

ASPECTS
of
INDONESIAN
CULTURE

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Dra. Intan Mardiana N., et. Hum

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ASPECTS
of
INDONESIAN
CULTURE

PERPUSTAKAAN
Museum Nasional



ASPECTS of INDONESIAN CULTURE

JAVA, SUMATRA AND SULAWESI

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Cover: Detail of a woman's skirtcloth, *kain limar songket*, with supplementary weft weaving in silk with gold-wrapped thread. Palembang, South Sumatra. Private Collection. Cover design and photograph by Susan Pairaudeau.

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FOREWORD

The Indonesian Heritage Society aims to promote interest in and knowledge of Indonesia's rich cultural heritage. This small book looks at aspects of that culture, and has been produced from studies by our large multinational membership. We hope to have provided an introduction to the traditions that remain an important influence in modern Indonesia.

The organisation was initially established in 1970 as the Ganesha Volunteers, which functioned under the patronage of the Ganesha Society. This society was founded by Mr and Mrs Zainal Abidin, Indonesian citizens with a strong interest in the country's art and culture. Its objectives were to support the museum and to promote the preservation and appreciation of this art. In 1994 the Volunteers became known as the Indonesian Heritage Society, retaining the original objectives of the Ganesha Society.

The Museum Nasional remains the initial focus of the organisation. Volunteers, as guests of the museum and under the direction of museum staff, work in the departments of Ethnography, Stone Sculpture, Prehistory, Ceramics and Textiles. The Archives section has translated many volumes of Dutch inventories into English, trained guides provide tours in various languages, and the museum staff participate in language classes. Outside the museum, activities include, among others, evening lectures on topics related to Indonesian culture, a schools programme where foreign children learn about their host country, and a study programme where groups of members look at the history and arts of Indonesia.

Several objects from the National Museum collections are mentioned in the text that follows, and many of the illustrations are from them. We are most grateful to the Director and staff of the Museum Nasional for allowing us to gather material and inspiration, and to our members Joanna Brierley, Susan Pairaudeau and Margaret Kerr for all their work in bringing this project to fruition.

Dana Mellis
Chairman, Indonesian Heritage Society

PREFACE

This is the third edition of *Aspects of Indonesian Culture*. The first two were published by the Ganesha Volunteers in 1979 and 1988, under the aegis of the Ganesha Society. They were the result of the work and study done by the volunteers in the National Museum, and took the form of a general introduction to the culture and history of the islands of Java and Sumatra, through the museum's collections. In 1998, a guidebook to the Museum Nasional was produced by volunteers of the Indonesian Heritage Society, with the assistance of the Museum staff. This was sponsored by American Express, and welcomed by the Director of the Museum Nasional as comprehensive and educational. It is available today at the Museum and in the Indonesian Heritage Society library.

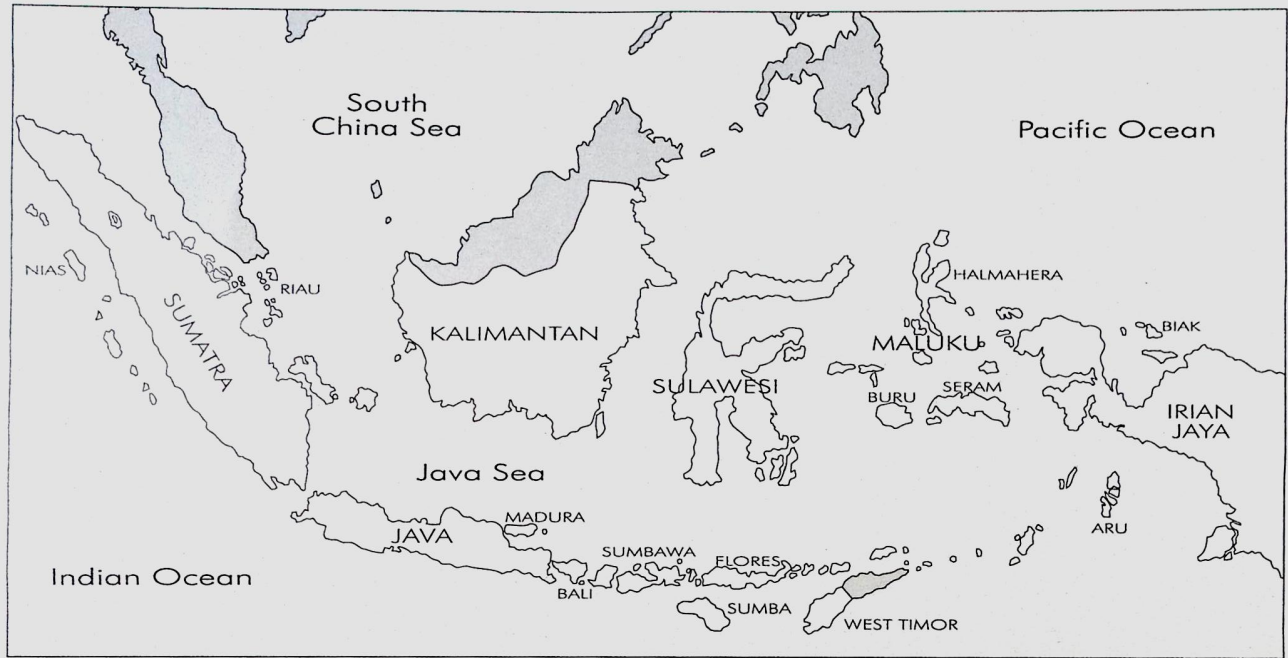
The third edition of *Aspects of Indonesian Culture* includes the island of Sulawesi. Working on the basic text of the first two editions, but without the constraints of needing to be a guide to the collections, we have expanded, enlarged, and updated the content. Importantly, we have included a comprehensive bibliography for more in-depth study than can be provided in this small edition. The aim has been to provide an introduction to Indonesia for newcomers and visitors to the archipelago.

Our thanks go to the Museum staff, and the many volunteers who worked hard to produce the first and second editions, which formed the basis for this, the third edition, *Aspects of Indonesian Culture: Java, Sumatra and Sulawesi*.

The Indonesian Heritage Society would like to thank those who kindly gave their time and expertise to help in the compilation of this publication. This assistance was given in the form of providing and checking information, editing, proof-reading, printing, and the drawing of illustrations.

Rewritten and edited by Joanna Hall Brierley, the project co-ordinated by Susan Pairaudeau, and layout by Margaret Kerr.

Our thanks to: Hilde Ardie, Amelia Barahona, Salu Chanrai, Retty Hakim, Katy van Heeren-Baan, Margaret Godson, Barbara Johnson, Yekti Kusmartono, Barbara MacNeill, Helen Marsland, Lorraine McCallum, Doctor E. Edwards McKinnon, Willemine Nommensen, Angela Poustie, Anne Rasmussen, Juliana Roe, Carol Walker, and to R. Anderson Sutton, Professor of Ethnomusicology, University of Wisconsin-Madison, for his written communication on gamelan.



REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA

INTRODUCTION TO INDONESIA

As a source of spice and aromatic forest products, the islands that today make up the Republic of Indonesia have attracted foreign trade for over two thousand years. Indonesia had commercial links with China as early as the Han dynasty of 206 BC, and then the influences of Hinduism and Buddhism that came from India in the first millennium. These were absorbed into the indigenous culture, as were the later influences of Islam and Christianity.

In the seventh century the powerful maritime kingdom of Sriwijaya, centred on Sumatra's east coast at what is now Palembang, held a key position on the trade route between the Indian Ocean and the Moluccas, or Spice Islands. Gold, resins and other forest products were traded to China, along with spices, Sriwijaya vying with neighbouring Java for control of regional trade.

In the eighth and ninth centuries powerful dynasties emerged in Central Java; the Buddhist Sailandras built the temple of Borobudur before they were expelled by the Hinduistic Sanjayas, who were to construct the temple complex at Prambanan.

By the thirteenth century the focus of regional power shifted to East Java, with the rise of Majapahit. The prosperity of this kingdom was based on wet rice agriculture, surplus rice being traded for the spices of the Moluccas, and on maritime trade, which was achieved by linking the Brantas River and tributaries with a maritime network. Majapahit's suzerainty by the second half of the fourteenth century reputedly extended over much of Sumatra, Kalimantan, the Moluccas, and even parts of mainland Asia.

Its power declined in the fifteenth century with the increasing prosperity of vassal coastal pepper-trading ports, which began trading independently with Muslim Malacca. The trade contacts with Malacca accelerated the spread of Islam to the archipelago, contributing to the decline of the Majapahit kingdom, which fell finally to the forces of Demak early in the sixteenth century.

This century saw the arrival of Portugal, followed by Spain, Holland and Britain. They were looking for a share in the lucrative spice market. The Dutch trading company, Vereenigde Oost-indische Compagnie, the VOC, was founded in 1602, and the city of Batavia established as the capital of the Dutch empire in the East. The VOC was to dominate Asian maritime trade, while controlling spice production to maintain the highest prices in Europe. This Company effectively eliminated all other European competition. During the Napoleonic Wars, following the establishment of a French-dominated Batavian Republic, Britain took over Holland's possessions in the Indies. In 1811 Thomas Stamford Raffles became Lieutenant-Governor of Java. The Netherlands Indies was returned to Holland in 1816 after the defeat of Napoleon, and Raffles was posted to Sumatra.

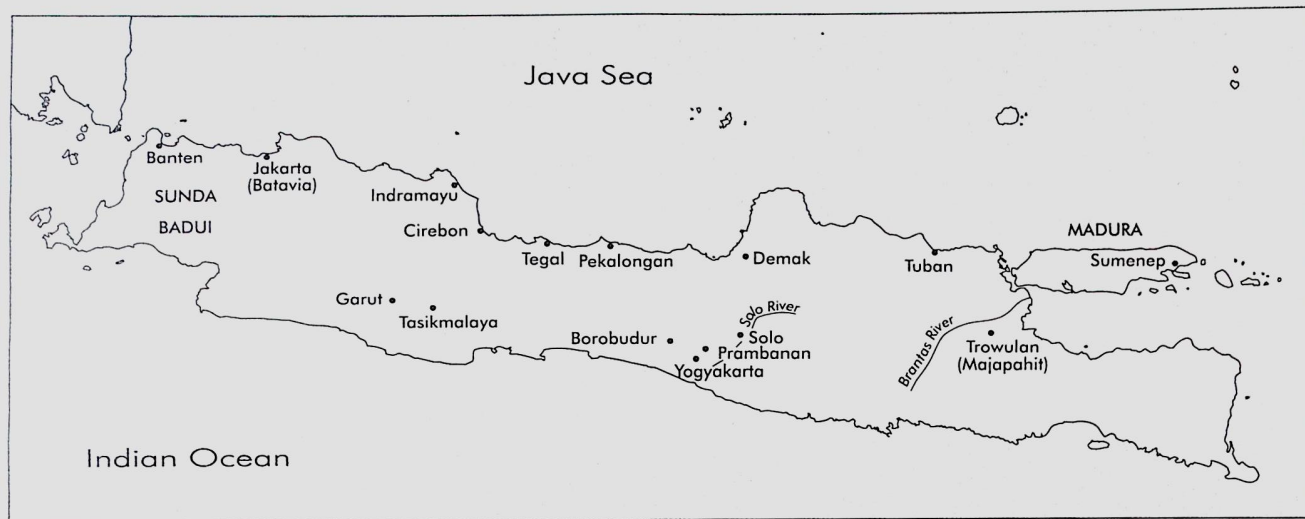
In 1900, Holland introduced an Ethical Policy whereby the Netherlands Government accepted a moral responsibility for the welfare of the people of the Indies, and introduced measures to promote economic development. This period also saw the beginning of the Indonesian nationalist movement, and the emergence of various political parties that were united only in their goal of independence from the Netherlands. There were several attempts by the Dutch to transfer a limited degree of power, but these were cut short in 1942 by the Japanese invasion. Their presence was to encourage Indonesian nationalism, within the context of a Japanese-controlled Asia.

As Japan announced its surrender, Sukarno proclaimed Indonesian independence on August 17th, 1945. This was not accepted by Holland, and a guerrilla war ensued until December 1949 when, under pressure from the United Nations, Holland agreed

that Indonesia become a sovereign state under the presidency of Sukarno. His policy of Guided Democracy was dependent for its implementation on the support of the military. An abortive coup in 1965 was blamed on the communist party (PKI), which had backed President Sukarno. A General Suharto took on the task of restoring order and, after an extended power struggle, Sukarno was deposed in March 1966. The PKI was banned, Suharto named acting president, and in the following year became president.

