis* meaning coin, *salang* is something that hangs).[19]

The mirrors on the *kepeng lamak* are square or rectangular and sometimes the coins are arranged in such a way that they form recognizable motifs, mainly a human figure (*cili*). Or the *lamak* as a whole is arranged in such a way, with a face on top, that it becomes a human body.

Nowadays temple or shrine decorations mainly made of coins, with a wooden face on top, can be seen at Galungan or temple festivals. In Karangasem these decorations are called Dewa-Dewi, 'god-goddess'. According to Sidemen (2002:161), these are called *salang cili* and they make use of small male and female masks.

Especially in the Tabanan area, even the *sampian gantungan*, the decorations hung at both sides of the *lamak*, are sometimes made of coins and cloth and have the shape of a *cili* (fig. 4.57). The most recent development (since about 2014 or 2015) is that the wooden 'hangers' and frames are sometimes made of a kind of moulded fibre glass material.

Whereas old *kepeng lamak* are made with genuine old Chinese copper *kepeng*, the current high price of genuine coins means that the ritual objects fashioned at present are usually made of newly fabricated, thin aluminium coins, copies of real *kepeng*, made shiny with gold paint. Whereas formerly *kepeng lamak* were probably rather expensive because of the special time-consuming techniques and the cost of the coins themselves, *lamak* made of newly fabricated 'fake' coins are quite cheap and increasingly available at the markets and ritual shops.

Traditionally, besides *lamak* and *salang*, Chinese copper coins were used in making a variety of ritual objects, the most important being god-figures or *pratima*, whose face is often of gold or silver. Some of these are of striking beauty, and may be centuries old. *Kepeng*, either old or new varieties, are also part of the contents of many offerings.[20]

19 In early museum collections, also the rectangular *salang* in the shape of a *lamak* are always referred to as *salang* only (see Appendix 1).

20 On the *kepeng*, see also Kat Angelino 1921b:79-82, Sidemen 2002 and Sidemen, Edy & Sukiada 1998.

4.4.1.2 Woven *lamak* with supplementary warp-embroidery

On these rare woven *lamak* (fig. 4.59-60), a rectangular blue woven cotton foundation is decorated with motifs fashioned from thick bundles of mainly white and sometimes some red and yellow yarns, applied in a double-faced continuous supplementary warp technique. Although in contrast to the palm leaf varieties these woven *lamak* have light motifs applied against a dark background, they have basically the same structure. Representational motifs which are derived from square, triangle and circle forms are placed in a central panel above a geometrical pattern of lozenges in a diagonal grid structure; the bottom contains a row of sharp triangles, and the vertical borders are formed by a pattern of small triangles. The top part of the *lamak* is not decorated, allowing an offering to be placed upon it. Little motifs fill empty space. Because of the special decorative technique, what is blue on one side is white on the other side, and vice versa.

In the 1980s and 1990s this special kind of woven *lamak* was still in use in a few temples in Sanur and Denpasar, in the region of South Bali. In one of these temples I noticed the same *lamak* used on the same shrine but on different occasions with different sides to the front (see also Hauser-Schäublin 1991a:6 (fig.1.7)). When in 2006 I visited the festival in this temple again, the blue-white woven *lamak* was no longer there; in its place, a new *kepeng lamak* was hung on the main shrine instead. They seem to have vanished from other temples too, sadly presumably to enter private collections.

Several of these *lamak* are in museum collections, and most have additional decorations by means of embroidery and the application of little mirrors. Although they are all rather similar in design, none are exactly identical, as I described in my article "The woven *lamak* reconsidered" (Brinkgreve 1993).[21] Some of these *lamak* are known to have

21 In this article I list all the examples of this kind of *lamak* known to me (Brinkgreve 1993:144, n.2). Later publications with illustrations include Maxwell 2003:39, Maxwell *et al.* 2014:54-55 (National Gallery of Australia collection), Brinkgreve 2005:141-145 (Museum Nasional Indonesia collection) and Achjadi 2015:128 (collection of Museum der Kulturen in Basel). See also Appendix 1.

Figure 4.59: Woven lamak, in Pura Segara Agung, Sanur, 25/5/1994.

Figure 4.60: Woven lamak, in Pura Penataran Pauman, Tonja (Denpasar), 25/5/1994.

been acquired in Bali before the World War II, and possibly in pre-war Batavia (Jakarta).[22]

The first publication about this particular type of *lamak* is by Langewis (1956) who based his interpretation of the function of the *lamak* and the meaning of the motifs on literature. This was followed some time later by an important article by Pelras (1967) who in 1961 did research in Bali on the subject. According to Pelras' informants, the maker of these textiles was an old lady, Men Nis, who lived in Kesiman (now part of Denpasar), where she died in 1927. Her place of residence explains why all the known examples seen hanging in temples are in this very area. Apparently she was very secretive about the techniques she used to create a *lamak*, which according to Pelras (1967:259) could be one of the reasons why after her death nobody continued to produce such *lamak* anymore.[23] However, Pelras reconstructed the special decorative technique as a unique form of loom embroidery, achieved, in the course of weaving, with a bamboo needle and a shuttle (Pelras 1967:260-264).[24]

The motifs on these woven *lamak* are rather similar to what on a palm leaf *lamak* would be called *Ibu* (Mother Earth); *bulan* or *matanai* (moon or sun); *gunung* (mountain); *cili* (human figure); *kamben* (hip cloth) and *cracap* (with sharp points), and side borders of *gigin barong* (teeth of a mythic animal). Not all woven *lamak* contain all these motifs, but their position on the cloth, from top to bottom, is the same as on palm leaf *lamak*.

22 A *lamak,* described as "very rare example", is listed in the catalogue of an exhibition in Batavia in 1934 (Tentoonstelling 1934:14, item 113), though further details are unfortunately not available.

23 Two other *lamak* are known using a similar technique, both said to come from Kerambitan, but somewhat different in style to the Men Nis *lamak*. What their relationship (if any) with the Men Nis *lamak* is unknown. One example is in the Georges Breguet collection (Perret 2006:[131], pl. 54), the other in the National Museum of World Cultures (the Netherlands) (see Appendix 1).

24 The publications by Langewis and Pelras are often used as reference when the Balinese woven *lamak* are mentioned, but in my article I continued the discussion by providing additional information and offering alternative interpretations of the motifs (Brinkgreve 1993).

4.4.1.3 *Songket lamak*

Not uncommon in museum collections are small textile *lamak* decorated with the *songket* technique.[25] Longer examples are apparently very uncommon. This is a technique in which additional patterns are woven into the silk or cotton cloth, with supplementary weft threads. These supplementary threads are either gold or silver-wrapped metallic threads or coloured silk threads. This rather complicated technique is described by Ramseyer and Nabholz-Kartaschoff (1991:32-50).

Like embroidery (discussed in the next section), *songket* was mainly used in West Bali for decorating cloth *lamak*, not only in the region of Jembrana, but also in Tabanan. Although according to Fisher and Cooper the weaving of *songket lamak* was replaced by less time-consuming embroidery already in the first half of the twentieth century, in the 1980s and 1990s some small ones were still in use during the Galungan period (fig. 4.61). I have not seen them for sale in any of the markets, only in Balinese antique shops.

