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INDONESIA'S IKAT WEAVING TRADITIONS





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MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND TOURISM, REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA

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MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND TOURISM, REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA

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KITLV - Jakarta

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Page 2. Elderly East Sumbanese man of importance dressed up for the annual *nyale* ritual and *pasola* horse race, feathers in his headcloth and warp-ikat wraps on shoulders and hips.





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Foreword

Minister for Culture and Tourism, Republic of Indonesia

H. E. Ir. Jero Wacik, SE



As a multicultural country, Indonesia boasts a myriad of traditions handed down from one generation to another. These amazing traditions are still largely practiced and treasured even in this era of modernity. Among such great wealth are the skills and culture of hand weaving some of which introduced to the indigenous peoples of the archipelago by traders from southeast continental Asia and even from farther afield. Indonesia's textile culture includes a large repertoire of techniques, one of the best-known being the dye-resist technique universally referred to as ikat weaving.

Found in many areas of the country including Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Bali, Java, and many more, ikat does not just serve as a mere piece of cloth, but plays an important role in these societies. Ikat with all its varieties in colors and symbols reflects the society in which it is used. It speaks volumes about the society's cultural habits, from their rituals to how they communicate with each other and the outside world. In a nutshell, it mirrors the character of each society, thus it is a very important component of the Indonesian culture.

This book aims to explore the intricate yet complicated culture of ikat weaving in Indonesia. Each area is discussed thoroughly, one by one. Each difference is acknowledged and explained. Each advancement is analyzed, and there is also a chapter that discusses the usages of ikat in today's fashion industry. All in all, this book is meant to be a comprehensive introduction to our ikat weaving treasure.

I hope this book will be able to tickle the appetite of a lot of Indonesians and others for more culture. I hope it will inspire the younger generations to be more involved in their own cultures and become more creative. On top of that, I also wish that producing literature about ikat weaving will be of benefit to millions of the humble craftsmen and-women who produce the glorious cloths, so that this great tradition could continue for many years to come.

Finally, it is also my wish that the continuous development of ikat weaving and the release of this book will help earn Indonesia the acknowledgment it deserves from world-over that the golden age of handwoven textiles took place in the archipelago whose peoples invented original patterns, symbols, and even colors. We might not have invented all the techniques, but we certainly developed the whole textile culture that comes along with them. And long may it continue.

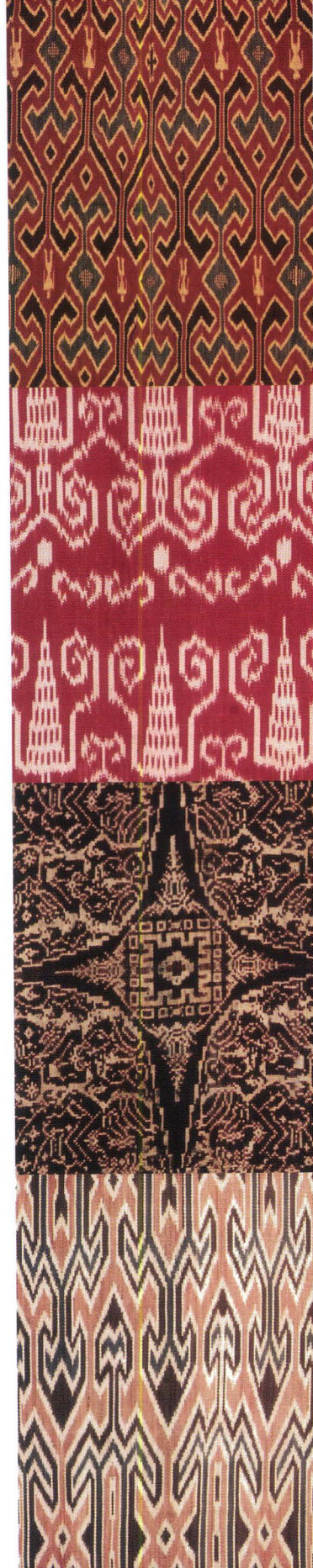
Jakarta, October 2009

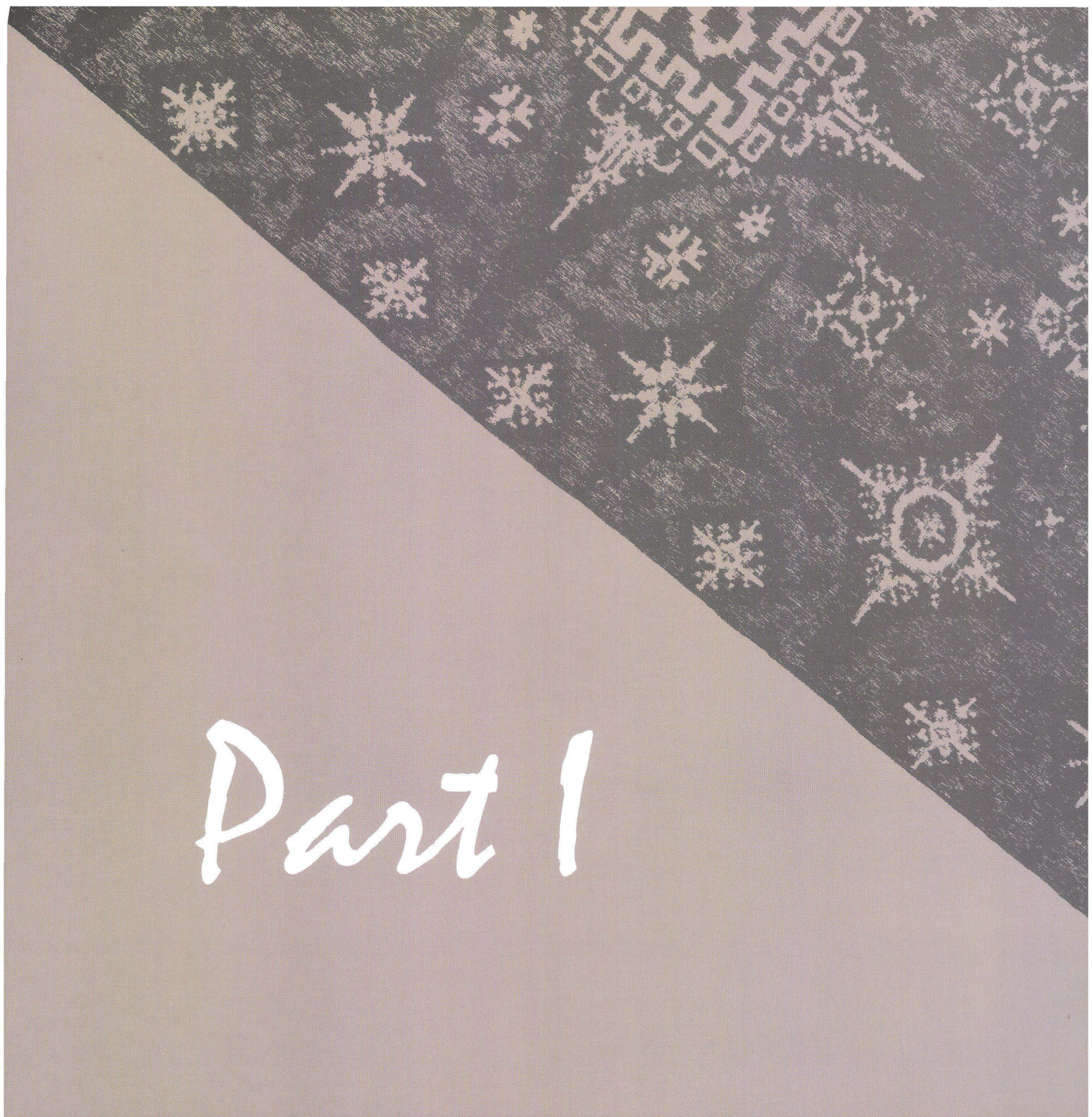
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jero Wacik', with a stylized, flowing script.

Ir. Jero Wacik, SE



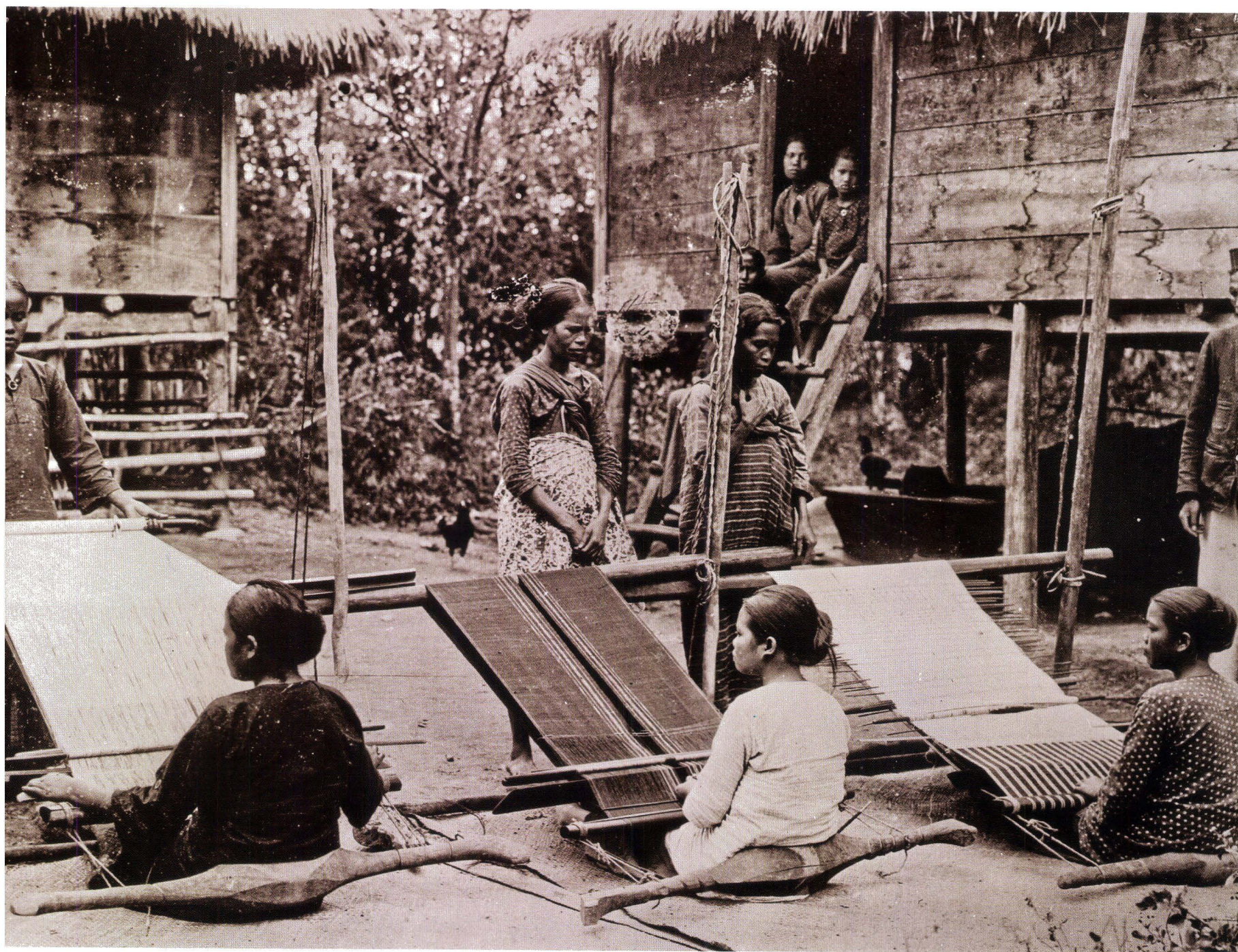
Map of Ikat-producing areas in Indonesia





Part 1





Ikat weaving traditions

by Suwati Kartiwa

Indonesia is well-known for the diversity of its weaving techniques, so admired that it occupies a very special place in the textile world. Located on the crossroads of ancient migration and later trade routes through Asia and the Pacific, the Indonesian archipelago was under the influence of foreign cultures from southeast continental Asia and even farther afield. The foreigners from China, India, Persia, Egypt, the Near East, and Europe who came to the islands brought along their cultural influences. Textiles were an integral part of this traffic and strongly affected by the cross-fertilization of techniques and ideas that enriched all countries involved. Indonesia absorbed and interpreted the contributions of distant cultures and developed the imported technical processes to a level that rose far above the original's. This is why some Indonesian textiles are regarded today as among the finest in the world, as has been stated in many of the books written by scholars and researchers on the subject, published since the beginning of the 20th century.

Among Indonesia's many known textile traditions is the dye-resist technique universally referred to as ikat weaving. The Malay word ikat means to bind, tie, or wind around. In this process, the parts of the yarn that are to remain undyed are protected by binding them tightly with a vegetable fiber that resists penetration of the dye. After the cloth has been dyed, the bindings are removed to reveal white patterning on a colored cloth. The ikat technique may be applied to either the warp or the weft yarns. More rarely, it is applied to both warp and weft. Warp ikat is where the ornamentation is applied to the vertical warp threads, and weft ikat is where the horizontal wefts are decorated. In double ikat, both the warp and the weft yarns are separately tied and dyed with patterns.

Bedrich Forman, in his book *Batik and Ikat in Indonesia*, describes the ikat process as "unique and requiring imagination, manual skill and incredible perseverance". The ikat process may be compared with computer graphics, as it demands a phenomenal amount of mathematical figuration. This is perpetuated as color codes throughout the long and difficult production stage, the image existing solely in the worker's mind, only to be revealed on the loom as weaving progresses.



ABOVE: The Toba Batak woman on the right is slipping pattern sticks into the unwoven warp, which will act as a guide for weaving the middle panel of an *ulos ragidup*. The *ulos ragidup* were formerly worn solely by grandfathers. Circa 1925, North Sumatra.

OPPOSITE: Three Toba Batak ladies weaving the various parts of an *ulos ragidup* that combine several ancient weaving techniques. On the far right is the central panel, which consists of a striped middlefield, often with bands of warp ikat alternated with plain stripes, and brocaded endfields (the solid white area that will be cut in the middle when finished). The woman in the middle is weaving the two side panels that have a few bands of supplementary warp ornamentation on the side where they will be sewn to the middle panel. The Bataks weave on simple backstrap looms that with continuous warps produce circular cloths. Circa 1940, North Sumatra.



LEFT: Three young women from the island of Lombok, east of Bali, prepare thread for weaving, while the two in the back are sitting at their looms. These backstrap looms are of a style typical of Bali and Lombok. Circa 1920, West Nusa Tenggara province. (FAR LEFT) A lovely *hinggi kombu* from East Sumba in East Nusa Tenggara province decorated with warp ikat patterning and neatly woven bands, called *kabakil*, at the ends. It takes several months to get the proper colors using organic dyes; the actual weaving takes only two or three weeks! Sanggar Seni Ori Angu collection.

OPPOSITE: A Sumbanese weaver at her loom in a shady space under the house. Traditionally, weaving took place under the house or on a verandah, depending on the architecture of the region. East Sumba.

The work of tying and dyeing take place before weaving. When the harvested cotton has been cleaned of its seeds and dried, it is fluffed and then spun into thread on a simple spindle. The finished thread is divided into two groups, one to be used as the vertical thread fixed to the loom (warp) and the other to be woven horizontally over and under the first (weft). Whichever of the two is to be ikat-decorated is arranged on a pair of parallel bars; these are at the top and bottom of the warp and at the two sides of the weft. The warp or weft is tied with patterning, steeped in a vat of dye, and set out to dry.

When the bindings are removed, the figurations appear in the original color of the threads against a dyed background, because only the unbound parts have absorbed the dye. This process may be repeated as many times as needed, resulting in various color combinations. Next, the patterned threads are put into use, the warps fitted onto the warp and cloth beams of the loom, the weft transferred to bobbins. When the warp is arranged on the loom, the final pattern becomes fully evident. The weft, in this case, will be mono-colored and undecorated. With weft ikat, an undecorated warp is arranged on the loom and the patterned weft that is wound around the bobbin is passed through, going over and under the warp. Here, the pattern will not become evident until the weaving is finished. The warp can be striped with various colors, even though it is not given patterning.





LEFT: A modern weaving from the village of Tenganan Pagringsingan on Bali made with double-ikat patterning. The pattern filling the body is traditional, named *prembon*, but the little doggies are a recent touch which tells us that the cloth was made exclusively for the foreign-tourist market. The excellence of the Tenganan weavers is still evident, however. ATA Shop collection.

On the island of Bali, ikat-weaving techniques are varied to produce positive or negative results. Negative is the opposite of the process described above where the designs are not ikatted but are left free to absorb the dye. It is the background that is ikatted and remains undyed.

The island is also one of the few places in the world where double ikat continues to be produced. This means that patterning is tied and dyed into both the weft and warp yarns, separately. Great care is needed in arranging the patterned warp on the loom and winding the patterned weft on the bobbin. Precision is absolute in lining up the meeting points of the motifs on the two during the weaving process.

Ikat-patterning and weaving are usually done by women. In some instances, one woman spins thread, experienced specialists bind and dye the threads, and a third woman weaves. In other cases, a single woman may do all of the processes, the work from spinning to ikatting performed by the same individual.

In the old days, before commencing work on a new cloth, a craftswoman must perform certain rituals. She would fast, observe taboos, and make offerings to deities or ancestors. In some areas, ikat-weaving skills were believed to be god-given, the deity providing inspiration and instruction. This is true of Bali where the unique ornamentation of the double-ikat *geringsing* cloths of Tenganan village are said to be designs painted in the sky, creations of Batara Indra.

Warp ikat is widely dispersed in Indonesia, found in such places as the Bataklands of North Sumatra, on the islands of Flores, Sumba, Rote, Sabu, Ndao, and Timor in East Nusa Tenggara, in Kalimantan, especially in the interior regions, in Sulawesi in Rongkong and Galumpang, and on the Maluku islands, such as Tanimbar and Kisar. Weft ikat is found in the Palembang region and Pasemah in South Sumatra, on Bangka and Belitung islands off the east coast of Sumatra, in Bali, in Sulawesi in the Donggala and Buginese regions, and in Gresik and Lamongan in East Java. As said, the double ikats or *geringsing* are made in the village of Tenganan in East Bali.



ABOVE: Two women neatening the unwoven end of the warps while the third woman, sitting on the ground, holds the loom taut. The loom is fastened to house poles at one end, in the old-fashioned way, while the warp is held taut by pressure from the woman's back against the wooden yoke, currently on the ground beside her. Toba Batak, North Sumatra, circa 1925.

LEFT: A Toba Batak *ulos mangiring* decorated with a simple arrow-like pattern. The word *mangiring* comes from the root *iring* which means follow. This cloth is worn at the celebration of a birth. Its pattern of rows of arrow-upon-arrow expresses the hope for many children to follow this one. Toba Batak, North Sumatra. Museum Tekstil DKI Jakarta collection.

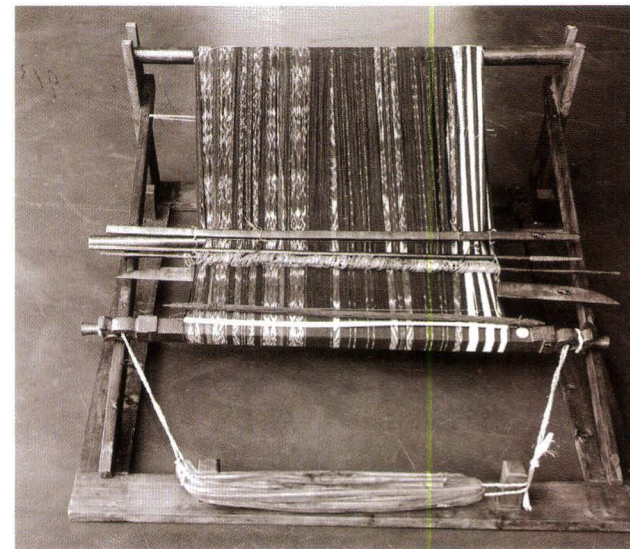


LEFT: A Sabunese woman's sarong, called *ei*, featuring motifs inspired by European crochet and embroidery patterns obtained from books and magazines. Nonetheless, the traditional layout of the sarong, with wide bands of ikat-patterning about a third of the way down on either side followed by a wide band of plain black, has been maintained. Museum Nasional collection.

FAR LEFT: A woman demonstrates the current 'national' way of wearing warp ikatted textiles on the island of Sabu in East Nusa Tenggara province. The narrow shawl is a recent addition, resulting from the desire of women across the country to wear matching skirts and shawls with their kebaya-blouse in the national fashion. But though new, they are still woven in the traditional way on a simple backstrap loom.

The word "ikat" was introduced into Europe's weaving vocabulary by Prof. A.R. Hein in 1880, according to both Loeber and Haddon. It was adopted into the Dutch lexicon as *ikatten* and into English as *ikat*, and meant both the process and the finished cloth. All warp ikats have common as well as regional characteristics. There are obvious similarities in style, technique, and ornamentation, all of which are related to a community's historical and cultural background. Factors like geographical location (remote), topography (difficult), and older local cultural elements (tenacious) serve to preserve a community's culture or cultural elements, such as specific weaving techniques. According to L. Langewis, the ornamentation on textiles in warp ikat-weaving communities shows that they originated with people who had been less influenced by techniques and patterns of imported fabrics. He gives the examples of warp ikats from the Batak, Dayak, Torajan, and Sumbanese people and puts the tenacity of local elements to the little interest that these communities generated in the trading world. In fact, it was through intensive trade exchange and the penetration of imported textiles that new elements were given the opportunity to exert influence over local patterns.

Weft ikat is relatively new to Indonesia. Several characteristics of weft ikat-weaving were already known in the historical era, when cotton thread was being used. However, weft ikat-weaving with silk thread is better known now. Until the indigenous Indonesians began to grow mulberry trees and cultivate the silk worm, the silk thread was imported from China. Thus, the development of weft ikat is related to imported silk and gold or silver metallic thread obtained from Muslim-Indian traders who arrived in Indonesia's coastal regions in the 15th century, especially the coasts of eastern Sumatra, northern Java, and western Sulawesi.



ABOVE: A partially finished weaving on a backstrap loom from the Tanimbar islands in southeastern Maluku. No foreign influence is to be found in the traditional textiles of this remote region, although some has crept in since the renaissance in traditional textile production that began in the early 1980s. Tanimbar, circa 1915.