Under his New Order government, backed by the military, an initial five-year development plan was implemented. This aimed to achieve self-sufficiency in basic needs, especially food crops, a balance between agriculture and industry, and the introduction of modern technology. A strong record of economic growth was achieved under Indonesia's second president.

By mid-1997, Indonesia's economy was suffering in the regional financial crisis. Student-led protests resulted in the resignation of President Suharto in May 1998. His vice-president, B.J. Habibie, who held office until the country's first democratic multi-party elections in June 1999, succeeded him. These elections brought to power Abdurrahman Wahid, and as vice-president, Megawati Soekarnoputri, the daughter of Indonesia's first president. She assumed the presidency in July 2001, when the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) voted Wahid out of office.



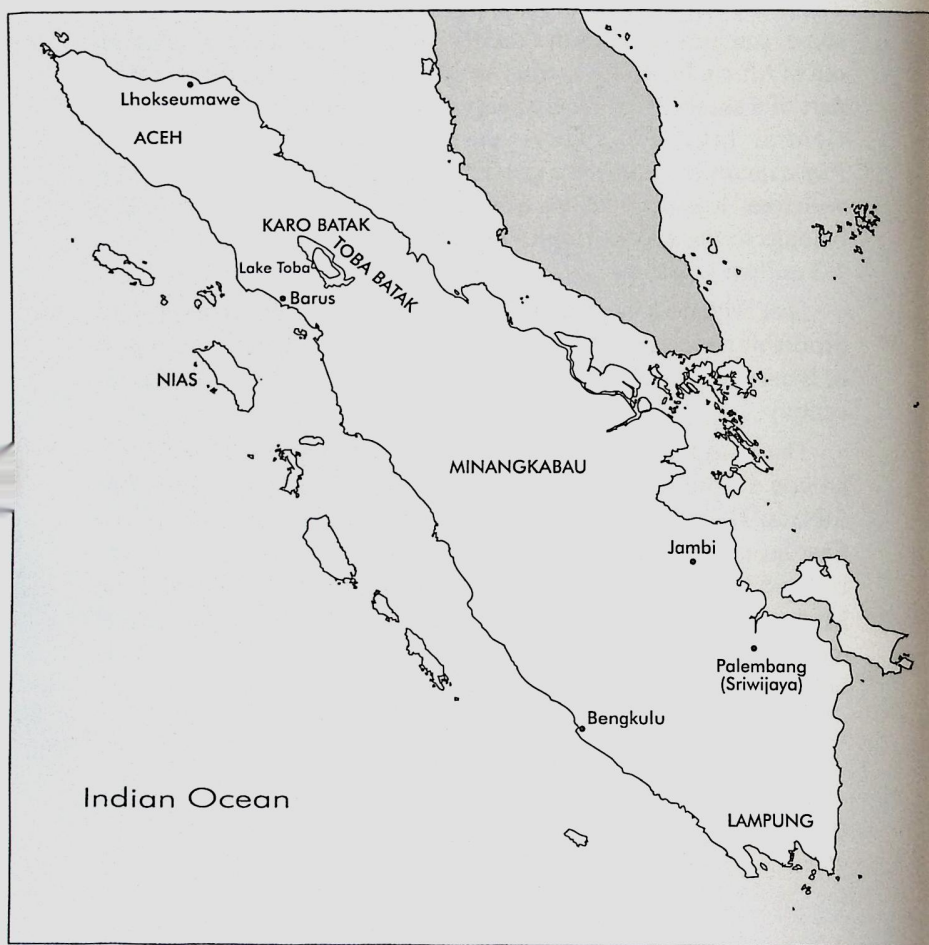
JAVA

JAVA

The richly fertile island of Java, punctuated with a central volcanic spine, contains some of the earliest evidence for human radiation out of Africa. In 1891 Eugene Dubois, a young Dutch doctor, found part of a skull cap of *Homo erectus* in Trinil on the Solo River in Central Java. For many years this fossil was known as *Pithecanthropus*, or more popularly, Java Man. This find, along with fossil hominid remains from Sangiran (also on the Solo River), belongs to the species *Homo erectus*, and dates to approximately 1.3 million years ago.

Java, with neighbouring Sumatra, lured early trade with its highly profitable pepper production. The strategically situated pepper port of Banten in West Java was a centre of Asian trading in the sixteenth century.

The island today supports a population of about 110 million, around 12 million of which are concentrated in the capital city, Jakarta. The main ethnic groups are the Javanese in Central and East Java; the Sundanese in the west, where there is a pocket of the isolated Badui; the Betawi from the city area of Jakarta; and the Madurese from the island of Madura. This island, to the east of mainland Java, is geographically and geologically related to Java, but unlike it in that it is dry and infertile.



SUMATRA

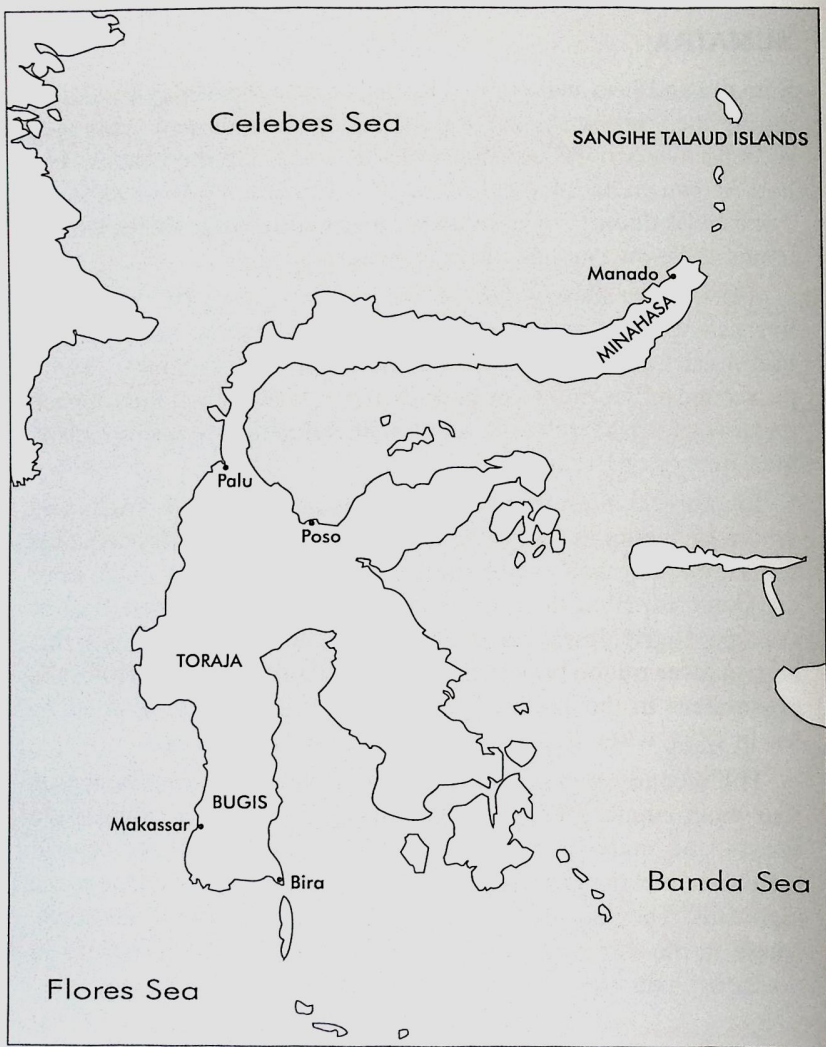
SUMATRA

Sumatra and Java were joined by dry land to the Malay Peninsula during the Pleistocene era, 1.6 million to ten thousand years ago, so early man would have been able to walk into the islands. The best-known archaeological remains in Sumatra are large middens – or rubbish dumps – which contain discarded marine shells, animal bones and tools from neolithic habitation.

The Indian *Ramayana* of the third century BC mentions Svarnadvipa, or Gold Island, which is thought to be Sumatra. The island's rich gold deposits have been mined since antiquity, and by the second millennium – or even earlier – Arab, Indian and Chinese traders came in search of it, along with valuable tree resins such as the camphor of Barus.

Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles (he was knighted in 1817) was sent to Bengkulu in south-west Sumatra in 1817. The English East India Company had established a settlement there in 1685, after the Dutch expelled them from the pepper port of Banten. Raffles attempted agricultural expansion and the growing of spices in this humid, fever-ridden province. His efforts came to little, as Holland's possessions in the Indies, including Bengkulu, were returned to her in 1824, when Raffles went on to found Singapore.

The second most populous island after Java, Sumatra houses four main ethnic groups; the Malay in the southern and eastern coasts, the matrilineal Minangkabau of the western central highlands, and the predominantly Christian Bataks of the northern highlands. The staunchly Muslim Acehnese are in the far north, where in the thirteenth century the earliest Muslim kingdom in Southeast Asia arose, at Samudra Pasai near Lhokseumawe.



SULAWESI

SULAWESI

The mountainous, sprawling island of Sulawesi lies east of the Wallace Line, the channel that separates the continental shelves of Asia and Australasia. Sulawesi's links to the latter can be seen in its flora and fauna with a predominance of marsupials and plentiful eucalyptus trees.

The island's oldest archaeological deposits are stone tools dating to 30,000 years ago, found in caves at Maros, outside Makassar, where hand stencils, coloured with haematite, can also be seen. On the island of Selayar, south of Sulawesi, is a splendid Dong Son bronze drum that was probably made in Vietnam around 200 AD.

In the early seventeenth century the Kingdom of Makassar grew rice specifically for Maluku, in return for spices, which Makassar then onward traded. Throughout the first half of the century Makassar was a powerful trading port, until its subjugation by the Dutch in 1669.

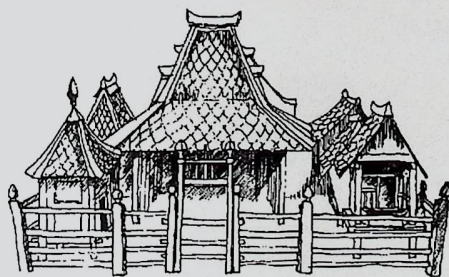
Sulawesi is divided into four provinces: the southern coasts are home to the seafaring Bugis and Makassarese, whose maritime skills gave them prominence in early trade throughout the archipelago. Their traditional sailing vessels, *prahus*, are still made in Bira. The south of the island is home also to the central highland Toraja people, with their lavish death rituals. The north of the island, with its capital of Manado, is home to the Minahasans.

TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE

DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE

Indonesian vernacular architecture encompasses a variety of styles and construction methods based on a common legacy of an Austronesian ancestry. Commonalities include the widespread building of pile dwellings with saddleback roofs and extended roof ridges, the post and beam structure put together without the use of nails. Building materials used to be natural – wood, bamboo, palm leaves and fibres.

The house is a microcosm, has cosmological order, is the place of origin for kinship groups or clans, and the depository for sacred heirlooms. Symbolic organisation of space within the house is another Austronesian characteristic. Areas are relegated according to sex, younger and older generations, extended family members, and for the dead.



Javanese house compound

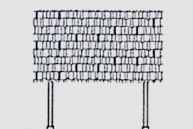
East and Central Java

Ancient Javanese architecture conformed to the archetypal pile foundation, but today the traditional house in Java is built on the ground with a raised floor, and basically consists of a single room with posts supporting the roof. Domestic architecture distinguishes three main roof types, which are indicative of the social status of the inhabitant.

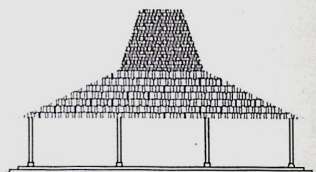
An ordinary home would have an *atap rumah kampung*, a simple pitched roof over four central columns. Extending the roof could enlarge this type of house.

The *atap limasan* is a more elaborate version of the *atap rumah kampung*, indicating an owner of greater status. An extra pair of columns is added at each gable end, which gives additional roof ridges and an extended verandah.

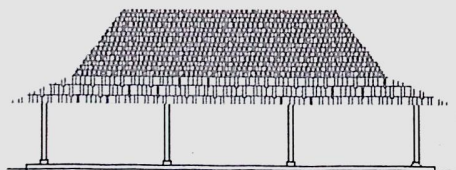
A noble family would choose the *joglo* style, in which the roof is steeper and the roof ridge much smaller. Four *soko guru*, main pillars, support the unique beam structure which is known as *tumpang sari*.



