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Representation of the Meaning of *Indung* in Artworks

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Abstract

Indung means mother in Sundanese. *Indung* in Sundanese culture is found in Paribasa, Babasan, Carita Pantun, Waditra (Sundanese traditional musical instrument), traditional ceremonies, and others. The word *indung*, which is found in almost all elements of Sundanese culture and manifests in Sundanese artifacts, has an invisible meaning. The meaning of *indung* in the perspective of Sundanese culture that exists in today's society has not been explored. The meaning of *indung* from a cultural perspective needs to be searched for. There have not been found artworks with the theme of *indung* from a Sundanese cultural perspective, so it is necessary to explore representations in artworks. This study employs the Art-based Research method, in which an investigation is carried out on the data, and the results are represented in artworks. Through questionnaires, interviews, and literature studies, the meaning of *indung* is extracted and then tabulated to be classified and analyzed. The results of data processing showed that *indung* has many meanings, the result of converging data from the literature, questionnaire and interview the whole there are 17 meanings, among which the nurse, angel, house, huge, source of life, earth, embrace, harmony, the center of life, and love. The results of data processing are represented in artworks. Artworks made based on the meaning of *indung* are limited to three titles, namely *Sumber Kehidupan* (Source of Life), *Merangkul* (Embracing), and *Rumah yang Hangat* (Warm Home). The visual exploration contained in the three titles is made using stylized forms with a decorative style, using elements of motifs and colors from West Javanese batik. The media and techniques used are found in written batik. The results of the visualization of the meaning of *indung* of the three artworks that are created can be concluded that the meaning of *indung* cannot be symbolized singly.

Keywords: Indung, Meaning, Sundanese Culture, Symbol


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INTRODUCTION

Sundanese people have cultural values that are carried in their lives. Sundanese cultural values are contained in the cultural system. The entire system is manifested in various forms and artificial media so that in his life, humans are faced with a new reality, namely the world of symbols

(Prawira, 2017).

Artifacts containing the word *indung* are the result of the ability of the Sundanese people to generate ideas. Humans in their cultural life can create ideas that are realized through the ability to develop their cultural systems. These cultural systems are language, knowledge, social organization, technology, economy, religion,

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and art (Koentjaraningrat, 2009).

Indung is found in almost all elements of Sundanese culture, such as in language, social systems, livelihood systems, religious systems, knowledge, and art systems. This shows that the *indung* is very important for the Sundanese people. Heryana (2012) states that:

“The mention of *indung* when side by side with father will be more dominant; at least arrive first or earlier. Keeping or mentioning the word *indung* before the father is not a coincidence or a handover of gratitude but based on a view that values *indung* (read: women) more than men.”

Indung is scattered in Sundanese and cultural artifacts as *Paribasa*, *Babasan*, *Carita Pantun*, *Mantra/Jangjawokan*, *Waditra* (Sundanese traditional musical instrument), and customs. *Indung* is written in Sundanese such as *suku indung*, *indung lenggeun*, *indung kesang*, *indung beurang*, *indung peuting*, *leuit indung*, *pare indung*, *urat indung*, and others. *Indung* is also contained in the name *Waditra* (Sundanese traditional musical instrument) such as *Angklung Indung*, *Calung Indung*, *Goong Indung*, *Kacapi Indung*, and others. *Indung* is also contained in *carita pantun*, *gending karasemen*, and *wewengkon Garut* who are mentioned as mythological figures of Sundanese women, as stated by Heryana (2012) that there are several names (figures) in Sundanese mythology who are identified as typical of Sundanese women, namely Dayang Sumbi, Sunan Ambu, and Nyi Sri Pohaci. It is hoped that these three distinct characters with different characteristics can unite and turn into *indung*, a mother.

Purna (2019) states that the natural power that can give birth to what is in this world is then personified as a Goddess or Mother. Thus, the mention of *indung* is not limited to women who give birth. According to Heryana (2006), the cultural *indung* is the name of *indung* who is intended for something (can be something or human-being) by taking on the feminine characteristics of a woman. The most important thing is characterization: giving the *indung*

character to the object or person attached to it. *Indung* in objects such as *kacapi indung*, *leuit indung*, *indung* in mythology, *indung* in *paribasa* and others, is a symbolic form, especially in a text (words).