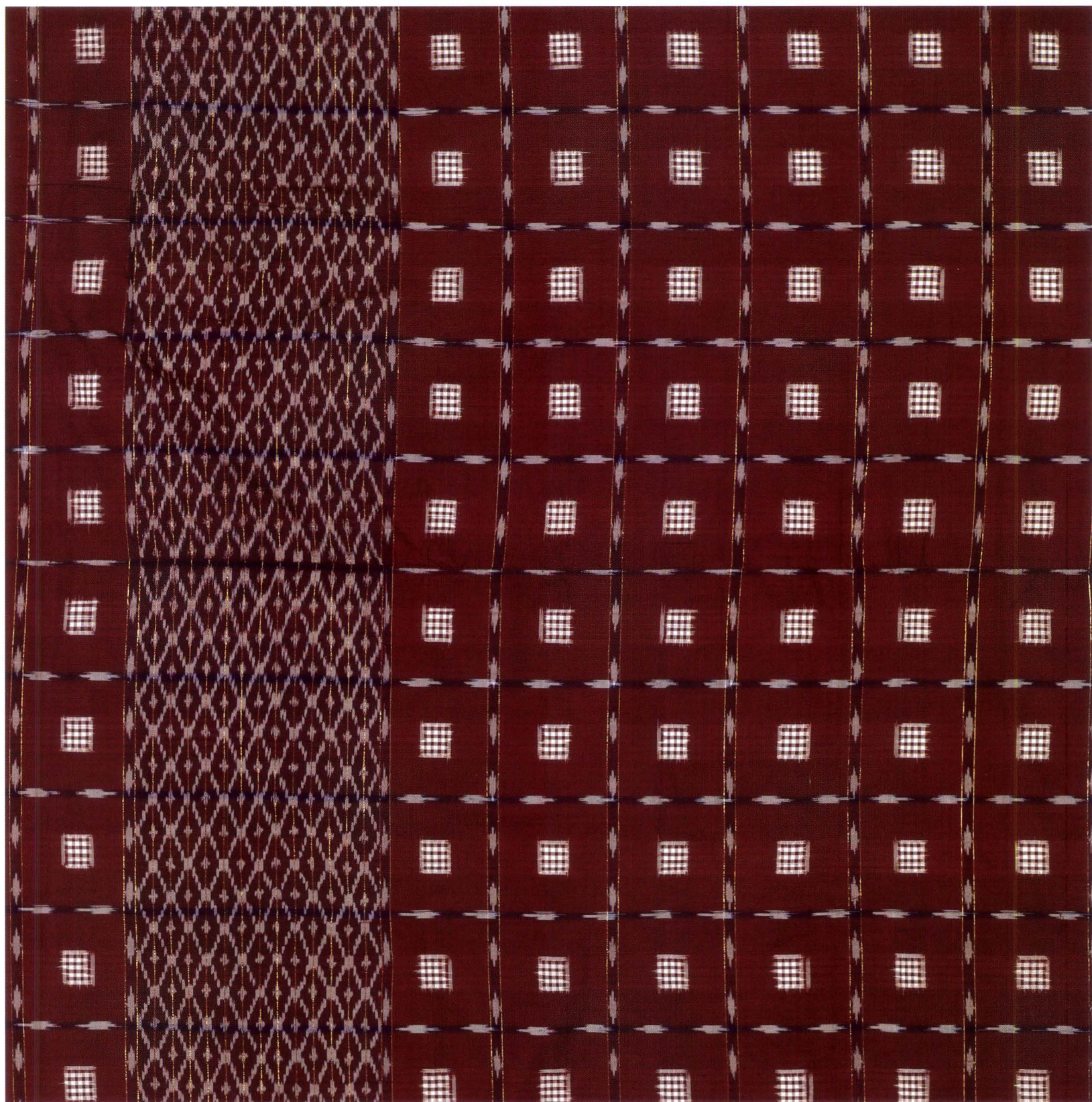
ABOVE: Weft-ikat patterning predominates in textiles from the Buginese lands of South Sulawesi, however it has only been in use there since early in the 20th century. Buginese silks are brilliantly colored but only plain dark plaid cotton sarongs can be used in the most intimate rituals in Buginese life. Woven on a backstrap loom on the verandah of a traditional house in the village of Sengkang in the 1950s. Private collection.

OPPOSITE: Although one speaks of the double-ikat patterning tradition as existing solely in the Balinese village of Tenganan, it is more widely practiced than that. This sarong, made of rayon thread and chemical dyes, involved both warp ikat and weft ikat, but the patterning is much less complicated than the more famous Tenganan double ikats. A bit of glamor has been added with the insertion of a few gold plastic wefts on either side of the narrow bands framing the checkerboard squares. Donggala, Central Sulawesi, circa 1985. Private collection.

Indonesia carried on intensive trade relations with other Asian countries in the historical era. The presence of imported goods added to the variation of techniques for weaving and decorating woven clothing. Through trade, Hindu and Buddhist influences reached Indonesia about the 4th century and Islamic influence about the 15th century, each becoming a new religion guiding the way of life and conduct of its followers and infiltrating local cultures.

Weft ikats display gay, eye-catching colors and may have gold or silver metallic thread, introduced through trade, inserted as supplementary wefts as part of the weaving process. Some weft ikats from Bali and Donggala (Central Sulawesi) are colored with a brush-like instrument in a technique called *coletan* or *coretan* where small areas are highlighted with additional colors that are brushed on.

A discussion of Indonesia's ikat textiles is incomplete without mentioning the double ikats of India, known as *patola*. They were brought to Indonesia by the same Gujarati merchants who brought the word Islam. They are identified by a combination of lozenges, triangles, and octagonal flowers and are made of silk. At the time, Indonesia produced similarly ornamented cloths, but in single, not double, ikat and using cotton thread, not silk. This similarity can be attributed to two factors: use of the same materials or assimilation of an outside influence on local cultures.





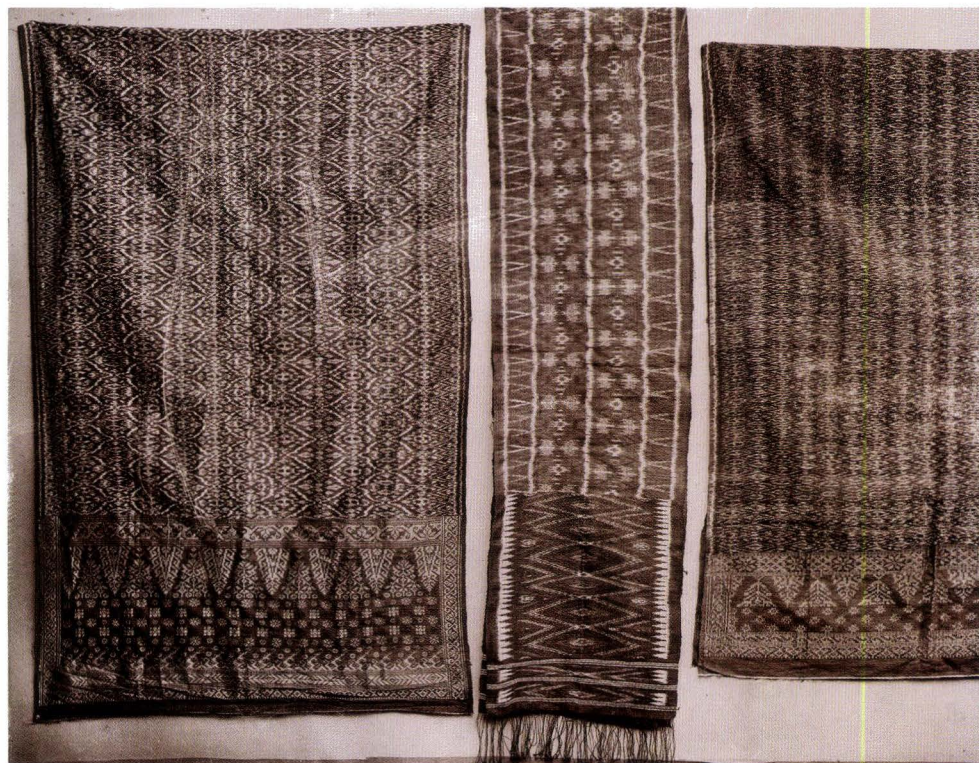
ABOVE: A typical warp-ikat sarong for women, *zawo*, from the Lio area of Flores island. The influence of the Indian double-ikatted patola that were so highly valued in colonial times (and still are) is clearly evident in the patterning on the central panel, here executed in warp ikat. The districts of Lio, Ende, and Sikka all show the strong impact of the patola on local weaving patterns. Although recently woven, this sarong was dyed with organic dyes. Flores Ikat Art collection.

RIGHT: An intricately patterned sarong or *lawo* from Ndona district in Ende, Flores. The bands of warp ikat work actually lie horizontally on the recently woven sarong. Some innovation is to be seen in the floral pattern on dark ground. It has been given the name *kembang nanas* which translates to pineapple flower. Inspiration for textile patterns in Indonesia comes from all kinds of sources. Flores Ikat Art collection.

The Indian patola is used in rituals in many parts of Indonesia. Paramita Abdurachman writes that Aceh, as the first port for trade commodities from India, and in fact all ports and coastal states on international trade routes, must have had wide use of patola and other related cloths. The motifs on them attest to the impact of the exchange of goods. At the other end of the road, she writes, in Sulawesi, in northern Maluku and on the Banda and Seram islands, one finds surviving evidence and knowledge of the use of the patola. In northern Maluku and Sulawesi, original patolas are still kept as heirlooms that are taken out solely on occasions of sacred nature. More often, such functions are referred to as 'rites of passage'.

Gujarati influence was acceptable to Indonesia, according to G.P. Rouffaer in his work *Over Ikat's, Tjinde's, Patola's en Chinde's*, because Indonesia already possessed ornamentation similar to that on the patola, and colors and patterns inspired by the skin of the patola snake (python). Patola-patterning is found on weaving everywhere in Indonesia, among others in Palembang (Sumatra), on Bangka, Java, and Bali, in Flores, Sumba, Rote, and Sabu in East Nusa Tenggara, and in past times in Minahasa (Sulawesi).





ABOVE: These sumptuous cloths were photographed at an exhibition in Indonesia in 1900. All have been decorated using the weft-ikat tradition, with some supplementary weft-ornamentation at the ends. The cloth in the middle, a cotton breastcloth, was made in Nusa Penida, Bali, the two others, to be used as skirt-cloths, in Gresik, East Java. The Gresik cloths were worn by nobles at a reception held after they had been through a purifying shower on the night before their wedding. The Nusa Penida breastcloth was and still is worn on ritual occasions.

LEFT: A traditional-style double-ikat from Tenganan Pagringsingan, Bali, that would be worn as an overskirt during ritual events. Hindu-Indian influence is clear in the diamond-shaped mandala motifs that decorate the body of the cloth. These textiles are considered to be sacred. ATA Shop collection.

The possibility of a link between the double ikat-weaving tradition of Tenganan village in Bali and the double ikat-weaving tradition of Gujarat's patola cloths has not been studied in sufficient depth. Tenganan is a mountain village that weaves only one kind of cloth, the double-ikat *geringsing*, made of cotton. The cotton is neither grown nor spun there, but purchased from Nusa Penida island, situated in the south of Bali. While the imported patola cloths were produced on a wide scale in India and traded with Indonesia, the *geringsing* are limited to Bali and made exclusively for ritual and sacerdotal purposes.



The rare double-ikat weaving tradition continues to flourish today. Unfortunately, some of Indonesia's other ikat-weaving traditions are now extinct. Among them are the *kain kasang* of West and Central Java, described by Jasper as long and narrow rectangles of cloth worn and used on ceremonial occasions. The warp ikats woven by the Bantik people of Bentenan island and Ratahan district of Minahasa in North Sulawesi represent another lost art. The last of these was apparently made in about 1880, according to the Dutch scholar Hetty Nooy-Palm. As in many other parts of Indonesia, their ornamentation was substantially inspired by the Indian patola (*cinde* in Indonesian). In Minahasa, such locally woven textiles were known as patola of which patterning was combined with hook or key motifs, manifesting a similarity with Iban ikats of inland West Kalimantan and Sarawak. Other patterns have an apparent relationship to those decorating weavings from southeast and southwest Maluku. Both Nooy-Palm and J.E. Jasper find the geometric human motif with arms raised reminiscent of motifs woven into the warp ikats of Leti, Kisar, and Tanimbar islands.

The Bentenan ikats were predominantly brown, dark blue, and wine red in color. They were worn by priests in certain rituals as sarongs, the bottom edge trimmed with tiny bells. Weaving these cloths was a complicated process and, not surprisingly, accompanied by rituals. It is not known if the common people were permitted to wear them. There are indications that they may have been reserved for women of the privileged class, who also used imported fabrics, such as those from India. Cloth beaten from bark usually served the common people's need for clothing. Considerable adoption of foreign cultures was made in Minahasa in particular, eventually supplanting local elements, some of which vanished forever. In the last few years, however, one young designer from North Sulawesi who resides in Jakarta took it upon himself to promote the revival of the Bentenan weavings, still using the warp ikat technique but semi-mechanized looms.

LEFT: Warp ikat was once practiced throughout almost all of Indonesia, even in West Java. This extremely rare example, that dates to the very beginning of the 20th century, was made to serve as curtaining and is an astounding 14-meters long. It was called *kain kasang*, *kain* translating to cloth and *kasang* meaning curtain. Museum Nasional collection.

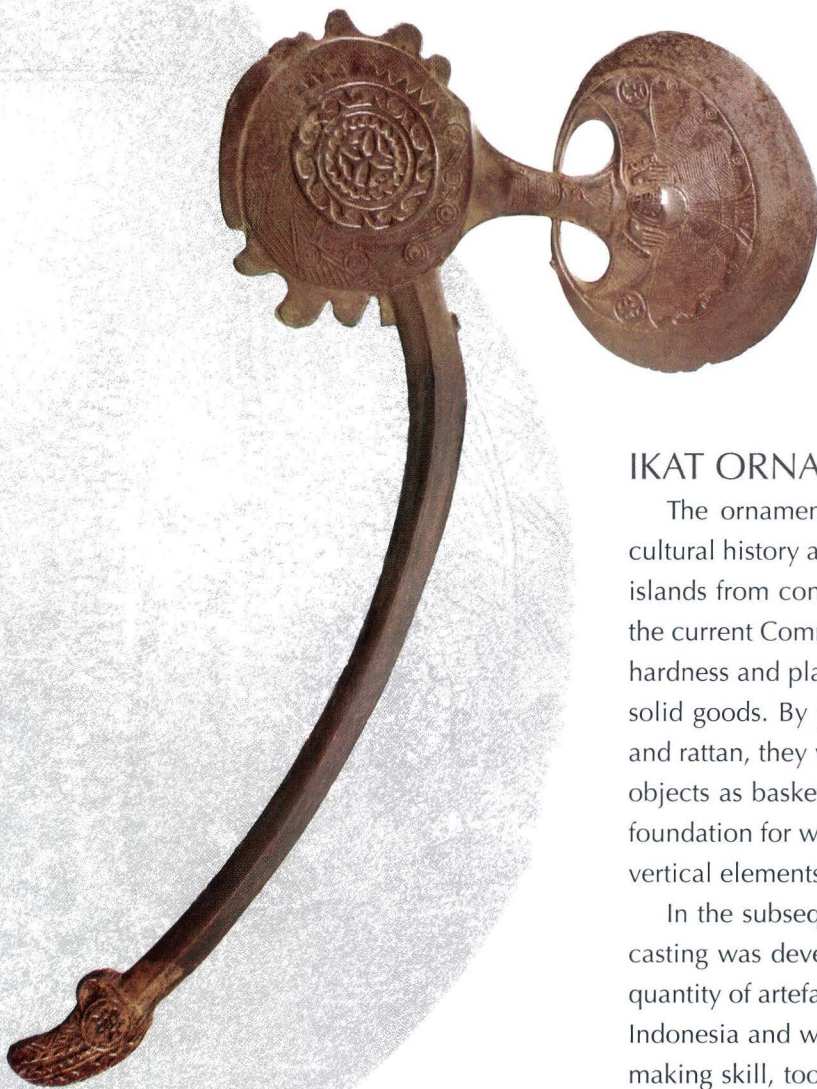


ABOVE: The Bada people of inland Central Sulawesi are not known to have ever woven, but used, and still use, a wide variety of textiles from elsewhere, especially from their neighbors to the south. In this trio from the Bada are a beeswax batik (left) a tie-dye (right) and a warp ikat (center), all from South and West Sulawesi, circa 1925.





LEFT: This textile, a sarong from North Sulawesi, may be the only one of its type and the finest still to be found anywhere in the world. Made of fine handspun cotton and dyed with intricate warp-ikat patterning, it entered the Museum Nasional collection in 1885 shortly after it was woven. Patolas were especially treasured in North Sulawesi, so it is not strange to see so much patola influence in this cloth; the patterning was locally felt to resemble the skin of the python (patola snake, it was called there). Although commonly referred to as a Bentenan cloth (Bentenan is a small island off the southern tip of North Sulawesi), its proper name is *ka'iwu patola*.



ABOVE: Ceremonial axe cast from bronze, one of three found early in the 20th century on the island of Roti in East Nusa Tenggara and dating from the Bronze Age. The source of much of Indonesia's textile ornamentation system is often to be found in both the patterning and even the shape of ancient objects like this, if not in the local environment. Museum Nasional collection.

OPPOSITE: Segment of a woman's skirt-cloth, *kain kebat*, woven by an Iban Dayak woman at Putussibau in West Kalimantan. The warp ikat-patterning on Iban Dayak textiles, woven on the backstrap loom, is extremely intricate and full of the so-called key and double-key motifs. However, the finished composition is frequently related to objects or phenomena related to the environment, like a vine or a forest leech or a deer. Kumang Pegari collection.

IKAT ORNAMENTATION

The ornamentation on ikat-weaving in Indonesia is related to the archipelago's cultural history and prehistory. The ancestors of the Indonesian peoples migrated to the islands from continental Southeast Asia in the Neolithic era some 2,000 years before the current Common Era. They made pots from soft clay that was dried into permanent hardness and plaited leaves and fibers from trees and wood into containers for storing solid goods. By plaiting together various species of pandanus leaves, bamboo reeds, and rattan, they were able to fill a multitude of household needs. They also wove such objects as baskets that could be used for transporting goods. This basic skill was the foundation for weaving cloth, being based on the principle of inter-weaving straight or vertical elements with transversal or horizontal elements.

In the subsequent period called the Dongson cultural era, about 700 CE, bronze-casting was developed. Dongson is the name of a place in northern Annam where a quantity of artefacts have been uncovered, including the kettle-drums that ended up in Indonesia and were used in rain-making rituals and also as battle drums. The bronze-making skill, too was brought to Indonesia during the migration from Southeast Asia, allowing kettle-drums to be made in certain localities, for ownership was a mark of great prestige.

The kettle-drums are decorated on the tympanum with geometrical patterns based on the spiral, meander, straight line, circle, and so forth, which is the same kind of patterning found on some extraordinarily shaped ceremonial axes, also of bronze, that were used exclusively in rituals. The ornamentation on the kettle-drums brought to Indonesia by the ancestors seems to have influenced textile ornamentation on the islands and the concept of nature having supernatural power.

This concept, which has thus been in existence since the Neolithic era, became part of traditional religious beliefs. Nature and everything in it influenced the life of humankind and its creations. Nothing was free from the great power of the natural element in the environment.





ABOVE: Again, we see patola influence in the central field of this warp-ikat cloth from East Sumba, but also figures taken from the local environment that are considered important to the community, such as the deer and the cockatoo, as well as pairs of cat-like lions rampant inspired by Dutch coats of arms. Museum Nasional collection.



RIGHT: A new design in warp ikat from East Sumba. Whereas traditional shawls from this area could be 'read' from either end with identical result, new versions can often be 'read' in one direction only. This version could never be worn over a shoulder with suitable effect; it was meant to be used in home decoration. The horse and rooster are very important animals in Sumbanese culture. Sumba Art collection.

RIGHT: The freedom being used today in the adaptation of traditional textiles for wider use is resulting in wonderfully dynamic patterns, like on this shawl from East Sumba with a pair of large crocodiles in the middle surrounded by pairs of little snakes and geometric motifs as well as a spidery animal, a row of turtles at the top, and a pair of surprised butterflies at the bottom. Formerly the turtle motif signified a noble user. Museum Nasional collection.

This mystical facet of nature is perceived to be manifested in certain species of flora and fauna, mountains, rivers, the sun, stars, and so on. Man's ancestors, too, were deemed to be endowed with special powers and were held in veneration.

In ornamentation, these elements were given form in the geometrically rendered shapes of animals with their individual powers: crocodiles, lizards, and gheckos representing the underworld and birds, the upperworld. Meanwhile, everlasting life in the 'other' world was represented by the tree of life with its multitudinous leaves and branches and tall, straight trunk. The ancestors themselves were portrayed with arms and legs extended. Geometrical lines frequently used in their composition were the hook, straight line, meander, triangle, and rectangle or square.

Wagner reckons that the hook could have been a modified Dongson spiral. It is often used on textiles in view of its compatibility with the weaving technique. He writes that the combination of hook and square or diamond, occasionally augmented by a straight line, and the equilateral triangle, constituted diverse variations of geometric lines. These combinations not only enriched ornamental form, Wagner continues, but served as means for imitating human, crocodile, lizard, chameleon, tree, and other figures.

It is difficult to determine whether an ornament is meant to be pure decoration or the symbol of something specific. This uncertainty is the result of an extended period of development during which the true significance of the object portrayed has been forgotten and the form alienated from contextual content. Indeed, in the beginning, the motifs used to decorate woven clothing generally had some meaning or were abstract representations of some object. This conforms to the use of clothing, which was adorned with certain patterns for certain ceremonies.

During the time of the Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms in Indonesia, the new elements were introduced into local cultures, especially benefiting aesthetics: the feeling of beauty and creativity. Indonesian fauna and flora were also introduced into local ornamental art in relation to Hinduism and the attitude towards nature, along with the ornaments worn by Hindu deities.





Islam, which arrived on Java after the collapse of the Majapahit empire in the 16th century, also augmented local ornamental art in general and particularly the decoration on woven clothing. The human figure rarely appears in Islamic art, since the portrayal of living beings is prohibited, but certain fauna, with the emphasis on birds, do appear in weft ikat-patterning. In the Islamic world, the artistic tendency is towards flora and the development of geometrical curves that are akin to Arabic script.

Local ideas were not supplanted by these new ideas. In fact, completely new Hindic creations appeared, permeated with prehistoric traits. The manifestation may be the same, but the context differs. One example is the isosceles triangle, the so-called *tumpal*, known since prehistoric times but also found in Hindic decorative arts where it symbolizes Dewi Sri, goddess of rice and prosperity and wife of Dewa Vishnu. At the same time, it is a streamlined version of the bamboo shoot, *pucuk rebung*, that symbolizes the power that grows from within. Some see it as an abstract representation of a human being.