Atap kampung



Atap joglo



Atap limasan

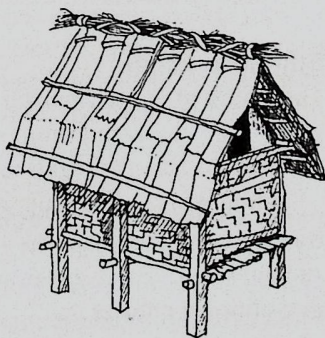
Javanese roof profiles

The traditional Javanese residence is a house complex, or compound. The basic plan consists of the *pendopo* (an open verandah), where visitors are received. Behind this is a small building, the *peringgitan*, where performances such as *wayang kulit* are held. The *peringgitan* connects the *pendopo* with the main house, the *omah*. The verandah around this leads in to the *dalem*, or inner sanctum, which consists of the main living quarter and three cubicles. In the middle one is the *senthong*, the spiritual core of a Javanese home. Larger houses often have a central garden around which are the *gandok*, or additional rooms, where guests can stay. The *pawon*, the kitchen, is behind these.

West Java: Badui, Sunda and Betawi

In Sundanese West Java there is a pocket of the isolated Badui, who cut themselves off from outside influences in the sixteenth century when they retreated into the Kendeng mountains, south of Rangkasbitung, to avoid conversion to Islam. Their architecture is traditionally Sundanese. They are the only ones in Java to build on piles.

Village roads are laid in an east-west direction, with houses built on a north-south orientation. These houses are timber-framed and built on piles that rest on river stones; the space under the house forming a chicken run and storage area. The floor is raised some forty centimetres off the ground, and constructed of strong, springy bamboo matting, as are the walls. The roof is thatched with pandanus (screw pine) leaves, with the roof ridge and peaks often decorated with *ijuk*, fibre from the sugar palm (*Arenga pinnata*) and occasionally decorated with a circle-shaped ornament of



Badui house

ijuk-covered bamboo. The Badui still build their homes without nails, relying on jointing techniques, and do not use metal tools or materials in their construction. Rice barns, *lumpung padi*, stand apart from the houses and, like them, are built on piles off the ground.

Badui houses originally consisted of a single room with a front door and a verandah across the front. While this remains the standard format, some now have an extra room and terrace, giving space for cooking and receiving guests. The hearth is in the far corner of the room used for cooking, set in the earth in a fire-resistant timber box. Smoke escapes through the roof gables. Diagonally opposite the cooking area is storage space for salt and salted fish.

Modern Sundanese homes have bamboo-matted walls that may be whitewashed inside and out, or plastered and painted. The roofs are laid with terracotta tiles and the windows are glazed. Wealthier villagers have plastered brick or stone houses with designs painted on glass to simulate the leaded glass so popular in the early nineteenth-century, which are still intact in some houses. The interiors have also been adapted along Western lines.

There are hardly any examples of Betawi architecture left in Jakarta, though a few houses have been preserved in the Condet area of the city, where traditional rural Betawi life continues today. This may be Jakarta's oldest inhabited area.

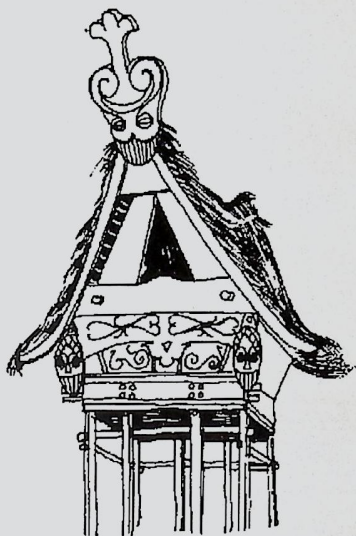
Sumatra: Batak

The Batak of North Sumatra can be divided into several regional clans, with the architecture of the Toba and Karo remaining the most traditional, distinguished by their dramatic roof profiles.

While there are individual architectural distinctions among the Batak groups, they share the same basic form with saddleback roofs and outward-leaning gables which are carved and richly decorated in traditional colours.

Houses are built on pile foundations on three levels, which represent the cosmos. The space under the house, the underworld,

is used for cattle and hogs. The next level is where people live, while the roof is the abode of the gods.



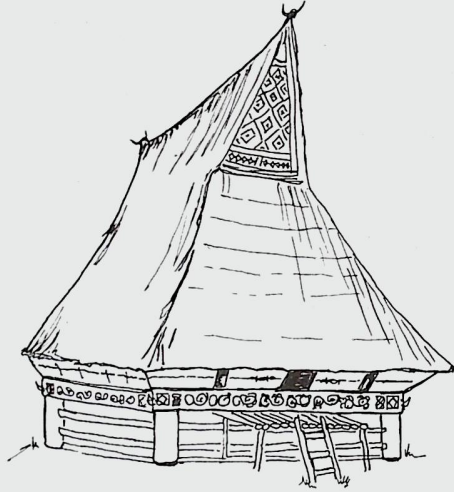
Toba Batak house

There is a communal area in front of the house where the women weave, children play, and visitors are entertained. The inside of the house consists of one large room with small cubicles marked off with matted screens. These accommodate several families, traditionally up to eight, and among the Karo Batak two families share each hearth. The location of living space reflects the degree of kinship with the master of the house. The advent of Christianity, however, has seen the building of smaller, one-family homes.

The houses of the Karo and Toba Batak were once built in fortified villages with walls and watchtowers. Houses were situated on one side of the village square, which was laid out in an east-west orientation, with *sopo*, rice barns, opposite. There were also assembly houses, *bale*. A few of these traditional villages survive in North Sumatra.

Both Toba and Karo Batak houses and rice barns carry representations of lizards, or earth deities. These are incised into the wood or worked from sugar palm fibre that is threaded through perforations in the walls. Another important motif in Batak house ornamentation is the double spiral, representing a species of water-plant. Circles, caricatures of animal and human figures depicting

scenes from daily life, and all other decoration, are washed with white, brownish-red and black pigments, representing for the Toba Batak the three spheres of the cosmos and their three kinship groups. The houses of the Karo are more sparsely decorated than those of the Toba.



Karo Batak house

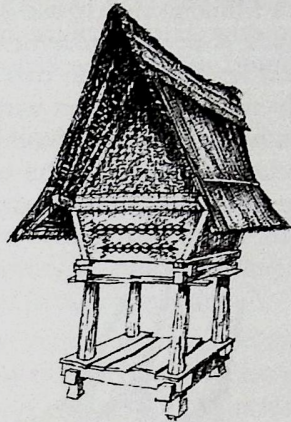
Ijuk thatches the roofs of both Toba and Karo Batak houses. The roof of the Toba Batak house is inward-sloping, terminating in points that are often decorated with buffalo horns. The roof of the Karo Batak house, huge in comparison with the Toba, reflects the social status of the inhabitant. It has one or two tiers thatched on all four sides, and gables with painted, plaited bamboo facades that permit air circulation and the escape of smoke from cooking fires. The gable peaks usually extend upwards into replicas of buffalo horns.

The Batak *sopo*, rice barn, is built in the same style as the house, but with an extra floor set a few feet off the ground, which is used as a meeting place. In the village granary this floor is used to house the drum that is beaten to summon villagers when they are needed.

The roof profile of the *sopo* closely resembles a temple relief from Borobudur.

The Toba Batak used to erect miniature wooden tomb houses, *joro*, which were exact replicas of their own pile-built homes. Tombs today are usually of concrete, though the traditional house form is still used.

The Karo Batak built *geriten*, or skull houses, which were often placed in the middle of the village, and in which the elaborately decorated skulls of chiefs and elders were preserved.



Rice barn

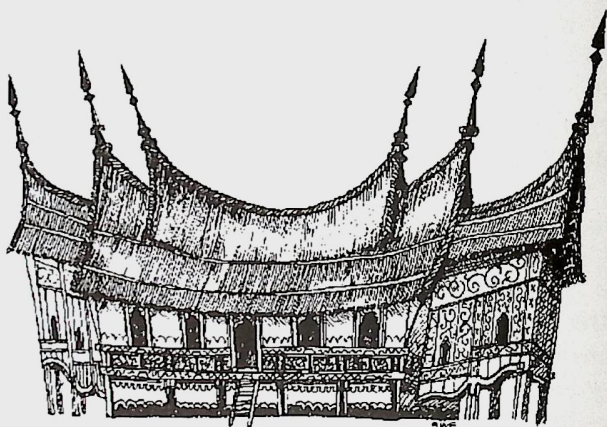
Sumatra: Minangkabau

The Minangkabau society of West Sumatra is matrilineal, with property passing down through the female line. Husbands are traditionally treated as visitors, and a woman's brother has parental jurisdiction over her children. Boys over the age of eight years formerly slept in a communal dormitory, *baile*, or the mosque, returning to their mother's house during the day.

The large *rumah gadang*, or great house, is the traditional Minangkabau home, which often accommodates several families. Its most impressive feature is the multi-gabled roof, with the ends of the roofridge, *gonjong*, replicating buffalo horns. The roof used to be thatched with *ijuk*, black fibre from the sugar palm. From a distance the house looks like a sailing ship, and on closer inspection the walls are no less impressive. They are decorated with brightly carved and painted bands of scroll-like ornamentation of plant and animal motifs, placed across the front and sides of the house. Richly decorated houses are a prerogative of aristocratic families. A back

wall of plaited bamboo permits a certain amount of air circulation despite closed window shutters and doors.

The Minangkabau house is raised on piles and, as with the Batak, livestock is penned underneath. The floor plan of large homes is divided lengthwise into two sections. The front half is used as a family room, sometimes with raised floors, *anjung*, on each end, where women gather to sew or weave, guests are entertained, and important persons sit. The rear half of the house is for sleeping quarters, divided for the daughters of the house and their spouses.



Minangkabau house

Rumah gadang are not as common as they once were; they are expensive to repair and maintain, but they still have significance for ceremonial functions. Small homes are now constructed to hold single families, some in concrete, but others retain traditional style and building techniques in their construction.

Two or three rice barns, *rangkiang*, are constructed in front of the *rumah gadang* and at either end (a wealthy family may have as many as nine). They are miniature houses, with the same swaybacked roof and carved walls. The one to the left of the house holds food for guests and the poor. The other two cover family and ceremonial needs, and storage against emergencies such as a poor harvest.

Sulawesi: Minahasa, Bugis, Bajau and Toraja

The traditional house of Sulawesi has architectural features in common with other parts of the archipelago, with the *rumah adat* being a pile-built structure. Its roof is saddle-shaped, with gables sweeping up like horns, as do the house roofs of the Batak and Minangkabau.

In the conventional house of the Minahasa of North Sulawesi, several generations of a family live in one large, pile-built home, typically consisting of one spacious central room with apartments leading off it. Each family has its own hearth. Roofs were of *ijuk* (fibre from the sugar palm). Modern homes are much smaller, with corrugated iron and concrete employed in their construction.

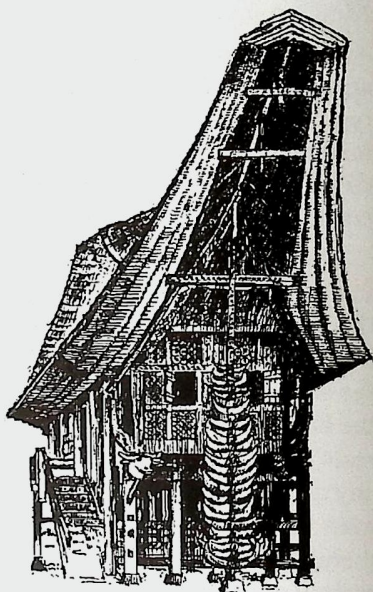
The convex or saddle-shaped roofs of traditional Buginese houses in the south have been mostly replaced by straight roof lines. Beneath the living area is the space where animals can be kept. Stairs rise to a small verandah, where guests must wait for an invitation to enter the sacred main room, which is enclosed and runs the full width of the house. This contains a central pillar, where the protective spirit rests. Behind here is the sleeping area for parents, with a room for any daughters beyond it. The sons of the house spread their sleeping mats in the main room. Rice is stored in the attic, the highest and therefore most exalted place in the house. Decoration consists mainly of intricately woven bamboo matting.

Not all houses in Sulawesi are built on land. The seafaring Bajau of North Sulawesi have bamboo houses built on rafts, living and working on the sea as they have for centuries. Bajau communities in other parts of the archipelago now live in settled villages.

Torajan houses in general are known as *banua*, which means an ordinary, undecorated home. The term *tongkonan* implies a house of origin, and describes the richly carved and decorated physical house as well as the kinship unit to which one belongs, and which traditionally only the nobility had the right to build. In common with most traditional houses, the aim in building was not to provide comfortable living space; houses were a place to sleep and to keep sacred heirlooms. Interiors were often dark, cramped and smoky.

