

Reflecting and [Living]: Philosophy and Architecture of the Art and Performance of Talawang

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ABSTRACT

This research examines Talawang shields, which have received little attention in scientific studies. Talawang shields are a cultural treasure for the Dayak people of Kalimantan, featuring intricate carvings, motifs, colours, and universes that blend art with local-global philosophical meanings. This is a qualitative research study that utilises previous studies as a secondary source of data. Additionally, the researchers provide evidence in the form of images of Talawang shields, which are considered an artistic luxury in Indonesia. The study also includes important interview results from credible sources with a cultural perspective to support the data. The results indicate that the Talawang shield serves as an art space for fashion and architecture, as well as a symbol of courage, responsibility, and loyalty. When presented to readers, observers, and art workers, the Talawang shield conveys multiple meanings.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Kalimantan is an Indonesian island with a rich culture, much of which remains unexplored. *Talawang*, a Dayak shield, is one example of this culture. While the sketches of the *Talawang* shield's patterns or motifs are well known, the story or meaning of the *Talawang* shield itself can be vague in modern times. It is important to research and preserve the cultural significance of the *Talawang* and other artefacts like it.

Here is a picture of the *Talawang* shield:

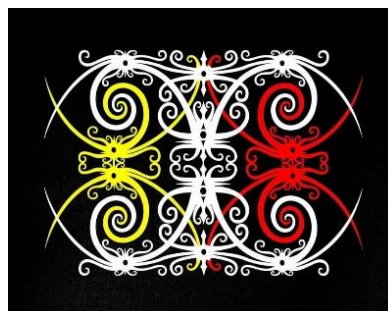


Figure 1. Talawang shield image

The Dayak Tribe has a wealth of spiritual values [1]. Throughout history, spiritual value has been derived from various cultures. One such example is *Talawang*, which is a shield and tool of war that holds magical value, motifs, colours, and other adornments. As part of local wisdom, *Talawang* is even incorporated into clothing motifs, whether it be women's or men's clothing [2].

Indonesia is a country that is rich in culture and is home to many researchers. One of the cultures that is often discussed is the Dayak culture. In particular, *Talawang*, a cultural symbol in Dayak land, holds significant cultural value. The purpose of this paper is to explore and research the meaning and use of *Talawang*. One of the research subjects stated:

Talawang dengan gambar bajei tuh kemungkinan tege makna kabuat akan Suku Dayak tuh, mbingat batang bajei tuh rancak i anggap sebagai simbol keabadian dengan kekuatan. Guna gambar jituh tau terkait kia dengan harapan supaya tau berkelanjutan dengan kekuatan ji abadi. Dan tege makna bahwa tau jadi contoh akan manusia te selalu huang jalan ji pas.

Talawang, in the form of a fern, may hold special significance for the Dayak people. The fern tree is often regarded as a symbol of permanence and strength, which could explain the use of this shape. It may represent the hope for sustainability and enduring strength, serving as an example for humans to always walk on the right path.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Before delving deeper into the meaning of the *Talawang* shield, this study examines the research and reviews the works of Mangundhining Siwi Syahbani, Yohanes Natali Routa Stela, and Anne Schiller, who have discussed *Talawang* from various perspectives, including fashion, architecture, and historical significance. The author presents the three previous studies by

Mangundhining Siwi Syahbani, Yohanes Natali Routa Stela, and Anne Schiller first.

2.1 First Literature

In the previous study, Mangundhining Siwi Syahbani's research on *Talawang* was reviewed. The focus was on its eclectic fashion style and how it was incorporated into furniture design for aesthetic and functional purposes. [3]. Syahbani presents *Talawang*, the traditional clothing of East Kalimantan, in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Traditional Clothing of East Kalimantan

Additionally, in Figure 2, Syahbani showcases a fashion design [3]. Evening party fashion quoted from <https://id.pinterest.com>

In the next image, the researchers saw the design of another evening party motif through image 3 displayed by Syahbani with the following image [3]:



Figure 3. Other Evening Party Motif Designs

Syahbani's figures 1, 2, and 3 are comparable to the researcher's data search, particularly in terms of motifs. Motifs or decorations/designs are represented by lines such as curls, spirals, horizontals, curves, verticals, and slants.

The motifs found in *Talawang* share similar characteristics with those in Syahbani's research. The divergence is that the researchers see *Talawang* as a shield in terms of narratives told by cultural activists in Central Kalimantan, which are more humanistic in meaning or more in line with the values raised by *Talawang*.

2.2 Second Literature

The second previous research, the researchers looked at Yohanes Natali Routa Stela's research on building architecture that was transformed by the roof of the building in the form of Tameng/*Talawang* of Dayak Customs [4]. According to Stela, the *Talawang* form incorporates cultural accents, symbols, and landmarks [4]. The performance arena is constructed using piles, space frames, and flattened audience stands to accommodate the swampy soil conditions. The provided image, picture 4, serves as documentation of Stela's ownership of *Talawang* [4].