The Hindu epic *Mahabharata* is the source of many tales in the Javanese and Balinese shadow theater or *wayang*. The *wayang* figures on the highly esteemed double-ikat *geringsing* of Tenganan village in East Bali are said to represent Hindu deities. They are shown in pairs arranged around three large star-shaped motifs dominating the central field of the textile. They are also found on Bali's weft-ikat cloths or *endek*, where they are translated as Rama, Shinta, and the white ape Hanoman from the *Ramayana*, the other great Hindu epic enacted in the *wayang* theater. The weft-ikat *endek* are often combined with geometrical motifs rendered in gold-thread brocade or *songket*.

LEFT: This shawl decorated with warp-ikat patterning shows the kind of geometric patterning that became more prominent in areas with a strong adherence to Islam. Sumba Art collection.

OPPOSITE: A lovely old weft ikat-decorated silk cloth from Singaraja in Bali; the ends are finished with the ancient triangular pattern dating back to the Metal Age and perhaps even before, executed in gold-thread supplementary weft. The scene represents a moment in the *Ramayana* epic as portrayed in the shadow-puppet theater. Each of the four identical scenes is separated by a 'tree of life'. Museum Nasional collection.





ABOVE: Two men brandishing long bush knives and round rattan shields. Also to be seen are the eight-pointed star, a mamuli (gold omega-shaped ornament) at the top, tiny seaworms, roosters, and a flowering 'tree of life'. The whole piece is very modern and could never be used as ritual wear. The men are said to be dancing the welcome dance once dedicated to returning warriors but now performed to greet guests. East Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara. Sanggar Seni Ori Angu collection.

ABOVE RIGHT: Important Sumbanese men wrapped in warp ikat-decorated and other textiles at a community gathering of some sort. Once, certain information could be gained from the patterning on a textile, such as the person's social rank and origin. At the very least, they still separate the people intimately involved with a ceremonial undertaking from outsiders. East Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara.



IKAT IN COMMUNAL LIFE

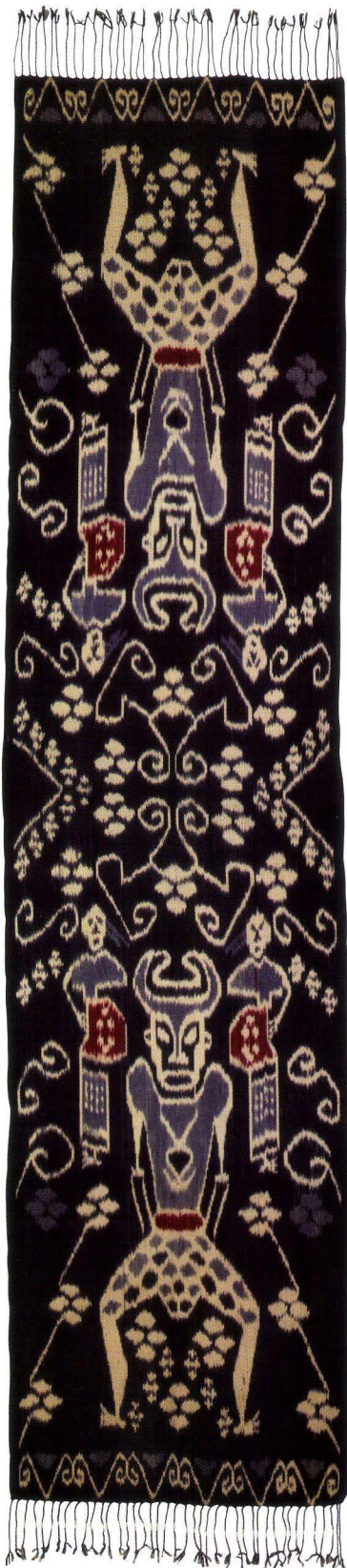
Textiles are a part of man's life and have been known since prehistoric times as a development in body covering, after grasses and bark cloth. Ikat, like other weaving techniques, evolved as a method of decorating textiles that were designed to fill one of humankind's most basic needs, along with food, drink, and a place to live. Aside from being a necessity, textiles have particular functions in the social, economic, religious, aesthetic, and other aspects of communal life. As a necessity, they are connected with all daily requirements and are an integral part thereof.

Human beings use the environment to produce textiles. They are socially significant as a mark of status. They are worn as clothing by *adat* (traditions and customs) leaders and tribal chiefs, warriors, priests and shamans, elders, youths and children, the married and the unmarried, men and women.

Ikats are the most popular fabrics used in garments for daily wear and for feast days and holidays. The garments produced from this cloth are sarongs, shawls, and other traditional items. On top of its secular usage, ikat cloth has a special esoteric significance as a hierarchical symbol (the social status of individuals or groups) within a community. They are connected to the spiritual, ethical, and philosophical ideas of such a community.



THIS PAGE: One of the more recent trends in East Sumbanese weaving is the so-called 'story cloth'; the weaver portrays a story related to the traditions and customs of and happenings in their community. These cloths are usually fairly wide and can be read one way only. However, it is often the case that only the weaver knows the story. East Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara. Sumba Art collection.

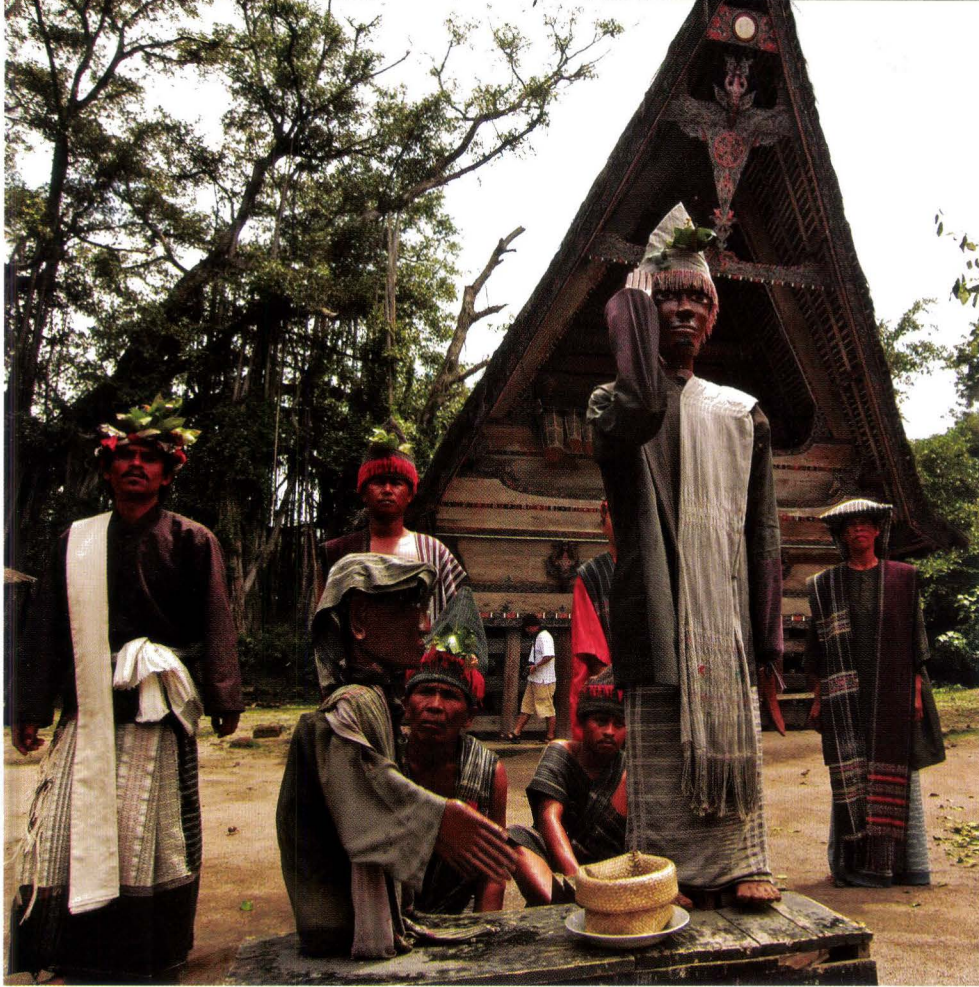


Clothing and other emblems denote the social standing of a king or raja and the nobleman, distinguishing them from the common people. The possession of a large number of textiles is generally highly esteemed, increasing prestige and symbols of wealth. Textiles with certain motifs have also served, and to a certain extent still serve, as a prerogative of individual families and clans, to be passed down through the generations. On the island of Sumba in East Nusa Tenggara, the most valuable textiles are stored away, along with sacred objects, deep in the attics of the tall-roofed traditionally built house. This is because the attic is the home of the *marapu*, the ancestor-spirit. Only certain people are ever allowed to see these “treasures of the *marapu*”. In the bridal exchange between families, the offerings given by each side has symbolic meaning. The bridegroom’s family gives horses, as horses belong to the realm of men, while textiles are identified with the female world. When a marriage is in the offing, these two objects are exchanged on several occasions as an obligatory part of the discussions. The man’s family turns over a stipulated number of horses and metal objects (gold jewelry), to which the bride-to-be’s family responds with a gift of pigs, precious textiles, beaded jewelry, and porcelain. Like the size of one’s herd of horses, textiles woven by the women of the house depict the family’s wealth and are amassed in huge collections, some of the most precious brought in “the bottom of the basket” that goes with the bride to her new husband’s house.

LEFT: This cloth from Rongkong in South Sulawesi is a perfect example of the borrowing going on today in textile patterning. It has the figurative nature of Sumbanese textiles, whereas Rongkong patterning is usually geometric, and colors that one would normally see on a piece of warp-ikat yardage woven in Troso, Central Java. In recent years, textiles from such places as Troso and Sumba are being used as ritual cloths in the northern regions of South Sulawesi, filling the gap left by the disappearance of heirloom textiles. Suwati Kartiwa collection

OPPOSITE LEFT: A scene related to funerary rites amongst the Toba Bataks, North Sumatra. In the middle is the life-sized Sigale-gale puppet (standing) with a female puppet at his feet. The puppets, operated by the two men behind the scene, move and dance; they are a part of the funerary rites of highly respected men. North Sumatra.

OPPOSITE RIGHT: This cloth is the *ulos ragi hotang*, the third-most important textile in Batak ceremonial life today. It is laid on the shoulders of a person being honored in some way, but especially on the shoulders of a bridal couple, in the hope that the relationship will be as strong as rattan or *hotang*. The colors and patterning of this shawl never change; the patterning consists of warp ikat dashes, fine warp stripes, and red, white, and yellow supplementary weft-patterning at the ends. North Sumatra. Museum Nasional collection.



During ceremonies, ikats may be used as sacred textiles or ceremonial vestments. Among the Torajans of South Sulawesi, they play an important role in funerals, when the deceased may be wrapped in ikat cloth. Elsewhere, the ikat is placed in the grave as part of the funeral gifts for the “other” world. Some bear motifs connected with the underworld and the earth, such as the *naga*, the mythical serpent of the underworld, or the tortoise, symbol of the earth.

Special textiles are used in initiation rites of passage, such as birth, marriage, and death. In the Lake Toba region of North Sumatra, the Batak people manipulate the life-sized wooden puppet known as *sigale-gale*, as part of funerary rites. The puppet wears a fine ikat-stole called *ulos* draped over a shoulder and another as a head-cloth or *tali-tali*. The puppet is animated from a distance of many meters with the aid of ropes hidden inside its hollow body. Custom dictates that the eldest son must also dance to give honor to the deceased who may be similarly dressed.

The importance of ikat is revealed not only by its extensive use as clothing, but also by its place in the spiritual and physical life of its users. No event of any importance, festivity, or ceremony in an ikat-weaving community passes without the presence of ikat cloth.





In Tenganan village, ikat cloth functions as protection from evil and illness in ceremonies marking entrance into adulthood, in marriage, and in death. During a tooth-filing ritual, the *geringsing* cloths cover the pillow.

In some communities, a newborn baby may be thought to be “spiritually protected” from danger and illness by being wrapped in ikat cloth, as a carrying sling or a hammock for sleeping.

Among the Dayak people of inner Kalimantan, the bird motif, especially the hornbill bird, is perceived as representing the god of the upperworld who will protect them when they are in field or forest. The farmers believe that the abstraction of a bird motif will help them fertilize the land and give them a successful harvest.

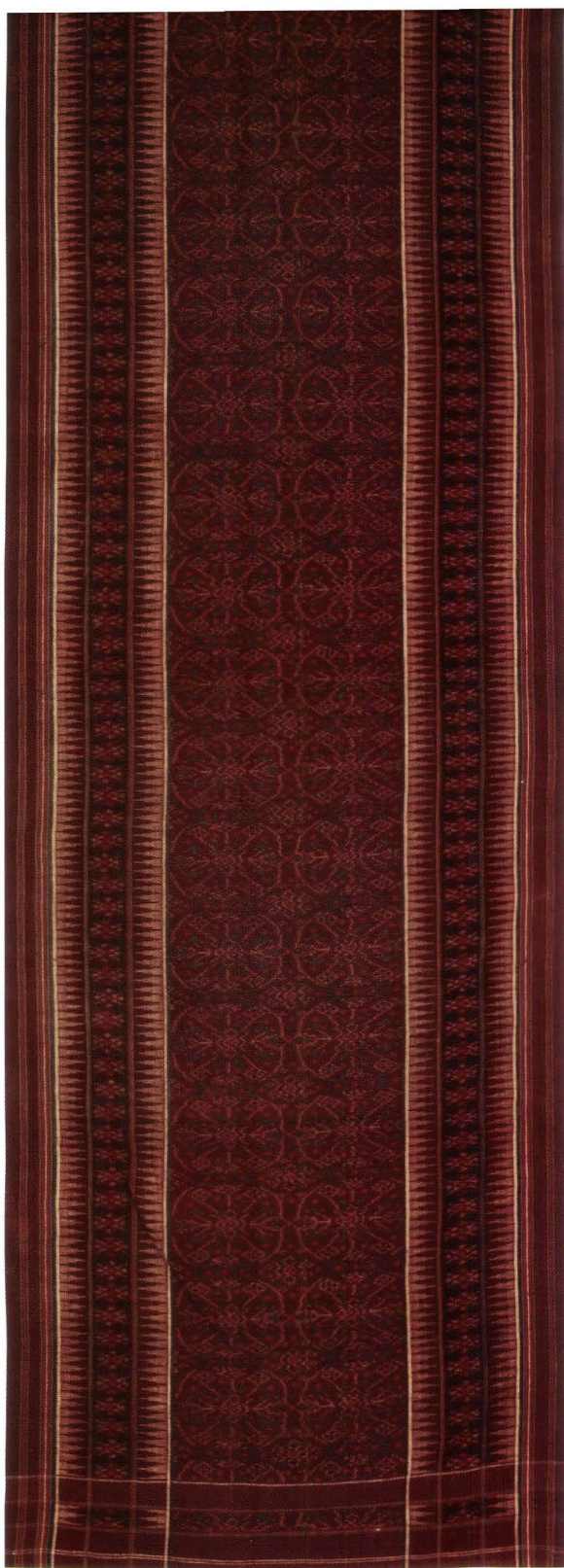
The To Rongkong and To Makki people, who are more generally referred to as “Torajans” and inhabit the southern arc framing Central Sulawesi, are famed for their ikatted blankets that are an important feature of funerary rites. Bold, angular compositions of such geometric motifs like hooks, arrows, zigzags, and rhombs appear in red or blue outlined in white and set against other forms on red or blue backgrounds. Their neighbors to the north, the To Bada, To Napu, and others, greatly admire these blankets that their women use as ceremonial skirts for traditional ceremonies. The blankets are bartered for water buffalo, either actual animals or the current value of these animals. Otherwise, the To Bada, To Napu, and neighbors use bark-cloth for their garments.

The warp-ikat blankets are so popular that they are being imitated in the Rantepao region of northern South Sulawesi, especially to fill the demands of the tourist trade. These copies are being dyed with chemical dyes, rather than the natural dyes of the traditional blankets, so they are fairly easy to spot. To make them more attractive to tourists, iconic Torajan motifs, such as saddle-roofed *tongkonan* houses-in-miniature, have been added.

RIGHT: A recently woven shawl from Kalumpang in West Sulawesi. The textiles of the To' Makki people of Kalumpang are especially known for the interplay of the double-key motif, here called *pa' sekkong*. Executed in warp ikat, weavings in Kalumpang were dyed with organic dyes until recently, with chili-pepper paste added to the red color for a particular, idiosyncratic result. Suwati Kartiwa collection.

OPPOSITE: A beautiful *sora langi'* possibly from Kalumpang in West Sulawesi, decorated with warp ikat patterning. The people who made these cloths did not wear them, but used them in ritual exchange. The people of Central Sulawesi to the north, on the other hand, used the huge sarongs as gathered skirts that they wore under barkcloth blouses, or they used them in ritual exchange and ritual-debt payment. Museum Tekstil DKI Jakarta collection.





In Bali, there has been a remarkable revival of interest in making weft ikats or *endek*. The industry is concentrated in and around Gianyar in southeastern Bali where there are at least six weaving firms employing hundreds of workers. In most factories, the patterning, including dyeing, is being carried out by men using a new time-saving method, while the women reel the threads for the warp and the weft, and weave them into cloth on manually operated floor looms with flying shuttles. Patterns are made up of geometrically shaped figures that may be derived from local flora, Indian patola, Chinese textiles, the great Hindu epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, and even Hindu-Javanese legends such as the Panji stories. These are set against brilliant background colors: magenta, purple, green or blue.

In terms of economic function, it is important that the ikat-weaving tradition be continued, in view of its long history, passed down through many generations as a source of income. Already, some of the culture of making one's own textiles has disappeared. An effort must be made by both individuals and communities to revitalize the ikat-weaving tradition for two primary reasons: socio-cultural identity, and economic opportunity. To ensure continuity, incentives must be provided to motivate the development of new creations without losing the traditional identity, as part of Indonesia's textile heritage.

LEFT: The *cepuk cenana kawi*, a beautiful weft ikat-patterned cloth from Nusa Penida, Bali. Being ritual textiles, the *cepuk* are woven with homegrown handspun organically dyed cotton and decorated using the weft ikat technique while the white-serrated edges, the so-called *barong's teeth*, have been made using the tapestry technique. The *cenana kawi* pattern filling the central field is derived from Indian patolas. In the past, *cepuk* were to be found in almost all ritual events as purificatory and protective and exorcistic cloths. Today, they continue to be used in death rites. Museum Nasional collection.

OPPOSITE: A weft ikat silk overskirt-cloth with supplementary weft-patterning on the two ends. Once, this type of cloth would have served as ceremonial wear for royal and noble persons; today, they may be used by anybody that can afford them. As a result, this tradition is thriving in Bali today, serving both the domestic market and tourist trade. Museum Nasional collection.





Part 2



Ikat within the islands

by Suwati Kartiwa

SUMATRA

The island of Sumatra lies along the western side of the Strait of Malacca, which historically has been an important trade route in Southeast Asia. Sumatra's location has brought its coastal regions into contact with myriad of foreign traders. The Chinese, Indians, Arabs, Portuguese, and Dutch, among others, brought in luxury goods, such as silks, dyes, and metallic threads, which they traded for gold, tin, wood, resins, pepper, ivory, and other forest products. Sumatra's strategic position exposed its inhabitants to the influence of various cultures, particularly along the coast. This enabled them to learn about new materials, including silk and metallic yarns, as well as new techniques and patterns. The exchanges gave rise to trading elite and enriched the courts with luxurious imported textiles, regalia, and many other things. Coastal towns became dependent upon foreign imports, while tribal communities in the interior remained self-sufficient and textiles came to be produced in remarkable variety.

Sumatra is made up of a number of provinces, ranging from Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam in the far north to southernmost Lampung. Historically, it has been more familiarly known as the 'Island of Gold', Suwarnadhipa, owing to its wealth of natural resources. In the 13th century, at least one kingdom in Aceh, Samudra Pasai, was already engaged in lively trade with Persia and other Middle Eastern countries, as well as with others in the Asia region.

OPPOSITE: Toba Batak spinners, dyers, and weavers demonstrating their trades in an arrangement posed for photograph-taking. On the far left, two little girls studiously spin thread using a drop shuttle; they had to learn early in those days, in order to be able to weave their garments for their weddings. Circa 1925.

RIGHT: Segment of a weft-ikat cloth from South Sumatra, with touches of gold-thread brocade along the sides. This appears to be a newly made cloth, since it carries the enlarged and less clear patterning that is found in precious old weavings. Rumah Tenun collection.





ABOVE: women weaving under a traditionally built platform house in North Sumatra. Circa 1935.

OPPOSITE: The *ulos mangiring*, with its pattern of arrow-upon-arrow or *padang rusak*, is a copy of a warp ikatted textile with identical pattern once woven in silk in Aceh (Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam) but used especially by the Karo Bataks in northeastern North Sumatra where they are generally worn as headcloths and short hip-wrappers over longer skirts. This example has a nice beaded border at the end.
UD. Ala Dos Roha collection.

NANGGROE ACEH DARUSSALAM

The Acehnese are mostly Muslims adhering rigidly to the tenets of Islam. They traditionally wore their textiles as shawls wrapped across the back with ends hanging down over the chest, and as skirt-cloths for both men and women. The shawl was worn by women with black trousers, a long-sleeved blouse, and a sarong. The colors of the various components were normally black, dark blue, purple, and maroon. The motifs woven into shawl and sarong consisted of small flowers, geometric figures, mostly spirals, hooks, and meanders, arranged in fine stripes and worked in the brocade or *songket* technique using gold or silver supplementary wefts for the patterning. This type of textile, which serves as a skirt-cloth for men and women, is now worn on special occasions only.

