Patterns of Culture – The Textiles of Bali and Nusa Tenggara
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Cover: Detail of a double-ikat cloth from Bali.

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## Contents

Author’s Acknowledgements

Foreword by H. E. Yuri Octavian Thamrin, Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia vi

1. Introduction by Emeritus Professor D. Holdcroft, Chairman of the ULITA Committee 1

2. Background 3

3. The Processes and the Products (by M. A. Hann) 9
   3.1 Weaving
   3.2 The Back-strap Loom
   3.3 Woven Fabrics
   3.4 Ikat
   3.5 Batik
   3.6 Pelangi

4. Further Observations on Production Techniques 25

5. Diffusion, Distribution and Origin of Motifs and Patterns 31

6. Functions: Quotidian and Ritual 37

7. Cultural Islands 41

8. Continuity, Decline and Innovation 49
   8.1 Continuity
   8.2 Decline
   8.3 Innovation

9. Conclusion 55

References 57

Provenance of the Collection 60
Author’s acknowledgements

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FOREWORD

Produced by a nation of over 17,000 islands, Indonesian textiles are as varied as their sources, with each artefact displaying distinctive motifs and unique symbolism. The beauty of Indonesian textiles is clear to any onlooker, but a deeper value lies in their history and legendary origins; their motifs are rich in cultural lore, their ceremonial uses are steeped in tradition. Indeed, Indonesian textiles can tell us a great deal about the beliefs and social systems of the Indonesian people who craft and use them.

In this regard, I believe that the University of Leeds International Textiles Archives’ Exhibition of Bali and the Islands of the Southeast: “An Exhibition of Indonesian Textiles from Bali and Nusa Tenggara” vividly reflects the rich heritage and beauty of Indonesian textiles. It is my firm belief that the Exhibition will offer its visitors an informative insight into Indonesian culture and society.

And, as Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia, I feel both honoured and pleased to learn that the textiles of Indonesia are receiving the recognition they so well deserve. This exhibition is proof that Indonesian textiles are treasured not only by Indonesian people but also by many of our foreign friends.

I am convinced that this exhibition will encourage better understanding and greater appreciation of the true beauty and value of Indonesian textiles.

H.E. Yuri Octavian Thamrin
Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia
to Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland
1. Introduction

Over many centuries the Indonesian archipelago had been a port of call for countless foreign sea-going vessels. Long before the arrival of the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British, all in search of the rare spices of south-east Asia, Chinese, Indian and Arab traders had already left their cultural imprint on many of the indigenous peoples. Hinduism and Buddhism appear to have co-existed on the island of Java for some centuries, prior to the former becoming the dominant force, particularly in Central Java, during the thirteenth century CE [Hann, 1993, p.5]. Three centuries later Islam had been accepted widely, having spread gradually from the trading ports of Java’s north coast where it had been introduced by Arab and possibly also Indian traders some centuries previously. With the arrival of European traders, Christianity left its mark also, particularly in the eastern part of the archipelago.

These successive waves of outside influence brought also changes in the decorative arts, often involving a fusion between the old and the new. Decorative motifs, symbols and patterns originating in ancient indigenous animistic beliefs were, in many cases, blended with those from Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam as well as various European and other Asian sources. As a result many of the islands or island groups, exposed to these outside influences, acquired their own unique iconography. At the same time, certain indigenous people, located on the more remote islands, remained largely unaffected and so retained forms of decoration more ancient in origin. Many of the textiles included in the exhibition, to which this monograph is an accompaniment, are sourced in these more remote regions.

This publication reviews the range of textile patterning techniques and their resultant products, associated with the geographical region known as Nusa Tenggara which stretches eastwards from the island of Bali to the islands of Flores, Sumba and Timor. The monograph has been produced as an accompaniment to the exhibition Bali and the Islands of the Southeast: An Exhibition of Indonesian Textiles from Bali and Nusa Tenggara. The items on display are on loan from the collection of Mr H. Coleman OBE.

D. Holdcroft
Chairman of the ULITA Committee
2. Background

Take an area slightly smaller than Scotland, break it into more than 2,000 islands and then scatter these islands in an arc measuring 1,500 km from end-to-end (the same distance as London to Warsaw): this is the region of Nusa Tenggara in Indonesia.