The word *indung* which is manifested in customs and artifacts has an invisible meaning. If someone wants to know and understand, he/she must look for it. Prawira (2017) states humans are always looking for meaning in objects and phenomena that surround them with or without accuracy, true or not, and humans try to give meaning to these objects or phenomena.

Prawira (2017) states that society consists of three trends: first, people who maintain old traditions and customs; second, people who accommodate old and new cultures; and people who want new values to get new values and develop their culture. This study is limited to finding the meaning of *indung* from a cultural perspective in the last two groups, namely, people who accommodate old and new cultures and people who want new values and develop their culture (current Sundanese people), through interview, questionnaires, and literature studies. In addition, in existing artworks in Indonesia, there have not been found artworks with main themes from a cultural perspective, especially Sundanese culture. Based on this, the meaning of *indung* obtained from data analyzing is represented in visual artworks.

METHOD

The object of this research is *indung* in Sundanese culture. This research is located in several areas of West Java, such as Sumedang Regency, Cirebon City, Karawang Regency, and Bandung City. The research was conducted from March 2018 to December 2020. The meaning of *indung* was collected through questionnaires, interviews, and literature studies.

The questionnaire was conducted on 51 people consisting of 36 men and 15 women, aged 17 to 23 years, claiming to be Sundanese. These questions are asked to

explore the meaning of *indung* in the present Sundanese generation.

Interviews to explore the meaning of *indung* were conducted with resource persons with cultural and artistic backgrounds, namely H. Asep Sutisna, S.Pd. (Art Division and Head of K3S Cilamaya Wetan, Karawang), Mr. Jeje (community leader, ceremony leader in Ngalaksa Village/Rancakalong District, Sumedang Regency), Prof. Endang Caturwati (Professor of the Institute of Indonesian Arts and Culture Bandung), Ugo Untoro (Indonesian Contemporary Artist), Associate Prof. She-Fong Chung (Director of the National Cheng-chi University Arts Center, National Cheng-chi University), Ir. Eko Prawoto, M. Arch (Lecturer in Architecture, Gadjah Mada University), and Drs. I Ketut Murdana (Lecturer at the Faculty of Art and Design at the Indonesian Institute of the Arts, Denpasar).

A literature study is carried out to collect the meaning of *indung* from various sources such as books, journals, theses, conferences/seminars, articles on web pages, and others. The data of the meaning of *indung* from the results of the three data collection techniques are outlined in tabulated form.

After the data on the meaning of *indung* based on the questionnaire, interview, and literature study is collected, the data is juxtaposed to obtain the converging of the meaning of *indung*. The meaning of *indung* converged is then represented in the creation of artworks to obtain a symbolic meaning for the meaning of *indung*. The work is made using techniques and media in traditional written batik making. The method used in the creation of artworks is Art-based Research (ABR).

ABR is a transdisciplinary approach to knowledge building that incorporates the principles of creative arts in a research context. The practice of ABR is a methodological tool used by researchers across scientific disciplines during any or all phases of research, including problem creation, data or content creation, analysis, interpretation, and representation (Leavy,

2015). Shaun McNiff (as cited in Leavy, 2015) states that these tools adapt the principles of creative arts to address research questions holistically. Therefore, this investigative process involves researchers in making art as a way of knowing. The practice of investigation is informed by the belief that arts and humanities can facilitate social scientific goals (Jones, 2010).

Based on the statement above, ABR is a method that is different from qualitative methods in general. ABR involves art in research. In this regard, Greenwood (2019) states that one of the main reasons for the growth of art-based approaches to research is the recognition that life experiences are multi-sensory, multifaceted, and related to complex ways to time, space, ideology, and relationships with others. Traditional research approaches have been seen by increasing numbers of researchers as outstanding brain/mind, verbal, and temporal approaches to knowledge and experience. Utilizing arts in research is one of many shifts in seeking honest inquiry and representation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Indung and Basic Beliefs of the Sundanese People

Indung in Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia means mother; parents (KBBI Kemendikbud, 2016). *Indung* in the Sundanese Dictionary means ¹*nu ngakandung urang jeung ngajurukeunana* (the person who conceives and gives birth to us), ²*pun biang* (mother), ³*tuang ibu* (mother) (Danadibrata, 2006). The word *indung* in Sundanese culture has various understandings, generally understood as a mother. However, based on the literature, the meaning of *indung* is not limited to the mother. *Indung* can mean nature, role, symbol, philosophy, etc.