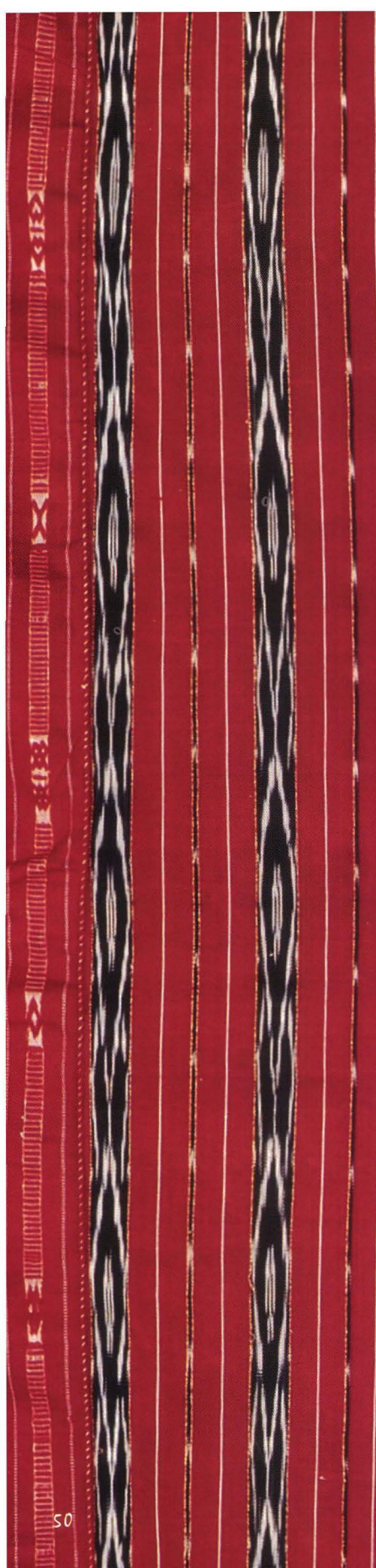
Although the Acehnese textiles we see today are mostly woven with silver or gold supplementary weft ornamentation, scholars believe that warp ikat was once known as well, producing simple broken lines in the style of patterning on the Batak *ulos*. These warp ikats were generally combined with silver-threaded supplementary weft-ornamentation.

On the subject of motifs shared by the Acehnese and their neighbors to the south, the Batak people, they both produce the same arrow-like pattern arranged in narrow vertical (warp-wise) bands.



NORTH SUMATRA: THE BATAKS

The Bataks weave rectangular cloths called *ulos*, which are worn as wraparound skirts, shawls, and head-cloths. The *ulos* have great ritual and social importance in the rites of passage and in reaffirming social relationships. In the northern Bataklands, warp ikat is the technique of choice for decorating textiles. In the south, it is supplementary weft.



One type of *ulos* is the *ulos mangiring*. This is a maroon-colored cotton rectangle decorated with pin-stripes and arrowheads running one after the other in warp ikat. This cloth serves as a baby's carrying cloth, *ulos marompa*, presented by the maternal grandparents on the birth of their daughter's first child. It may also be worn by men as a head-cloth on festive occasions.

Another Batak *ulos* with warp ikat work is the *ulos sibolang*. This is an important ritual textile for the Batak people. It is blue or black in color with bands of whitish-blue ikat-patterning. In traditional ceremonial use, the *ulos sibolang* is presented by a bride's parents to the bridegroom's father, as well as to their daughter who is the bride. It is also the main textile received by a widow from her mother at the time of bereavement. During the mourning period, the *ulos sibolang* is worn on the woman's head instead of used as a wraparound skirt.

The most valuable *ulos* today is the *ulos ragidup* which measures about 200cm by 100cm and is patterned through warp ikat and stripes that fill the central panel which has end fields decorated with white supplementary weft-ornamentation with rather plain sides. In other words, the *ulos ragidup* consists of three panels sewn together to create a large cloth.

OPPOSITE LEFT: The most important use for textiles amongst the Batak people is to reaffirm family ties. In this picture, women perform the Tor-Tor dance as the men carry shawls, *ulos*, that will be draped on the shoulders of an honored person or persons. The men are led by a priest wearing the braided tricolored headband signifying his status.

RIGHT: The *ulos ragidup* is currently the highest valued of the Batak weavings and can only be worn by people who have grandchildren. It is characterized by a brownish-black background and five sections. This new version in rich red could never be used in the traditional way, but it does fill the needs of the contemporary market, giving the weavers a reason for carrying on their work. UD. Ala Dos Roha collection.





LEFT: The primary textile in the Palembang region of South Sumatra is patterned by means of the supplementary weft weaving technique. Made of silk, it is rich with gold-thread ornamentation bearing a distinct resemblance to Mughal Indian styles of centuries past. Meanwhile, the textile was first patterned with weft ikat, which can barely be seen in spaces in between the gold-thread motifs. This is a new shawl to be worn with traditional dress. Suwati Kartiwa collection.

SOUTH SUMATRA: PALEMBANG

From the coastal region of South Sumatra, and especially Palembang, site of the old court, come the most remarkable silk sarongs, head-cloths, and shawls in vibrant red, gold, purple, blue, and green. Included in this area is the island of Bangka, particularly the town of Muntok, which produces similar textiles but is part of the Province of Bangka-Belitung.

These gorgeous cloths are decorated with fine patterning executed in weft ikat and embellished with gold-thread supplementary weft-ornamentation. In Palembang and its vicinity, weft ikat is called *limar* and in Bangka, *cual*. The cloths evolved from a history of foreign contact. The silk yarns and dyes were traditionally imported, while the motifs and their arrangement on the cloth appear to have been inspired by the Indian patola and local patterns.

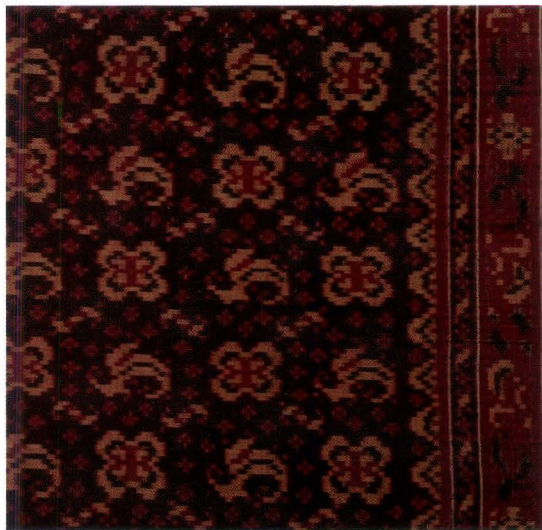
The weft ikat-patterning of South Sumatra and Bangka island includes geometric stars and circles, arabesques, flowers, rosettes, vines, fruits, stylized fanciful birds, and a special motif called *lar*. These occupy the central field of the cloth, while the end fields contain rows of triangular tumpals and narrow bands of small geometric and floral elements.

The *limar* and *cual* are important for formal wear on special occasions, such as weddings and religious holidays. The combination of weft ikat and supplementary weft or *songket* generally appears on shawls and sarongs that are worn on such occasions. Previous to the nuptials, there is a showering ritual for the bride and bridegroom, the *upacara turun mandi*, in which the two usually wear a weft-ikat textile.

The Pasemah highlands on South Sumatra's western border, near the present-day town of Lahat, once produced distinctive weft ikats combined with supplementary weft or *songket* weaving, and occasionally also tapestry-weaving. The central body of these textiles feature weft-running bands of weft ikat in geometric shapes, such as rhombs, executed in beige on a brownish to purplish wine-colored ground.

Modern weft-ikat patterns are usually simpler and the colors brighter than their predecessors, owing to the increasingly widespread use of chemical dyes. In view of the high value of a certain type of gold thread once imported from China, this is often retrieved from old worn-out cloths for re-use. Palembang textiles have been preserved through the tradition of handing them down through the generations as precious heirlooms.

The richness of the silk *limar* and gold *songket* of Palembang is reminiscent of the ancient kingdom of Sriwijaya and its fabled wealth. From the seventh to the 11th centuries of the Common Era, this city was the capital of the Indianized kingdom of Sriwijaya, a center of Mahayana Buddhism that dominated much of Southeast Asia.



RIGHT AND ABOVE: Weft ikat ornamentation also has a high place in textile design in Palembang as well as in Bangka island to the east whose history is closely related to that of the Palembang sultanate. This example is, again, a recently made cloth, but it is remarkable for its extreme fineness of patterning and exquisite coloring. The shawl is embellished with gold-thread brocade ends. Damais family collection.



WEST SUMATRA: THE MINANGKABAU

Weft ikat-patterning from the Minangkabau lands in West Sumatra is also well-known. However, at present, it is a rare commodity, surviving mainly in the hill-town of Silungkang where it is being produced for the open market. Simple motifs are arranged in vertical (weft-running) bands, while the borders may be enhanced with *songket* patterning. Traditionally, the weft ikats were worn by *adat* (traditions and customs) leaders, *penghulu*, as part of their state dress, especially at their inauguration ceremony, *batagak penghulu*.

LAMPUNG

Lampung produces the most unusual set of cloths generically referred to as 'ship cloths', because more often than not, they are decorated with a large ship motif executed in supplementary weft. Lampung's other primary textile is the sarong, *tapis*, which is usually hand-embroidered. However, while some have bits of supplementary weft (in gold thread), only a few, the *tapis inuh*, combine embroidery with weft ikat.

There are several kinds of dissimilar *tapis inuh*, most of which are no longer being made. They came from western Lampung. The warp-ikat bands were decorated with finely detailed abstractions of lizards in black and brown ikat, laid out in alternation with bands of huge inkfish-like motifs executed in white silk embroidery.

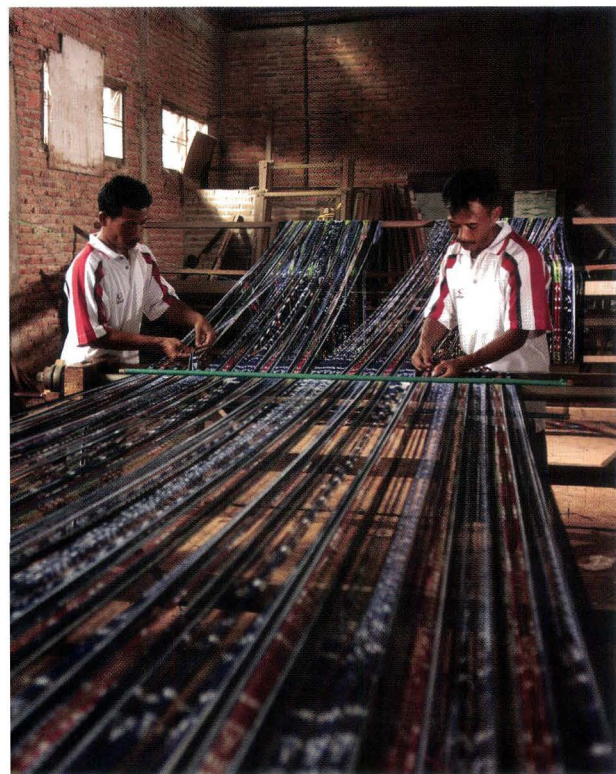
THIS PAGE: The weft-ikat patterning technique was once frequently used in the northern parts of Lampung to decorate women's sarongs or *tapis* and men's rectangular wraps known as *bidak*. The weft ikat appeared on these cloths in narrow bands running in the weft direction that were alternated with bands of gold- and silver-thread supplementary weft, while the ends of the cloths were terminated in rows of isosceles triangles, usually two rows back-to-back. The *bidak* were made in northern regions of Lampung and the adjacent Pasemah area in South Sumatra, but have not been made since early in the 20th century. They were masterpieces of craftsmanship, woven of silk on a backstrap loom and colored with organic dyes. (RIGHT) This *bidak* has been enriched with a heavy application of metal discs that glimmer in the sun as the man moves about. Late 19th/early 20th century; private collection.





THIS PAGE: The ikat work (weft ikat) on the *bidak* was extremely fine with the patterning based on the elongated lozenge. The *bidak* were also notable for delicate shading of brown in the plain-colored bands in between the ikatted bands. Late 19th/early 20th century; private collection.





ABOVE: The north-coast town of Troso in Jepara Regency, Central Java, has gained a reputation over the past several decades for its ability to imitate warp and weft ikat textiles from all over Indonesia, which it produces en masse for the general market. With adapted equipment, it also yields traditional-looking cloths of considerably expanded length. Above, two men prepare the tied-and-dyed threads for warping the loom.

JAVA

Java is better known for its batik than its ikat textiles. However, there is a striped cotton textile called *lurik* that has long been used for daily clothing and as a sling for carrying loads from the field or from the market. *Lurik* is also used as a *stagen* that is wound around a woman's waist to secure her sarung. The most famous *lurik* is made in the royal towns of Yogyakarta and Surakarta. A few types are decorated with shots of warp ikat, *lurik talenan*. While the striped *luriks* are found in almost all Javanese rites that have to do with the life-cycle, the warp-ikat *lurik talenan* serves as general daily wear only.

CENTRAL JAVA: TROSO

Both warp and weft ikat are produced by more mechanized techniques in the town of Troso, near Jepara, on the north coast of Central Java. Here, the weavers are mostly men, while the women spin yarn when needed. Reeling the thread onto ikat frames is also handled by men. Using stencils, the designers block pseudo-ikat patterns onto the threads. This is next handed over to the women who use the so-called *cetak* method to tie and color the yarn. Fraser-Lu describes this as “reverse ikat”: using a cardboard stencil, the motifs are drawn in outline on the wefts strung tightly on a frame. The outlines are bound with dye-resistant plastic raffia and then chemical dye is spooned onto the wefts within the area inside the outlines and spread about thoroughly. The colored area is tied off with plastic raffia and, after all other colors have been applied in the same way, the background is dyed in a vat.

Troso's weft ikats are patterned with floral and geometric motifs (rhomb, zig-zag, etc.). One product is very similar to the weft ikats of Sengkang in South Sulawesi. On top of that, Troso has also been copying warp ikat patterns from Sumba island in East Nusa Tenggara for Indonesian hotels to use. They have also been producing ikats for the general and tourist market.



ABOVE AND RIGHT: Above are examples of Troso's production. In the inset on the right, young men are busy hand-tying patterns into the warps prior to dyeing them in a vat. This means that although equipment has been modified and modernized and certain other, time-saving coloring techniques introduced, some of Troso's textiles are still patterned by hand; but they are therefore much cheaper than the 'real thing'.



ABOVE: A pretty cloth with weft-ikat decoration that could be used as a shawl or a table runner. It may not be as stunning as its predecessor was a century ago, but it does show that fine weft ikat continues to be practiced in the sleepy port-town of Gresik in East Java, although using modernized equipment and materials. Museum Tekstil DKI Jakarta collection.

OPPOSITE: A handsome weft-ikat sarong made in the town of Tegal in the Central/West Javanese border area. Weft ikat is not nearly as old as warp ikat in Indonesia and appears to have displaced warp ikat in many areas. Museum Tekstil DKI Jakarta collection.

EAST JAVA: GRESIK

Gresik was an important trading port on the northeastern coast of Java. In the sixteenth century, it was the port for handling textiles from Gujarat in India destined for eastern Indonesia. In the 17th century, the Dutch established a trading post there to control this lucrative trade. Today, Gresik produces its own weft ikats under the management of Arab-descended Indonesians who have turned this into a flourishing backyard industry. The products are primarily sarongs with brightly colored floral patterning on the body or *badan* of the cloth and geometric patterning on the narrow transversal panel known as *kepala* or head. Gresik ikats are characterized by narrow, brightly colored bands of ikat along the selvages. They are marketed all over Indonesia as well as to Malaysia, the Philippines, and the Middle East.

EAST JAVA: LAMONGAN

During the Japanese occupation of World War II, Lamongan in East Java produced unbleached grey cotton, *blacu*. In the 1960s, ikat production was developed and the sarongs made served the demand from all over the country, but mostly from West Kalimantan for which special ikat patterns containing birds and crocodiles were made.

Lamongan also produces double-ikat-type sarongs on order, but they differ from the *geringsing* of Tenganan village in Bali by having no symbolical, religious, or mythological content.





ABOVE LEFT: Segment of a weft ikat-decorated *kain endek* from Bali. A century ago, such a textile would have belonged to court wear, but today the technique is widespread on Bali and the cloths worn as desired. They are also frequently woven on semi-mechanized looms rather than the backstrap loom. ATA Shop collection.

ABOVE RIGHT: A Balinese woman in Buleleng, Singaraja at her loom. It is a large piece of equipment but is still tensed by pressure on the yoke around the weaver's back. Circa 1922.

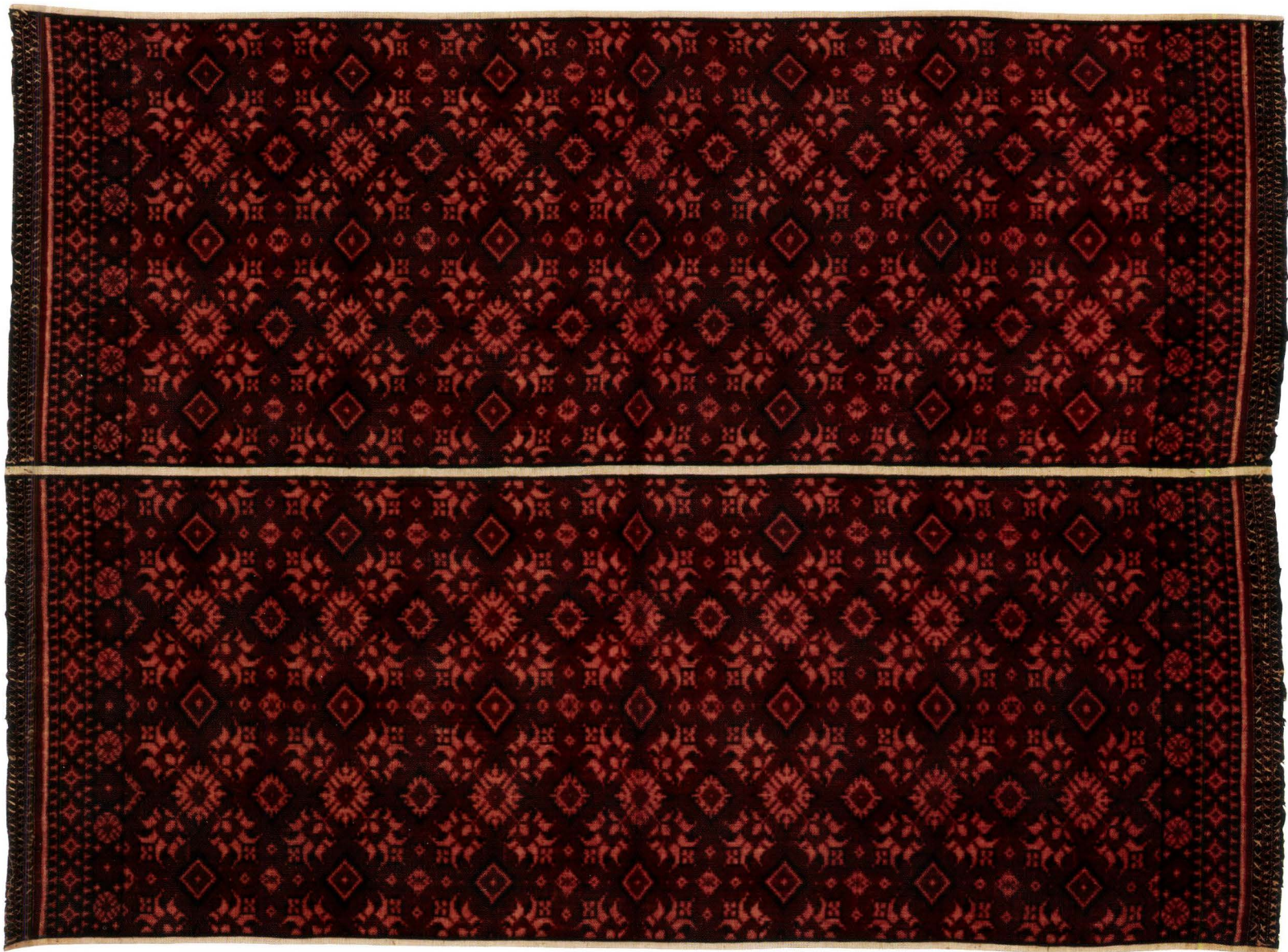


BALI

The home of Indonesia's Hinduism boasts a variety of textiles made for daily wear and ceremonial occasions. Some have important roles in rites of passage, such as tooth-filing, wedding, and funerary rites, as well as ceremonies held in honor of the ancestors and to invoke favor from the gods. In addition, textiles also form part of the ritual offerings made to a temple.

Endek, the term for weft ikat on Bali, have a cotton warp and silk weft. The cotton is from Indonesia and the silk imported. Brightly colored in green, purple, red, blue, and yellow, the patterns are primarily floral and geometric. Chinese-inspired motifs, human figures, wayang figures, and animal figures drawn from Hindu mythology are also tied into these textiles. Today's *endek*, on the other hand, are more frequently given non-thematic ornamentation, the designs being purely decorative. Embellishment is sometimes added through the *songket* technique, using metallic thread. The use of chemical dyes alongside natural vegetable dyes has provided the Balinese with a wide spectrum of colors from which to choose.

BELOW: A pair of double-ikat *geringsing* from the town of Tenganan Pagringsingan on Bali. The patterning is in the classical style, this one known as *cicempaka*, and the work quite fine. *Geringsing* are considered to have the power to heal and protect and are used in all ceremonies and rituals related to life and death in Tenganan. Museum Nasional collection.







LEFT: A *geringsing wayang kebo*, a double-ikat cloth decorated with figures resembling shadow-puppet figures or *wayang*. Down the center are one full and two half *mandalas* from Hindu philosophy, for the Balinese are mainly adherents of the Hindu religion. Museum Tekstil DKI Jakarta collection.

OPPOSITE: Young girls, members of a traditional association related to their age group, preparing to participate in a life-cycle ceremony. They are dressed in the sacred double-ikat *geringsing*, that include plain checkered cloths.