The *tongkonan* is divided into three rooms, at different levels. These are for sleeping and general living, for storing family heirlooms, and for guests. The front of the house has an open area for weaving or socialising.

The orientation of the *tongkonan* has cosmological significance. It must always face north, the direction associated with the creator deity. The south is associated with the afterlife, and the east to life; and this is where placentas are buried and life-affirming rituals are performed. The west is associated with death, so mourning rituals are performed in this direction. Corpses are laid out on this side of the house, with their heads pointing south. South and west are associated with the ancestors, and family heirlooms are often stored in the south west corner of the southern room.



Toraja tongkonan

The four basic colours used in house decorations are equally associated to this directional structure: red is the colour of the setting sun, and belongs to the west. White, the colour of the Lord of the Sky, to the north. Yellow is the colour of the deities, to the east. Black is for the ancestors and the dead, and belongs to the south.

The distinctive, upsweeping roof, with extended ridgelines, represents the upper world; the interior the realm of the living; and the space below the house is the underworld. The central post supporting the roof ridge is decorated with buffalo horns, which

reflect status, as they show the number of funerary sacrifices. Inside the *tongkonan* a central, non-structural post, the *a' riri posi*, can be dressed as a male or a female, and is the focus of the fertility-enhancing *ma' bua* ritual, which can take a whole year to perform. *Tongkonan* are richly carved, with designs associated with prosperity and fertility.

CLASSICAL ARCHITECTURE

In the early part of the eighth century many splendid architectural monuments were erected. These were mainly on Java, but there are examples also on Bali and Sumatra. The main feature of Indonesian classical architecture is the *candi*, a stone tower built as a representation of Mount Meru, the cosmic mountain. The outstanding monuments of Indonesia's Classic Era are Borobudur and Candi Lara Jonggrang, better known as Prambanan.

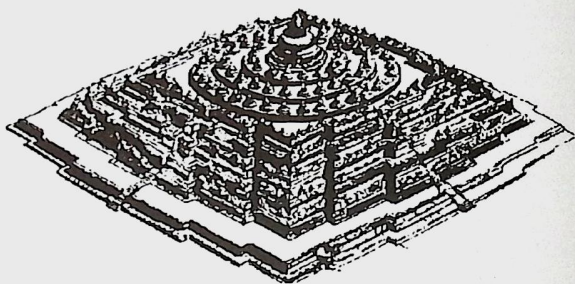
Borobudur

Candi Borobudur, known as the world's largest Buddhist monument and one of the great structures of Indonesia's Classic Period, stands on a small hill above the Kedu plain forty-two kilometres to the west of Yogyakarta.

It is thought that its construction began during the Sailendra dynasty, around 760 AD, when Java and Sumatra were major centres of Buddhist learning, and was completed around 830 AD. Various restoration projects have been undertaken over the years, one in 1814 under the orders of the British Lieutenant-Governor, Thomas Stamford Raffles. The Indonesian Government funded a major restoration with sponsorship from UNESCO between 1975-1984.

Borobudur differs from the usual temple construction in that it is not an enclosed sanctuary, but a massive stepped pyramid, surmounted by a huge, bell-shaped stupa. It has nine levels, with the lowest functioning as the base, and the second level receding twenty-three feet from the edge of the base, so that there is room for a wide processional path around the entire building.

The stepped part that makes up the body of the *candi* consists of five levels that diminish in size as they rise. Surrounding the four lower levels are galleries with balustrades, covered with narrative reliefs. On the first level they illustrate the deeds of self-sacrifice practised by the Buddha in his previous lives, and his final incarnation as Prince Siddhartha, when he attained Supreme Enlightenment. On the higher galleries they illustrate the pilgrimage of the young man Sudhana, who sets out in search of the Ultimate Truth.



Borobudur

At the base of the Borobudur there is another series of reliefs, illustrating the Law of Cause and Effect. These depict men and women performing both good and evil deeds, and then being rewarded or punished accordingly. Stones to provide the wide processional path around the monument later covered these.

The arches which one must pass through to reach the upper levels have a *kala* head decoration at the top. This fearsome monster, with bulging eyes and no lower jaw, appears on top of the gateways to many Hindu temples.

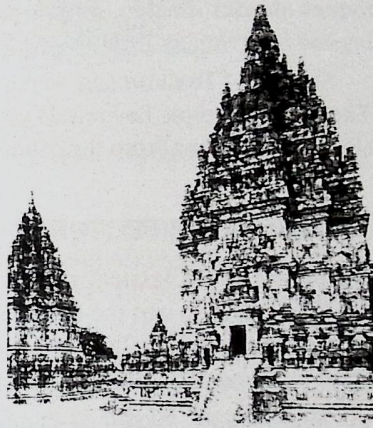
Placed on top of the three circular terraces, which form the upper levels, are seventy-two stupas; thirty-two on the lowest terrace, twenty-four on the middle, and sixteen on the highest. They are hollow and contain life-size stone Buddha statues.

There are a further four hundred and thirty-two Buddhas located in niches in the balustrades on the lower levels of the monument, and they can be placed in six categories, each with its own hand position, or *mudra*.

Prambanan

The vast Hindu temple complex at Prambanan, east of Yogyakarta, is dated to the middle of the ninth century, though there are indications (a dated inscription) that this could have been earlier. When the focus of regional power shifted to East Java in the tenth century, the temples were left to decline. Much of the structure had collapsed by the nineteenth century, and the restoration work, which began in the 1930s, continues today.

The temples stand on three levels, with the two lower levels originally containing 224 minor temples. The top level, or central group, has three large temples, the largest of which is the Shiva temple in the centre. The temple dedicated to Brahma is on the south side, and to Vishnu on the north. These three temples face east, and each has a smaller temple, dedicated to the mount of the gods, in front of them.



Prambanan

The main Shiva temple is a synthesis of north and south Indian architectural styles, with the body of the terrace decorated with the unique *Prambanan* motifs, which show a lion in an ornamental niche flanked by two panels with ornate jewelled trees. The steps are lined with *makara* motifs (the *makara* is a mythical beast, probably derived from the crocodile) and niches with dancers and

trees on each side. The outer walls of the temple show sixty-two panels of dancing figures and musicians. The relief sculptures on these three major temples are said to be among the finest in Indonesian art.

The inner wall of the Shiva temple is decorated with reliefs depicting the Hindu *Ramayana* epic. The story begins from the east side, continues around the terrace, and then finishes on the inner side of the gallery around the Brahma temple.

A three metre high statue of the god Shiva in royal attire is enshrined in the eastern chamber. Three other minor shrines house statues of *Agastya*, the teacher; *Ganesha*, Shiva's elephant-headed son; and the goddess *Durga*, Shiva's consort, in the northern chamber. This temple is known locally as *Loro Jonggrang*, which means slender maiden, a name that appears to come from a local legend referring to the statue of *Durga* as a maiden turned to stone.

Statues of Brahma and Vishnu are in their respective temples. The Vishnu temple has reliefs on the terrace walls, illustrating the stories of Krishna from the *Mahabharata*, another Hindu epic.

ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE

As Indonesia's Classical period had inspiration from its Hindu-Buddhist past, so was the spread of Islam throughout the islands to offer architectural influences that were adapted and absorbed into local building traditions and techniques.

The mosque, *mesjid*, is an enclosed space for prayer and is a focal point for the brotherhood of Islam. The word *mesjid* is derived from Aramaic and means 'to prostrate oneself in prayer'. Since the mosque is used for religious meetings, it can also be looked upon as a cultural centre for Muslims.

Mosques can be differentiated by function. The *mesjid jami* is used for Friday prayer meetings, *jami* meaning congregation. The memorial mosque is for the commemoration of glorious events in Islamic history. The *mashad*, or tomb-mosque, is located in a

cemetery. A *musholla* is a prayer house, and not used for Friday meetings. In strongly Islamic areas of Java such as Banten, Cirebon, Yogyakarta and Demak, there are *mesjid agung*, or great mosques. The Great Mosque of Demak is thought to be the oldest in Indonesia.



Mosque near Padang, West Sumatra

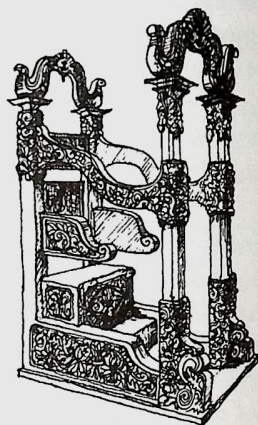
The traditional artistic elements of pre-Islamic Indonesia can be seen in mosques of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In Cirebon, Demak and Palembang (Sumatra) old mosques are capped with two, three, and five-storeyed roofs. It is thought that these are a survival of the Hindu-style *meru* architecture, and their high, massive bases echo those of the ancient *candi*, or temples. Mosques 'often incorporate local features and elements in their design. In West Sumatra, mosques frequently employ the local Minangkabau 'horned' roof profile ... the Mesjid Raya in Sumenep, Madura, is a typical example of structures that exemplify Portuguese characteristics' (*Regional Mosques: Tradition and Eclecticism*, Hugh O'Neil, from *Architecture, Indonesian Heritage*, 1999).

In some of the oldest *mesjid agung* on Java, such as those of Cirebon and Banten, a separate building was erected on the southern

side of the mosque with its own door, for the exclusive use of women.

Today's mosques are often built with roofed, or vaulted, colonnades supporting a high dome set over an enclosed centre, the inner hall. Inside there are five principal features: the *mihrab*, which is a niche in the wall marking the direction of Mecca and prayer; the *mimbar*, which is a raised pulpit, often canopied and with a staircase leading up to it from the main floor; a screen, to give important persons privacy when praying; a stand to hold the Koran; and a fountain, pool or water jug for the required ablutions, sometimes with a canopied arcade.

Outside the mosque is a minaret; a tall, slim tower from which the *muezzin* summons the community to prayer five times a day.



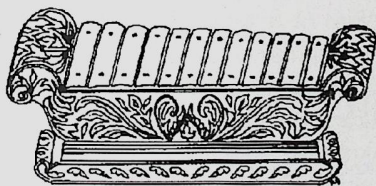
Mimbar, *East Java*

ARTS AND CRAFTS

MUSIC: GAMELAN

Gamelan is a generic term used to describe an orchestra composed almost exclusively of percussion instruments. A *gamel* is a hammer or mallet. *Gamelan* literally means the action of hammers.

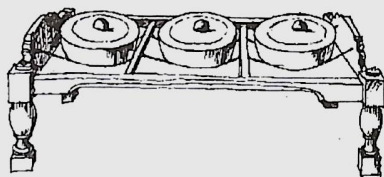
Gamelans differ in size from just a few instruments to the impressive gamelan orchestras of Central Java. The Javanese *gamelan* discussed here includes a vast array of hanging gongs, metal-keyed xylophones (metallophones), wooden xylophones, suspended gongs, drums, the bowed fiddle, bamboo flute and plucked zither.



saron

In Javanese culture, *gamelan* is an important component of a court arts complex that includes music, dance, theatre, *batik* and various literary forms. As with any classical tradition, *gamelan* music has been experienced, performed, and transformed by people of all classes, as well as challenged by Western art forms and pop music.

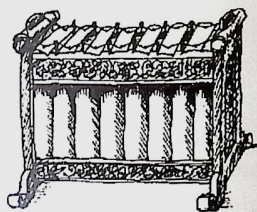
Nevertheless *gamelan* music still marks many meaningful moments in the social and ceremonial life of Javanese people, from the auspicious calendar of the Central Javanese courts (in Yogyakarta and Surakarta) to family weddings. *Gamelan* music can be heard regularly on radio and TV stations; among thousands of amateur neighbourhood school and family groups that play for their own enjoyment; in theatres where the music provides the backdrop to *wayang orang*; during performances of *wayang kulit*, at which a *dalang* (puppeteer) directs the musicians and the actions of delicately carved leather puppets. *Gamelan* is heard in high schools and universities where the performing arts are studied, and by tourists in the lobbies of many fine hotels.



bonang

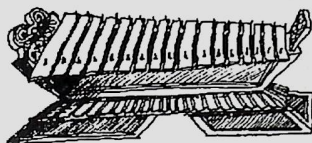
The entire set of metal gongs and metallophones of the *gamelan* are tuned at the time of their construction through a process of smelting, forging, hammering and shaving, to one of two musical scales called *slendro* (a five-tone scale) and *pelog* (a seven-tone scale). A complete *gamelan* will consist of two full sets of instruments, one tuned to each scale system.

A *gamelan* ensemble, which is both expensive and very heavy, is rarely moved, and individual instruments are not taken home or owned by the players. It is usually the property of an institution or a family, and sits in a *pendopo*, a hall, and musicians come to rehearse.