Like all other types of *lamak*, *songket lamak* depict both geometric and representational motifs. Most often the main motif is a *cili* figure, usually more than one; either two of equal height or one large one and two smaller ones. There is no evidence that the presence of two *cili* is related to the use of two *cili* on *lamak nganten*. Other *songket* textiles in Bali are also sometimes decorated with comparable *cili* and *wayang* figures and plant motifs. Larger *songket* textiles, used as hip cloths, are framed by a clearly defined border, which usually consists of triangles, like the *cracap* on a *lamak*. They are called *tetumpengan* (after conical-shaped offering ingredients of cooked rice) or *pucuk rebong*, young shoot of bamboo (Ramseyer & Nabholz-Kartaschoff 1991:45).

4.4.1.4 Embroidered *lamak*

Negara, the capital of the district of Jembrana (West Bali) is known for its embroidered *lamak* (fig. 4.62-4.65). They mainly illustrate themes and figures from the Indian epics. According to Fischer and Cooper, the only scholars who have

25 For published examples, see Khan Majlis 1991:160 (ill. 138), Soedjatmoko & Damais 1993:68, Campbell 2014:34-35 (ill. 14-17), Maxwell *et al.* 2014:57.

Figure 4.61: Songket lamak with two cili figures. Delod Berawah (Jembrana), 7/4/1994.

Figure 4.62: Embroidered lamak depicting the god Siwa. Yeh Kuning (Jembrana), 7/4/1994.

Figure 4.63: Embroidered lamak with padma (lotus) motif. Delod Berawah (Jembrana), 7/4/1994.

researched this type of *lamak* (Fischer & Cooper 1998, Fischer 2001, Fischer 2004), the embroidery was done with a long needle and the help of a tambour frame, using a continuous chain stitch. It was mainly a women's craft, although men sometimes outlined in pencil the characters and motifs to be embroidered.

Fischer and Cooper describe how in the first half of the twentieth century *songket* weaving (with metallic threads for the main design) of *lamak* in Negara was replaced by less labour-intensive embroidery, using cheaper materials. But since the 1980s embroidered *lamak* are also gradually disappearing because they too have become too time-consuming to make.

However, some women in Negara still have needlework skills and in the 1990s I noticed in Jembrana small embroidered *lamak* decorating shrines for the Galungan period (fig. 4.61-4.62). In these cases, also the other textile decorations of the shrines were embroidered.[26] Instead of embroidery silk (as in fig. 4.64), woollen yarns were used, brighter in colour and thicker. In August 2010 at the main market in Negara a few small embroidered *lamak* were for sale, two for Rp. 15.000 (€ 1.50). These *lamak* had only a very simple flower pattern. According to the saleswomen, *lamak wayangan*, ornamented with shadow play figures, were only made to order. I have not seen embroidered *lamak* for sale in any other market in Bali, only in Negara.

At the top end of an embroidered *lamak* often a deity or hero from the epics is depicted, identified by name, either in Latin or Balinese script. Figures include "Bhatari Sri", goddess of rice and fertility, or "Rama" or "Hanuman", main figures in the Ramayana epic; or Arjuna or one of the other Mahabharata heroes. Beneath this figural image is usually a bold floral ornament, often a lotus flower, associated with fertility. Especially on long embroidered *lamak*, a crowned serpent or *naga* with tail rising upwards is sometimes represented towards the lower part of these *lamak*.[27]

Another kind of embroidered *lamak*, with *cili* figures, I noticed in 2010 on shrines for Galungan in the Tabanan area (fig. 4.65).

4.4.1.5 Appliqué *lamak*

Although in some collections long appliqué[28] *lamak* are present,[29] in the 1980s and 1990s only very small and rather old appliqué *lamak* sometimes decorated shrines in West Bali (Tabanan and Jembrana) during the Galungan period. And although the exact provenance of this type of *lamak* is uncertain,[30] the style of its decorations is most similar to that of Tabanan in West Bali. The motifs of these *lamak* are usually cut from felt of different colours, applied to a white cotton base with small stitches, and additionally decorated with silver thread couching,[31] sequins and pieces of mirror. As is the case with *songket lamak*, the *cili* is the main motif on appliqué *lamak*. Their headdresses are usually upright and their arms as well, in the style of Tabanan *cili*.

In 2010 I noticed modern-style appliqué *lamak* with *cili* motifs on shrines for Galungan in the Tabanan region, which were also for sale in some shops with ritual paraphernalia (fig. 4.68-4.69) in this area. The material looks like a kind of felt, they seem to be mass produced since the shapes are very similar, and the colour range is wider than it used

26 The embroidered *lamak* seem to be the only type whose decorating techniques are in accordance with the other textiles which decorate the temple where these *lamak* are used.

27 See illustrations in Fischer & Cooper 1998, Fischer 2001, Fischer 2004. See also Hamilton 2003:256 and Brinkgreve in Reichle 2010:147-149 (private collection). See also Appendix 1.

28 Appliqué refers to a needle work technique where pieces of fabric are sewn onto the ground material to make a design.

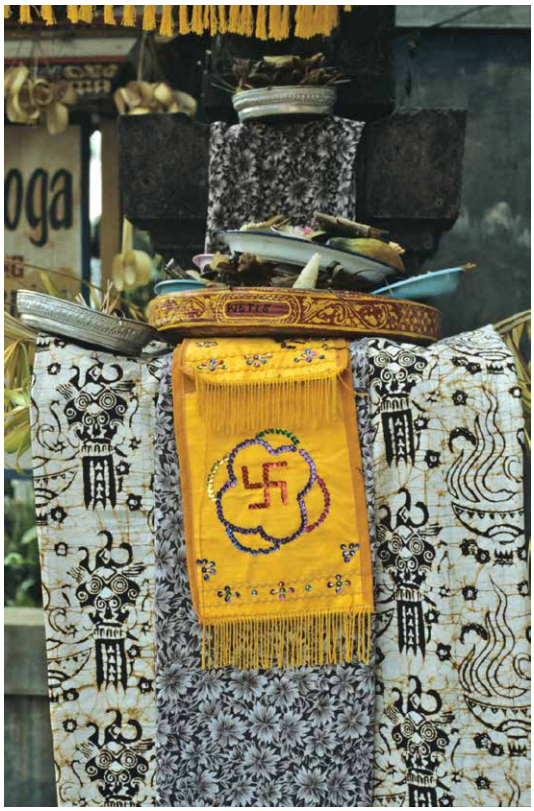
29 See Maxwell 1990:204-205 (Australian Museum, Sydney), Sumner 2001:51 (Powerhouse Museum, Sydney), Brinkgreve in Reichle 2010:145-146 (private collection); also Soedjatmoko & Damais 1993:68, Campbell 2014:cover, 5, 24-25 (ill. 3), 36 (ill.18) (private collection).

30 Fischer & Cooper (1998:fig. 91) illustrate an appliqué *ider-ider* (a long cloth hung under the roof eaves of a temple pavilion or shrine) with felt wayang figures, said to come from Negara.

31 Couching is a technique where a thread is laid on cloth and attached by stitching with another thread, which is usually finer.

Figure 4.64: Embroidered lamak. Batungsel (Pupuan), 3/8/1977 (photo D.J. Stuart-Fox).

Figure 4.65: Embroidered lamak. Sudimara (Tabanan), 13/5/2010.



Figures 4.66-4.67: Two lamak with decorations of applied sequins. Pujung Kelod, Sebatu, 21/8/1985.