The name *Nusa Tenggara* - applied to this great chain of islands which runs east of Java, beginning with Bali and ending with Timor – translates as ‘the Islands of the Southeast’. ¹

¹ The term ‘Lesser Sunda Islands’ (*Kleine Soenda-Eilanden* in Dutch) was applied to this region in colonial times (see for example van Diessen & Ormeling 2004:388-389). Despite its colonial associations, the term ‘Lesser Sundas’ is still occasionally used by Western anthropologists writing about the region (Forshee 2001: vi and Moss 1979, for instance).
In contemporary Indonesia the region is divided into three administrative provinces:

- Bali, which consists of 85 islands\(^2\) including Bali itself and Nusa Penida.
- Nusa Tenggara Barat (NTB, West Nusa Tenggara), which covers 864 islands, including Lombok and Sumbawa.\(^3\)
- Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT, East Nusa Tenggara), which has 1,192 islands, including Flores, Sumba, Timor and Rote.

Twelve million people live in this region. For comparison, Scotland, with a slightly larger land area, has a population of just over five million.

Despite its relatively limited land area, Nusa Tenggara is a region of extraordinary diversity, demographically, in climate, in natural history, economically, in terms of religious affiliation, culturally and linguistically.

A. R. Wallace, the mid-19\(^{th}\) century naturalist, noted:

\[\text{Between the two ends of the chain [of islands between Bali and Timor] there is a great contrast of climate, the west being exceedingly moist, and having only a short and irregular dry season; the east being as dry and parched up, and having but a short wet season.} \]

[Wallace, 1869, p.210]

Wallace also noticed that there was a remarkable cline from the typically Asian flora and fauna at the western end of this chain to a flora and fauna more typical of Australia at the eastern end. In particular, he pointed out the disjunction between the neighbouring islands of Bali and Lombok:

\[\text{The islands of Bali and Lombock [sic] ... are particularly interesting [since] they form the extreme points of the two great zoological divisions of the eastern hemisphere; for although so similar in external appearance and in all physical features, they differ greatly in their natural productions.} \]

[Wallace, 1869, p.160]

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\(^2\) These figures for the number of islands are provided by the Indonesian Ministry of Home Affairs [Departemen Dalam Negeri, 2004]. They are currently under review. More than 55 per cent of the islands are still without names.

\(^3\) It is possible that, in the not too distant future, the Province of NTB will be split into two: Lombok and Sumbawa.
Wallace gave the names ‘Indo-Malayan’ and ‘Austro-Malayan’ to these zoological regions [Wallace, 1869, p.583] and to this day the dividing line between the regions, running between Bali and Lombok, is known as the ‘Wallace Line’. Culturally, the region of Nusa Tenggara is a microcosm of the extraordinary diversity of Indonesia as a whole. In terms of religion, for example, the people of Bali are largely Hindu, the population of NTB is largely Muslim, and the people of NTT are largely Christian.

Figure 1: Bali
Hindu priests sprinkle holy water on the heads of worshippers during a temple ceremony in Songan, Batur.
Figure 2: NTB
Musicians escort the bride and groom through a village in East Lombok, at the end of an Islamic wedding ceremony.

Figure 3: NTT
Dancers welcome government officials to a Christian village in South Central Timor.
There are, however, numerous exceptions to these generalisations, as can be seen from the following three examples, all from NTT:

- Although Christianity has been practised on some islands since the arrival of the Portuguese in the 16th century, mass conversion from an indigenous belief system to Christianity took place on the island of Rote only in the late 1950s [Fox, 1989, p.69].

- In East Sumba, as recently as 2007, some of the more traditional umbu (aristocrats) were said to change their religion from Christianity to Islam and back again if they felt that religious leaders were interfering too much in their way of life. If an umbu adopts a particular religion then all of his hamba (serfs) follow suit [Obed Hilungara, personal communication].

- Meanwhile, in the village-sized ‘kingdom’ of Boti, in the Sub-District of KiE, District of South Central Timor, the people continue to maintain their own belief system, resisting all attempts by government officials to persuade them to adopt one of the officially recognised religions. During a visit to Boti in September 2006 the author was told by the raja-in-waiting that his late father, the former raja, had always said to government officials that if ever a crime was committed in his realm then he would be prepared to sanction conversion to one of the religions approved by the state, but until such time he was determined that his people should be allowed to maintain their own beliefs. The villagers showed the author their homemade ‘identity cards’ - typed on small pieces of card – on which they described themselves as ‘adherents of the Monarch who governs the Heavens and the Earth’ (orang penghayat Uis Neno ma Uis Pah, literally, ‘followers of the Raja of the Sky and the Raja of the Earth’).