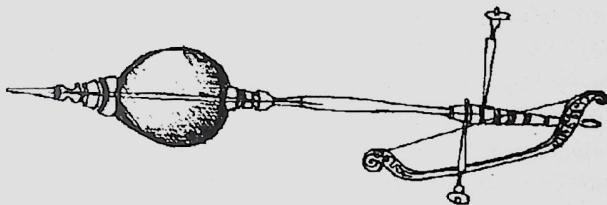
gender

Although professional *gamelan* musicians may be recognised for their talent on one particular instrument, any experienced musician will be able to play all the instruments of the ensemble and to move easily from one to the other. The serious study of *gamelan* entails knowledge of all the instruments. It is in marked contrast to most Western music, where a musician will concentrate - for perhaps a lifetime - on only one or two instruments.



gambang

Three groups of instruments can be described in terms of their function within the ensemble. These are the metallophones (*demung*, *saron*, *slenthem* and *peking*), which play the central melody from which the rest of the instruments derive their parts. The second group of hanging gongs punctuates and subdivides the phrases of the melody. The third group of instruments decorates the melody with complex patterns specific to each instrument. This elaborating group includes the *bonang barung* and octave-higher *bonang panerus*

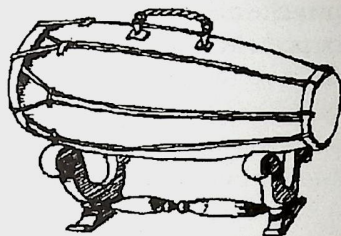


rebab

(both are sets of kettle drums mounted horizontally in two parallel rows in a wooden frame), the *gender barong* and octave-higher *gender panerus* (thin metal keys suspended by strings over bamboo or metal cylindrical resonators), the *gambang* (xylophone with wooden keys), the *rebab* (bowed fiddle), the *suling* (flute), and the

celempung (zither). To this group of about twenty instruments are added two groups of male and female voices who further enrich the sound.

The drummer plays three drums; the large *kendhang gendhing*, the small *kendhang ketipung* and the *ciblon*, and serves as the conductor of the ensemble. This musician is responsible for keeping the entire ensemble together, and for signalling and sustaining the many changes in tempo that occur within the performance.



kendhang

Javanese *gamelan* is only one of the many musical repertoires found in Indonesia, and one of the great musical traditions of the world.

A typical *gamelan* orchestra of West Sumatra is composed mainly of knobbed gongs, both suspended and laid in frames and beaten with mallets. While South Sumatran *gamelan* shares similarities with Java, it is tuned to a different tone and scale, which points to Chinese, Indian, Arabic and Portuguese origin. Instruments showing this influence are the oboe-like *serunai*, a tambourine-like drum, various lutes and chordophones, and certain flutes.

The Batak peoples of North Sumatra play large and small gongs and drums with different pitches, which they beat with sticks as in a European pattern of play. The most characteristic instrument found here is the bamboo buzzer, which dates from megalithic times, and is found in the north and also on nearby islands. It produces a sound similar to a Western recorder, its most distinctive feature being the buzzing quality of its tone. On the island of Nias, off the west coast of Sumatra, various sized gongs and drums, some over ten feet long, are played.

There is no indigenous *gamelan* tradition in Sulawesi. However, among the Bugis, Makassarese, and Mandar peoples of the lowland south, a variety of indigenous musical traditions exist, although none resembles the gong and metallophone ensembles of Java. Instead, a basic instrumental ensemble in lowland South Sulawesi consists, among other instruments, of a pair of drums, a gong, and secondary percussion played on cymbals, metal plaques, and fringed bamboo. This music may accompany dances, or it may be used in ritual activities with no dance. A larger ensemble, often referred to nowadays as *orkes turiolo* (Makassarese), is a mix of violin, *rebana*, gongs, and sometimes other Western derived instruments. This usually accompanies songs that are often sung to the accompaniment of Western chordal harmony (provided by guitars, keyboard etc).

PUPPET THEATRE: WAYANG

Indonesia's puppet theatre includes a variety of forms: *wayang kulit*, leather shadow puppets; *wayang golek*, solid wooden puppets; *wayang klitik*, thin wooden puppets; *wayang beber*, in which the story is told by unrolling a scroll; and *wayang topeng* and *wayang wong*, which are masked human 'puppets'. The word *wayang* is thought to derive from the Javanese word *bayang*, which means shadow, and refers to the fact that the most ancient and popular puppet form is the shadow puppet or *wayang kulit*. The word *wayang* has evolved as a common reference for puppet.

It is probable that the shadow puppet theatre tradition grew out of neolithic ritual ceremonies which were performed for fertility purposes, ancestor worship, and to appease ghosts and evil spirits. The earliest written reference to *wayang kulit* is found in Hindu-Javanese court literature of the tenth century. The Hindu Ramayana and Mahabharata epics enriched indigenous ritual stories, ancient Javanese gods and heroes took on Hindu names, and the Indian epics were transposed onto Javanese backgrounds. The resulting repertoire is referred to as *wayang purwa*, or ancient *wayang*. In *wayang purwa* the Ramayana and Mahabharata have been divided into a series of plays or *lakons*, each requiring one full night for its performance.

The *wayang* performance is still a part of ritual life on Java, and is used to celebrate rites of passage such as weddings, the first time a child is allowed physically to touch the earth, and circumcision. It is used to entertain guests, to invoke blessings, to give thanks and to ward off malevolent spirits.

The puppet master is called the *dalang*. He originally filled the role of a priest and brought magic, spirituality, emotional well-being and blessings into the lives of his audience. In recent times, the *dalang's* role as priest has become less important and emphasis has shifted to his role as a performer. During a performance, a *dalang* not only recites long passages of memorised dialogue, but will also improvise humorous and political dialogues, sing, speak in ancient and modern Javanese dialects, use widely varied voice styles for dozens of different characters and manipulate his puppets with remarkable dexterity (some *dalangs* make their own) all the while controlling the gamelan orchestra and singers.

Through the centuries many varieties of puppets have come into existence. Although the original Ramayana and Mahabharata epics may be performed with most of these puppet forms, each has made unique adaptations. *Wayang golek*, which is important in West Java, is more closely linked with Islamic influences. *Wayang klitik* details the history of the Padjadjaran and Majapahit empires of Java, but is now seldom performed. *Wayang kulit* and *wayang wong* continue to emphasise the Hindu cycles. In all cases, the traditional repertoire is often augmented by important current events such as the struggle against the Dutch, communism, feudalism and political events. Christianity and Islam have both used *wayang* to further their teachings, and the government has used it to teach modern social ideas such as family planning and civic responsibility. But through all these changes the traditional *wayang purwa* stories remain the most popular. The ambiguous romantic morality of the Ramayana, and the character-based code of morals of the Mahabharata, have fused with Indonesian ethics and created a national theatre whose popularity continues as entertainment, cultural teaching, and ritual.

Wayang Kulit

Although the *wayang* theatre is known in many parts of Indonesia and throughout Southeast Asia, the *wayang kulit*, or leather shadow puppet, is predominantly a Javanese art.

Performances take place at night, between approx-imately 9 pm and sunrise the next morning, though shortened versions are now becoming popular. The puppeteer sits cross-legged in front of a large white screen, manipulating the filigree leather figures with



Wayang kulit: Kumbakarna

their moveable arms and legs. When the oil lamp is lit behind the puppets, the world comes to life. On the other, unlit, side the audience watches the shadows. Women and children traditionally watched from the shadow side, or the back; men watched from the front, behind the puppeteer. From above, a bronze oil lamp, the *blencong*, projects its light through the puppets onto the screen.

The screen, *kelir*, together with the banana bole, *gedebog*, on which the puppets rest when not

in use, represent the universe, or sky and earth. The story, *lakon*, enacts aspects of life through the medium of puppet figures, *wayang*, which represent selected sides of human nature. *Gamelan* music carries the mood and complements the personalities in play. The puppeteer, the *dalang*, guides these characters along the way, pointing out to the audience the right path to take in life.

The *wayang kulit* play is a highly structured art form. In the ancient *purwa* repertoire, each is a complete story describing a supernatural experience. It teaches the meaning and purpose of life, and the benefits to be obtained from meditation. Each play shows the weakness and the strength of all characters and, by implication, in human society as a whole. Personalities are not painted as black or white, evil or good, but are shown in all shades of grey. The total performance gives guidance for the development of one's life from the struggles of youth (the inconclusive battles in the first act of the play), to the battle to conquer one's passions (the conquering of the demons and giants in the wilderness, which usually takes place in the second act), through to the mature ability to control oneself and solve personal and community problems, (the final resolution of the plot in the third act).



Wayang kulit: Arjuna

On another level, the *wayang* performance is a cultural form of moral education. It gives a clear audio-visual rendering of the difference between desirable and undesirable human characteristics. The performance imparts philosophical teachings, and purposefully promotes the aesthetic awareness of its viewers. It provides a character chart by which to judge people, and a choice of ideal types to be emulated.



Wayang kulit: Gatotkaca

The leather puppets are highly stylised. By looking at the shapes of eyes and mouth, inclination of head, colour of face, size and bulkiness of body and their stance, aficionados know exactly what facet of that particular individual's nature is being represented. People are frequently identified with reference to a *wayang* figure. Public persons are often typecast and whole *wayang* plays become politically relevant. Some of the better-known figures of the *purwa* repertoire are:

Yudistra: a just and compassionate intellectual.

Bima: a loyal, courageous, and skillful warrior, yet uncouth.

Arjuna: an unsurpassed warrior, but gentle and refined.

Gatotkaca: patriotic, with fiery courage, the ideal of the active nationalist.

Kresna: a wise and diplomatic intellectual, but also a dishonest schemer.

Kumbakarna: he epitomises blind patriotism.

Wibisana: he deserted king and family and fought against them for the sake of justice and humanity.

An unusual application of the leather puppet figure is on pictorial cards which, not unlike Tarot, were used in the past to tell fortunes. The cards were laid face down; the subject would turn one up and the face of the selected card would be interpreted in the usual way.

Wayang Golek

Stylised three-dimensional wooden *golek* puppets are the popular form of *wayang* theatre in West Java, and probably originated on the island's north coast. The great mercantile centres of Cirebon, Demak and Gresik had a mixed population of Arab and Chinese traders, as well as urbanised Javanese. It was in these areas that the *wayang golek* prospered among the common people, building up a wide repertoire of plays to suit the varied tastes of its audience.

The Hindu epics were adapted and performed for these audiences, having been extracted from the *wayang kulit* repertoire, which was already deeply entrenched in the courts and cultural life of the central and southern Javanese people. More typical, though, of the *wayang golek* are the *Panji* stories, which are based on Javanese folklore and the life of a mythical prince, *Panji*. Muslim settlers introduced Arabian folk tales with stories and characters such as Aladdin, Sinbad, and Harun-al-Rashid of *A Thousand and One Nights*, which were assimilated into the local theatre.



Wayang golek: Arjuna

Conversion to Islam encouraged the modification of Hindu elements in *wayang golek* plays to suit the new faith. In the fifteenth century the Muslim saint, Sunan Wali Kalijaya, used this puppet medium to attract converts, and was rewarded by becoming himself one of the stock of *wayang golek* characters.

For three centuries *wayang golek* flourished in the towns of north Java. It was a robust parody of the *wayang kulit* performed in the courts. In the early nineteenth century Prince Kusumadinata of Sumedang,

one of the most powerful Sundanese princes of West Java, was eager to assert the identity of his court against the *kratons* of Central Java. He had puppeteers from Tegal make a set of *wayang golek* puppets corresponding exactly in their appearance and dress to the *wayang kulit*. With these, he was able to perform the Hindu epics with the traditional splendour of his Javanese rivals.

Prince Kusumadinata was immediately copied by neighbouring princes in Bandung, and in the next hundred years the *wayang golek* carried versions of the Hindu epics all over west Java. It is essentially the wayang of Prince Kusumadinata that is played today as a vital adjunct to many traditional and religious ceremonies in Sundanese West Java.

Wayang Topeng

Wayang topeng, masked human 'puppets', is an evolution of the ancient mask dances of Java. Though in a style influenced by Hinduism, the dances performed by the masked dancers depict the intrigues of the royal courts of Java.



Wayang topeng mask
representing a noble character

Older Javanese masks had strong sculptural qualities. The actor held the mask in place by gripping with his teeth a leather tag projecting from the inside of the mask, and so could not speak.

Masks today are flatter, features tend to be painted rather than carved, and a strap around the head frees the mouth for speech. Eyes are mere slits, requiring the dancer to throw his head back in order to see, giving his movements a bird-like quality.