Figures 4.68-4.69: Two lamak with applied cili motifs and sequins. Sudimara (Tabanan), 13/5/2010.

to be. Additional plastic sequins and other decorations are frequently attached.

At least since the 1980's small, rather simple cloth *lamak* have been in use and are available in the markets. These consist of a plain base, decorated with simple patterns of sewn-on sequins and beads or small bits of contrasting coloured cloth (fig. 4.66 and 4.67, see also Appendix 1). At present, these *lamak* are sold as sets of five, with the base cloth in the four colours of the cardinal directions or the three colours of the Trimurti, white for Siwa, black for Wisnu and red for Brahma (fig. 4.70) and one *poleng* variety (fig. 4.71).[32]

4.4.1.6 *Poleng lamak*

Shrines or statues that are adorned with the black and white checked *poleng* cloth often receive a cloth *lamak* with this same *poleng* pattern. *Poleng lamak* (fig. 4.71-4.72) are for sale in all markets and ritual paraphernalia shops, sometimes with patterns of coloured sequins added to the *poleng* base.

Poleng cloths with their chessboard pattern of alternating black and white squares, are woven with white and black yarn or simply printed on the finished white cloth, but the *lamak* made of this material are mainly woven. As a result of the weaving process, in addition to the black and white squares there are also squares that are grey in colour, created when the warp and weft threads intersect one another. As Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin (1991b:80-93) has analysed, *poleng* cloths have strong danger-averting qualities/properties, because the pattern encompasses the whole world, by means of the complementary opposition of the white and black squares, according to the *rwa bhineda* principle of cosmological ordering.

In this regard, the cultural values enclosed in a *poleng* cloth are comparable to the meaning of the combination of "white" and "black" leaves on any palm leaf *lamak*, as pointed out earlier in this chapter. But *poleng* is itself also one of the patterns on palm leaf *lamak* (fig. 4.47). Hauser-Schäublin (1991b:82, fig. 7.3) illustrates a palm leaf *lamak* with a *poleng* pattern hanging from a shrine which is decorated with a number of *poleng* cloths. But as we have seen, this pattern can also be called *compang banggul* or bamboo staircase.

Nowadays the additional colour red is often used in *poleng* cloths as well (fig. 4.72). The combination of three colours is related to the colours of the Trimurti.

4.4.1.7 Leather and gilded (*prada*) *lamak*

When for a temple festival deities are invited to descend, shrines and pavilions are dressed on the same principle as the human body, with a "hip cloth" around the base of the shrine, a "head cloth" under the eaves of the roof, and a *lamak* as "breast cloth" suspended from the opening of the shrine in which the offerings are placed (Hauser-Schäublin (1991a:10).

Likewise, a *lamak* can be part of the costume of a real person, usually a dancer, and be made of leather or cloth patterned with gold leaf.[33] As mentioned in Chapter 2, in a recent publication on Legong, edited by Djelantik (2015), it is noted that *lamak* are not only used in the Legong costume, but also in the costume of dancers of Gambuh (fig. 4.73), Arja, Topeng Telek and Baris (Arini 2015:125).

The costume of the male Baris dancer has a number of *lamak*, usually of cloth patterned with gold leaf.[34] In Bali (and elsewhere in Indonesia where it is practised), the glue-work technique of decorating cloth with gold leaf or gold dust, or more recently with cheaper gold-coloured substitutes, is called *prada*.[35] In Bali, the design is first sketched (*ngorten* or *macawi*), a skill related to painting, and traditionally done by men. After a fish-based glue (*ancur*) is applied to the parts of the design to be covered, the gold leaf is attached.

In contrast to the leather *lamak*, which are only used as part of a dance costume, *prada lamak* are also used as a decoration of a shrine (fig. 4.74) and occasionally as part of a *rantasan* offering, a pile of folded textiles offered to the deities as clothing. For such an offering also other types of textile *lamak* can be used, but I have never seen a palm leaf *lamak* as part of a *rantasan*.

32 In figures 4.70 and 4.71 such a set can be seen in use in a family temple in Budakeling.

33 See Appendix 1.

34 *Lamak* can also be part of the costume of Jauk dancers (Bandem 1983:93). See Appendix 1.

35 On *prada* in Bali, see Nabholz-Kartaschoff 1991a.

Figures 4.70-4.71: Set of black, white and red cloth lamak on sanggah kemulan and poleng lamak on taksu shrine, all with added decoration of sequins. Family temple of Ni Made Darmi, Budakeling, 12/5/2006.

Figure 4.71.

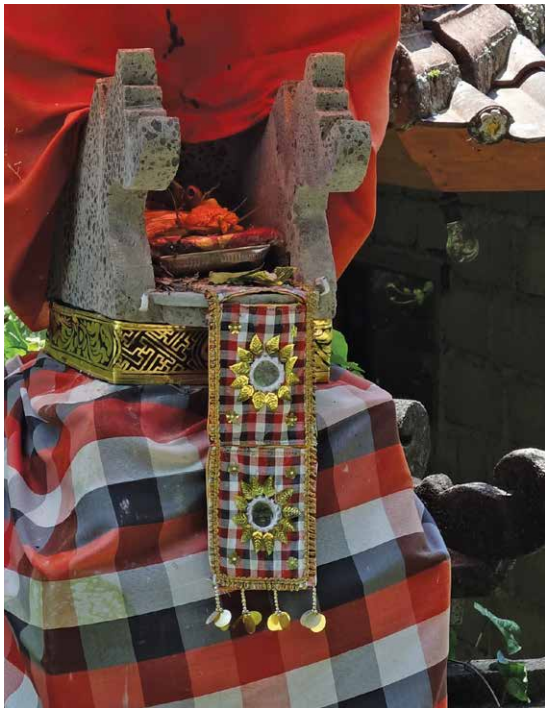


Figure 4.72: Three-coloured poleng lamak on shrine for the deity who protects the house. Komala (Bebandem), 1/4/2016.

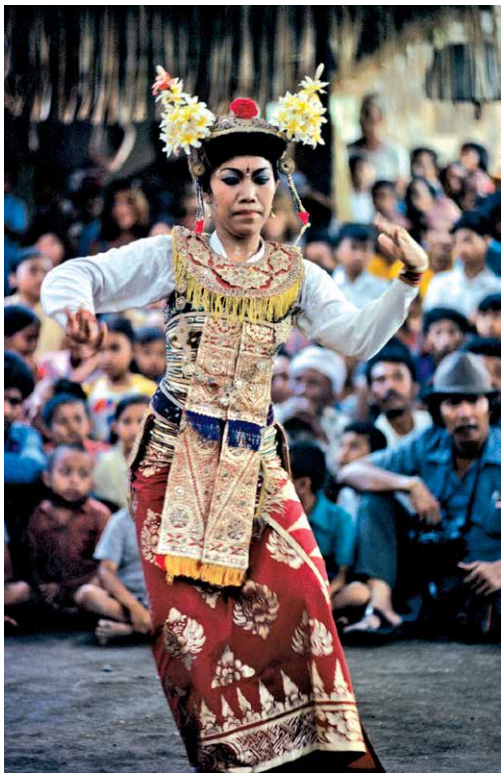


Figure 4.73: Leather lamak, worn by a condong dancer in Gambuh theatre. Puri Saren, Ubud, 27/1/1979.