Based on Heryana's (2006) research, *indung* is divided into two categories: biological *indung* and cultural *indung*. Biological *indung* is related to the nature and role of women in domestic life. Marriage is the gateway for a woman to become *in-*

indung. *Indung* as a mother has female characteristics such as being gentle, loving and having *cikahuripan* (all the causes that make life) for children. In marriage, *indung* also functions as a process of family regeneration.

According to Toynbee et al. (1964), culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, is the distinctive attainments of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts; the essential core of culture comprises traditional.

Indung in a Sundanese culture, based on Kroeber and Kluckhohn’s statement, can be seen as an explicit culture as well as an implicit culture. The explicit culture of *indung* is the word/text, while the implicit culture is the meaning of the word/text of *indung*.

One of the elements of culture is a basic assumption. This element is in the deepest part and visible and which is the basis of culture. This basic assumption, built through a certain evolutionary process, consists of basic assumptions and beliefs, which become the foundation for acting in certain cultural societies in carrying out their lives (Uyan Dur, 2015). It can be concluded that the implicit culture, according to Kroeber and Kluckhohn is the same as the basic assumption according to Banu Inanc Dur.

Heryana (2012) called *indung* of Sundanese artifacts “mata holang”, which is a Sundanese idiom that means the source, center of life, or the spearhead of activities. Heryana’s statement above and understanding of the “mata holang” show that *indung* is a view of life and basic assumptions and basic beliefs about life in Sundanese culture (see Figure 1).

Further and in the practical field of art creation, Ernst Cassier stated (as quoted in Prawira, 2017) that humans live in the physical world and live in a symbolic world. Language, myth, art, and religion are part of that symbolic world. Cassier also emphasized that humans, apart from having the ability to think systems, also have the ability for symbolic systems.

With this system, humans develop symbolic thinking and symbolic behavior as human characteristics that are different from animals.

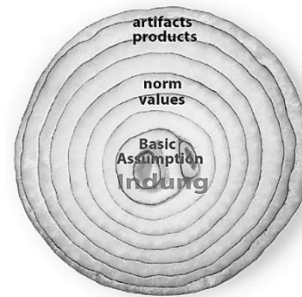


Figure 1. Diagram of the Application of *Indung* as Basic Assumptions (Source: Personal Data, 2019)

The Invisible Meaning of *Indung*

Shaules (2007) states that the visible products of culture are symbols of deeper meaning. Artifacts are cultural forms (objects) created by humans. Objects are visible cultural/product elements that contain invisible meanings. *Indung* (text/explicit culture/visible product) contained in Sundanese cultural artifacts has yet to be explored.

Meaning can be extracted from the relationships between humans who establish communication. Aart van Zoest in Prawira (2017) said the relationship between humans is established in communication using these signs. Humans send and receive signs and recognize their meaning. Furthermore, Roland Barthes (as cited in Robinson, 2011) states that a sign, in this context, refers to something which conveys meaning – for example, a written or spoken word, a symbol or a myth. The explanation above can be seen in Figure 2.

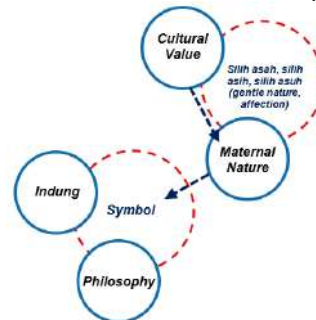


Figure 2. Diagram of *Indung* as a Symbol (text) (Source: Personal Data, 2018)

Analysis of the Meaning of *Indung*

Artwork is made based on the results of research related to anthropology, the meaning of *Indung* collected from Sundanese culture is anthropological-related research that involves the practice of representation where the results of the research are represented in artworks. In this regard, Preiser (2010) states that both art and anthropology rely on observation skills and various forms of visual literacy to collect and represent data. Anthropologists represent their data mostly in written form through ethnographic accounts, and artists represent their findings through imaginative artistic media such as pain-

ting, sculpture, filmmaking, and music.