Figure 4. Mass Formation and The Existence of The *Talawang* Roof

Figure 4 illustrates the formation of the mass and the presence of the *Talawang* roof [4].

Stela, a scientist from the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Design, and the author both touched on the subject of *Talawang* shields. The text discusses *Talawang* shields from two different perspectives. The other researcher examines the meaning of the *Talawang* shield from the perspective of Central Kalimantan.

2.3 Third Literature

In the third section of the previous research, the authors look at the data research of Anne Schiller, who spoke in 1999 about the history of the Dayak Association in East Kalimantan [5]. Schiller discusses the symbols of the natural and social world in relation to ethnicity. Both Schiller and the author explore the concept of ethnicity as it pertains to the Dayak people in Kalimantan [5], [6].

Schiller is more concerned with the meaning contained in the custom itself, which leads to a space of solidarity between communities that is still maintained today. The distinction is that the researchers are more focused on the specific meaning of the *Talawang* shield, seeking data through interviews with traditional leaders who know about the *Talawang* shield.

3. METHODS

This research method involves data collection through interviews with experts or individuals knowledgeable about *Talawang* artefacts and Dayak shields, which are typically made of *Ulin* or *Ironwood*. The research subject, Nedkhng (not his real name), is a 47-year-old Christian who currently serves as a local village facilitator in Central Kalimantan.

The research process involved conducting interviews to gather information about *Talawang*, including its shape, the type of wood used (*Rattan* and *Ulin*), and the meanings of *Kelakai*, *Tombak*, *Batang Garing*, and *Sapundu*. The interviews were conducted solely to reveal the meaning of *Talawang* without delving deeper into its history.

The analysis of meaning involves searching for philosophical concepts such as life, responsibility of tool users, symbolisation of rich cultural heritage, depiction, and respect for nature and organic nuances.

Additionally, researchers sought data through visual images, such as photos depicting *Talawang* artefacts. The photos presented serve as supporting evidence or

objects/subjects for researchers to interpret within the cultural and literal landscape.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tameng, Talawang and Spaces of Interpretation

Dayak shield made of *Ulin* wood or *Iron* wood. It symbolises protection for the Dayak people. The researchers also quote the research subject's interview results:

Talawang jitu jadi hal penting ndai melai budaya Dayak. Gawi Talawang tuh ingguna akan perang ji fungsi a menjaga arep bara pawu musuh, tapi metutuh Talawang tuh lebih identik akan tari-tarian daerah Dayak. Jia baya akan perang bewei Talawang tuh ingguna tapi tau supa kita melai huka-huma sandung, uka tulang-tulang uluh matei, dan identik kia akan Agama Hindu Kaharingan gawi uka masyarakat Dayak percaya bahwa uka te tege ji nunggu atau kia leluhur ewen te.

Talawang holds great significance in Dayak culture as it is traditionally used in warfare to protect against enemy attacks. *Talawang* holds great significance in Dayak culture as it is traditionally used in warfare to protect against enemy attacks. However, in modern times, *Talawang* has become more closely associated with Dayak regional dances. *Talawang* holds great significance in Dayak culture as it is traditionally used in warfare to protect against enemy attacks [7]. *Talawang* is not only used for war, but it can also be found in sandung houses where the bones of the dead are kept. It is also associated with the Hindu Kaharingan religion, in which the Dayak people believe that the place has a guardian or their ancestors [5], [8]–[11].

Secara uras te Talawang Jia baya tentang alat perang bewei, tapi kia cerminan budaya Dayak dengan nilai-nilai budaya Dayak te, mangat uluh Dayak tau menghargai dan melestarikan budaya Dayak tuh, supaya Jia kana telen zaman ji semakin modern tuh.

Overall, *Talawang* reflects not only the tools of war but also the values and culture of

the Dayak people. It serves as a means for Dayak people to appreciate and preserve their culture, preventing it from being lost in the face of modernity.

The *Talawang* is a traditional shield with significant cultural value in Dayak life. It is crafted from *Ulin* wood or *Ironwood*, both of which possess exceptional strength and durability. The use of these natural materials not only enhances the physical strength of the *Talawang*, but also imbues it with rich symbolism related to nature and the daily lives of the Dayak people [12]–[37].

It is crucial to comprehend that *Talawang* holds not only physical defensive capabilities but also significant symbolic value [38]–[46] [47]. *Talawang* is primarily a symbol of protection for the Dayak people. It is used as a shield to safeguard against various forms of danger, including warfare, wild animals, and negative energies [1], [47].