Figure 4.74: Prada lamak, Bebandem market, 26/10/2013.

Figure 4.75: Double-ikat gringsing lamak, worn by a condong dancer in Gambuh theatre. Pura Dalem, Budakeling, 23/32016.

Most *prada* textiles, including *lamak*, have flower motifs and the geometric meander motif (*banji*), which refers to a possible Chinese origin of this kind of textile.

Nowadays many markets sell small cheap *lamak* with *prada* patterns painted directly onto the material with cheap bronze pigment paint. Another method is to transfer gold-coloured plastic foil (*prada plastik*) onto patterns previously applied with red and yellow oil paint (Nabholz-Kartaschoff 1991a:52-57).

4.4.1.8 (Double-) Ikat *lamak*

Although the resist-dye ikat technique of the weft, *endek* in Balinese, is one of the main textile-decorating techniques in Bali, especially for silks used at the courts, it is rarely used for cloth *lamak*.[36] Interestingly however, the only reference to *lamak* (ephemeral or permanent) that I have so far found in religious texts mentions the requirement of ikat textiles as *lamak* (see Chapter 2)[37]: "as a *lamak* on a *sanggar tawang* (a high bamboo shrine with three compartments), a *cepuk* cloth (*wastra cepuk*) is required when the ceremony is carried out at *nista* or simple level; a red *patolu (patola bang*) at *madia* or medium level; and a silk *patolu* (*patola sutra*) at *utama*, or highest level, [….] If it is not visible in this way, the ritual will not be successful, it will not be noticed by the gods."[38]

Sacred *cepuk* cloths, whose patterns are produced by the *endek* technique and which at ritual occasions have a protective and purifying function, sometimes function as temple decoration (Nabholz-Kartaschoff 1989:184; 1991:114). Although *cepuk* textiles are often used in ritual contexts, such as wrapping around a shrine, I have not seen it used as a real *lamak*. However Nabholz-Kartaschoff (1991:103,110) reports that *cepuk* is often used as a *tatakan*, underlayer of offerings, and also hanging from a shrine like a *lamak* (Nabholz-Kartaschoff, pers. com. 1991).

Although red is the dominant colour of a *cepuk* cloth, I have never seen a red *patolu* cloth being used as a *lamak*, as stated in this *lontar* text, but there are connections between *cepuk* and *patolu*. A *patolu* cloth is a famous silk textile from Gujarat, India, decorated in the double *ikat* technique in which resist patterns are applied to both the warp and the weft before weaving. In Bali and elsewhere in Indonesia *patola* were regarded as prestigious textiles. The geometrical pattern on the central field of a *cepuk*, called *padma* or lotus, is influenced by the pattern *padma* on a *patolu*, one of the *patola* patterns that was most popular in Indonesia and most often imitated (Nabholz-Kartaschoff 1989:185,192). A *padma* is also the name of a motif on palm leaf *lamak*. Both long sides of a *cepuk* are bordered by a pattern of rows of small triangles, similar to the *gigin barong* motif on the sides of a *lamak*.

According to Ramseyer (1991b:123), in Tenganan (Karangasem) a sacred *gringsing* cloth, made by the double *ikat* technique and related to the Indian *patola* cloths, is sometimes used as a breast cloth and "drawn over the upper garment so that it hangs down as a loose end (*lamak*) in front of the body" of girls and women who dance the solemn *abuang luh* dance. Recently I have seen a *gringsing lamak* worn by a Gambuh dancer at a temple festival in Pura Dalem, Budakeling (fig. 4.75).

4.4.1.9 Paper and plastic *lamak*

Although the Museum für Völkerkunde in Vienna is in possession of two unusual *lamak* of paper, with painted designs, very likely made by the German artist Walter Spies on the basis of *lamak* patterns he had collected (Brinkgreve 2010b:74-79; Kraus 2010:66-73), in Bali I have seen only a few times a *lamak* made of paper, covered with plastic to protect this material against the rain (fig. 4.77).

In the 1980s in Kerambitan I also saw once or twice a *lamak* made entirely out of plastic. They had the same structure and the same motifs as the palm leaf *lamak* from this area, only the colours were different. Motifs in black, blue, red and other colours were sewn with white thread onto a white background. Already at that time plastic *lamak* were almost never used anymore in temples, because the

36 See Appendix 1.

37 HKS 2774 = Or 15.918, *Makudang bebantenan dewa-, bhuta- yadnya, Griya Talaga, Sanur,* p.15 (10b/24-11a/4). Translation by David Stuart-Fox.

38 *Kunang ikang sanggar-tawang lalamakania wastra cepuk nistania. Madhyania patola bang. Utamania patola sutra, kaatur ring sang ngajengin karya tekeng daksina kabeh. Yan tan samangkana byakta tan sida karyané, tan kahulatana den i watek déwata.*

Figure 4.76: Plastic lamak. Kediri (Tabanan), 5/1/1977 (photo D.J. Stuart-Fox).

Figure 4.77: Paper lamak. Tengkudak (Penebel), 7/4/1994.

material was not regarded as ritually suitable by religious authorities (pers. com. Dayu Komang 3/10/1982 and Dayu Made Sapri 26/9/1985).[39] Plastic *lamak* also appeared in other parts of Tabanan, for example Kediri (fig. 4.76). Nowadays in the area of Tabanan (I noticed this for example in the neighbourhood of Wongaya, Galungan 23 October 2013) plastic in all kinds of colours is again being used for *lamak*, but only in combination with other materials, such as *lontar* leaves.

4.4.1.10 Painted *lamak*

Very occasionally, it would seem, painters have been inspired to paint a *lamak*, presumably just for use in their own temples, for there is no evidence of a tradition of painted *lamak*.[40] A very small number of *lamak* in traditional wayang style, produced in Kamasan, are known, two of them being part of the Forge collection (Campbell 2013:228 and 264). Interestingly, these two *lamak* both illustrate episodes from the Ramayana, depicted in two or three scenes, one above the other. At the very top of both *lamak* is a sun, and at the very bottom a pond filled with water and fish, and so the usual vertical tripartite structure of a *lamak* has been followed.

In the 1980s as a result of the commercialization of *lamak* making (which will be dealt with more extensively in the next chapter), cloth *lamak* were created with painted motifs, which were intended as an exact imitation, a copy (in permanent form) of the ephemeral palm leaf *lamak* (fig. 4.78). Especially in the region of Ubud in Gianyar, well-known for its painting traditions, some *tukang lamak* who made palm leaf *lamak* to order, started to paint *lamak* motifs on canvas. The size of these *lamak* was similar to the palm leaf versions, and the colours chosen were as close to the palm leaf ones as possible. The canvas was painted a light yellow shade, and the ornaments in a contrasting dark green, just like the colours of *ambu* and *ron*, the young and mature leaves of the sugar palm respectively. The motifs were first drawn in pencil and then painted by hand, and in some cases the *tukang* made use of small carton templates for certain parts of patterns. The patterns were so similar in style to those of the palm leaf *lamak* in the Ubud area, that from a distance almost no difference could be seen. The whole range of existing motifs from this area was taken over, since the craftsmen, generally specialists in the palm leaf ones, were well acquainted with them.

People who bought and used these painted *lamak* did so for reasons of efficiency, but this development around Ubud was looked down upon by people in more traditional villages in Gianyar, like Lambing and Jasan. They were proud of the fact that they did not participate in these new innovations, but still used *ambu* and *ron* for their traditional, authentic (*asli*) *lamak*.