Linguistically, the people of Nusa Tenggara speak 73 languages (10 per cent of Indonesia’s total of 737 languages), in addition to the national language, Bahasa Indonesia [Gordon, 2005]. Linguistic diversity increases the further east we travel through the region.
As would be expected of a region of such variety, Nusa Tenggara is also extremely diverse in its traditional textiles. This variety can be considered in terms of: techniques of textile production; textile design; the ‘cultural islands’ which are found even within individual geographic islands; the functions which textiles have in these societies; evidence of continuity, decline and innovation.
3. The Processes and the Products (by M. A. Hann)

Since the exhibition to which this monograph is an accompaniment is comprised largely of textiles with decoration realised through the process of weaving, attention will be focused first on outlining briefly the principles of the weaving technique and also on explaining the operation of the so-called back-strap loom used extensively throughout the Indonesian archipelago. Subsequent to brief descriptions of the nature of ikat and supplementary weft textiles, which form the bulk of textiles presented in the exhibition, brief descriptions are given also of batik and pelangi products. The emphasis throughout is on craft rather than industrial production. Many of the explanations given are developed further in the subsequent chapters.

3.1 Weaving
The process of weaving consists of interlacing, at right angles in the same plane, two series of threads, a longitudinal series known as warp threads and latitudinal series known as weft threads. Typically, the warp threads (known also as ends) are assembled side by side and stretched between two rollers. In the simplest case, the weaving process progresses as follows: the odd-numbered warp threads (1, 3, 5, 7, etc) are raised and the even-numbered warp threads are left in position. An opening, or shed, is thus formed between which a weft thread (also known as a pick) is passed. This thread is straightened and beaten into position at right angles to the warp threads. The odd-numbered warp threads are then dropped back to position and the even-numbered threads raised to provide an opening (known as a counter-shed). A weft thread is passed through and beaten into position as before. The cycle is repeated and the most simply constructed woven fabric, with a structure known as plain weave (or tabby), is produced.

Although there are many technological refinements, and numerous structures, the basic operating sequence for each shed formation remains the same: shed opening, weft insertion and beating in. The instrument or machine which facilitates this sequence of operations is known as a loom.
Figures 4 (a), (b), (c) and (d) show the stages in weaving a plain-woven structure on a basic, horizontally-organised, weaving apparatus [Bühler, 1940, p. 1080]. The important component tools which assist in the formation of a shed and a counter-shed (in the example shown) are the lease rod, the heddle rod and the warp sword.

![Figure 4](image)

**Figure 4: Stages in weaving a plain-woven structure on a horizontal loom.**

(a) Warp sword introduced into shed created by a lease rod.
(b) Warp sword turned on its edge and weft inserted.
(c) Heddle rod raised and warp sword inserted to create counter-shed.
(d) Weft inserted.

Source: Redrawn from Bühler [1940]

In the preparatory stages of setting up the loom, the lease rod is passed between odd-numbered warp threads (first, third, fifth etc) and even-numbered warp threads (second, fourth, sixth etc). Alternate warp threads are thus divided into positions above and below the lease rod. The warp threads positioned below the lease rod are then threaded through loops on the heddle rod. The heddle rod is positioned parallel and to the front of the lease rod. The warp sheet is then stretched between two rollers. During the weaving process the warp sword assists in the formation of the shed as
well as beating the weft thread into the fabric. Weaving proceeds as follows:

(a) The warp sword is introduced into the shed created by the lease rod and turned on its edge to enlarge this shed.
(b) The weft is inserted and beaten into place by the flattened warp sword.
(c) The counter shed is formed by raising the heddle rod. The warp sword is inserted again, but this time into the counter-shed and turned on its edge to enlarge the opening.
(d) The weft thread is inserted and again beaten into place by the flattened warp sword.

In a more technically developed loom a shed may be formed through raising one of a series of heddles consisting of frames holding wires, each wire with an eye (also known as a mail) through which particular warp threads are threaded prior to weaving. Synonymous terms for heddles include shafts, leaves, staves, cambs and headles. After shed formation, a trail of weft thread may be laid by passing a shuttle (a wooden box-like container holding a bobbin of thread) from one side of the shed to the other. Beating the weft into position may be facilitated by using a comb-like device known as a reed which also assists in ensuring an even spacing between the warp threads.

Different sheds may be formed by lifting different combinations of warp threads; these different sheds offer the possibility of producing differently-structured cloths with differing technical properties and aesthetic characteristics.

As pointed out by Schaefer the term loom “…comprises every kind of cloth-weaving instrument from the simplest wooden frame to the complicated power-driven apparatus of modern industry” [Schaefer, 1938]. As has been established above, the key stages in the weaving process are shed formation, weft insertion into the shed, and beating up of each inserted weft thread to form the cloth. Not surprisingly, different means of
meeting the requirements of each stage have evolved and developed over the centuries. Certain classes of looms have dominated during particular periods and in different regions. Different cultures were associated with different fibres and different weaving techniques: e.g. ancient Egypt with the weaving of linen on ground horizontal and two-beamed vertical looms, ancient Greece and parts of northern Europe with wool weaving on warp-weighted looms and ancient China with silk weaving on early forms of drawlooms. Meanwhile the preferred loom used traditionally throughout much of South-east Asia, including the Indonesian archipelago, was the so-called back-strap loom. This particular loom type is discussed below.