Based on this, before being represented in an artwork, the meaning of *indung* needs to be analyzed to get the essence of the meaning of *indung*. The meaning of *indung* obtained from literature data, questionnaires, and interviews are outlined in several tables. The results of literature studies show that there are 21 meanings of *indung*, which can be seen in Table 1. The results of the questionnaire indicate 22 meanings of *indung* that can be seen in Table 2. The results of the interviews showed that there were 18 meanings of *indung* that can be seen in Table 3.

Table 1. The Meaning of *Indung* form Literature Studies

Writer	Meaning of <i>Indung</i>	Data Source
Dienaputra	The value of <i>silih asih, silih asah and silih asuh</i> ; Loving each other (giving priority to compassion), perfecting or improving oneself (through education and sharing knowledge) and protecting each other (maintaining security).	(Dienaputra, 2012)
Sumardjo	"The fields in Sundanese society are called <i>huma</i> . In Javanese society (<i>sawah</i>), there is <i>omah</i> which means "house." But on Mentawai Island, <i>huma</i> means village. The match among rice fields, houses, and villages shows the importance of rice fields in Sundanese society. Because the house is a woman, so the most important part of the house has woman characteristics.	(Sumardjo, 2003)
Drs. Agus Heryana	Biological <i>Indung</i> <i>Indung</i> culture The female character is found in the mythological figures of Sunan Ambu and Dewi Sri. The characteristics of women such as gentle, affectionate, and <i>cikahuripan</i> for their children. <i>Indung</i> becomes the spiritual central figure of the Sundanese people. <i>Indung</i> is a symbol of perfection for the attainment of spirituality that is lived in everyday life.	(Heryana, 2006)
Heri Mohamad Tohari	In Sri Sadana's <i>carita pantun</i> , there is a meaning of woman in symbolic, aesthetic, and ethical forms. In Sri Sadana's mythology, it is found that the Sundanese human mind places women in a great and very respectable position.	(Tohari, 2013)
Agus Haryana	The characteristics of Sundanese women through Sundanese mythological figures, namely Dayang Sumbi, Sunan Ambu, and Nyi Sri Pohaci. The position of women as <i>indung</i> in Sundanese culture is the eye of holang or the center of life in social activities.	(Heryana, 2012)
R.H. Hasan Mustapa	<i>Indung</i> is the sign of all role models. Something that is considered more, is called <i>indung</i> . People who educate children from an early age, even if they are not human, must be called <i>indung</i> .	(Mustapa, Hasan, 1985)

Table 2. The Meaning of *Indung* from Questionnaire Results

The Meaning of <i>Indung</i>			
1	Perfect	12	Gentle
2	Angel	13	Determine
3	Wingless angel	14	Great
4	Guardian angel	15	Mother
5	Have a heart like angels	16	Take care of
6	Mercy	17	Care
7	God's representative	18	Caring for children Giving birth
8	Home	19	Sacrifice
9	A place to return	20	Sincere
10	Important	21	Protect
11	Everything	22	Affection

Table 3. The Meaning of *Indung* from Interview Results

Source person	The Meaning of <i>Indung</i>
1. H. Asep Sutisna, S.Pd. Art Division and Head of K3S Cilamaya Wetan, Karawang	1 <i>Ageung</i> (Big)
	2 <i>Indung ngarangkul putra-putrana</i> (embrace their children)
	3 <i>Nada Euyeu</i> /Low note
	4 Harmonization
	5 Leader
2. Jeje (Community leader, ceremony leader in Ngalaksa Village/Rancakalong District, Sumedang)	6 Sanghyang Dewi Sri
	7 Source of life
3. Prof. Endang Caturwati Professor of the Institute of Indonesian Arts and Culture Bandung	8 Passion and power to turn people to be enthusiastic and dreaming
	9 Moves the outer and inner soul
	10 Dynamic and moving
4. Ugo Untoro Indonesian Contemporary Artist	13 A place to return
	14 Irrational
	15 Instincts of women.
	16 harmonious
	17 regularity
5. Associate Prof. She-Fong Chung Director of the National Cheng-chi University Arts Center	18 Selfless caring
8. Ir. Eko Prawoto, M.Arch. Lecturer in Architecture, Gadjah Mada University	19 Earth
9. Drs. I Ketut Murdana Lecturer at the Faculty of Art and Design at the Indonesian Institute of the Arts, Denpasar	20 Nature of Beauty