Nowadays hand-painted *lamak* are probably not made anymore, since I have not seen them in use since the beginning of this century. They seem to have been replaced by or lost out to the cheaper, mass-produced *lamak sablon*.

4.4.1.11 *Lamak sablon*

Related to the painted *lamak* are the *lamak sablon* (fig. 4.79-4.80, 4.82).[41] It was in 1988 that I first noticed in the Gianyar area (and only there) a few *lamak* which were decorated by means of the silkscreen technique, but by no means yet in the quantities I noticed throughout Bali on a visit in 2001. In that year large numbers of this new type of permanent *lamak*, called *lamak sablon*, were available at the markets. The name is derived from the technique, since these *lamak* are mass-produced by patterning pieces of cloth by means of a silkscreen, called *sablon* in Indonesian (from the Dutch word *sjabloon*, meaning stencil). These *lamak* are very cheap, and I have seen them with only a very limited range of motifs, which, like the chosen colours, at first sight seem to imitate the palm leaf varieties. The main difference, though, lies in the use of one particular motif never found on traditional *lamak*, the motif of Dewi Saraswati. This important Hindu goddess is in Bali worshipped as the consort of the Creator Brahma, and as goddess of

39 See Appendix 1.

40 In my own collection are two painted *lamak*, said to come from Karangasem, with flower motifs. One is dated 20-9-56 and, unusually, even the names of the intended shrines are written on the back. See also Appendix 1.

41 This section is derived from my article "Palm leaf to silkscreen" (Brinkgreve 2010a).

Figure 4.78: Three painted lamak, in the family temple of I Gusti Putu Nonderan, Padangtegal, Ubud, 5/4/1994.

Figure 4.79: Lamak sablon. Denpasar market, 20/7/2005.

Figure 4.80: Lamak sablon. Workshop of Ni Made Darmi, Budakeling, 15/7/2010.

learning, knowledge and writing, especially *lontar* manuscripts. On the holy day dedicated to her, the last day of the Javano-Balinese *wuku* year, manuscripts are ritually purified and honoured. Nobody is allowed to read or write. Nowadays schools and institutes of learning hold special ceremonies, in which also the books of students and schoolchildren receive ritual attention. Furthermore, the day dedicated to Dewi Saraswati is nowadays widely celebrated, not only at schools, but also at special ceremonies held at some major temples like Pura Besakih. This increased attention to the day honouring Saraswati in all probability influenced the decision to use the Saraswati motif on a *lamak.* On the *lamak sablon*, Dewi Saraswati is represented with all her attributes, which she holds in her four arms and hands. In one hand she holds a musical instrument which she is playing with another, and in the two other hands she holds a *lontar* manuscript and a rosary (fig. 4.79). At her feet are two geese, which act as her vehicle, and on her head she wears a kind of crown with an aura around it, a development of the ornate headdress of the traditional *cili.* This representation is probably influenced by illustrations in modern school books and religious magazines, which show a tendency to visualize deities in a kind of more realistic Indian style.[42] In any case, Dewi Saraswati was never depicted on a palm leaf *lamak*, so she is a completely new element in the *lamak* iconography. Other *lamak sablon*, however, do depict a "traditional" *cili* figure instead of this goddess (fig. 4.80).

Probably because the *lamak sablon* appeared in such large quantities compared with other permanent *lamak*, and because they were so clearly an imitation of the palm leaf ones, they gave rise to an interesting exchange of views about whether they could be regarded as an acceptable substitute for the originals.

In the January 2000 issue of *Sarad*, a Balinese magazine about Hindu-Balinese religion, an article appeared entitled "*Siapa suka lamak sablon?*", which means "Who likes the silkscreen *lamak?*" The author, Ni Made Mawi Adini, collected various current opinions about the numerous *lamak sablon* or "*lamak palsu*", "false" *lamak*, which are "flooding" the markets of Bali. One lady, who has a full-time job, says that it saves her a lot of time during the ritual seasons not to have to make the palm leaf *lamak* herself, but to buy the *lamak sablon*, which are cheap and can be kept until the next ritual. Moreover, she uses the *lamak sablon* on an everyday basis, "to give the shrines a festive appearance" ("*biar palinggih tampak meriah*"). However, deep down, she would prefer to keep the traditional ways of the village where she grew up, and not only use palm leaf *lamak*, but even make them herself. But she simply does not have the time anymore for doing this. In contrast, another lady thinks that one should not try to be too frugal in front of the deities. Moreover, she likes to make *lamak* herself, since for her working with palm leaves is a good way to relax, to put her mind at rest.

The author of many booklets about offerings and especially about palm leaf *jejaitan,* specialist Ida Ayu Putu Surayin, also prefers to make the *lamak* herself, because it is her interest anyway, and she likes to offer to the deities something beautiful. She has not found any prohibitions against the use of *lamak* such as the *lamak sablon* in the religious manuals she knows. Essentially she leaves it up to the religious feelings of individual persons themselves, since it is their intentions that form the essence of the offerings. Also according to the then head of Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia (the official organization for Hindu affairs) in the district of Badung, I Gusti Ngurah Oka Supartha, the use of imitation *lamak* is not forbidden and the Hindu congregation is allowed to follow recent developments. However, he reminds the Balinese of the fact that anything that is offered to the deities must contain leaves, flowers, fruits and water. These are basic requirements, taken from the natural realm, and in principle not to be imitated. He stresses the religious significance of the *lamak* as a bridge between the human world and the deities, and the symbolism of the motifs, representing the contents of the world**.** He is concerned that with the increasing use of the *lamak sablon* the sym-

42 Fischer & Cooper (1998:chapter 4, fig. 2) illustrate a contemporary painting of Dewi Saraswati, which also is not in traditional Balinese wayang style. Similar Indian influence is noticeable in stone sculpture. In a photo-essay, Rama Surya (2001:76,79) shows a street trader with a painting of such an Indian-style goddess Saraswati, and of Dewi Saraswati as religious icon in a department store in Denpasar.

bolism of the decorative motifs on the *lamak* will eventually disappear.

In a reaction to this article, in a later issue of *Sarad*, one of the makers of *lamak sablon*, the son of a temple priest from Sukawati in Gianyar, gives his opinion. Since the palm leaf *lamak* sold at the markets were so expensive, he started his own business. He learned about the materials and techniques of the silkscreen method from a Javanese craftsman in Denpasar, and in making his silkscreen he copied motifs from an original *lamak*. He receives many orders, and his example has been followed by many other producers in Sukawati and the neighbouring village of Batuan. According to him, the use of cloth as material for a *lamak* is no different from the use of other types of textile decorations, such as the long cloths along the eaves of buildings (*ider-ider*). Also textiles are used as parts of offerings. For him, the *lamak sablon* is just a more practical and cheaper way, which does not deviate at all from existing religious values.

One reader wondered why some people thought that the *lamak sablon* should be forbidden, whereas other new developments, like offering the deities bottled soft-drinks instead of a glass of coffee, were allowed. And the answer was,[43] that a *lamak* has to be made from leaves, because of the symbolic value of the natural elements: leaves, flowers and fruits are symbols of birth, life and death, of the cycles of life of all creation. According to this opinion, even should the ornaments be the same as on the palm leaf *lamak*, their symbolic meaning cannot be accepted, because the material lacks religious value.