Kings and queens wear white masks. Their features are calm and elongated, slightly parted lips exposing their teeth. A red mask indicates a powerful rival, with the face fuller and the features larger. Javanese masks have tapered faces, with sharp noses and small mouths.

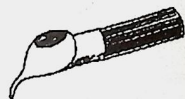
TEXTILES

Joseph Fischer writes in *Threads of Tradition: Textiles of Indonesia and Sarawak*, (1979), that 'Indonesia has been and still is one of the greatest producers of fine traditional textiles in the world ... Textiles represent links with ancestors and contacts with ancient civilizations ... Their threads, colors, designs and uses are a mirror of history, tradition and change.'

Java

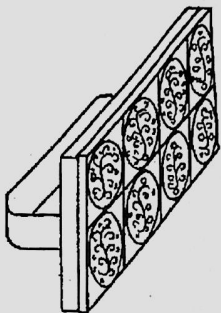
Batik is a resist-dye process used mainly in Java, whereby cloth is patterned through successive dyeing. Wax is applied to woven cloth, which is then dyed. This process can be repeated, scraping off the wax each time then re-waxing and re-dyeing the cloth. The waxed areas resist the dye, retaining their original colour. For this reason *batik* is known as a resist-dye technique.

In Javanese *batik*, hot wax is usually applied with a *canting*, or a *cap*. The *canting* is like a pen. It has a walnut-sized copper basin ending in a small spout, mounted for ease of handling onto a wooden or bamboo handle about twenty centimetres long. The basin is filled with melted wax and the spout



Canting,
pen for applying wax

drawn across the cloth, leaving a trail of wax. This type of *batik* is referred to as *batik tulis*, or written *batik*.

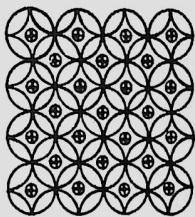


Cap, batik printing block

The second method of wax application is by a *cap*, which is a copper printing-block. By means of a handle on the upper side, the block is dipped into hot wax and then pressed onto the cloth. This newer, more commercial way of producing *batik* cloth was developed in the mid-nineteenth century.

The earliest written evidence for the making of *batik* dates back to the sixteenth century in the royal courts of Central Java. The *batik* centres on the north coast developed later, and from there spread to other parts of the island. Each area produced, and still produces, its own distinctive patterns and colour schemes.

The designs on the *batiks* of Yogyakarta and Solo were essentially indigenous, although some influence from India is seen on higher quality products, particularly in the overall layout. Examples of motifs are the *kawung*, an ancient design of touching or intersecting circles, and the *parang*, a simple, repeated diagonal design traditionally reserved for the royal families of Central Java.



Kawung motif



Parang motif

Artisans were generally women. They obtained their colours from vegetable dyes, with browns and blues predominating. Today, chemical dyes are almost exclusively used, and the work is carried out by both men and women, with the exception of the *canting* process, which is still considered to be the work of women.

In the sixteenth century traditional Central Javanese *batik* designs became more highly stylised with conversion to Islam, which proscribed artistic representation of animals and humans.

On the north coast, the Chinese and the Dutch exerted considerable influence on the development of *batik*, especially in the nineteenth century. The *batiks* of Pekalongan, Lasem and Cirebon employ an extensive palette of bright colours, with designs of birds such as the phoenix, with flowers, trees, butterflies and European floral embroidery patterns.



Pekalongan bird motif

Tuban and Madura in East Java, Banyumas in Central Java, and Indramayu, Garut and Tasikmalaya in West Java are also *batik* centres.

Batik is traditionally used as clothing. There are several stock sizes based on the width of the cloth. The length of a *kain panjang* (long cloth) is two and a half times its width. The length of the royal *dodot* is almost four times its width. The tubular *sarung* is twice its width in circumference. These cloths are used by men and women. The *destar* is a man's headcloth measuring the square of its width. The *kemben* or *kain kemben* is a long and narrow breast-cloth.

Sumatra

The two most common types of cloth found on the island of Sumatra are *kain songket*, carrying supplementary cotton, silk and metallic threaded patterns, and *ikats*, in which the threads are dyed before weaving. *Songkets* are produced on an upright treadle loom; *ikats* on a backstrap loom. Palembang and Jambi in Sumatra also produce *batik*, which shows a definite Indian influence.

In *songket* weaving, extra threads of contrasting colour and texture are woven into the weft of the cloth. This extra thread may be continuous, and traverse the entire weft, or width, of the cloth from selvage to selvage, or it may be discontinuous, also called floating weft, passing back and forth within a small area to form a single motif. Most *songkets* make use of silk and metallic filaments and use the treadle loom, none of which are native to Indonesia. Silk and cotton *songkets* are produced throughout much of the island.

Individual motifs are built up in discontinuous supplementary weft on the *songkets* of North and eastern Sumatra, where gold, silver, silk or metallic thread may be employed. *Songkets* from these areas are distinguishable from others for their sparse placement across the cloth of medium-sized, individual motifs such as flowers, fans, or *kerises*, as opposed to the overall brocaded patterns of small floral designs in West and South Sumatran *songkets*.

The continuous supplementary weft technique produces gold-threaded *songket* cloths in West and South Sumatra. The basic fabric is traditionally woven from silk thread, though nowadays cotton is used as well. Foil-covered thread has almost totally replaced the original solid gold filaments, except on wedding *songkets* for the wealthy. All designs have names, and in the past indicated the status of the wearer. *Songkets* are generally used for festive wear; *batik* sarongs for daily purposes. Typical of Palembang *songkets* is the incorporation of additional supplementary thread in brightly coloured silks on green, purple, red or white grounds. The weavers of Palembang also produce complicated silk weft *ikats* richly framed in gold *songket* borders.

Ikat (literally, to bind) is a process in which threads are patterned and dyed before being woven into cloth. The threads are measured and stretched on a frame, and patterns made by tying dye-resistant palm leaf strips (more recently plastic) around portions of the threads. The threads are then dyed, the ties cut off, and the process repeated with as many colours as needed. The threads are then transferred to a loom and woven into cloth. If the warp (up and down) threads are tied, the cloth is called a warp *ikat*. If the weft (left to right) threads are tied, it is, of course, a weft *ikat*.

The *ikat* and supplementary weft techniques are combined by the Batak of North Sumatra in their *ulos*, a superb example of which is the *ragidup* textile. Woven entirely from cotton and dyed with sombre vegetable colours, these sacred scarves are used in gift exchange occasions such as a woman's first pregnancy, when the designs are 'read' to tell her future. Despite their name, which means pattern of life, *ragidup* are also used in burials, as a result of which younger generations of Batak are reluctant to wear them as clothing. The Toba Batak also weave cotton warp *ikats*, carrying fairly simple motifs.

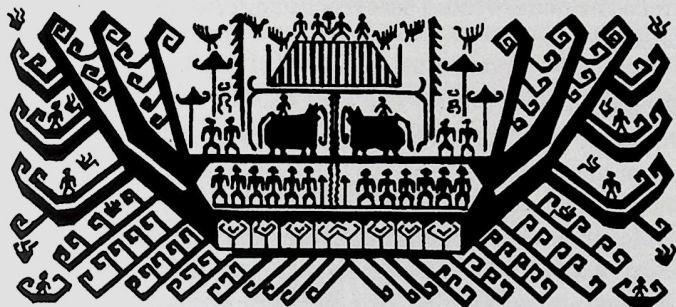
The *tapis*, a ceremonial sarong from Lampung Province in southwest Sumatra, is usually an *ikat* which relies heavily on embroidery for decoration. These cloths were originally worn during rites of passage ceremonies, but are now used mainly at weddings. A bride would embroider her own sarong, which then became an heirloom for her children.

There are variations in style between different ethnic groups, the Paminggir, the Kauer and the Abung. The *tapis* of the Paminggir is a cotton warp *ikat* in rust red, with bands of designs embroidered in silk in white, brown, blue and golden yellow. The motifs may be amorphous, like a many-tentacled squid (hence the local name *cumi-cumi*), or of ships with figures wearing headdresses. The sarongs of the Kauer are similar, but are appliqued with mirrors, *cermuk*, imported from India. The Abung weave their *tapis* (often silk) in plain stripes, which are couched with gold or silver threads. Some

are almost completely covered in gold, the designs formed by the stitching, while others have only bands of motifs. Sequins are often used on these cloths.

The golden sarongs of the Abung people are the only ones produced today. They are popular for use in interior decoration, and are seen in hotels and shops, often in bright, non-traditional colours.

Discontinuous supplementary weft is used to produce the now rare *tampan*, *palepai*, and *tatibin* textiles of Lampung. These textiles are better known as ship cloths, as the ship of souls is a favourite theme portrayed on them.



Ship Cloth, Lampung

The *tampan* is a rectangular textile measuring up to a metre square. Designs range from geometric patterns to the ship of souls and tree of life; the background is often filled with animal and ancestral figures. In all levels of society the *tampan* was used in gift exchanges during traditional rites of passage ceremonies. The cloths were used to cover gifts or ceremonial food; as mats for the bridal couple; for the initiate being circumcised; as containers for children's treats; and to cover roof posts before placing the roof on a new house. They may be multi-coloured, using red, yellow, brown and blue vegetable dyes, but are generally two-toned.

The *palepai* is a long narrow cloth usually measuring three metres long by a metre in width. It is nearly always red, yellow and blue. The design focuses on a long ship, which is filled with ancestral figures and surrounded with animal life from both the upper and lower worlds. Unlike the *tampan*, the aristocratic *palepai* is inherited. It belongs to an extended family, or clan, rather than the individual; for a new one to be made, a new family has to evolve. The *palepai* is hung on the walls during rites of passage ceremonies.

The *tatibin* is a narrow cloth, which can be up to a metre in length. It also carries ship designs and was the property of the aristocracy. The *tatibin* is often labelled a *tampan*, but is more reminiscent of the *palepai*. It was sat upon by the bride and wrapped around heirloom wooden boxes containing ceremonial textiles and family jewellery.

Sulawesi

Although the manufacture of barkcloth in Sulawesi preceded the use of cotton and silk, these two fibres were woven from as early as the sixteenth century. Some cloths are unique to a specific area, while others show common trends and the foreign influences of India and Holland. Geometric motifs such as the rhomb, key, diamond and spiral reflect early stylistic features of the Dong Son repertoire.

Bark cloth from the paper mulberry tree (*Broussonetia papyrifera*) was made in the central mountain region, and was the preferred textile for daily use. Men wore loincloths, and on their upper body a rectangular-shaped cloth with a slit in the middle for the head. Square headcloths, painted and decorated, were also worn. Women wore a sarong about two metres in length, with a blouse decorated with paint, applique and mica.

The Bugis and Makassar people in the southern areas used plaid cotton sarongs, often starched with sago flour and polished with a shell to give them a shiny finish. When silk thread was introduced, these designs were transferred to the silk. Weft *ikat* and gold-threaded float wefts were often worked into the silk. Local silk was used for

the weft threads, while imported silk was used for the warp threads. Most of these sarongs were originally woven on a backstrap loom, but later this changed to an upright floor loom. These sarongs were worn pleated in the front with a small fold worn over the left arm. A sheer, loose-fitting overblouse, a *baju bodo*, made of muslin, raw silk, wild pineapple or banana fibre, was worn with this sarong. Commercial dyes have been in use since 1936.

Warp *ikats* are the most famous textiles of the Toraja area. They are used as death shrouds or hangings during funeral ceremonies, and sometimes in marriages (a dowry had to contain one piece). They were worn as sarongs in areas where they were not woven, such as Palu and Poso. The motifs on these *ikats* consisted of highly stylized ancestor figures, arrow-like shapes, rows of diamonds with hooks, zigzag lines and tiny crosses. The colours of these cloths were symbolic of Toraja beliefs: black is associated with ashes and relates to expiration of life; red signifies the blood of the sacrificial animals; and white the supreme god, *Puang Matra*.



Detail of a kain sarita

There are two other textile types of importance; the *kain sarita* and the *maa'*, or *mawa*. Both were considered sacred and endowed with magical power.

The *kain sarita* is a long, narrow cloth of approximately two and a half to seven metres, usually coloured with patterns of either indigo blue or morinda red on a buff background. The textile was

decorated by painting, direct printing, or a print-resist method. *Kain sarita* were used ritually to cover a corpse, as a head cloth for a wooden *tau-tau* or a person of high status, as a breast cloth, and sometimes hung from the gables of clan houses as a banner during important ceremonies. *Kain sarita* were of indigenous origin as well as made in Holland for trade to areas of Toraja.