Converging the Meaning of *Indung* from Literature Studies

Twenty-one (21) data on the meaning of the *indung* are obtained from the results of data collection of literature studies, based on the meaning, they can be reduced to five (5) meanings of *indung* as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Converging the Meaning of *Indung* from Literature

The Maening of <i>Indung</i>	Converged into
The center of spiritual	
The center of life	Source of life
Source of life	
Sincere	
Affection	
Sunan Ambu (affection)	
Dewi Sri (sacrifice)	Affection
Love	
Sunan Ambu (affection)	
Nyi Sri Pohaci (sacrifice)	
Sincere	
Take care	
Home	Home
Gentle	
Perfect	
Great	Great
Very nice	
Big	
Honorable	
Dayang Sumbi (Role model)	Role model
Role model	

Converging the Meaning of *Indung* from Questionnaire Results

Two Twenty-two (22) data on the meaning of the *indung* are obtained from the results of data collection of questionnaires; based on the meaning, they can be reduced to five (5) meanings of *indung* as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Converging the Meaning of *Indung* from Questionnaire

The Meaning of <i>Indung</i>	Converged Into
Angel (3)	
Wingless angel	
Guardian angel	Angel
Have a heart of angels	
God's representative (2)	
Mercy	Mercy
Important	
Sacrifice (2)	Affection
Sincere	
Affection (2)	
Mother (15)	
Warm home	
A place to return	
Take care of (6)	Warm home
Give birth	
Protet	
Gentle	
Everything (5)	
Perfect (3)	Great
Great (2)	
Role model	Role model

Converging the Meaning of *Indung* from Interview Results

Eighteen (18) data on the meaning of the *indung* are obtained from the results of data collection of literature studies, based on the meaning, they can be reduced to ten (10) meanings of *indung* as shown in Table 6.

The meaning of *indung* in Tables 1, 2, and 3 are summarized to get the main meaning of *indung* into Tables 4, 5, and 6, the meaning of *indung* is selected based on the similarity of meaning, then converge into nine meanings of *indung* (see Figure 3). The three data are compared with each other to obtain similarities with one another in the hope that a generalization of the meaning of the *indung* obtained. Of

the nine meanings of *indung* obtained have three meanings of *indung* that is closest to the life that is the source of life, embrace and home.

Table 6. Converging the Meaning of *Indung* from Interview

The Meaning of <i>Indung</i>	Converged Into
Sanghyang Dewi Sri	Source of life
Source of life	
Soulful	Soulful
Embrace	Embrace
Selfless caring	Selfless caring
A place to return	A place to return
World	
Low tone	
Beautiful	Beautiful
Big	
Harmonious	
Strong instincts	
Regular	
Dynamic and moving	
Leader	Leader
Motivator	
Inner and outer encouraging	

dispute that what we are doing is making representations. Viewers and readers engage with representation (Bolt, 2004).

Artwork that represent the data processing results in Figure 3 are limited to the three meanings of *indung*, namely the Source of Life, Embrace, and Home. The title used for artworks is *Sumber Kehidupan* (The Source of Life), *Merangkul* (Embrace), and *Rumah yang Hangat* (Warm Home).

The meaning of *indung* as the source of life is visualized by the sun. As an analogy to the source of life needed by all living things, the sun is described as the main object in the artwork. The meaning of *indung* as an embrace is visualized by a tree. Trees as an analogy to embracing, it is the same as accepting anyone. Trees are needed by all living things. Butterflies, beetles, bees, birds, other animals, and humans come to the vicinity of the tree to get food from the juice of the flower, sap, or fruit, and get protection from wind, rain, or heat, and the tree embraces all living things that need it.

The meaning of *indung* as “*Rumah yang Hangat*” is visualized as a home. The home as an analogy to the Warm House is the warmth and comfort of the shelter for all living things. The elements of the home, such as doors, windows, walls, and roofs, are described as the main objects.

The concept of the three works consists of different aspects, each of which has an important role in the creation of visual work. These aspects are the stages of visual formation, these aspects are,

Reflection: A response to a visual form in nature. Defection: Development of images based on observations of the visual world. Composition: Organization of the image and quality in the creation of a unified statement designed objects and artworks. Expression: The use of art materials as a vehicle or medium for saying something in a meaningful way (Alberta Education, 1985).