Amongst my informants opinions about the use of *lamak sablon* also differed. For example in Sanur they have never been sold at the market, because people there did not want to use them (pers. com. Ni Nyoman Murni 11/5/2010), whereas in the market of Bebandem, Karangasem, they are still being sold, even during my latest visit in 2016. A *lamak sablon* was even hanging from the wall shrine in the *jejaitan* workshop of Ni Wayan Suartini (see the beginning of this chapter), but she had added on top a *lontar lamak* and a *lontar ceniga* of her own making (fig. 4.82), "so that it is more complete" (*biar lebih lengkap*), she said.

43 Again from Ngurah Nala, whom I quoted also in the section in this chapter about the materials having to be "*dari alam*".

4.4.2 Meanings of materials and colours of permanent lamak

Most of the permanent *lamak* which are nowadays sold at the markets, besides the white and black checked *poleng lamak* (discussed in section 4.4.1.6), have a cloth background in one of four colours, white, red, yellow and black. In family temples in Karangasem (and probably elsewhere in Bali) the three compartments of the so-called *sanggah kamulan* shrine (shrine of origin) are often decorated with three permanent *lamak*, from left to right in the colours black, white and red (fig. 4.70). These colours are related to the Trimurti, the great deities of the cycle of life: red for Brahma (Creator), black for Wisnu (Sustainer) and white for Siwa (Destroyer). Sometimes the colour yellow is added to the central compartment of the shrine, and then the colours are related to the deities who are located and rule the cardinal directions: white for Iswara in the East, red for Brahma in the South, yellow for Mahadewa in the west, and black for Wisnu in the North.

This classification of colours related to deities is also found in the material of newly fabricated coins which are of better quality than the thin aluminium fake *kepeng*. Answering a question in *Sarad* magazine (April 2003:44), "Is it allowed to exchange old *kepeng* coins with newly-made ones, quantities of which are nowadays sold in the market?"[44], Ngurah Nala replied that "old *kepeng* coins may be replaced by newly-made ones, provided they are made from the five metals (*panca dhatu*, *panca dewata*) which fulfil [ritual] requirements."[45] The *panca dhatu* mentioned here as being required for ritually approved coins refers to five metals that are related to the powers of the Gods of the five directions: iron (black), silver (white), copper (red),

44 *Bolehkah menggantikan uang kepeng yang kuno dengan uang kepeng buatan baru yang kini banyak dijual di pasar?*

45 *Uang kepeng kuno dapat diganti dengan uang kepeng buatan baru, asal uang kepeng ini dibuat dari lima macam logam (panca dhatu, panca dewata), yang memenuhi persyaratan.*

gold (yellow), while bronze-brass (multi-coloured) represents Siwa at the centre.[46]

This classification system, in which colours are related to five deities, Panca Dewata, can be elaborated into the so-called *nawa sanga* system, the eight directions of the compass around the centre, related to nine deities. This is also a symbol of the totality of the universe, as has been explained in Chapter 3, but this particular elaboration is not reflected in the colours or materials of *lamak*, neither ephemeral nor permanent.

4.4.3 Clothing of a shrine

As discussed in Chapter 2, a *lamak*, ephemeral or permanent, acts both as base for offerings and as decoration of shrines or altars where offerings are placed. They are then said to be "the clothing (*busana, pangangge*) of a sacred building". In both ways, a *lamak* fulfils its ritual purpose as an invitation, a sign of welcome for deities, ancestors, spirits and other invisible, *niskala* beings. Most kinds of permanent *lamak* can in fact be used as base for offerings which are placed on the (sometimes undecorated) upper end of the *lamak*. But a *kepeng lamak* with a wooden upper part can only be a shrine decoration, and another *lamak* has to be used as actual base for offerings. For example, Dayu Putu Sriani from Ubud (pers. com. 29/8/2001) bought a whole set of *kepeng lamak* with wooden ornaments on top for all shrines in her family temple (*mrajan*). But for Galungan she hung on all shrines small palm leaf *lamak* on top of these *kepeng* ones, to act as base for the offerings.

So whereas not all permanent *lamak* can act as base for offerings, they all can, in any case, serve as decoration of a shrine, they make the shrine complete for the duration of the ritual. Being colourful and prominent, they show the invisible beings the way to the shrines with the offerings. And, like the ephemeral *lamak*, they remain in use during the course of the ritual, as long as shrines or altars are inhabited by ancestors or deities, until they return to their own abodes. After the ritual is over, they are taken off the shrines, and stored away until the next occasion. Permanent in terms of materiality, their action is temporary.

If permanent *lamak* are used in a village temple, they usually hang only on certain shrines, whereas all shrines receive an ephemeral one. In any case, for a temple festival (*odalan*), all shrines with offerings must have at least a *lamak*, accompanied by two "hanging decorations" (*gantung-gantungan*). These hanging decorations can also be of permanent materials, like *kepeng* and beads for example. The cheaper *lamak* which are sold at the markets nowadays often come as a set, together with matching *gantungan*.

The function or purpose of a *lamak* as "clothing of a shrine" is in fact in almost all cases only an addition to the fact that for a temple festival all shrines are already decorated, "dressed" like a person, with textiles of different kinds. In this model, a *lamak* acts "only" as the breast cloth of the costume of the shrine, like a *lamak* can also be part of the costume of a real person, usually a dancer, and sometimes of the small statues the deities descend into when they are invited for a temple festival.[47]

In the words of Hauser-Schäublin (1991a**:**10): "The customary appearance of Balinese temple sanctuaries, with their offering stelae, shrines and open pavilions, is grey, forlorn and lonely. For the annual festival when the deities are invited to descend, however, these sites are transformed. The individual abodes of the gods, the shrines and the pavilions, are made ready for the arrival of the gods and are dressed on the same principle as the human body. Two wraparounds, one representing the upper hip cloth, and one the cloth beneath, are draped around the pillar on which a small shrine stands; both are secured with a sash. Above the offering niche, the structure is adorned with a head-

46 "*Panca Datu (Lima Kekuatan Hidup yang dipengaruhi oleh Kekuatan Panca Dewata) yaitu: Besi (Hitam), Perak (Putih), Tembaga (Merah), Emas (Kuning) dan Perunggu-Kuningan (berwarna-warni) adalah kekuatan Siwa di Tengah*", according to a leaflet from the *Industri uang kepeng KAMASAN BALI*. I visited the workshop of this company in Desa Tojan, Klungkung, 30/5/2015. The company makes a wide variety of objects out of modern coins, for both ritual and tourist use, *lamak* among them. See also Sidemen, Edy & Sukiada 1998.

47 As Belo noted, "[…] the dressing of god-figures: they are wrapped first in a *kamben*, a skirt, then an upper scarf, *tjerik*, and lastly a gold-leafed panel, a *lamak* such as dancers wear, was bound from their breasts with a brightly colored sash, *saboek*" (1953:21).

Figure 4.81: Palm leaf and kepeng lamak on the shrine for Ida Ratu Ngurah, which is 'dressed' with a poleng cloth. Pura Bias, Budakeling, 19/10/2013.

band modelled after a man's head cloth. The niches themselves, at least in south Bali, are lined with plaited mats, with a *lamak* hanging down."