Maa', the local name generally given to imported Indian textiles, refers to cloths believed by the Torajans to be of sacred origin. It includes cloths from India, Java and other areas as well as indigenous textiles. The silk double-ikat patola, imported from India by the VOC in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as barter for spices, was highly prized. Also valued were cotton prints from India made for the Indonesian market, patola-inspired local textiles, as well as sacred cloths made locally with patterns that reflected scenes from everyday life. The *maa'* textiles were an inherited treasure and usually stored in special chests, or baskets, in the southwest corner of the clan house (the part related to ancestors). These textiles are rarely used now, as they are too fragile and valuable.

Koffo cloth is a textile from the Sangihe and Talaud area of Sulawesi. It was made from fibres of a variety of wild banana plant (also known as Manila hemp). The fibres were cleaned, dyed, and woven on a backstrap loom in much the same way as cotton was woven. Then it was beaten over a log with a wooden mallet to make it pliable, and polished with a shell. Its most common use was as a hanging, a curtain that acted as a room divider, but it was also made into sarongs, tunics and smocks. The few remaining pieces found today are parts of screens, or decorations for special occasions.

The production of Sulawesi textiles has declined. There are many that are no longer made, or becoming very rare. Some remain in museums and others in private collections. The homespun cotton weaving industry is being replaced by machine-spun, or imported, mechanically produced fabrics. The silk industry continues, but often cannot keep up with the demand. A few areas are producing poorly woven pieces from commercial yarns made for the tourist market.

KRIS

The *kris*, or *keris*, is a weapon thought to be endowed with supernatural power and surrounded by ritual, magic and legend. During the annual cleansing the *kris* is prayed over, treated with perfumed oil, and stored in a special place in the home. It is used in ceremonies, to ward off evil influences, to avert danger and disaster, and is considered to be the personification of the owner, so that a man could send it to stand in for him at his own wedding. Traditionally, in Java, a man is not complete until he has a house, a wife, a horse, a singing bird, and a *kris*.



Javanese kris
with gold leaf snake, naga

It is a work of great craftsmanship. The blade is damascened in controlled patterns, *pamor*, reputed to have been introduced by Persian master smiths early in the thirteenth century, and improved upon by the ingenuity of Indonesian *krismakers*, called *empu*. There were initially five *pamor* designs: scattered rice grains, parallel coconut leaves, nutmeg flowers, ginger flowers, and standing flowers. The number subsequently increased to hundreds. Besides being decorative, *pamor* patterns are believed to convey strong magic powers to *kris*

owners. For example, the *pamor* of scattered rice grains, *wos wutah*, was said to ensure prosperity, while the pattern with coconut leaves, *blarak ngirit*, endowed the possessor with authority and leadership.

The *pamor* is achieved by hammering a nickeliferous meteoritic iron into the blade, the lighter hue of the nickeliferous iron forming a clear pattern on the surface. The blade itself is forged from many layers of ordinary and meteoritic iron, which create a marbled effect.

The shape, which can be either straight or curved, is also significant. The straight blade is likened to a resting snake, while the curved blade represents the serpent in motion. The number of curves, *luk*, always uneven, is related to the Javanese calendar, which associates numbers with certain concepts. For example, three is associated with fire, ardour and passion, and five with the five *Pandawa* brothers in the Mahabharata epic.

Although the blade, which is thought to be sacred, has always been the most important part of the *kris*, great care is given to the decoration of the hilt and scabbard as well. Hilts made of rare woods, or of ivory, silver, and gold, studded with precious stones, often take the shape of stylised human torsos, guardian spirits, or demons. Scabbards of wood may be encased in richly embossed brass, silver or animal forms in decoration) was more noticeable on design in Sumatra than Java, where floral meanders and geometric motifs were used instead.



Sumatran kris
in a silver scabbard

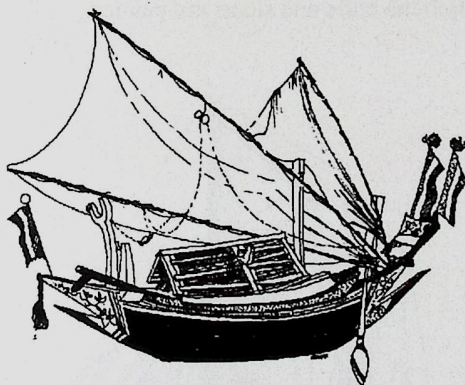
Some of the finest *kris*es were made during the Majapahit period of the fourteenth century, and the *kris* remains a venerated family heirloom in Indonesia, and an essential part of a Javanese man's attire on the occasions when traditional dress is worn.

BOAT BUILDING

The economy of several early Indonesian kingdoms was based on sea trade, with waterways providing communication and access to the interior, as they still do.

The Roman encyclopaedist, Pliny, wrote of Indonesian sailors employing trade winds as early as the first century AD to carry cargoes of cinnamon and cassia, on rafts, to Madagascar and the east coast of Africa.

A variety of vessels evolved in the islands over the centuries, beginning with the basic dugout, which is carved out of a whole tree trunk. Controlled burning and gouging produces a hollowed-out log capable of accommodating up to six persons or more; the Batak dugouts on Toba are said to have been able to accommodate up to twenty. Outriggers were sometimes added to stabilise these simple craft, which could be propelled by paddle or a triangular sail.

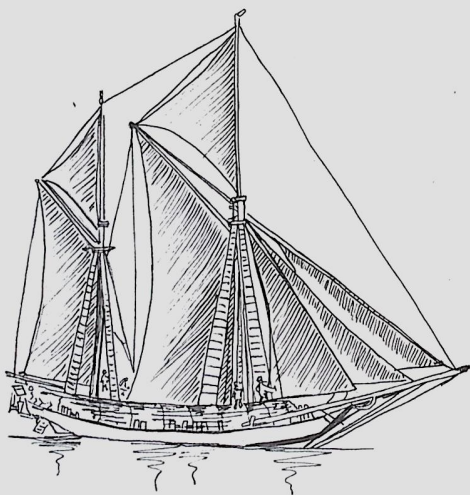


Madurese janggolan

The *janggolan* of East Java and Madura has a keel that is a long tree trunk on which the planked hull is built, leaving the upward-bent ends of the trunk to jut out under bow and stern. The side planks are joined to the stems, which may be narrow wooden

trapezoids, sometimes beautifully carved and painted. The rudder is a long, removable steering oar, which can be lowered or raised to increase or diminish its effectiveness. It has two masts, which support the two triangular sails. This type of sail, hung on a tripod mast, is depicted on a stone relief on the temple of Borobudur. The hoe-shaped anchor hangs alongside the ship, weighted with a stone. Freight is stored away under a peaked bamboo roof, which can be lifted for loading.

The *mayang* boats of Tegal and Madura are equipped with large *payang* nets for fishing in the Java Sea. The hull and rudder are very similar to those of the *janggolan*. Sometimes the bow stems rise steeply, curving inward at the top. They vary in size and shape according to local traditions. The *mayang* are used all along the north coast of Java, from Banten in the west to the Strait of Madura in the east. Their wide and rather flat hulls make them resistant to rough weather. A special feature of the *mayang* is the picturesque way in which the hulls and stems are painted.



A pinisi

Perhaps most distinctive of local sea craft are the Bugis schooners, or *pinisi*, from South Sulawesi. Bira, on the southern coast, has been a village of sailors and ship-builders for centuries. They once plied trade routes throughout the archipelago, and were noted as far as Malacca by the Portuguese Tome Pires, in 1515. Powered in modern times by an engine, and with a large deckhouse aft, these vessels still carry cargo between the islands, and can be seen in Jakarta's port at Sunda Kelapa.

Traditional building techniques are still in use by boat-builders today. Boats are made without the use of power tools; planks are carved to fit into position, and added one by one to the keel to form a shell. Each plank is attached to its neighbour with wooden pegs (no nails are used in construction). Curved floors and ribs are placed crosswise and fixed, again, with wooden pegs. This method of building, with the shell first, dates from prehistoric times, and was later to influence the design of the Chinese junk.

The ancient and pervasive custom of *sirih*, betel chewing, with its accompanying preparation and presentation, has an important part in ceremonies and social customs in Indonesia.

The betel quid has been chewed for enjoyment and stimulation throughout Southeast Asia for centuries. It is offered to guests as a sign of hospitality, exchanged in marital agreements, and considered to have medicinal and magical properties. It was (and still is) such a personal act that in some areas a woman was not allowed to chew betel with a man who was not her husband.

Though the custom is termed betel chewing, it is actually the *areca* nut, from the palm *Areca catechu*, which is chewed. It is wrapped in the aromatic leaf of the betel vine, *Piper betle*; lime paste is dabbed onto the leaf, and topped with thin slices of the nut. These are the basic ingredients of the chew, others – such as tobacco, or spices – can be added as available or wanted. *Sirih* is the Indonesian name for the quid, the chewing of which produces the distinctive red-coloured saliva that stains the mouth and lips.

Special containers and implements were made for the betel chewing ingredients, known as the *sirih* set. These reflected status. At the most ordinary level, ingredients could be knotted into a piece of cloth, while wooden boxes or palm leaf baskets made simple everyday holders. In the courts of the archipelago ornate sets of

silver and gold, sometimes embossed with jewels or ceramic sherds, were used. These sets contain a leaf-shaped container for the betel leaves, individual containers for other ingredients, and a tool for cutting the nut.



A silver sirih set from Cirebon

rites of passage

The rituals and ceremonies that accompany the passages of life unite members of a community. They remind them of a common heritage, provide continuity and security during times of change, and avert latent dangers. What varies is the relative importance of each ceremony, and whether it is a joyous or solemn one. A common denominator is the *selamatan*, or ceremonial feast.

Pregnancy, Birth and Infancy

These events have inspired many rituals and ceremonies in Indonesia. They serve not only as celebrations, but to ensure the child's well-being and facilitate the transition from one stage of life to the next.

In Java, the *selamatan* is a common occurrence during pregnancy, at the birth of the child, and sometimes every month for one to two years following the birth. The seventh month of pregnancy (for a first child) is cause for a major *selamatan*. The woman is ritually

bathed and this is considered her introduction to motherhood. Several rice dishes are served, some mixed with grated coconut and accompanied by chicken, and they have symbolic reference to aspects of Javanese culture. The essential component of this ritual celebration is the *rujak legi*, a sticky, spicy mixture, used as a *sambal* (spice paste) for fruits and vegetables, often totalling seven varieties. Pottery sherds, symbolizing money, are distributed to guests and used to purchase the *rujak*.

In Batak communities of north central Sumatra, the *ulos*, an esteemed textile, plays an important role in the seventh month ceremony. It is presented to the pregnant woman by her parents, and acts as a 'soul cloth', thereby protecting her. At the same time an elder of the clan reads the woman's future from the motifs woven into the cloth.

The period immediately following childbirth has produced many complex rituals, which surround the bathing of the baby as well as the disposal of the placenta. In South Sulawesi, new-born babies were placed on ceramic dishes, often of Swatow origin, for their first bath, whilst in Yogyakarta, celadon dishes were used.

In Sumatra, the Batak transferred the placenta to a large, deep basin, *hudon*, which was put underneath the house where it was guarded and watered for a week. In South Sulawesi the afterbirth was placed in a ceramic container, *uring-uring* or *loak-loak*, and buried under a tree to guarantee the baby stature and wealth in his lifetime. A stillborn child was buried to the east of the house.

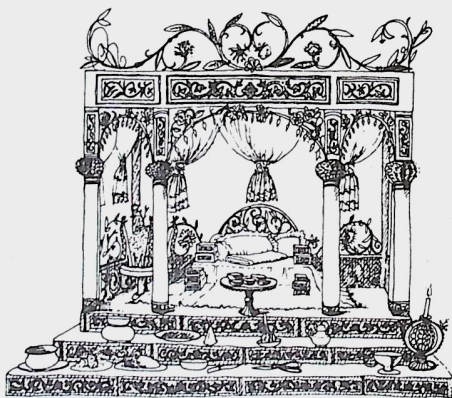
The Javanese regard the afterbirth as a spiritual brother to the new baby. The afterbirth and umbilical cord are buried in a jug outside the house, with a burning candle placed on top, to ward off evil spirits.

The naming of a Javanese child usually takes place at a ceremony known as *pasaran*. Traditionally, it is the father who chooses the name. The food served at this *selamatan* is the same as that served at the seventh month ceremony, with one exception: the *rujak legi* is replaced with *jajan*, small snack foods, which are bought in the market and not in a shop.

There is another major *selamatan* when the baby is thirty-five days old. On the night before or the morning of the *selamatan* some hair is cut from the baby's forehead. The remainder is cut off after the feast. The *pitung lapanan* is when the baby's feet first touch the ground, and this is held at around seven and a half months. In eastern Java, cakes in seven colours are served at this ceremony.