The following is a visual concept from the work of *Sumber Kehidupan*, *Merangkul*, and *Rumah yang Hangat*. The visual styles used are decorative using elements of motifs and colors from West Javanese

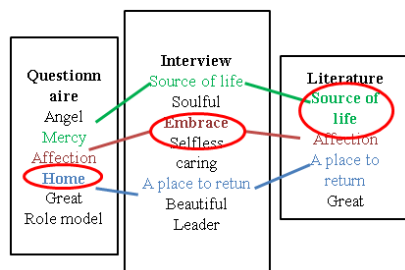


Figure 3. Correlation of questionnaire, interview, and literature data. (Source: Personal Data, 2021)

Representation of the Meaning of *Indung* in Artwork

Research on the meaning of *indung* produces the essence of the meaning of *indung* as presented in Figure 3, the result is represented in the artwork. Art is the practice of representation and the product is representation. When we speak, write, draw, take pictures, make digital images or make videos, there seems to be a bit of a

batik (see Figure 4). The visual style of batik is used as a Sundanese aesthetic concept. Sundanese aesthetic concepts are also found in Sundanese batik (*priangan*) decorations. The aesthetic aspect of Sundanese decoration has local wisdom values for Sundanese culture (Maulina et al., 2020).



Figure 4. “*Sumber Kehidupan*” by Rini Maulina 2021, written batik 80 x 80 cm. (Source: Personal Data, 2021)

The visual concept of “*Sumber Kehidupan*” (See Figure 5) includes a) Reflection, which uses forms found in nature such as plants, trees, mountains, water, clouds, sun, and sky; b) Defection; these forms are then transferred in the form of stylized batik visual style using the technique of written batik; c) Composition, the composition spreads to fill the area of a square box, by dividing curved and straight lines. The sun is analogous to the meaning of the source of life as the main object in the middle of the composition. Mountain views of clouds, plants, water, and animals are placed around the composition, framing the main object; d) Expression, the media used is fibre reactive dyes (brand Remazol) on cotton cloth measuring 50x55 cm with written batik techniques and *colet* color techniques. The colors used are the colors found in batik cloth from West Java.

The visual concept of “*Merangkul*” (See Figure 5) includes a) Reflection, which uses forms found in nature such as hu-

mans, animals, plants, trees, mountains, clouds, sun, and sky; b) Defection, the shapes depicted in the form of stylized batik visual style using the technique of written batik; c) Composition, the composition spreads to fill a square box, by dividing the diagonal curved line in the middle of the composition. The analogy tree of the meaning of *indung* to embrace as the main object is placed in the middle of the composition. Human, plant, and animal objects are placed around the composition, framing the main object; d) Expression, the media used is fibre reactive dyes (brand Remazol) on cotton cloth measuring 50x55 cm with written batik techniques and *colet* coloring techniques. The colors used are the colors found in batik cloth from West Java.



Figure 5. “*Merangkul*” by Rini Maulina 2021, written batik 80 x 80 cm. (Source: Personal Data, 2021)

The visual concept of “*Rumah yang Hangat*” (see Figure 6) includes a) Reflection, which uses forms found in nature such as animals, houses, plants, trees, mountains, clouds, sun, and sky; b) Defection, the shapes depicted in the form of stylized batik visual style using the technique of written batik; c) Composition, the composition spreads to fill the area of a square box, with a straight-line division. The house is an analogy to the meaning of *indung*. Home, as the main object, is placed in the

middle of the composition, views of mountains, clouds, plants, animals are placed around the composition, framing the main object; d) Expression, the media used is fibre reactive dyes (brand Remazol) on cotton cloth measuring 50x55 cm with written batik techniques and colet coloring techniques. The colors used are the colors found in batik cloth from West Java.



Figure 6. “Rumah yang Hangat” by Rini Maulina 2021, written batik 80 x 80 cm. (Source: Personal Data, 2021)

CONCLUSION

The meaning of *indung* which is represented in visual artworks consisting of the titles *Sumber Kehidupan*, *Merangkul*, and *Rumah yang Hangat*, visually has similarities, namely, various shapes and colors. The forms consisting of elements such as sky, sun, clouds, mountains, water, trees, plants, animals, humans, and homes, are the wealth of the meaning of *indung* which is attached to life. All three artworks represent the meaning of *indung* diversely, that the meaning of *indung* cannot be created in a single symbol.

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