Also Hildred Geertz (2004), in her study of one specific temple, Pura Desa in the village of Batuan, writes about the importance of decorations in a temple in order to please the invisible (*niskala*) beings. In a chapter about the purpose of this temple, in which she discusses the yearly temple festival, she describes the beautiful carvings of the temple as "aspects in the transactions" between the deities and worshippers (2004:63). In return, "the intended practical effects […] are the well-being (*rahayu*) of all in the immediate world of the worshipper: humans, animals, plants, and the land around them. The works of the ritual persuade these beings to grant the divine gifts of fertility, vitality and protection" (2004:73). Since "the altars are the most important part of a temple, the place to receive the *niskala* beings of the village" (2004:69), they are decorated with beautiful carvings "to provide a palace, covered with ornaments" (2004:71). "This purpose is the primary interpretative frame for form and ornamentations" (2004:67).

However, Geertz does not pay any attention to the additional, temporary decorations of the temple and its shrines for the duration of the ritual. There is no mention at all of the textiles that decorate or dress the temple for the special occasion, nor of any other ritual decorations, like *lamak*, which must certainly have been present to make this "palace of the *niskala* beings" even more beautiful for the reception of the honoured guests.

Discussing the Balinese word *ias*, beautiful, and *maiasan*, to decorate, Geertz states, "There is a strong motivation to please the gods, but it is not necessary for the temple to be *maiasan* for the rituals held in it to be successful" (2004:71). Indeed, the beautiful carvings alone cannot fulfil this task, since it is the very purpose of the *lamak*, by acting as base for the offerings and decoration of the shrines, to make the offerings work, so that the intended effects are reached. The permanent decorations on a shrine, no matter how beautiful these carvings are, cannot act as an invitation for a temporary festive occasion, a ritual that has to be repeated regularly, because, as Geertz herself points out, "The state of well-being can never last but must be constantly renewed" (2004:74). Because the carvings cannot be renewed yearly, a temple needs temporary visible objects to show that the invisible beings are requested to be present.

In an article about "the art of transformation", Hauser-Schäublin stresses the importance of the temporal aspects of wrapping and unwrapping, dressing and undressing of ritual space. "It is the actualization and animation of the sanctuary, with its abodes for gods and deified ancestors, that is achieved through the textiles. The stone and wooden structures become endowed with life;[…]" (1995:4; see also Hauser-Schäublin 1992).

4.5 Ephemeral and permanent *lamak* compared

Within this general process of transformation of ritual space (dressing a temple), to mark the transition to ritual time (its festival), *lamak* play a crucial and specific role, in showing the invited invisible beings the way to the offerings.

This might in principle be done by either a *lamak* made of non-ephemeral materials or one made of palm leaves. However, when asked to compare both types of *lamak*, informants all stressed that the use of only a permanent *lamak* is not really enough, "*kurang lengkap*"[48], not yet complete, even if this *lamak* can also physically act as the base for offerings. They always put an ephemeral *lamak* or *ceniga*, or just leaves or flowers, between the top end of the cloth *lamak* and the offering, or sometimes underneath the permanent *lamak*, as a kind of underlay. And even when a shrine is permanently in use, as in shops or restaurants or in front of houses, to the permanent *lamak* hanging from it, some fresh flowers are added every time new offerings are put on the shrine.

The motivation for these necessary natural additions according to the Balinese is, as already explained, that a *lamak* in principle has to be "*dari alam*", from nature. And furthermore, they also say that even if a *lamak* which in principle is taken from nature, like one made of *lontar* leaves, and that still looks attractive would be kept after a ritual like a permanent *lamak*, it is not allowed to be used again

48 The Balinese often express this idea with the phrase: "*kantun kirang*". Literally: 'still lacking', or 'not yet sufficient'.

for another ritual (pers. com. Ni Nyoman Ngetis, Budakeling, 9/6/2015).

As Ida Pedanda Gede Oka Timbul (pers. com. 13/4/2014) explained, "a *lamak* of (palm) leaf is more sacred, because the motifs have a purpose, but a *lamak* made of cloth is merely artistic. If it is from leaf, it has *taksu*."[49] The *pedanda* is referring here to both the meaning of the motifs on a palm leaf *lamak*, which are related to the blessings of life from above, and to the natural material, which is alive, in which the Creator is seated, as it were.

Also according to Ida Wayan Jelantik, *klian adat* of Budakeling (pers. com. 25/4/2014), "A cloth *lamak* can be used when needed on a daily basis, but as a requirement for a ceremony it must be made from God's creation. All offerings and ritual necessities are provided with *taksu*; after the ceremony it returns to its origin, so that it can grow again."[50]

The author I Gusti Agung Mas Putra is of the opinion that "*jejahitan* that are made from leaves serve also as a form of gift. […] It is one of four ways to bring oneself closer in worshipping God, Ida Sanghyang Widhi […]. The replacement of leaves with paper or plastic, or with cloth that is of a permanent nature, is to diminish the spiritual values" (1985b:5).[51] And she continues, referring to "*lamak* made of cloth, also those made of Chinese coin (*kepeng*)" that "such a replacement using these would seem to give priority to worldly or material values, since they appear more luxurious, their materials more expensive, difficult to obtain, and only available to certain people" (1985:7).[52]

Also according to Sidemen (2002:165), "*lamak* that are made from young coconut palm leaf or young and old sugar palm leaf apparently are a ritual prerequisite, since without them the ritual requirements are not complete. *Lamak* made from *kepeng* coins are only an additional decoration."[53]

In fact, there is no ritual requirement or obligation to use permanent *lamak* at all.

But some Balinese wish to decorate their family temple or the most important shrines in a village temple with some extra beautiful permanent *lamak*. And for practical reasons some people prefer to make the offering places which are in permanent use and in public view, such as the wall shrines in shops and the shrines in front of a house entrance, attractive with a simple permanent *lamak*.

The wish to be as complete as possible, together with a precaution against perhaps not getting everything correct,[54] results sometimes in up to three layers of *lamak* on a single shrine, as illustrated in photographs taken of examples in Pura Bias, Budakeling (2013) (fig. 4.81), Pura Dalem Sibetan (2014) (fig. 4.85), a family temple in Komala (2015) (fig. 4.84) and the wall shrine in the workshop of Ni Wayan Suartini in Bebandem (2015) (fig. 4.83). But even from the 1920s there is photographic evidence of the use of a combination of palm leaf and *kepeng lamak* and *ceniga* (fig. 4.86) and the more recent *lamak sablon* are often completed with a palm leaf *ceniga* (fig. 4.82).

In a sense in this way the Balinese combine the best of two worlds: the ritually obligatory leaves, taken from the natural world, are represented in a simple palm leaf *lamak* or *ceniga*, and the shrine is decorated by a permanent *lamak*, transforming the shrine into an attractive and inviting place where the invisible beings can enjoy the offerings. These permanent *lamak* can be used again for the next ritual, so the Balinese do not need to worry about making attractive *lamak* with beautiful motifs time

49 *Lamak dari daun adalah lebih sakral, karena pola-pola ada fungsi, tetapi lamak dari kain seni saja. Kalau dari daun: ada taksu*. "*Taksu* is a very special power with divine origin […] [which] exists in the arts world and beyond […]" (Dibia 2012:29).

50 *Kain lamak boleh kalau sehari-hari, tetapi kalau perlengkapan upacara lamak harus dari penciptaan Tuhan. Semua banten, upakara, diberi taksu; sesudah upacara kembali kepada asal, supaya tumbuh lagi*.