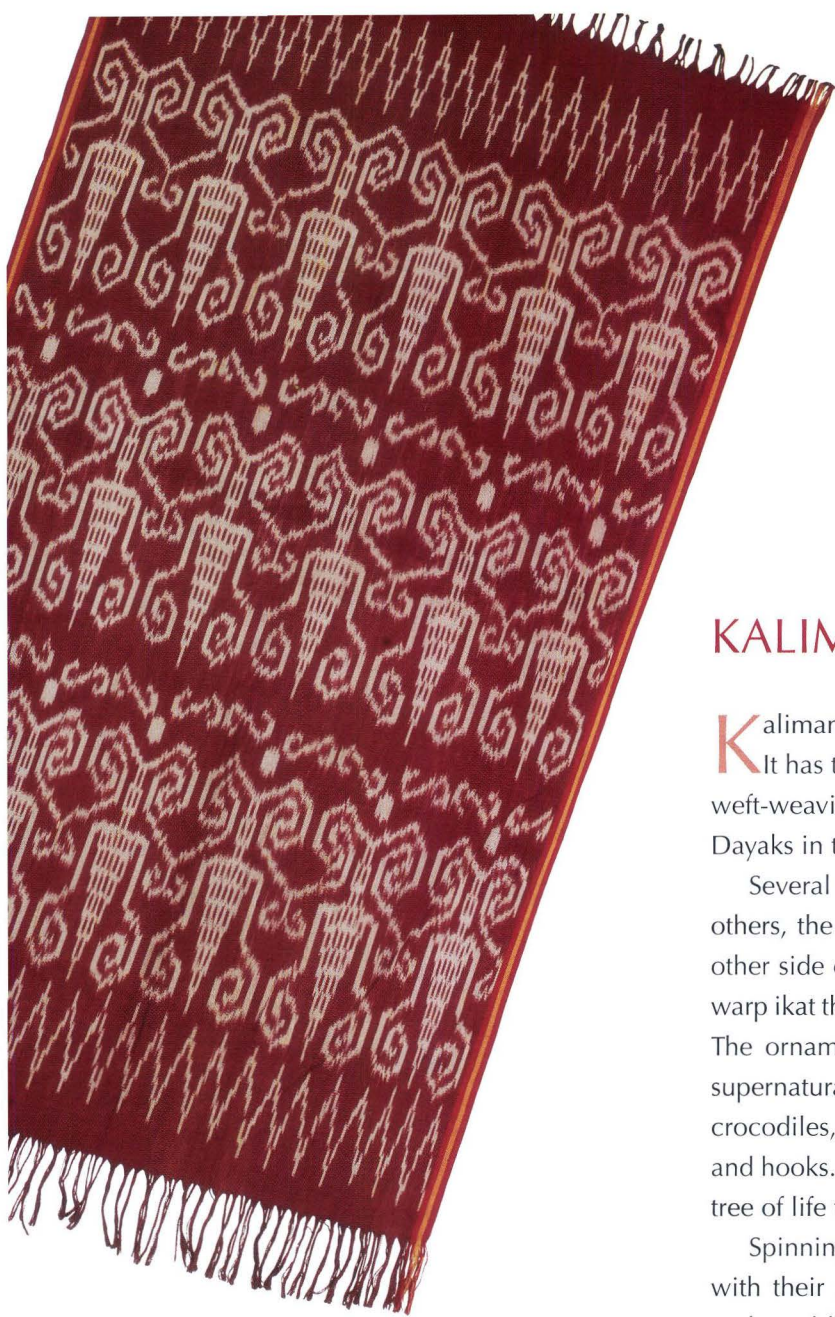
The *endek* is decorated through the true ikat process, finishing touches being applied using the *nyantri* or *coletan* method. This means that additional colors are painted on with a brush. Products consist of men's sarongs, women's wraparound skirts, and shawls. The sarongs and wraparound skirts are made up of two identical panels seamed together along one selvage to create a larger cloth. The women's skirts are decorated around the edges, leaving the centerfield untouched.

Weft ikat on Bali is not always limited to silk. On the island of Nusa Penida, the weft-ikat *kemben cepuk*, which are used both as clothing and as temple decoration, are made of cotton. Locally the *cepuk* appear in religious rites, while in other areas their usage is more general in nature. Their dark ornamentation is reminiscent of the Indian patola.

The double-ikat *geringsing* are still made in Tenganan village in East Bali and constitute sacred heirlooms to be passed down through two or more generations.

A *geringsing* averages 140cm by 35cm in size and is woven on a small body-tensed loom with a continuous warp. The main color is a rusty purplish-red. The cloths are named according to pattern, for example *geringsing wayang kebo* or *geringsing wayang putri* both highly valued as a protector against evil. The pattern is characterized by three large star-shaped figures dominating the central field surrounded by pairs of *wayang* figures that look very much like those carved into the walls of some East Javanese temples. This kind of *geringsing* is worn as a stole by women in ritual dance in Tenganan village, and used as a pillow cover for the initiate in the tooth-filing ceremony in other places, and to cover the coffin at a funeral.

The *geringsing cemplong* has reddish and white geometric flowers inspired by patola patterns and may have hand-embroidered floral patterns at the ends, executed in gold thread. It is worn as a shawl in traditional ceremonies in Tenganan itself. The embroidery is carried out in a neighboring village. Some *geringsing* patterns may be overlain with gold leaf, as well.



ABOVE: Warp ikat is currently thriving in and around the town of Sintang in West Kalimantan. This cloth shows its Iban Dayak origins through the big-eyed insect repeated in rows across its surface, but it is extremely modern and destined for the contemporary market. Museum Tekstil DKI Jakarta collection.

KALIMANTAN

Kalimantan comprises approximately two-thirds of the equatorial island of Borneo. It has two distinct weaving traditions, ikat-weaving and *songket* or supplementary weft-weaving and two distinct cultures, that of the Malays on the coast and that of the Dayaks in the interior.

Several Dayak groups practice warp ikat-weaving, with one standing out above all others, the Iban. The Iban live in the northwestern interior of Kalimantan and on the other side of the border with Malaysia. They make rectangles of cloth decorated with warp ikat that serve as blankets (*pua*), skirts (*bidang*), and blouses and jackets (*kalambi*). The ornamentation on them was once invested with symbolic meaning related to supernatural power. The large *pua*, for example, carried intricate warp-ikat patterns of crocodiles, human figures, and birds executed in stylized geometric spirals, meanders, and hooks. The most valuable of these was the *batanggaring* motif, the many-branched tree of life that filled the center of the cloth and symbolized the continuity of life.

Spinning thread, dyeing, and weaving are all women's occupations – the men hunt with their mandau (bush knives) and blow-guns. Weaving is believed to be a skill endowed by a female deity. When a young girl is of an age to begin weaving, she seeks heavenly inspiration by fasting, observing taboos, reciting magic formulae, and praying, particularly before embarking on ikat work. The complexity of the pattern indicates the age of the woman making it, for it is believed (or was believed) that if she attempted to copy such a pattern before the right time, her life would not be long.

The women weave on the long gallery fronting the long-house, a long narrow building raised high off the ground with enough rooms to house the entire family extending from one senior man and wife.



ABOVE: Another very new Iban Dayak cloth made in West Kalimantan for the tourist market. The warp ikat-pattern, however, is a traditional one; it has merely been enlarged and streamlined to make it easier to make and use. Kumang Pegari collection.

LEFT: A traditional woman's warp-ikat skirtcloth from West Kalimantan. Comparing this example to the other two on these pages, the recent adaptations are obvious: enlarged and simplified motifs, elimination of uneven endfields, and elimination of elaborately striped side borders. Museum Tekstil DKI Jakarta collection.



LEFT: A Benuaq Dayak clad in traditional attire. His shirt, of modern style, is woven from an orchid-leaf fiber or *doyo* and patterned through the warp ikat technique. ABOVE: A Benuaq woman's two-piece outfit. Museum Tekstil DKI Jakarta collection.



In East Kalimantan, the Benuaq Dayak produce a special kind of warp ikat with fiber extracted from the fleshy leaves of a ground orchid. This thread is referred to as *doyo* and a length of woven cloth as *ulap*. *Ulap doyo* is turned into sarongs for women, and sleeveless vests or long-sleeved jackets for both men and women.

In coastal East and South Kalimantan, owing to the migration of Buginese people from South Sulawesi hundreds of years ago, weft ikat-weaving is practiced. The cloth made by the women of Pagatan in South Kalimantan is identical to the Buginese prototype in its patterning and brilliant colors, while that of Samarinda Seberang in East Kalimantan can be much more simply patterned, more somberly colored, and owing to a particular treatment, looks more like cotton than the silk it actually is. Samarinda weavers have also produced floral-patterned weft ikats that have given weft ikats of similar patterning and coloring made anywhere in Indonesia the generic name of *Sarung Samarinda*.



LEFT AND ABOVE: Since the 1980s, when the 'big brother' scheme was introduced whereby large industries took small local handicrafts industries under their wing, the weaving of cloth from *doyo* has flourished. There are less than a hundred motifs known to have been used in decorating these cloths, but the human motif is the most popular with tourists who are the primary purchasers of these textiles. Kayan Art Samarinda collection (left). To make the textiles more attractive as wall hangings, they are being provided with delicately carved wooden holders executed in typical Dayak style. Museum Tekstil DKI Jakarta collection (above).



SULAWESI

Sulawesi is the orchid-shaped island east of Kalimantan. Taking the island as a whole, with its many different cultures, the variety of weaving techniques and patterning is surprising. Aside from the beaten bark cloth of the Central Sulawesi interior, there are the checkered silks and silk weft ikats of the Buginese, the cotton warp-float *pinatikan* and supplementary weft-decorated banana-fibered cloths of North Sulawesi, and the warp ikat cottons of Galumpang and Rongkong on the southern rim of Central Sulawesi, among others.

SOUTH SULAWESI: THE BUGINESE AND MAKASSARESE

The Buginese and Makassarese are famed as a seafaring people who have traveled far in their trading vessels, leaving behind their wives to take care of their homes and weave cloth, among other things. On occasion, the sailing traders would take their families to settle in other promising places in the coastal regions of nearby South and East Kalimantan and throughout Indonesia. They also settled in various places in Malaysia and Singapore.

Historically, the women of South Sulawesi have made finely woven silk cloth. According to Fraser-Lu, as early as 1701, Nicolas Gervais, a foreign trader residing in Makassar, remarked on the wide variety of silk and cotton goods available in the go-downs. The town of Sengkang, in the district of Wajo on the shores of Lake Tempe, 150km north of Makassar, has always been an important center of silk-weaving.

The Buginese sarongs are brilliantly colored, with crimson, rich purple, turquoise, red, and lime green being the preferred hues. Aside from simple plaids, the Buginese weavers produce weft ikat-decorated sarongs. Weft ikat-patterning is known as *bombang*. The motifs are zigzags representing stylized ocean waves, spirals, and flora. Sometimes the weft ikat-patterning appears on the narrow transversal panel or “head” of the sarong, while the “body” has checkered or geometric patterning. Other times, the entire sarong is weft ikat-decorated.

A floral pattern executed in weft ikat is called *Sarung Samarinda*, meaning sarong from Samarinda (in East Kalimantan), because that type of pattern is believed to have originated in Samarinda.

The Buginese silks are worn by women with a sheer loose-fitting over-blouse, the *baju bodo*, which is made from the finest silk yarn.

BELOW: About the late 1970s, weft ikat in South Sulawesi was being imitated by painting dyes directly onto the unwoven wefts using a stencil. This allowed the production of a large expanse of undyed area without having to waste so much time on tying this off and vat-dyeing. South Sulawesi, Museum Tekstil DKI Jakarta.

OPPOSITE: A modern sarong of fine silk with matching shoulder cloth woven in Sengkang, South Sulawesi. The decorating technique is weft ikat, but the procedure has been simplified by applying patterning solely to the transversal ‘head’ or *punca* of the sarong and the ends or *punca* of the shawl. Such innovations in Buginese weaving in South Sulawesi began in the late 1970s. Museum Tekstil DKI Jakarta collection.

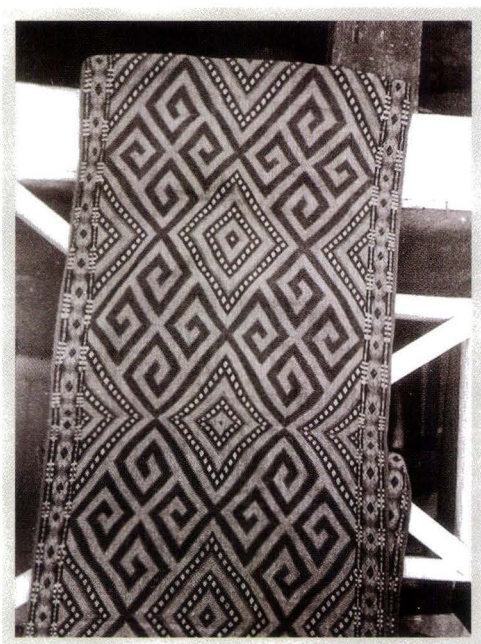




LEFT: A woman weaving a *pori lonjong*, or long, rectangular warp-ikat textile, while her husband watches and three young women work on tying another set of warps for yet another textile. Seen on the loom is only half of the cloth; when finished it will be cut in half and sewn together down the middle to produce a wider cloth somewhat like that against the back wall. Rongkong, North Luwu, South Sulawesi, Circa 1925.

BELOW: A striking warp ikat-patterned weaving from the Duri area in the borderlands in the center of South Sulawesi province. The people living here are of mixed descent and while this cloth shows a strong affinity with Kalumpang and Rongkong weavings, it is also quite different, as can be seen in comparison with the other textiles on these pages. Duri, Enrekang, South Sulawesi, Circa 1932.

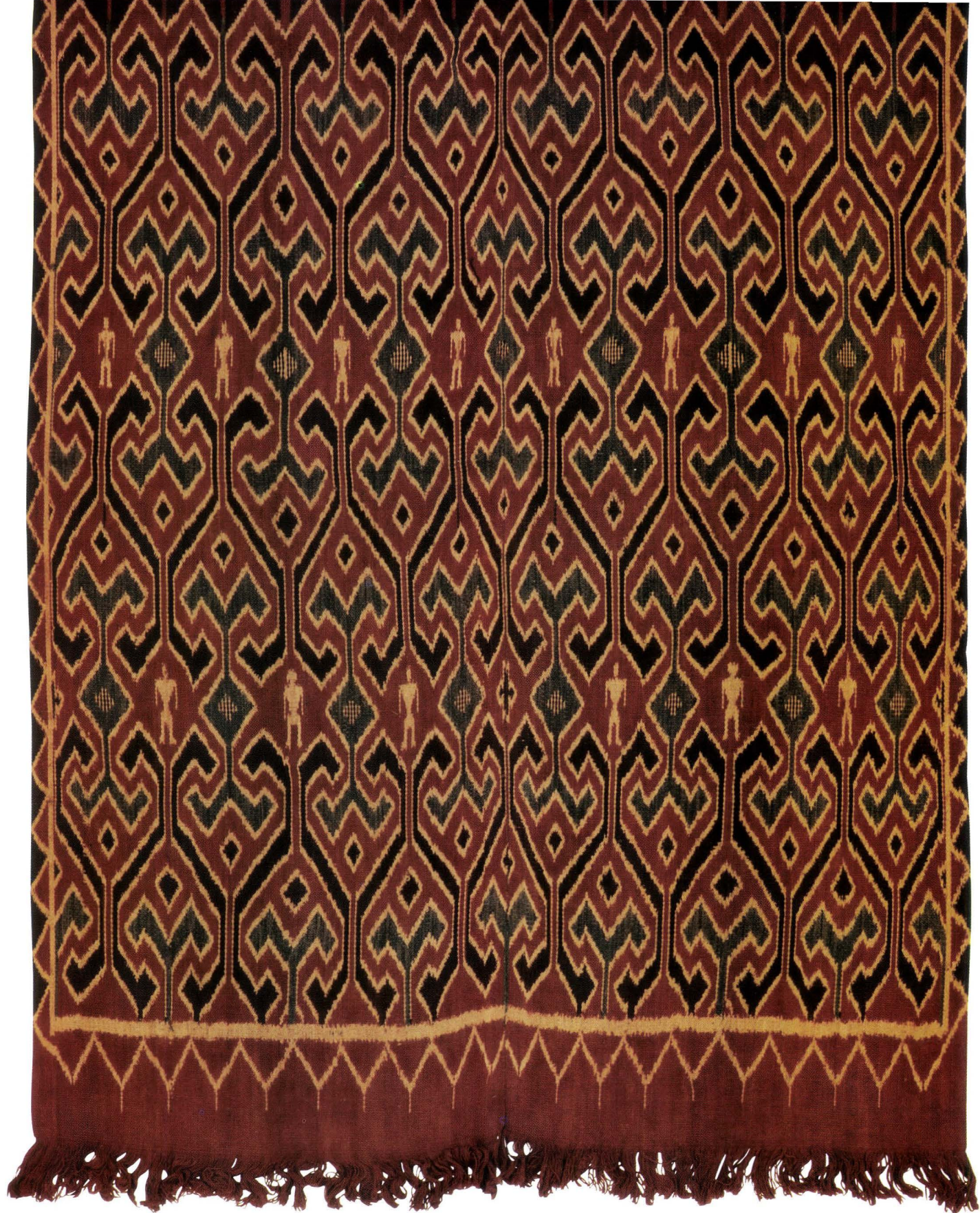
OPPOSITE: A large blanket-like weaving of more than three meters in length that would have been used to cover a corpse or to wall off a ceremonial arena. Patterned with warp ikat, it displays a geometric pattern that is believed to represent human bodies linked together; the white human bodies in between are very realistic. Kalumpang, West Sulawesi. Museum Nasional collection.



SOUTH AND WEST SULAWESI: RONGKONG AND GALUMPANG

Rongkong in South Sulawesi and Galumpang in West Sulawesi once produced a famous type of warp-ikat blanket used for funerary rites. These great cloths decorate the ceremonial pavilions, used to receive the guests, and wrap the body of the deceased. They also constitute part of bridal and debt payments, and like fences, mark off ceremonial and ritual arena. They are boldly patterned with angular geometric compositions based on the hook, rhomb, zigzag, and triangle in red or blue outlined in white against a blue or purplish-black ground.

The cloths of Rongkong (To Rongkong people) and Galumpang (To Makki people) are dominated by hooked lozenge motifs called *sekong* or *sekon* that are seen to be abstract representations of the ancestors. The lozenges are the bodies, the hooks the limbs.



RIGHT: A blanket-like textile woven earlier this century in Rongkong, North Luwu, South Sulawesi. What is presented here is part of a small rectangular cloth; three such rectangles appear on the very long cloth because they were woven at one go and meant to be cut apart, if desired. Each one individually would be called *pori situtu* or covering cloth, but as a long textile it goes by the name of *pori lonjong*. *Pori* refers to the warp ikat process. Museum Tekstil DKI Jakarta collection.

OPPOSITE, RIGHT: A young Torajan tends to his sacrificial buffalo (buffaloes are well cared for in Tana Toraja). He wears an overshirt and short pants made of a locally woven striped fabric and a headband of Javanese batik. Using foreign-made textiles is an honored tradition in this part of South Sulawesi. Tana Toraja, South Sulawesi.



Farther north, in the bark-cloth-making societies of Central Sulawesi, these warp-ikat blankets were once in great demand. They were obtained through barter, their prices calculated in terms of water buffalo, the going currency in the area at the time. These cloths were used for ceremonial dress, a woman's skirt folded into two or three flounces teamed with a blouse of bark-cloth.

Formerly, these great blankets were made from home-grown hand-spun cotton. They took months to make, owing to the time needed to obtain the desired colors from natural dyes. Today, there are a few To Makki women who continue to make blankets in the traditional way, but yarns purchased in stores have largely replaced hand-spun cotton.

Due to tourist demand, copies of the traditional blankets are now being made in the Rantepao area of Tana Toraja, a district in the northern part of the province of South Sulawesi.





LEFT: A woman posing in Kaili dress, consisting of a satin blouse with upright collar and frilled short sleeves, a weft-ikat patterned silk skirt, and elaborate jewelry. The Kaili inhabit the peninsula bordering Palu Bay on the south, around the town of Donggala. The skirt is a sarong of silk patterned in a distinctly Donggala manner.

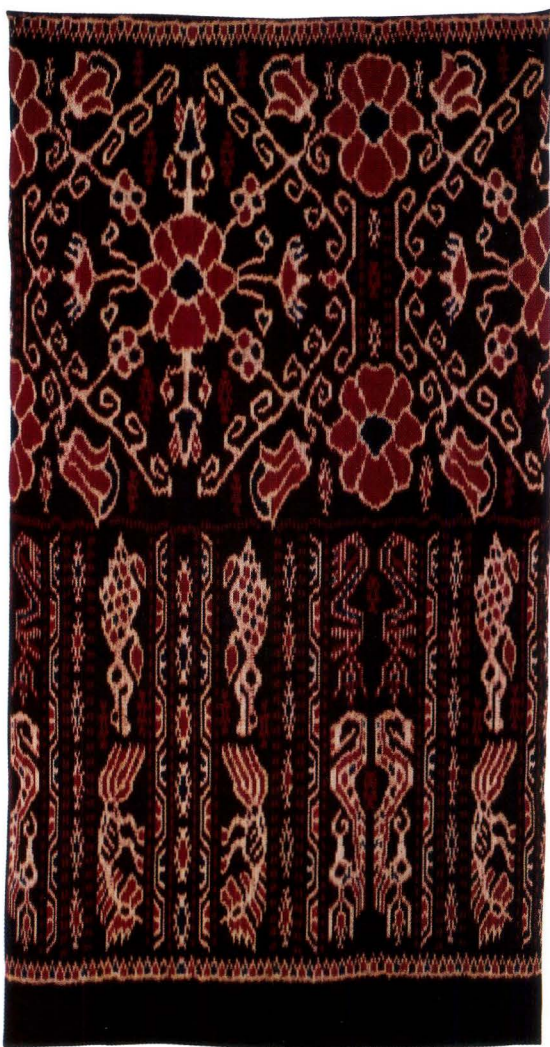
OPPOSITE: Detail of a Donggala weft-ikat sarong or *buya* of silk shot with gold-colored plastic thread. Diagonal alignment of the motifs in the transversal panel in the front of the sarong is a common feature of Donggala sarongs, as is the tendency to look to nature for inspiration. Suwati Kartiwa collection.

CENTRAL SULAWESI: DONGGALA

The ikat weavers of Central Sulawesi live in and around the town of Donggala. Here, plaid and *songket* sarongs are made in addition to weft ikats. Donggala weavings are an important element of traditional costume, especially on the coast, as can be seen in the dress of the Kaili and Pamona people.

Donggala weavings have their own characteristic patterns of flowers and leaves combined with geometric motifs. The weft ikat-patterned sarongs are called *buya bomba*. The patterning is of two kinds on one cloth: that filling the "body" and that decorating its narrow transversal panel or "head", which is characterized by a latticework of diagonal lines filled with a sprinkling of flowers that have the same shape as those on the "body". Many of the patterns are named after vegetation, such as *tavanggadue* or taro leaves, *sesebaranji* or basket pattern, and *bomba kota* or flowers enclosed in a box. Originally, the colors were extracted from vegetable matter, but they have now been replaced with chemical dyes. Similarly before, only pure silk was once used, and now spunsilk or rayon has been introduced.





EAST NUSA TENGGARA

East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia's southeastern-most province, consists of a string of islands that include Flores, Sumba, Timor, Sabu, Rote, and Ndao. All are famed for their warp ikats which are sometimes embellished with the application of small shells, beads, and seeds and may be combined with highlights obtained through staining, and other weaving techniques.

EAST NUSA TENGGARA: FLORES

Flores is mainly Roman Catholic, owing to conversions carried out by European missionaries. People living along the coast frequently have Portuguese names, a relic of the days when the Portuguese came into the harbors to trade, some four hundred years ago. The textiles woven on Flores and adjacent islands are mostly sarongs and shawl-like cloths, but they may also be used as burial shrouds. Warp ikat is the dominant patterning technique and cotton the principal thread used in much of Flores.