Coming of Age

Coming of age rituals in Indonesia do not always coincide with the onset of puberty. In Lampung, southern Sumatra, rituals for tooth filing and blackening are performed on both adolescent males and females. The charcoal dust used is held in a metal container called a *sihung*. This is often in the form of a stylized buffalo, as this is the animal sacrificed during the ceremony. Tooth blackening and filing are performed to rid the person of animal-like characteristics (pointed teeth), to signify that the adolescent is of marriageable age, and to provide entry into community organisations responsible for music and dance performances.



Circumcision pavilion from East Sumatra

The ritual of circumcision is associated with the Islamic religion, and is an important coming of age tradition celebrating a male's transition from child to adult. Circumcision (*sunatan* in Java) is

optional and not mentioned in the Koran, although it is included in Mohammed's teachings. It usually takes place between six and ten years old.

A typical circumcision pavilion had a divan placed in the centre, covered with a white cloth, and surrounded by cushions. There were bowls of ritual foods, powdered medicinal plants used as an anaesthetic, and tobacco as an antiseptic. A contrivance for supporting the *sarong*, and paraphernalia for the operation, were placed nearby. Incense was burned throughout the ceremony.

Marriage

The protocol surrounding marriage can be intricate. Wedding customs vary from region to region, with the bride's family usually determining what traditions are observed.

Javanese wedding ceremonies include complex and symbolic rituals performed over several days before the legal and religious formalities. During all of them traditional dress is worn. Women who are 'experts' in these rituals organize the family and the events, one of which involves the parents each cutting a little hair from the nape of their daughter's neck. The hair, put into a bowl with water and jasmine flowers, represents the bride's youth, which is thus transformed to a new life.

Before the wedding a *siraman* is held at the bride's home. The bride's parents, grandmothers and aunts use a scoop, a *gayung*, to pour water scented with jasmine and rose petals over her head and shoulders, which cleanses her body and soul to ensure her purity for the wedding day. Then the parents feed her a token helping of rice, indicating that their responsibility for her is ending, and that it will be her husband's task to provide for her in future. Following the ceremony the parents walk beneath an umbrella and distribute pottery sherds to guests who use them to purchase a special coconut drink.

Traditionally, the wedding was observed as a pact between the groom and the bride's father. Marriage documents are often still signed in one part of the house, whilst the bride signs the documents

in her own room. The bride and groom are finally brought together to sign the marriage certificate.

After the signing the couple throw *sirih* leaves at one another, and again this ritual is symbolic: the one to throw first will be the dominant partner in the marriage. The groom then smashes a raw egg with his right foot to attest his virility. As a sign of harmony and faithfulness, the bride washes the groom's foot with water she pours from a *kendi*. To affirm their unity, the couple then feed one another from a cone of yellow rice, the *tumpeng*. The marriage ceremony is finally completed when the newlyweds kneel, separately, at the feet of their parents to receive their blessings.



Dewi Sri and her consort Sadono

The goddess of fertility, prosperity and rice, *Dewi Sri*, the female embodiment of the Hindu god Vishnu, and her consort, *Sadono*, were sometimes placed in front of the ceremonial marriage bed, *krobongan*, or *petanen*. Together they formed the inseparable couple, *loro blonyo*, and at one time furnished the central room of the royal palaces and well-to-do homes of Central Java. Bowls and platters holding water, food, and *sirih* were placed about the statues for their comfort. Variations on this ritual bed are found throughout Indonesia.

The *loro blonyo* are sometimes referred to as the bridal couple, and during wedding ceremonies may be replaced by the real bride and bridegroom. Both wear fine batiks, and the bride's hairline is

shaved and painted to resemble the petals of the lotus bud, symbolizing purity.

In the matrilineal Minangkabau society of Sumatra, the woman proposes marriage and pays a dowry to the groom's family. The wedding day itself represents the intertwining of *adat* with religion, combining a visit to the mosque with traditional Minang ritual. The ritual marriage bed, or ornately curtained alcove where the bridal couple sit, is known here as a *pelaminan*.



*Minangkabau
bridal headdress,
the suntiang*

Minangkabau jewellery is spectacular. The bridal headdress, the *suntiang*, is an elaborate, glittering, gold and enamelled concoction. A semicircle of gold is placed on the bride's head, and as many as eighty individual ornaments, gold or gilded, each attached with a pin, are inserted into a bun of hair which has been added to the bride's head as an anchor for this enormous headpiece. In modern times, a much lighter, pre-

assembled *suntiang* can be bought at the local market, and secured on the head in minutes (Arifin, *Walk in Splendour*, 1999).

The Sumatran Batak have a patrilineal system of kinship and marriage, with complex rituals of bride-givers and bride-takers. Traditionally, a man selects his wife from a clan other than his own, and ideally from his mother's clan. Gifts of specially arranged food, *ulos* textiles, and metal jewellery are exchanged with brides.

The wealthy Karo Batak bride wears a traditional headdress ornament, the *sertali*, of gilded silver mounted on plaited red cord, the metal crescents of which resemble buffalo horns or the roofs of

traditional Karo houses. The refined jewellery of the Karo, with its Malay and Acehnese influence, is no longer made. Today, ornate wedding pieces are usually rented.

In central Sulawesi *taiganja* pendants, small male and female figurines made of brass, were used in gift exchanges in the early stages of marriage arrangements, and were sometimes given to newly married couples. The charms would be carried to their new house, as aids to fertility and prosperity.

Death

In Java, Islamic funerals are held as soon as possible after death, usually within twenty-four hours. It is thought that a loose spirit flying around may harm the living, but that after burial the spirit will return to its home.

Following death a *modin*, a religious functionary, is summoned to the home of the deceased. News of the death spreads rapidly. Family, friends, neighbours and acquaintances abandon their work to pay homage. Perhaps because death is such a compelling reminder of our own mortality, death ceremonies, more than any other rite of passage, often surmount barriers of class distinction and long-standing feuds.

The family bathes the corpse, holding the body on their laps and becoming soaked themselves. This final demonstration of love is known as *tegel*, meaning that it is performed without visible emotion. The shedding of tears would darken the deceased's path to his grave, making him melancholy and reluctant to leave his earthly home. The body is shrouded in white muslin by the *modin*, secured at the head, waist and feet, and verses from the Koran are chanted. The body then makes its final journey to the cemetery, where the grave has been dug during the ritual bathing, with seven stones laid at the bottom. The body is laid on a woven mat to lower it into the grave, which also serves to shield the deceased's eyes so that he will not be frightened. The body is laid on top of the stones, with the head facing north. Attendants pull the woven mat, *tikar*, to tilt the body to its right side, and balls of earth (made during the digging of the

grave) are thrown under the body, enabling it to remain in this tilted position.

The *modin* now enters the grave and loudly proclaims the Confessions of Faith three times into the deceased's ear. When he exits, mourners sprinkle surplus bathing water (carried in special bottles or a *kendi*), over the body. The *modin* reads the funeral oration in Arabic to mark the end of the ceremony.

Funerals mark the beginning of a series of *selamatans*, the first taking place right after the funeral. Others are on the third, seventh, fortieth and one hundredth day after the death, and then there are additional feasts on the first and second anniversaries. The final one is a thousand days after the death.

The Batak of north central Sumatra wear red, black and white death masks (colours favoured by the ancient peoples) in various ceremonies, most prominently in the funeral rites of the nobility.

During the funeral rites of a chieftain, both masked and unmasked dancers perform, demonstrating to the deceased that his descendants will continue to honour him with regular offerings. The dancers follow the coffin to the grave. After the funeral, the custom of the Toba Batak was to place the masks in tiny houses on top of the tomb, while other Batak clans left them on top of, or near to, the grave.

Megaliths, prestigious stone carvings, were often used as grave monuments for nobility; they were an affirmation of the family's commitment to honour the deceased. A mounted figure is typical of grave monuments, signifying privileged status.

On the island of Samosir on Lake Toba in North Sumatra, life-sized puppets known as *si gale gale* were used in death rites until the advent of Christianity in the nineteenth century.

Various explanations exist as to the creation of the *si gale gale* and its surrounding rituals. One is that in the afterworld, the status of a man's spirit was determined by the number of descendants he had. If he had no male heirs, his spirit would achieve only a secondary status. Thus, the *si gale gale* was created to represent the man's male descendants. These were either sons he had never had, or sons

who had predeceased him. During the funeral rites the puppet, manipulated by the puppeteer (who also made the puppet), comes to life. Through the puppet's movements, homage was paid to the dead man, allowing his spirit to rise to a more elevated position in the afterlife.



Si gale gale from Lake Toba, Sumatra

The body of the puppet was made of wood, animated by strings to allow the movement of head, eyelids, shoulders, arms and legs during the ritual death dances. In these, the *si gale gale* might dance alone, or with the relatives of the deceased. The puppet was treated as far as possible as a human, with food pressed to its mouth daily, and occasionally a wet cloth was squeezed behind its eyelids to simulate tears.

As part of the ritual, buffalo would be slaughtered and the meat distributed on the final day of the rites, when the *si gale gale* was destroyed or thrown away. Pieces of the puppet were saved by the participants for their magic powers.

When the *si gale gale* had been destroyed, the puppet maker was chased from the village. He stayed away overnight so that whatever remained of the dead man's spirit would depart with him. Several days later the village was ritually purified by noise-making, dancing, and the sprinkling of holy water.

Although the use of *si gale gale* figures in death ceremonies has been largely discontinued, special performances are put on for the benefit of tourists and important visitors.

The island of Nias is known for its megalithic monuments, and for the carving of wooden figures, which were made to assist in ceremonies of rites of passage. The most important were the ancestor figures, *adu*, carved in various sizes and sometimes tied together in clans. These were created to represent family members who had died recently, and considered receptacles for the soul. The *adu*



Carved ancestor figures, adu, from the island of Nias

demonstrated people's desire to maintain harmony and balance between this world and the afterworld, and served as a vehicle for the family to inform ancestors of important events, such as births and marriages. They were traditionally attached to a post in the largest room of the house, addressed daily, and were given offerings such as *sirih*. Children, therefore, grew up connected not only with immediate family, but also with their ancestors.

The Tana Torajans of South Sulawesi have lengthy and elaborate funeral rites. A corpse might be stored for years 'sleeping' in a home, regularly served food and drink, while funds were accumulated for a funeral of proper status.



Tau tau effigies of the Toraja, Sulawesi

When ready for burial, the corpse is ritually turned to wake it up, and also confuse the spirit so that it will not come back to the family. The bier then proceeds to a specially constructed tower in the shape of a *tongkonan*. Thousands of guests gather, and buffaloes and pigs are slaughtered (many of which would be gifts from family members). The *ma'badong* dance, an elegy for the dead, carries on all night and is thought to soothe the souls of the bereaved.

The coffin is then carried to the burial cliff, hauled up the side, and placed in a cave, which is watched over by *tau tau* figures. These are effigies of the deceased, carved from wood, which guard the burial caves and are thought to contain the spirit of the dead. Ceremonies are held every few years to honour the ancestors, during which graves are reopened and the *tau tau* repaired.

MAGIC RITUALS

The Batak are skilled wood carvers, and although their religious tradition has made no use of ancestor figures or idols, their work frequently features human forms, often in conjunction with animals. Magic wands, the wooden ceremonial sticks used by priests, *datu*, is a ritually important carving for the Toba Batak. There are two different kinds of wand. One is topped with a figure astride a horse, perhaps with a plume of hair or feathers inserted, the rest of the wand unworked. The other type is also topped with a mounted man, but the entire body of the wand is carved with figures.



*Magic wand with a plume
of feathers*

Legend has it that this second wand is the result of the incestuous love between a boy and his twin sister. To separate the twins and prevent them from bringing shame on their family, the girl was banished to the forest where she climbed a tree to save herself from wild beasts. As she climbed she became part of the tree, only her head protruding. Her brother came to join her in the forest, and when he saw her head he climbed up to free her, but was himself absorbed by the tree. A number of *guru*, teachers, *datu*, and various animals, were similarly captured as

they tried to free the twins. Finally the tree was chopped down, at which point all the heads vanished. The father of the twins thereupon cut the tree into lengths, and carved on the wood the images of the people that had disappeared within it.

Magic wands were used to bring about sickness or death to enemies, or pinpoint a thief. Even today they are believed to have influence over rain. An iron point on the base of the wand enables it to be stuck into the ground during ceremonies. It is said that sometimes, during rituals, the wand will rise up from the ground and dance on its own.

The magic wands of the Batak are no longer being made except for the tourist market.

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