51 *Jejahitan yang dibuat dari daun-daunan berfungsi pula sebagai persembahan dan* [….]*cara untuk mendekatkan diri berbakti kehadapan ISHW* […]. *Penggantian daun2an dengan kertas plastik, ataupun kain yang bersifat permanen bisa dianggap mengurangi nilai2 spiritual.*

52 *Lamak dibuat dari kain, adapula yang dibuat dari uang kepeng* […]. *Penggantian ini kiranya lebih mengutamakan nilai duniawi/lahiriah, karena kelihatannya lebih mewah, harga bahannya lebih mahal, sukar didapatkan dan hanya bisa dijangkau oleh orang2 tertentu*.

53 *Lamak yang terbuat dari janur atau daun enau muda dan tua itu tampaknya merupakan prasyarat upakara, karena tanpa lamak itu maka upakara dianggap tidak lengkap.* […] *Lamak yang terbuat dari uang kepeng hanya sebagai tambahan dekorasi saja.*

54 This tendency to endlessly repeat the same concept in different ways in the same object is also often seen in the way offerings are constructed.

Figure 4.82: Lamak sablon and palm leaf ceniga. Batuan, 12/5/2010.

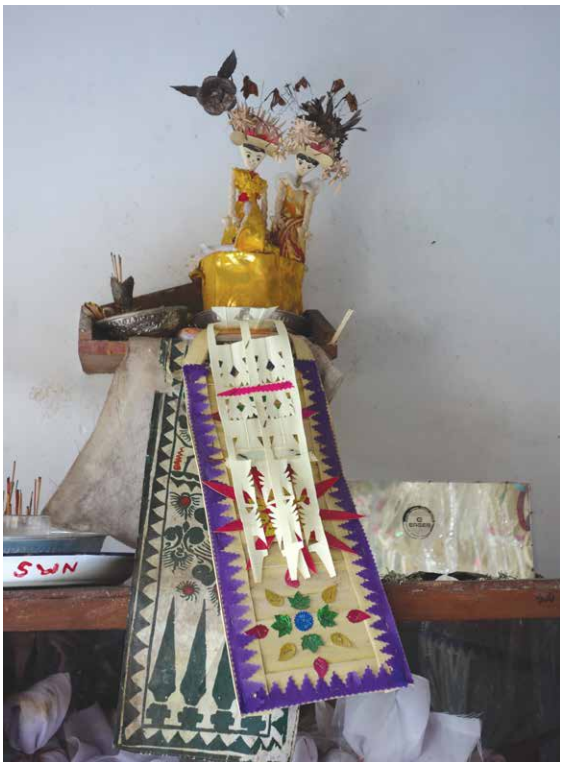


Figure 4.83: Three layers of lamak in workshop of Ni Wayan Suartini, Bebandem, 28/5/2015.

Figure 4.84: Kepeng lamak and lontar ceniga. Komala (Bebandem), 31/5/2015.

Figure 4.85: Prada, kepeng and lontar lamak and banana leaf. Pura Dalem, Sibetan,15/4/2014.

and again. It would then be sufficient to recreate only the simple palm leaf *lamak* or *ceniga.*

4.6 Conclusion

The subject of this chapter was the connection between the ritual purpose of a *lamak* and the materials and techniques it is made with. Given the fact that a *lamak* serves as a base for offerings and as decoration of shrines and altars, the ritual purpose of a *lamak* is to attract invisible beings to the offerings, and to let their blessings come down from heaven to earth via the *lamak*. I also explored whether there is a difference between *lamak* made of palm leaves and *lamak* made of more durable materials, as far as this interpretation is concerned.

In Bali, the regeneration of nature, the continual renewal of life, is the purpose of many rituals during which offerings are presented to deities and ancestors. Like offerings, which are taken from nature and can be offered one time only, *lamak* should be made from ephemeral palm leaves, from natural 'living' materials, and only be used once. As a consequence, ephemeral *lamak* have to be recreated again for the next ritual.

And, just as the motifs on a palm leaf *lamak* are related to the divine blessings the Balinese hope to receive in return for the offerings, likewise the natural materials of the ephemeral *lamak* themselves, taken from useful trees, are associated with the growth of plants and fertility generally.

The 'colours' of the leaves, and the symmetrical structure of some of the patterns, is interpreted as an expression of the *rwa bhineda* principle, 'the unity of two separated', the concept that all phenomena consist of two complementary parts, especially related to the complementary opposition of female and male, which is the source of all creation.

Lamak are also made of non-ephemeral materials like coins and many kinds of cloth, decorated in a wide range of textile-decorating techniques. In all varieties of permanent *lamak*, the main structure of a palm leaf *lamak* is maintained, but the form of the ornaments is more or less dependent on the techniques used, and some motifs common to these techniques are adopted as well. Of the motifs derived from palm leaf *lamak*, the human figure, *cili,* is the one most often used. And the order in which the motifs are placed usually follow the vertical structure of the cosmos, as on palm leaf *lamak*.

However, especially of the varieties presently sold in the markets, the decorations are less meaningful than their colours, which are usually related to the Trimurti (Brahma, Wisnu, Siwa) (fig. 4.83), the deities of the cardinal directions (from East to North: Iswara, Brahma, Mahadewa and Wisnu), or, in case of the black and white *poleng*, to the *rwa bhineda* principle.

Although permanent *lamak* in principle, just like ephemeral *lamak*, can act as a base for offerings[55] and as decoration of shrines and altars, so that the invisible beings are attracted to the offerings, according to the Balinese themselves it is not enough to only use permanent *lamak*.

They always add a palm leaf *lamak* or *ceniga* or in any case a special leaf (*plawa*) or flowers between the offering and the permanent *lamak*, because a *lamak* has to be "*dari alam*", from nature. Only natural materials, related to life and fertility, can be associated with the blessings coming down from heaven to earth via the *lamak* as spiritual ladder.

The desired aim by carrying out the ritual, continuation of life and regeneration of nature, is better represented by an ephemeral *lamak* than by a permanent one, since the ephemeral, natural *lamak* itself is recreated time and again, for the creator himself is regarded as being present in nature.

As is the case with so many aspects of culture in Bali, including ritual objects, the enormous variety of kinds and styles of *lamak* is dependent on, as the Balinese say, '*desa, kala, patra*', 'place, time and circumstances'. But it is always the people themselves, individual Balinese makers and users of *lamak*, who eventually determine what the *lamak* he or she makes or uses will look like.

In the previous three chapters I have concentrated on the *lamak* as ritual object, on its place or purpose in the wider network of visible and invisible beings. In the next chapter I will focus on the social context of *lamak*, on their being a part of the social network of their makers and users.

55 With the exception of *lamak* made of coins, with a wooden top.

Figure 4.86: A kepeng lamak on top of a palm leaf lamak decorate a shrine; below the shrine a ceniga is visible. Regency of Tabanan, 1922. Collection National Museum of World Cultures, TM-60042729 (photographer unknown, collection Anna Koorders-Schumacher).

Figures 5.1-5.3: Together with her family, Ni Ketut Pilik works on a lamak nganten. Lodtunduh, 5/7/1988.

Figure 5.4: Ni Ketut Pilik looks at photographs taken of herself 25 years earlier. Lodtunduh, 16/10/2013.