Ikat-patterning takes weeks, and occasionally even months of work. One or several sarongs may be dyed at one time. In the days when Flores consisted of small kingdoms, a number of weavers would work solely on orders emanating from the palace. Today, the textiles are sold in the market place. The exception is weavings of a certain quality that are made-to-order at special prices.

The patterning on some of Flores's warp ikats shows the influence of the patola and other Indian textiles, while others may have been inspired by the environment (e.g. the shark and manta ray) or European-style flowers. Common colors used are red or blue on a dark-colored ground.

Customarily, textiles are not only worn in traditional and ceremonial costume, but are also part of the bridal payment. The recent demand for weavings particularly from tourists, has encouraged the use of synthetic dyes and rayon fiber, although traditional materials continue to be employed in a few areas.

ABOVE LEFT: A modern textile from Sumba. The presentation of the patterning is completely innovative, with a composition of the eight pointed flower derived from the Indian patola filling the top half (which may be where two identical pieces would be joined to make a sarong) and the manner in which the pattern bands on the bottom half are laid out, running upwards from the bottom edge. These bars contain an amusing scene of a rooster with a crocodile at its tail and what appear to be pairs of snakes. Modern uses of textiles are essential for the preservation of weaving and dyeing skills, for without a buyer there is no incentive to weave. Sumba Art collection.



ABOVE: A woman from Alor in East Nusa Tenggara weaving a traditional warp-ikat cloth on a backstrap loom. She is also wearing one of her own textiles as a skirt. The island of Alor is somewhat remote, so home-weaving is still an important means for producing clothing. What we see on the loom here is one half of a narrow sarong.

LEFT: A *kewatek* or warp-ikat sarong from the Atadei district, Lembata island off the eastern end of Flores in East Nusa Tenggara. The dramatically patterned cloth consists of three panels woven with a circular warp. Usually the unwoven portion of the sarong, that shows here on the left side, is cut and the cut ends joined, yielding a solidly woven tube. Sarongs with uncut warp are used in ritual exchanges related to a marriage. Flores ikat art collection



EAST NUSA TENGGARA: SUMBA

The island of Sumba lies south of Flores. Its warp ikats are probably the best-known Indonesian textiles and well-known worldwide. There are two types of ikat- patterning. Cloths from West Sumba are characterized by small floral patterns and the heirloom ear-pendant motif or *mamuli*, while those from East Sumba carry striking depictions of horses, deer, lions, birds, fish, skull trees, human figures, and others. In West Sumba the patterning is simple and static, whereas that of East Sumba is dynamic.

Sumba's textiles are brought into function in life-cycle rites, when they are exchanged between families and social groups in the community. In the marriage exchange, the bridegroom's lineage usually gives gold, silver, arms, horses, and the like, which the bride's lineage counters with woven cloth (*hinggi* shawls, *lau* sarongs) and beads. The exchange of goods and services made during wedding rites serve to establish a link between the two families.

Several different woven textiles are produced on Sumba, including the *hinggi*, a rectangular cloth worn by men around their waists and as knee-length skirts, and the tubular sarong or *lau* worn by women. The warp ikat-patterning is geometric and organic in the form of horses, skull trees, lions, and many others. High-quality weavings were once restricted to the nobility, *maramba*, but are now made and used by anybody who can afford them or knows the secrets of making them. *Hinggi* are dominated by a rust color, *kombu*, that comes from the *mengkudu* (Morinda) tree.

OPPOSITE: Warp-ikat patterning is a lively and dynamic business on Sumba today, especially in East Sumba. European visitors remarked on them already in the late 19th century and made them so popular with collectors that today they travel to Sumba solely to buy these cloths. On the right: A traditional form of *hinggi*, man's wrap, from East Sumba. The central field is filled with a pattern derived from the Indian *patola* and named *patola ratu*, while the end fields are decorated with wide bands of animals executed in warp ikat: roosters, faint snakes or seaworms, shrimp, ghost-like figures on horses, and the tree of life. (Rambu May collection) The gentleman is in ceremonial dress, with warp ikat shawl and skirt-cloth, a shirt decorated with warp ikat from another region, and plain red and black headcloths.

RIGHT: A newly woven warp-ikat decorated cloth from East Sumba. What's new about this is the bare patterning with lots of empty spaces, the gross enlargement and realism of the motifs, and the one-way aspect of their placement. Sanggar Seni Ori Angu collection.





THIS PAGE: Story cloths, cloths that can be interpreted to tell a story, are a fairly recent phenomenon on Sumba island and extremely popular with collectors and tourists. The attention they are getting and the money they are bringing in is serving to perpetuate the art and to raise prosperity in the region. Museum Nasional collection.

OPPOSITE: Sumba's more traditional weavings do not tell a story, but they do reveal certain aspects of the local culture. Here, again, Indian patola influence is to be seen in the central field. Meanwhile, the main motif is a series of giant skull trees or *andungu*. It was the custom to fit the skulls of dead enemies on a bamboo or wooden tree erected in the central square of the village. Suwati Kartiwa collection.





One particular motif appearing on *hinggi* meant for *maramba* is a star, which is a symbol for the descent of a celestial deity. It is displayed on a dark ground, representing the divine being that controls the world. This motif is generally repeated to fill the central portion of the cloth that lies on the man's shoulder. On a lower section are animal figures. Horses signify heroism, sea animals represent the local coastal environment and a substantial population and deers are the target of dry-season hunting expeditions.

Sumbanese men wear the *hinggi* in traditional ceremonies, but they also wrap them around the corpse during funerary rites. Huge quantities are given to the family for this purpose and end up in the ground with the corpse. This conforms to the belief that the deceased must be properly equipped for a second life in the "other" world.

The "other" world is symbolized in the shrimp, which regularly sheds its old, hardened shell for a new, softer one. This is meant to represent the concept that life and death alternate allowing for a new life to be lived.

The skull tree is a motif peculiar to East Sumba's weavings. It was once the common practice to exhibit the skulls of the enemy or of criminals on a tree-like structure in front of the house of the local ruler.

Warp ikat is also used to decorate women's sarongs on Sumba, usually in combination with other kinds of ornamentation, woven and otherwise. They are used on special occasions, with the finest being made and worn by the *marapu* women.

LEFT: A young Sumbanese woman weaves a traditional man's *hinggi* on her loom in a quiet space under her house.

OPPOSITE: This fantastic cloth from East Sumba tells how a local king is buried. That he was of high status is evidenced by the presence of turtles near the bottom of the cloth. The dead man is seated on his horse and in a long parade taken to the gravesite where his most beloved horse is put to death so that it can serve its beloved master in the afterworld. Indigo Art Shop collection.





EAST NUSA TENGGARA: TIMOR

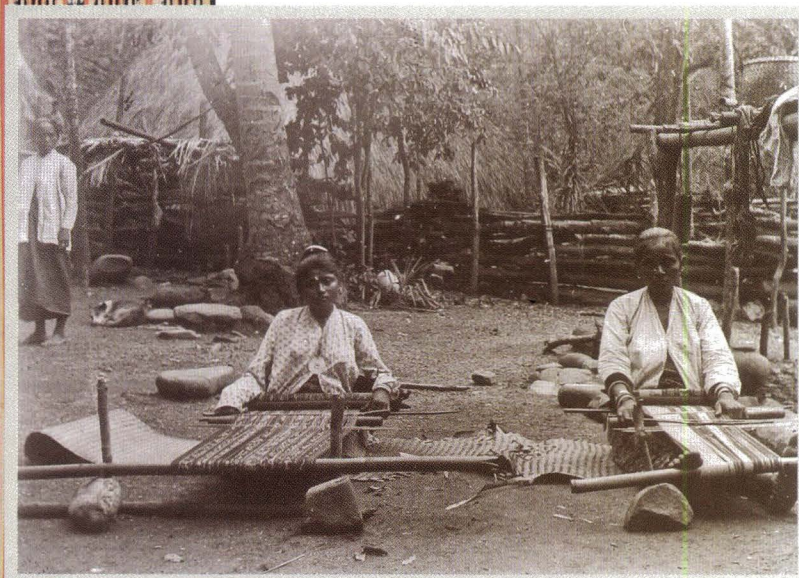
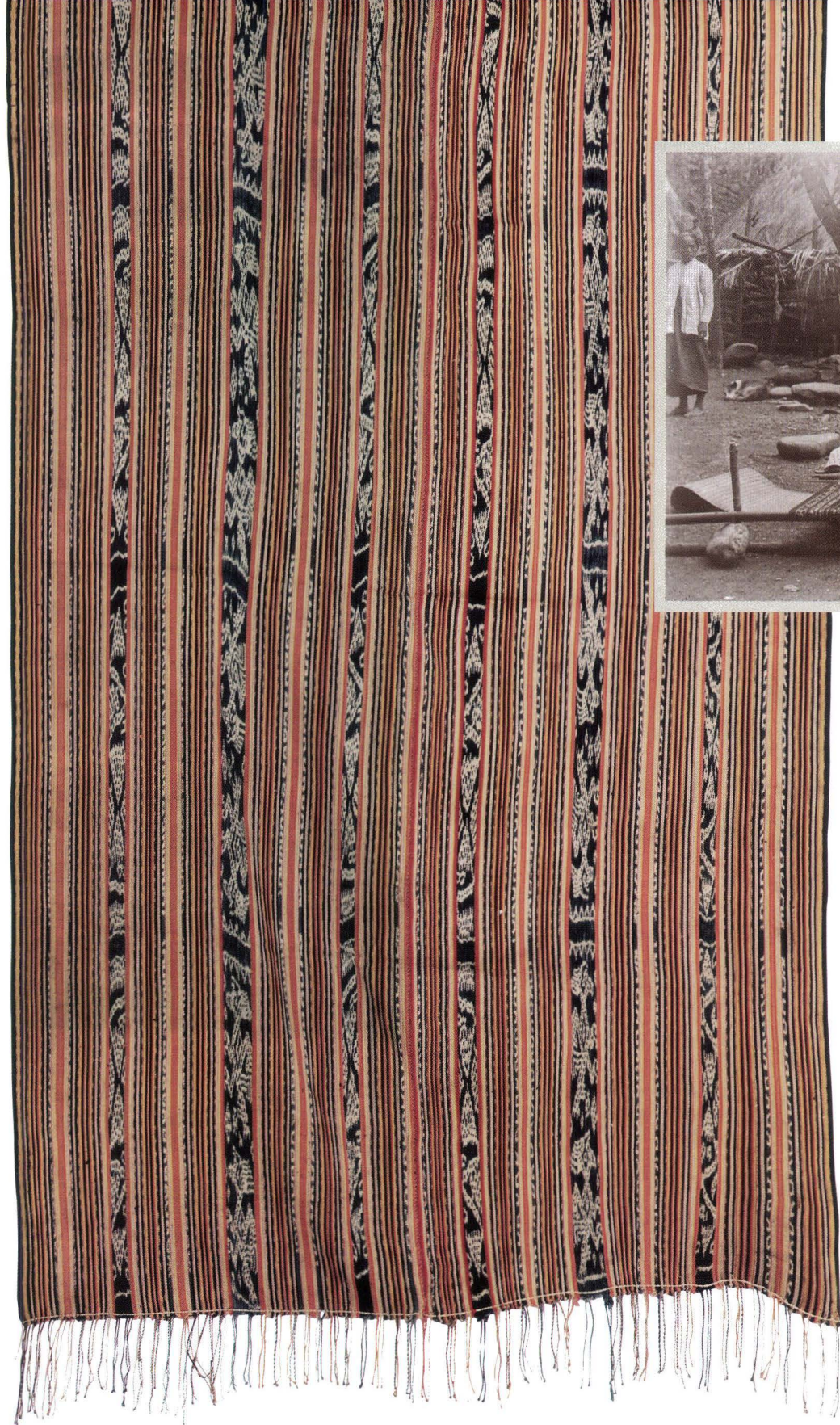
Timor is the easternmost island of the East Nusa Tenggara chain, the western half belonging to Indonesia and the eastern half being independent under the name of the Democratic Republic of Timor Leste. The island is inhabited by a variety of ethnic groups, each having different customs, languages, and social structures. The dominant groups in western Timor are the Helonese, Atoni, and Tetum-speakers. There are also large communities of Rotenese and Sabunese from adjacent islands to the west. Of their handicrafts, weaving is the most important. The women generally weave cloth for their own use, but dealers do buy in bulk for sale outside Timor.

The trade in Timor's textiles outside the area is long-standing, especially in non-weaving areas such as Papua. Torn shreds of Timor cloth are known to have served as a valuable form of currency. These old textiles were ikat-patterned cotton dyed with vegetable coloring matter, but synthetic dyes are now in use.

Several types of cloth are woven for use as men's and women's clothing, namely shawls, blankets, and sarongs. "Blanket" or *selimut* is a generic Indonesian term for large fringed rectangles worn by men as skirt-cloths. The characteristic of Timor's textiles include a broad central panel and warp-ikatted patterns of hooked rhombs, human figures, and reptiles in particular. Those of Rote have angular floral motifs derived from the old Indian patola, and those of Sabu feature bands of small geometrics along with a wide band of floral or geometric patterning, some of which were inspired by European patterns.

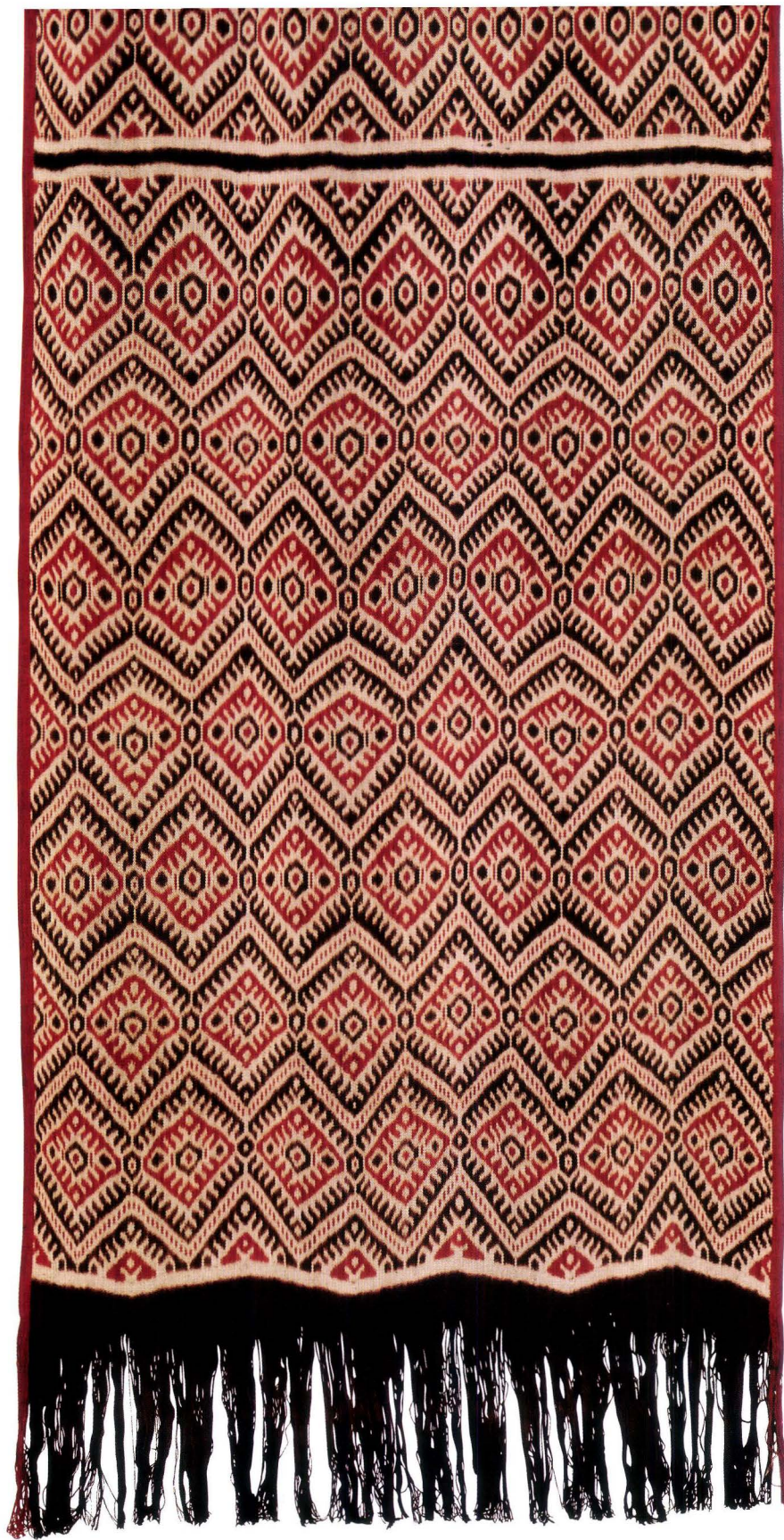
The textiles that the Timorese make today are primarily things of beauty, although some do retain their traditional symbolism. There is a huge variety in type and patterning, despite the similarity of techniques and the modernization of materials.

ABOVE: A fairly new warp-ikat weaving from the Amanatun region of western Timor, East Nusa Tenggara. There are innumerable styles of textiles on Timor, using a variety of techniques, that are still relatively localized. This example was made in the district of Amanatun and was inspired by a foreign pattern. It would have been used as a man's skirt-cloth. Museum Tekstil collection.



ABOVE: A pair of women weave cloth in the Besikama area of Belu near the border with East Timor. They are sitting on the ground, but since this photograph was apparently taken in 1909 and they are wearing blouses, it is possible that the photograph was posed. In those days, Timorese women in remote areas did not wear blouses when they were weaving, but their sarongs were so long as to reach from anklebone to the armpits.

LEFT: A characteristic man's wrap or *bet naek* from the Insana area in western Timor. Insana has a number of textile styles, but the roosters arranged in a row on a dark blue ground are the best-known. Museum Tekstil collection.



OPPOSITE AND RIGHT: The Biboki district in western Timor today continues to produce a large number of warp-ikat textiles on the backstrap loom. They are typified by a particular color palette that includes a dusty rose color, soft brown, and black. Older cloths are generally filled with fine warp stripes of warp-ikat dashes with a number of wider, more complex warp-ikat bands in between. These three examples are very new and represent an attempt, that is proving successful, to meet market demand. The geometric patterning that is normally found in the wider warp-ikat bands in between fine stripes of dashed lines has been amplified and simplified to fill the entire body of the cloth. Biboki Art Shop collection.





EAST NUSA TENGGARA: SABU, ROTE, NDAO

These three little islands between Sumba and Timor have different cultures but have exerted influence over each other, such as in their weavings. All three give the same importance to textiles. Their folklores tell us that the more significant motifs on Rotenese weavings originated in the little adjacent island of Ndao, for example. Of the three, Rote has been the most sensitive to alien influences. The first contact with the Europeans in this area took place early in the 17th century, with the arrival of the Portuguese. Trade was expanded with the inclusion of Gujarati merchants, but these contacts were almost all on the superior-class level only.

Sabu's weavers, using the warp-ikat technique, produce some very striking floral and geometric patterning that is arranged in distinctive bands against a dark indigo or rusty mengkudu ground. Those for men's cloths tend to be geometric and include the diamond-shaped *wohapi*, the zigzagged *kekamahaba*, the star-like *moto*, and the flower-like *boda*. The motifs may be evenly spaced in bands separated by narrow ribs of two-color warp stripes resulting from use of a warp-float technique. The women's sarongs are dominated by a fairly wide band of ikat-work towards the top and bottom edge of the cloth that may have a rusty ground. The main motifs on these are traditional floral medallions, possibly inspired by the patola, a stylized bird-and-flower composition called *tutu*, and the snake motif or *ledo*. The Western-inspired motifs include vases of flowers, floral bouquets, roses, and floral arabesques.

LEFT: Textiles from the small island of Rote, off the western tip of Timor, are quite distinctive, with rigidly geometric patterning largely derived from the Indian patola. This is a new cloth decorated with the floral pattern known locally as *dula ai*. It was woven on a backstrap loom using machine-spun cotton and chemical dyes. Museum Tekstil DKI Jakarta collection.



RIGHT: An autochthonous priest dressed in modernized textiles from Sabu island in East Nusa Tenggara. His skirt and shawl are decorated with warp-ikat patterning. However, for his headcloth he uses the preferred Javanese batik. He is holding a very old heirloom sword with rattan fittings and a lance.

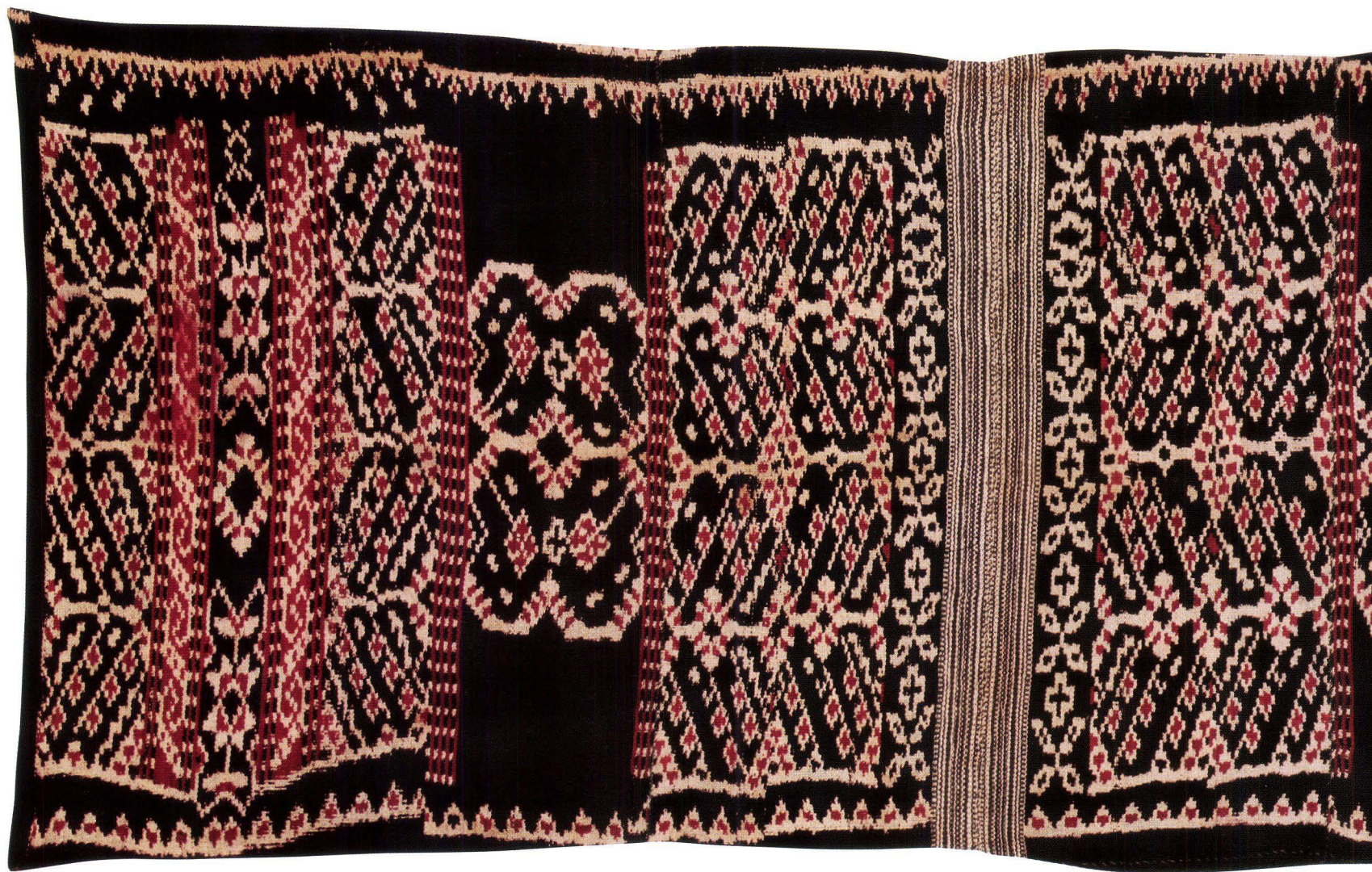
ABOVE LEFT: A warp-ikat man's wrap or *hi'i* from the island of Sabu in traditional style. The social status of the wearer is shown in the number of warp bands decorating the central portion of the cloth, while the motifs themselves do not appear to have any particular significance. Antique Art Shop collection.