The wood used in making *Talawang*, *Ulin* or ironwood, is known for its strength and durability, which are symbolic of heroism and courage [48]–[64]. The manufacturing process of *Talawang* often requires the assistance of local carpenters. These carpenters possess not only the necessary expertise in manufacturing techniques but also a deep understanding of the cultural symbolism associated with *Talawang* [65], [66], [75]–[84], [67], [85]–[94], [68], [95]–[100], [69]–[74].

Talawang are often adorned with artistic carvings that hold special significance to the Dayak people. These motifs may reflect daily life, myths, or values cherished by the community. Therefore, *Talawang* is not only a utilitarian object but also a work of art that reflects the rich cultural heritage of the Dayak Tribe. The provided pictures serve as documentation.



Figure 5. Talawang motif

Talawang can play a significant role in religious ceremonies, weddings, and other special occasions in traditional contexts [101]–[107]. The use of *Talawang* not only creates a spiritual bond between individuals and communities but also connects them to their ancestral heritage.

Therefore, *Talawang* is not only a traditional defence tool but also a symbol of courage, protection and cultural wealth passed down from generation to generation within the Dayak community.

Talawang forms come in various types, including plant forms such as *Rattan*, *Kelakai*, and *Ferns*, as well as forms of spears, garing rods, and *Sapundu*. These forms are well-known in every Dayak area and have many uses, including important events such as weddings, deaths, religious ceremonies, and rituals in the Dayak Tribe that symbolise gratitude and blessings for the Dayak Tribe [7].

Rattan, Talawang and Philosophical Meanings

Talawang forms in Dayak traditions reflect a wealth of creativity and deep symbolic values [108]. There are various types of *Talawang* shapes, including:

Talawang dengan gambar urwei tuh menunjukkan ka tatau alam dengan ije keterkaitan uluh Dayak dengan lingkungan sekitar. Urwei, sebagai bahan alami tuh, manenga angkat bara organik bara talawang dengan rancak ji ihias dengan motif-motif je menceritakan pabelum alam.

Talawang made of rattan reflects the Dayak people's connection to the surrounding environment and the richness of nature. The use of natural materials gives the *Talawang* an organic feel, and it is often decorated with motifs inspired by the natural world.

Gambar talawang kelakai tuh mencerminkan hubungan ji dengan tumbuhan kelakai. Jituh kemungkinan mencerminkan kepentingan huang pabelum setiap andau atawa tege nilai

ji simbolis kabuat je i hormat uluh Suku Dayak.

The *Talawang Kelakai* shape reflects a close relationship with the *Kelakai* plant. It may reflect its importance in daily life or have a particular symbolic value that is respected by the Dayak Tribe.

The use of *Talawang* in the form of a fern may symbolize permanence and strength, possibly indicating a hope for sustainability and enduring strength.

Talawang huang gambar lunju tu menggambarkan unsur keperkasaan dengan kahanyi. Gambar jituh rancak i sundau huang konteks militer atawa upacara-upacara je menekankan nilai-nilai kepahlawanan.

The *Talawang*, depicted in the form of a spear, symbolises strength and courage. It is commonly used in military contexts or ceremonies that emphasise heroic values.

Gambar talawang bara batang garing tuh mencerminkan kaguna bahan ji batekang dengan tahan tahi. Jituh kemungkinan ngarti sebagai simbol katanggihan dan katahanan huang menghadapi cubaan atawa tantangan.

The shape of the *Garing* rod in *Talawang* reflects the use of strong and durable materials [109]. This interpretation of the symbol highlights resilience and endurance in the face of trials or challenges [34], [110]–[115].

Talawang dengan gambar sapundu tuh tau tege keterkaitan ji husus dengan upacara-upacara adat dengan peringatan pampatei. Sapundu iye te batang je rancak ingguna akan manampa tiang-tiang pemakaman, sehingga talawang dengan gambar jituh tau tege makna pabelum dengan pampatei.

Talawang in the form of *Sapundu* can have special associations with traditional ceremonies and death commemorations.

Sapundu is a tree that is often used to make funeral poles, so *Talawang* with this shape can represent the cycle of life and death [116].

Each form of *Talawang* holds great significance in the lives of the Dayak people. Its use extends beyond physical security, as it also serves as a symbol during important moments such as marriage, death, religious ceremonies, and other rituals. *Talawang* embodies the cultural heritage, gratitude, and blessings of the Dayak Tribe, which are preserved in various aspects of their lives.

5. CONCLUSION

Talawang has many meanings and uses in the context of the Dayak Tribe. And what researchers could also understand is that a culture will never be abandoned for Tribes in Indonesia as it is so vital to preserve and maintain a culture for this nation in order to the younger generation who will continue the progress of this nation could always develop the talents or potentials that exist within themselves for the culture, whether it's academic or non-academic, in order to not be inferior to the progress of foreign nations but for country to progress in own way, which is to maintain the existing culture of Indonesia.

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