THIS PAGE: An old man's wrap or *lafa* from Rote island in East Nusa Tenggara. It was once said that these were horse blankets, the plain black space being where the rider would sit. This type of cloth has not been made for some time now; today they are fully patterned. The bird-on-branch motif is of European origin, while the style of triangles at the end indicates the kingdom of Termanu as being the place of make. Museum Nasional collection.

OPPOSITE: A Sabunese villager in informal costume carrying a bucket made from pleated lontar leaf (*Borassus flabellifer*) that is used for collecting the liquor from lontar flowers that is used to make palm sugar. His textiles are warp-ikat patterned.



ABOVE: The woman's sarong, *pou*, of Rote island is unique in the range of textiles produced in the Indonesian archipelago, one of a kind as to patterning. Even today, they are woven from coarse handspun cotton, a trend that has been preserved by the relative remoteness of the little island. Antique Art Shop collection.

Rote's textiles demonstrate special ingenuity and skill in applying the patola motif that is called *dula nggeo* or "black motif" and *dula penis*, a diagonal cross-shaped motif formerly used exclusively by the nobility, and simpler floral motifs or *dula bunga* for the common public. The blanket-like cloths terminate in a row of triangles or *tumpal* on the cut ends. Coloring is generally red and yellowish-tan on a blue-black indigo ground.

As for Ndao, its weavings originally showed strong affinity with Sabu's textiles, but today's pieces are more like Rotenese textiles, produced with imported threads and chemical dyes for the market.



RIGHT: From Rote, a very modern shawl in the rich but soft coral hue characteristic of weavings from Rote. The patterning is quite 'bald' with lots of bare spaces, and drawn in outline without details. Its naivete makes this a very handsome cloth for traditional dress (although not for ritual wear) and contemporary fashion. Antique Art Shop collection.





ABOVE: This bright blue sarong is in a modern style, while maintaining traditional motifs, created in the southeastern islands of Maluku province, probably on Selaru island. The brilliance of chemical dyes is adored in this region where textiles were normally quite dark with minute patterning. Museum Tekstil DKI Jakarta collection.

OPPOSITE: This matching set of shoulder cloth and sarong, which has yet to be made up, comes from Tanimbar in southeastern Maluku. The use of a matching shoulder cloth is part of what is perceived to be the national dress of women of Indonesia: a skirt cloth and matching shawl of any Indonesian make, worn with the thin jacket-like kebaya. To speed up production, the patterns have been greatly enlarged and small details eliminated. Museum Tekstil DKI Jakarta collection.

MALUKU: TANIMBAR AND KISAR

In terms of color combinations and patterning, Maluku has many kinds of textiles. In the far north, supplementary weft-weaving has been used to produce beautifully patterned cotton textiles on Ternate. One area on the central island of Seram is known to have formerly woven complex patterns using the tapestry technique combined with ikat. And the islands in the southern sphere weave cotton that they pattern with warp ikat.

The textiles from Tanimbar's weavers in the southeastern corner of the province comprise long thin cloths for the men and long narrow sarongs for the women. While the men's cloths may be plain-woven and embellished with the application of shells, the women's sarongs are decorated with warp ikat-work. Typical motifs are the hook and lozenge arranged in narrow bands. Cotton and chemical dyes are the usual materials today, but natural fiber extracted from the *lontar* (Borassus) palm and organic dyes were used in the past.

In the southwestern corner of Maluku, Kisar's women weave an interesting motif of a man with arms raised near a tree-of-life, which is believed to symbolize man after death. A dark-hued (black or blue) cloth called *sinun* was formerly used as a burial shroud and today as wraparound clothing.

The man figure is similar to a motif that appears on Sumbanese textiles, but it is much smaller and has some distinct differences as well. Other textiles decorated with warp-ikat ornamentation are worn to ceremonies and festive gatherings, and display greater brightness, with stripes of yellow, red, and green.



RIGHT: A warp ikat-decorated shoulder cloth from the Tanimbar archipelago in southeastern Maluku. The modernization and simplification of materials, techniques, and patterning has been necessary for the survival of this segment of Indonesia's precious cultural heritage. However, it takes experimentation and time to determine exactly what will truly satisfy the demand. Suwati Kartiwa collection.

CONCLUSION

Traditional textiles have particular functions in the social, religious, aesthetic, and economic aspects of community life. Ikat textiles have long been known to have such roles. Historically, warp and weft ikat have diffused into local cultures at different times and in different ways, warp ikat earlier than weft ikat. According to scholars, warp ikat was brought to the Indonesian archipelago by the Annamese at the time the Dongson culture was at its zenith on the mainland.

The warp-ikat tradition can still be found in several of Indonesia's regions. In Sumatra, the Bataks of North Sumatra province continue to make and use the *ulos mangiring* and the *ulos sibolang*, both displaying stripes of warp-ikat work and geometric lines, in the same style as was once produced in Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam, executed there in black and purple combined with silver thread supplementary-weft ornamentation, as opposed to the bright red-and-black and blue-and-white Batak cloths.

On Kalimantan, warp-ikats called *pua kumbu* are brought into use on ceremonial occasions in the longhouses, woven by the inland Dayak people, and this tradition has been injected with new life in recent years through the efforts of such people as Edric Ong in Sarawak and Pater Maessen in Sintang, West Kalimantan. In East Kalimantan, the Benuaq Dayaks are well-known for the cloth, *ulap*, which are woven from fibers extracted from the fleshy leaves of a ground orchid, *doyo*, that grows along riversides. This fabric, decorated with geometrically shaped birds, reptiles, and ancestor figures, is worn as jackets and skirts and used as ceremonial cloths. The *ulap doyo* industry has benefited by support from Pupuk Kaltim (East Kalimantan Fertilizer) under the big-brother scheme promoted in the 1980s.





ABOVE: One of Kisar island's textile genres, identifiable by the human figures with arms raised in the larger pattern band and the fine band of twined patterning near the two ends of the cloth. Sumba Art collection.



RIGHT: A modified shawl from Kisar island with its typical patterning, although slightly enlarged, its plain coloring and its simplified layout (i.e. no side borders or twined border at the ends). Museum Nasional collection.



In Sulawesi, the Torajan people, who inhabit the mountainous portion of northern South Sulawesi, have a typical warp-ikat blanket that is important in funerary rites. These textiles – formerly woven in Rongkong (South Sulawesi) and Galumpang (West Sulawesi) districts and ornamented with artistic geometric compositions of hooks, meanders, diamonds, and triangles that construct human or abstracted ancestor-figures – have been so popular with tourists and art collectors that a successful copycat industry has developed in the town of Sa’dan. They are still being woven in the traditional way in their homelands, however, particularly in Galumpang.

As for the eastern islands of Indonesia, and especially East Nusa Tenggara, this is where most traditional cloths have always been decorated mainly through the warp-ikat process. Flores, Sumba, Timor, Sabu, Rote, Ndao, and other small islands produce a great variety of warp ikats carrying geometric motifs representing ancestor-figures and important animal-figures such as horses, reptiles, and birds, while floral motifs predominate in the weavings of Rote, Ndao, and Sabu islands. There is also evidence of strong influence from the Indian patola patterns. These traditional cloths are worn on ceremonial occasions and included in the bride price and marital exchanges between the families of the bride and bridegroom.

In the Maluku region, warp-ikats are still woven on Tanimbar and Kisar islands in particular. Tanimbarese textiles are characterized by hook-and-lozenge motifs arranged within narrow bands, while the cloths of Kisar are especially noted for the figure of a man with arms raised and a tree-of-life, as evidence of the impact of Sumba’s textiles. However, the variety is endless on the thousands of small islands strewn along the southern border of Maluku.

The weft-ikat technique coincides with the period of Islamic influence in Indonesia beginning in the 14th-to-15th centuries, when it was brought to the islands by Muslim traders from India, China, and the Middle East. Among their trade goods were silken cloths with weft-ikat and metallic-thread ornamentation that were bartered for Indonesia’s most-valuable spices needed for international trading. In South Sumatra, the primary ornaments on weft-ikats or *kain limar* are floral compositions and a



THIS PAGE: A man's wrap in the traditional style of Amarasi in the mountains of southwestern Timor. The plain white centerfield is typical of men's cloths from this part of Timor. The two side pieces were woven separately, then the three sewn together to produce a wide cloth. The warp-ikat pattern includes a bird motif, the *koro* bird; the royal family is also named *Koroh*. Museum Tekstil DKI Jakarta collection.

OPPOSITE: A fine warp-ikat shawl from Sikka, Flores, showing distinct influence from the Indian patola. This is a recently made textile, but is unusually fine and dyed with organic dye. Museum Tekstil DKI Jakarta collection





Garuda-wing motif or *lar*. These are woven in Palembang and on Bangka island off the east coast. The Pasemah region of South Sumatra was also known for a distinctive weft-ikat tradition in combination with supplementary-weft decoration. Beyond South Sumatra's southern border, the Lampung people produce the *tapis* that is mostly decorated with embroidery, although some do have bands of weft ikat alternating with bands of embroidery. Unfortunately, the weft-ikat traditions of Pasemah and Lampung have not survived.

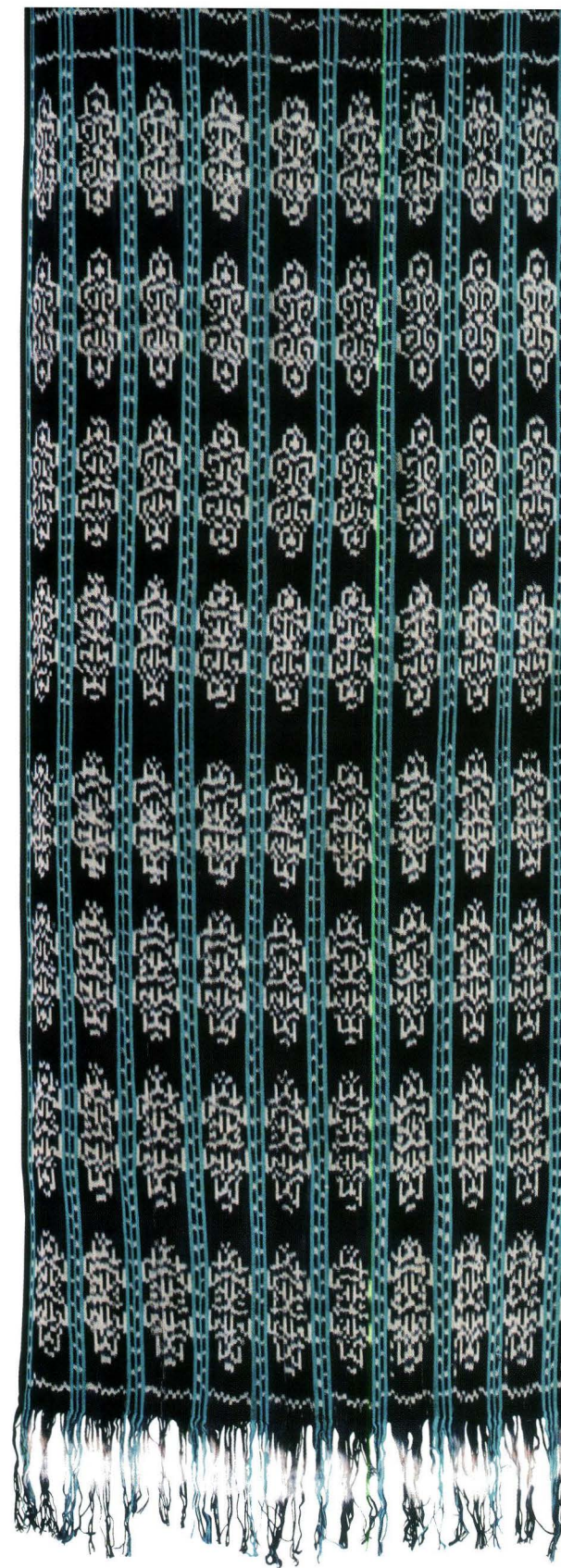
Java's weft-ikat tradition is centered around the town of Trosro on the north coast of Central Java and the towns of Gresik and Lamongan across the border in East Java. Weavers in these places produce weft-ikat sarongs and other textiles decorated with traditional motifs taken from all over the country, but especially from eastern Indonesia where they are made for traditional as well as modern uses, they are also exported outside of Indonesia.

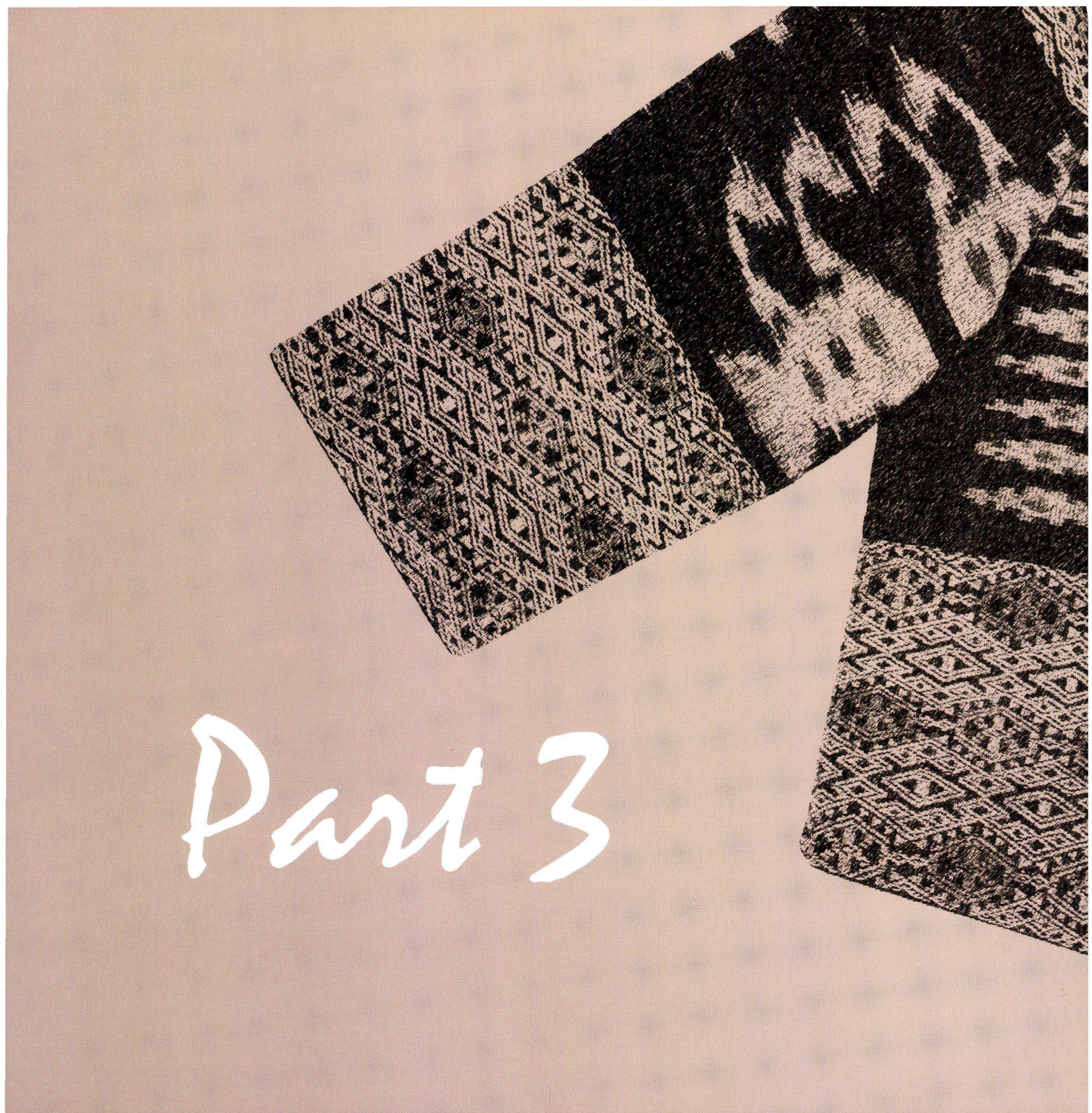
Bali's famous weft-ikats, called *endek*, are worn on ceremonial occasions and as part of dance costume. For these purposes, they are often enhanced with gold and silver thread ornaments using the supplementary-weft or *songket* technique. The same kind of combination is also to be found in the Donggala region in Central Sulawesi as well as in South Sulawesi, while in South and East Kalimantan across the waters to the west, the weft-ikat tradition is preserved by weavers whose ancestors came from South Sulawesi several generations ago.

The great variety in the weft- and warp-ikat traditions of Indonesia attests to great antiquity and undeniably places the archipelago in a very special position in the weaving world.

RIGHT: A very new, chemically colored shawl from western Timor that was exhibited at a recent, huge handicrafts show held annually in the Jakarta Convention Center. Crafts people and producers from all over the country come to display and sell their wares. It is a wonderful opportunity for them to see at first hand how their designs are received by the more sophisticated public in Indonesia's capital city. Biboki Art Shop collection

OPPOSITE: A very large blanket-like cloth acquired a few years back in Sa'dan village, Tana Toraja regency, South Sulawesi. As a result of tourism, a traditional textile mart opened up in a large barn-like structure in Sa'dan in the 1980s. Here the weavers gather to demonstrate their trade, people in need of cash bring their old cloths for sale, and new products are market-tested. Before this forum opened up, makers had a hard time finding a place to market these cloths that were in danger of disappearing because the need for them was dying out. Private collection.





Part 3





Ikat for modern society

by Unggul Hermanto

Hand-woven textiles have always had a special place in Indonesian society. Ikat, for instance, was never a mere piece of clothing. The glorious cloth was highly regarded as an important social symbol. It separated the nobles from the commoners. It complemented and completed life rituals. It gave distinction for sophistication and it was used to speak in volumes to the ancestors.

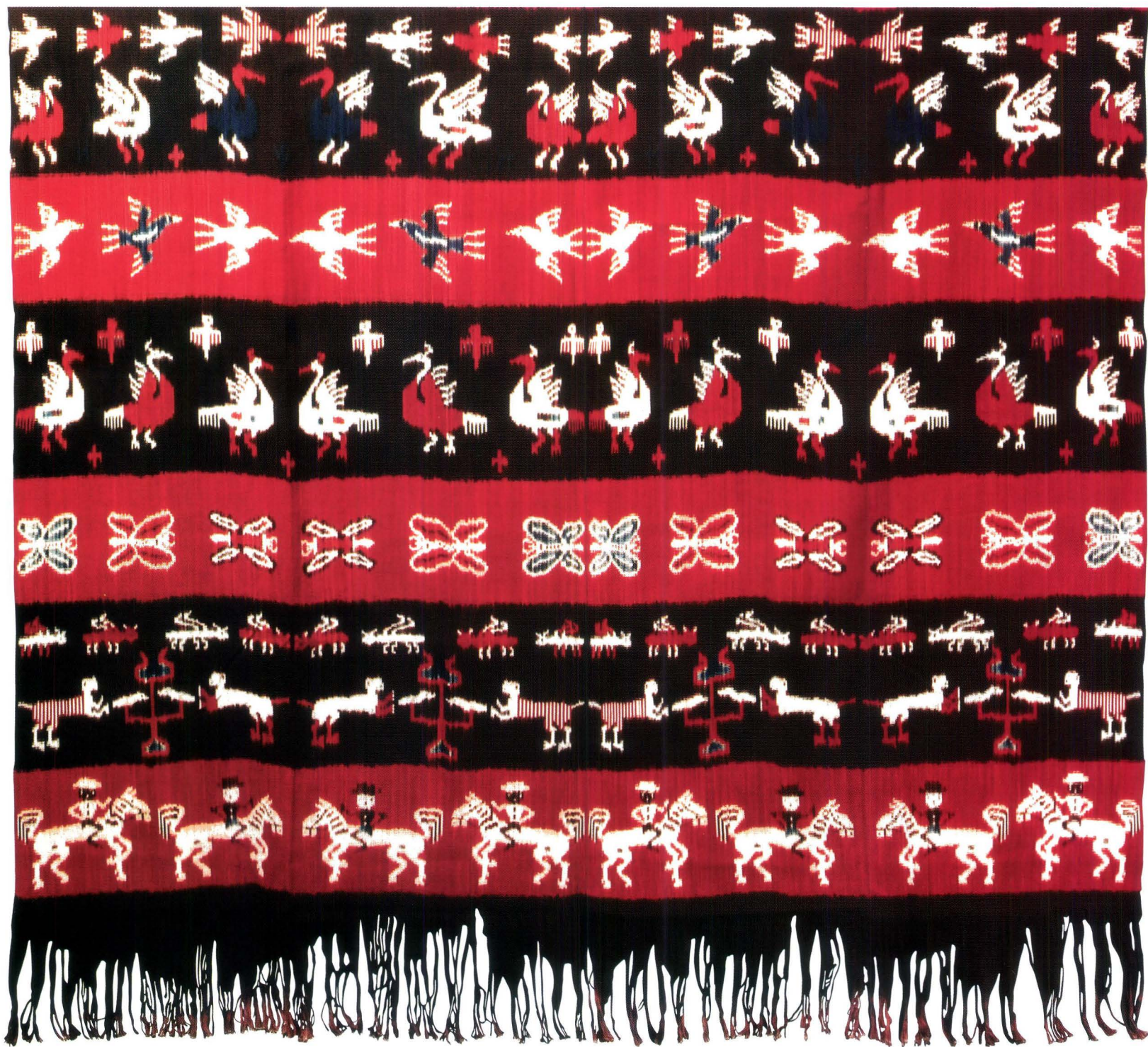
Unfortunately, modernity does not leave much room for rituals and traditions. What once was an important part of everyday life is now considered as something trivial. As modern Indonesians care less and less about the importance of rituals and traditions, the demand for ikat cloths decreases. The ikat weaving traditions of Indonesia have not gone to extinction as of yet, but are experiencing another role shift. While still produced and considered by some as highly precious, most people do not take the ikat traditions as seriously as before. The younger generations, especially, are more interested in fresher, more instant things coming from outside Indonesia, be they notions of cuteness from Japan, the concept of fast food from the USA or Europe's wine-drinking culture.

Luckily, while the East is busy importing goods and culture from its counterpart, the West is doing the exact same thing. The notions of exoticism and the saying that "the grass is always greener on the other side" go together well. While not fully taking on all the traditions that come along with Indonesia's ikat cloths, a great number of foreigners are surely interested in its artistic side.

OPPOSITE: Women of Sabu in East Nusa Tenggara wearing ikat cloths. In areas in Indonesia where modernity is still a stranger, ikat cloths are still highly valued and the rituals that come along with them are still diligently practiced.

RIGHT: A modern-style bag made by Sumba Art adorned with ikat cloth. Foreign and local tourists are also interested in collecting Indonesian ikat cloths in other more practical forms such as bags, pencil cases, pouches, et cetera. Sumba Art collection.







Sumba Art's workshops, for instance, have been selling ikat cloths to enthusiastic foreigners for many years. Apart from selling genuine old-style Sumbanese ikat, they have also been selling pieces colored with chemical dye. There are two reasons for this. One is the fact that chemical dyes take less time to process and the other is that there are certain colors that cannot be produced with natural dyes. Strangely enough, these colors tend to be the more striking colors that foreigners like to see on their ikats.

One of the main traits of greatness is longevity. And this is something that can only be achieved through adaptability. In order to survive modernity, ikat needs to become fashionable, both in Indonesia and abroad. The ephemeral nature of the fashion industry creates a situation in which new creations are in constant demand. The fashion world always welcomes new innovations, be it inventing new materials or styles, or adopting old ones with new twists. This is the door that ikat can and should utilize.

One of the first Indonesian designers to use ikat in his designs is Prajudi Atmodirdjo. The Jakarta-born designer received formal education in architecture from Germany before realizing that his interest was in designing clothes, not buildings. Prajudi started his career by joining PAPMI, the Association of Indonesian Fashion Designers, and quickly made a good impression on the the country's fashion industry. It did not take the talented artist long to set up his own ready-to-wear label, Studio One, which was established in 1975.

ABOVE: Long-sleeved jacket made by Sumba Art. The simple design shows it was made before Indonesian fashion designers started working with ikat cloths. This shows that the market demands for such items was there, but the workshops not yet able to produce high-quality fashionable pieces.

OPPOSITE: Brilliantly colored textiles from East Sumba with amusing modern designs are being made today especially for the fashion trade. Titus Ngg Karanggu Limu collection.

RIGHT: Nice sports jacket for a woman using a traditional ikat with muted coloring. The problem has always been matching up the weft-running patterning at seams, which this designer appear to have achieved successfully in the late 1970s. Rumah Mode Prajudi collection.

BELOW RIGHT: Woman's formal jacket in Sumba ikat designed by Prajudi Atmodirdjo, who is one of the first Indonesian designers to take interest in ikat. Rumah Mode Prajudi collection.

Prajudi's interest in Indonesia's traditional cloths, such as batik, ikat and songket, was already obvious in his early creations. Focusing on feminine tailoring, the celebrated designer managed to work wonders with ikat cloths from Bali, Lombok, Ujung Pandang (South Sulawesi) and Lampung (southern Sumatra). This is how Prajudi earned himself recognition as an expert in pattern precision, not only in Indonesia, but also abroad. His so-called Kebaya Prajudi, a modern interpretation of the Javanese kebaya made with diagonally puffy sleeves, has also been widely acknowledged as the style of 'today'. Recently, Prajudi's heirs are experimenting with combining songket and ikat--without Prajudi who passed away some time ago, but still in his inimitable style.

Another Indonesian designer who takes pride in working with traditional Indonesian cloths is Samuel Wattimena. The renowned designer was forced to be creative in his search for clothing materials in the 1980s, because there was simply not that much imported quality-material available in Indonesia. Therefore he started to look for traditional cloths. He was also looking for materials with striking colors for his clients, most of whom were singers, to wear on stage, and the ikat cloths from Timor served his needs perfectly.

Over time, Samuel has worked with ikat cloths from many other areas including Makassar (South Sulawesi), Maluku, Bali, South Tapanuli (North Sumatra), and Gorontalo (northern Sulawesi). Using the ikats mostly for jackets and suits, at which he excels, and formal dresses, Samuel admits that he leaves much of the cloth's patterning and designing to the craftsmen and -women. However, he does get involved in selecting threads for weaving, producing new colors, creating new layouts, and even determining the weight of the cloths.

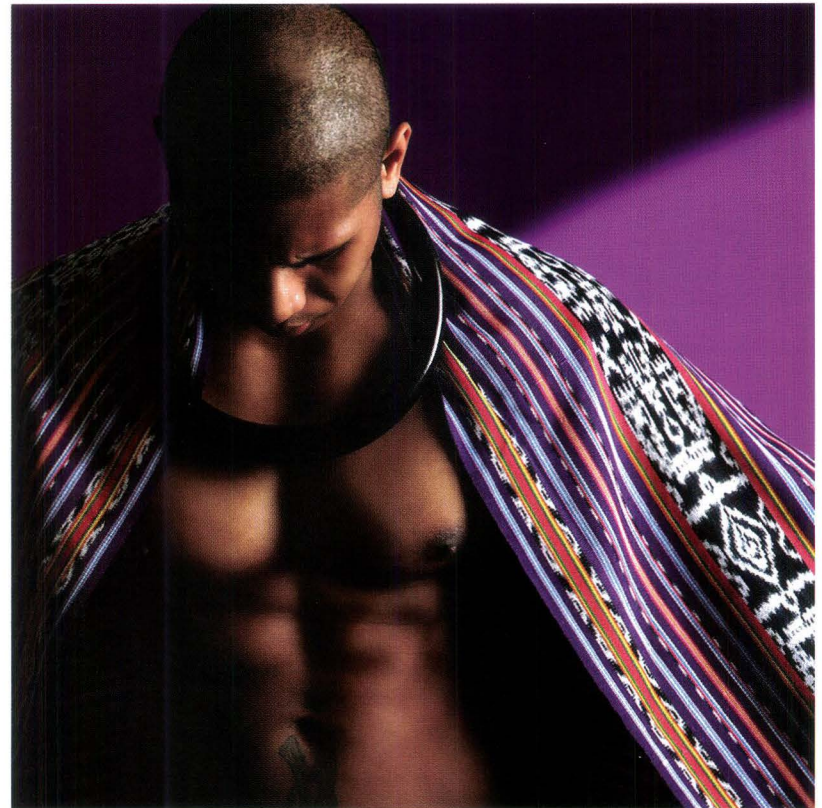
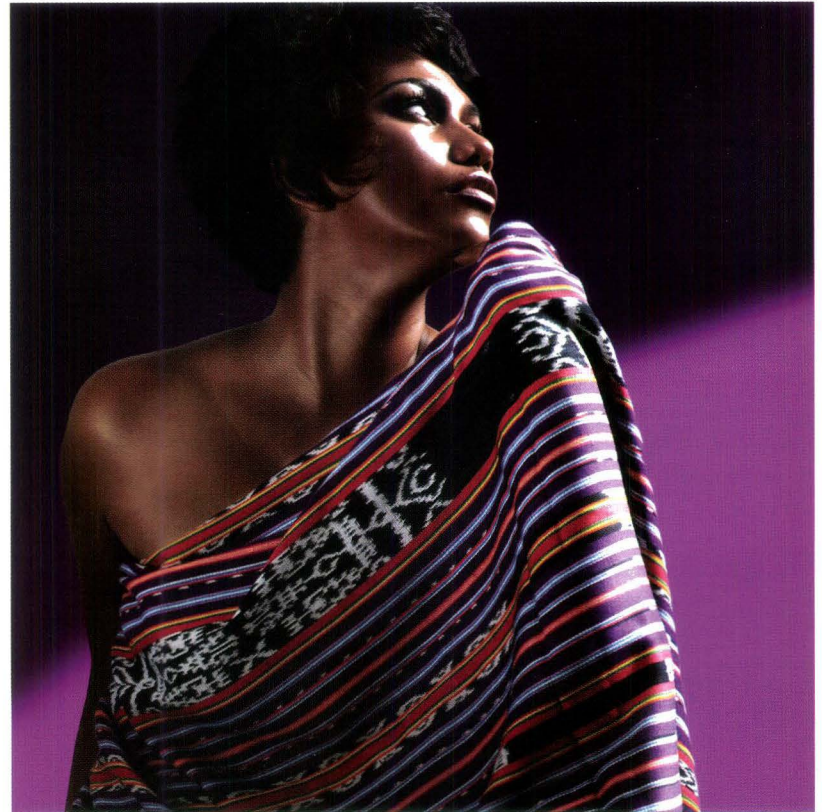




ABOVE: Prajudi's signature is his precision in combining patterns. He loves working with Indonesian handwoven cloths because their complicated patterns suit his style. Courtesy of Rumah Mode Prajudi.

THIS PAGE: Samuel Wattimena started to use ikat cloths for his designs because he was forced to look for local materials due to the limited availability of imported materials in the 1980s. In these pictures, he has simply manipulated the form of the rectangular *kain* to create two very sexy looks for both men and women. Courtesy of Samuel Wattimena.

OPPOSITE: The celebrated designer likes to work with bright colors. At the start, this was because he had to design cloths for singers to wear on stage. Here, he uses the ikat cloths from Maluku to cut formal jackets for men. Courtesy of Samuel Wattimena.



"Most of the ikat craftsmen and -women realize the potential of their ikat in the fashion industry, in both Indonesia and abroad. But to be successful, they first need to change their mindset into becoming more entrepreneurial. They all need to work together to produce good quality ikats consistently. As much as we'd like to support them, we also need a guarantee that the cloths will always be in superb condition, the colors won't fade easily, and they will be delivered on time," Sam says.

Despite his young age, Sumatra-born Oscar Lawalata is considered a senior name in the Indonesian fashion industry. One of his three fashion labels, Oscar Culture, focuses on creating fashion designs exclusively using handcrafted textiles from all over Indonesia. "The aim is to preserve and popularize these traditional materials (i.e. ikat, batik, songket, and many more) which have formed our national heritage," claims Oscar who admits to first becoming interested in ikat from Timor. Together with his Japanese friend, Seiichi Okawa, the inspiring young designer visited Timor to learn more about the ikat cloths in the area. Not long afterwards, he came up with his first haute couture pieces adorned with the patterns and symbols of Timor's ikats.

After spending over five years working with ikat cloths and their craftsmen and -women, Oscar decided to start inserting his own ideas into ikat. "We are doing an experiment where silk threads are used in the weaving process instead of the regular cotton threads. Hopefully this will result in lighter cloths with more lavish colors," he explained.

Unlike her seniors, young Lenny Agustin has a different interpretation for ikat. Despite its complicated patterning and symbols, its thickness and above-average weight, Lenny has managed to see that ikat can be used for casual occasions. Her 'Lennor by Lenny Agustin' label, like Oscar's, also focuses on designs made exclusively from Indonesian hand-woven cloths. The difference is that the designs for Lennor are for daily wear. "My designs are very simple. I just try to follow the present trends to make the cloths look fashionable and current. They are already beautiful in their original state," explained the Jakarta-educated designer who also pointed out her belief that ikat cloths could easily be very popular worldwide if marketed correctly.





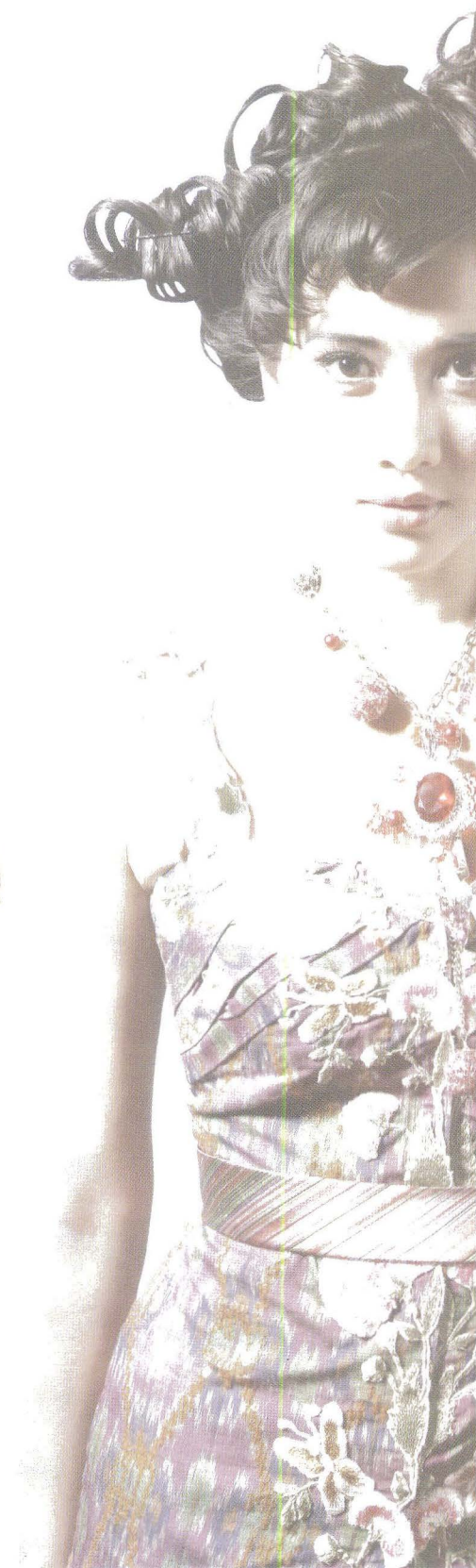
PAGE: Oscar Lawalata is one of the masters of haute couture in Indonesia. His cuts are always very clean, simple and elegant where the clothes actually look like they are hugging the body. For these two designs, he used warp ikat from Flores with its handsome patterning. Oscar Lawalata Culture collection.

RIGHT: Taking cloths that are heavy in weight and have complex patterning and transforming them into casual wear is the work of a genius. Lenny Agustin, despite her young age, is one of the most talented designers around. Courtesy of Lenny Agustin

At the moment, Lenny simply aims to introduce her ikat-decorated designs to a wider audience, but in the future, she plans to experiment further with the ikat cloths, probably resulting in a new innovation for ikat.

The commercial value of Indonesia's ikat cloths does not just stop at being collected and used in clothing. Just like batik that has gone as far as influencing the world of interior design, ikat is slowly having an impact on the other branches of the design world. Wall-hangings made from *ulap doyo*—warp-ikat textiles woven by Benuaq Dayak women in East Kalimantan from a fiber extracted from the fleshy leaves of a ground orchid known as *doyo* and usually turned into sarongs for women and vests for men—were already being sold by several ikat workshops in the 1980s, to both locals and tourists. At the time, the designers did not inspire these workshops to produce other ikat-decorated products until a commercial movement was set into motion by some establishments, for example the House of Daloeng. They started designing bags for men and women using *ulap doyo* and other ikat cloths. As the products became more and more popular, the other ikat workshops followed suit.

Among them were, and still are, the craftswomen of Uma Mamuli and Sumba Art who likewise produce souvenirs decorated with ikat cloth. The display in their workshops shows toys, pouches, scarves, passport covers, shopping bags, wallets, even laptop bags, all boasting patterns and symbols usually seen on Sumba ikat cloths. These goods are seen as more practical, hence easier for tourists to buy, carry away, and show off in their own homes. Again, this proves that in today's market, the more obvious and instant the usages of ikat-decorated products, the bigger the demand.





LEFT: A wall-hanging made of *ulap doyo* of the Benuaq Dayaks shows how ikat cloths have begun to penetrate the world of interior design world as well. Museum Tekstil DKI Jakarta collection.



BELOW: Other workshops have also started utilizing ikat cloths to make other fashion accessories such as handbags for women. House of Daloeng collection.





The long time it takes to produce ikat, its heavy nature, and its limited color choices are among the problems that the ikat craftsmen and -women need to overcome in order to enter the fashion industry. Luckily, the designers have also taken these matters into their own hands. Silk threads and chemical dyes are being introduced, making ikat cloths lighter and even more colorful than before.

“But to really help the ikat-weaving traditions of Indonesia, the designers need to do a lot more than just organizing fashion shows to show off their ikat-patterned designs. They need to educate the people who produce the cloths and make them understand the professional and quality-control side of the business. Without this, there will be no demand from anywhere,” argues Samuel Wattimena.

He certainly has a point. Indonesia’s ikat cloths are widely acknowledged as one of the most beautiful wonders of the world, but beauty doesn’t survive by itself. All parties involved – including the government, the craftsmen and -women, the designers, and the marketers – should work together to make ikat a profitable business commodity. This means the production of ikat cloths needs to be continuously reliable for commercial purposes. The buyers, be they big corporations or individual tourists, need to have the confidence that any ikat piece they buy in Indonesia at any given time is of the best quality. Over time, such consistent quality control will enable Indonesia’s ikat cloths to step up to the next commercial level. And when this has been realized, then maybe we can start dreaming about the next golden age for ikat cloths and Indonesia’s other hand-woven textiles.

ABOVE: The bags and other accessories shown here are made by the craftswomen of the House of Mamuli using Sumba ikat. These items are favorites for tourists because they are more practical and easy to use.

Appendices

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Glossary

adat (Indonesian): customs and traditions

backstrap loom: a weaving loom that has a strap or yoke that fits around the back of the weaver who sits on the ground

badan (Indonesian): the main part of a sarong or rectangular cloth; body

barong (Bali): a large lion-figure in Balinese ritual dance that stands for good

bidak (Lampung): a man's rectangular skirt-wrapper or shawl

bidang (Dayak): a woman's short tubular sarong

buya (Kaili): tubular sarong for women

cepuk (Bali): a sacred weft ikat-decorated textile used as clothing, shroud, ritual object, or decoration for a shrine. *Cepuk cenana kawi*: one decorated with the 'sandalwood' motif

cual (Malay): weft ikat

doyo (Dayak), *lemba* (Indonesian): the *Curculigo latifolia*, a wild ground orchid whose fleshy leaves produce weaving fiber. *Ulap doyo*: a cloth woven from that fiber.

ei (Sawu): woman's sarong

endek (Bali): weft ikat

geringsing (Bali): a textile decorated by tying and dyeing both weft and warp yarns before they are woven into cloth. *Geringsing cicempaka*, *geringsing prembon*: *geringsing* with particular patterning. *Geringsing wayang kebo*, *geringsing wayang putri*: *geringsing* whose patterns include human-like figures

hi'i (Sawu): a man's rectangular skirt-wrapper or shawl

hinggi (East Sumba): a rectangular cloth or shawl. *Hinggi kombu*: a red-dyed *hinggi*

ikat (international): tightly binding warp or weft threads according to a preconceived pattern; when dyed and the bindings removed, a white pattern on colored ground is achieved

ka'iwu (North Sulawesi): a weaving decorated with warp ikat.

Kai'wu patola: one that has patola-inspired patterning

kabakil (Sumba): wide band between web and fringe of a *hinggi*

kain kasang (West Java): cloth to be used as curtaining

kain panjang (Indonesian): a long rectangular cloth that may be wrapped around the hips, worn as a shawl, or hung as decoration

kewatek (East Flores): tubular sarong for women

lafa (Roti): a man's rectangular skirt-wrapper or shawl

lar (Javanese): wing figure in batik patterns

limar (Palembang): weft ikat

lurik (Java): a textile decorated with stripes, plaid, and sometimes simple warp ikat

mamuli (East Sumba): a gold ornament worn as a pendant and eardrops or attached to a man's headcloth; very important in Sumbanese culture

mandau (Dayak): a man's bush-knife

national dress: for women, a long skirt (sarong or rectangular wraparound) worn under a long-sleeved jacket with a shawl thrown over the shoulder

pa' sekkong (Torajan): the double-key motif

patola (Indian): a double ikat-decorated weaving; patterns are bound into both warp and weft

penghulu (Indonesian): village chief or head man

pori lonjong (Torajan): a long warp ikat-decorated cloth

pua (Iban Dayak): a rectangular ceremonial textile. *Pua kumbu*
(Iban Dayak): a red-dyed *pua*

punca (Kaili): the narrower vertical panel of denser patterning on a sarong; called *kepala* or 'head' in Indonesian

songket (Indonesian): a cloth patterned by incorporating extra wefts of different colors and texture from the foundation weft

sora langi' (Torajan): a cloth with four major bands decorated with warp ikat patterning and plain-colored bands

story cloth (English): a Sumbanese textile on which the pattern tells a story

tapis (Lampung): a woman's tubular sarong. *Tapis inuh*: one that is decorated with weft ikat-patterning

tumpal (Indonesian): the ends of a rectangular cloth decorated with row(s) of triangles

ulos (Toba Batak): a rectangular cloth or shawl. *Ulos ragidup*, *ulos mangiring*, *ulos ragi hotang*, *ulos sibolang*: Toba Batak shawls with particular patterning

warp (English): the thread fixed to the loom and running perpendicularly from the weaver's body

wayang (Indonesian): shadow theater played by diverse two- and three-dimensional wooden or leather figures as well as by humans in a form of dance-opera

weft (English): the thread that is woven in and out of the warp

zawo, *lawo* (Flores): woman's sarong in certain districts



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Ikat-weaving is an important source of extra income for women in many parts of Indonesia where myriad styles are produced with local characteristics. On the left is a woman weaving a Sumba man's wrap on a traditional backstrap loom set up in the cool area under the platform-house. On the right, a bevy of lovely girls prepare to celebrate their entrance into puberty, dressed in the rich brown double ikats made in Pagringsingan Tenganan, Bali. This is one of the very few places in the world where double ikats are still made; their production involves the tying and dyeing of the warp threads and the weft threads, separately, before they are woven together.



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