### 3.2 The Back-strap Loom
The back-strap loom was in widespread use, at various times, in rural households in India and in South-east Asia, including much of the Indonesian archipelago, as well as Central and South America, and among the Ainu of Japan [Schneider, 1987]. Such looms are easy to construct from readily available materials. The warp threads are attached to two parallel sticks, one of which is tied to a stake and the other is attached to a belt. The belt is placed around the weaver’s waist. This arrangement allows the weaver to relax or tighten the warp threads, by a slight movement of the body forwards or backwards, so as to facilitate the opening of the shed and the insertion of weft threads. The two stages in the production of plain weave (the simplest woven structure, invariably used in the weaving of ikat fabric) are as follows:

(a) A heddle consisting of a rod with hanging loops encircling alternate warp threads is raised to form a shed and a weft thread is inserted. The weft is beaten in using a flat stick. The heddle rod is then lowered.

(b) A broad counter-shed stick, placed weft ways through the sheet of warp threads, is used to raise the other warp threads and thus form the counter shed. Another weft thread is inserted and beaten in using the counter-shed stick.

In certain instances (e.g. with some Peruvian cloths) the length of the fabrics produced is restricted due to the absence of beams to unwind the warp and wind the woven cloth. The maximum length of fabric in these cases is governed by the length to which the weaver can stretch in order to
insert the weft. In some cases (such as with cloths produced in parts of Indonesia) this restriction was addressed through the use of a continuous circular warp which allowed around twice the length of fabric to be produced.

3.3 Woven Fabrics
As indicated previously the most commonly used and simplest structure, where both warp and weft threads follow a sequence of over one and under one, is known as plain weave (or tabby). The maximum possible interlacing is built into the cloth. Plain weave permits the firmest and lightest weight fabrics to be made from a given yarn type, and more often than not it is produced using equal amounts of warp and weft. Plain weave is relatively easy to create and has been produced on the primitive, simple looms of ancient times, as well as the most sophisticated, industrial, shuttleless varieties of the early twenty-first century (CE). So although the time gap in technology extends over more than five thousand years, the technique and product remain broadly similar.

A particular category of decorated textiles which relies largely on the use of plain weave is ikat. The process associated with this textile category involves decorating the warp or weft, or both sets of threads, prior to weaving. Technically, ikat is regarded as a resist-dyeing process rather than a decorative weaving process, but it should be noted that it is occasionally used in conjunction with various forms of decorative weaving, especially extra-weft or extra-warp figuring (dealt with in paragraphs below).

Decorative effects are often attained through employing extra threads in a warp or weft direction, or occasionally in both directions. An issue of importance in the use of the resultant fabric is the substantial floats which may ensue in sections at the back of the cloth where the decorative threads are not used on the face. Substantial floats will lower the practical usefulness of the cloth. Solving the problem may entail cutting away the excess thread and binding the decorative remainder to the fabric through the use of interlacements positioned at the circumference of the decorated area.
An alternative to cutting the excess thread would be to substantially shorten floats through interweaving the thread into the face of the fabric and, if possible, lower its visual impact by hiding the interlacements between face warp or weft floats. A wide range of further features and issues relating to extra-weft and extra-warp figuring was discussed many years ago by Watson [1925, pp.108-131 &131 – 147].

Supplementary weft techniques are commonly used in Indonesia. With this technique additional weft threads are used in the construction of complex patterns. A particular variety, known as songket, uses quantities of metallic yarns to enhance the decorative effect. Often such textiles play an important role in ritual and ceremony (including marriage, birth, circumcision and funerals).

The ship motif shows predominance on the supplementary weft textiles of south Sumatra (these textiles have become known in the west as ship cloths). In Palembang, the most common motifs used by weavers are an eight-pointed star and a rose motif; some songkets feature combinations of these motifs in gold and silver threads. Balinese songkets are predominantly of gold- and silver-wrapped yarns, woven on foundations of brilliantly coloured silks. Motifs range from stylised floral and geometric patterns to human and animal figures taken from the Ramayana epic. Songkets from central Sulawesi show a range of geometric or floral motifs composed of coloured silk threads. As observed by Kartiwa:

The patterns appear on the surface of the fabric, in yellow, red, green, blue, and other colours which contrast with the ground colour.

[Kartiwa, 1986, p.53]

3.4 Ikat
The word ikat is derived from the Malay (or Indonesian) word *mengikat* meaning to tie [Kramer and Koen, 1993, p.265]. The ikat process is a resist-dyeing process, which involves the binding of sections of warp and/or weft threads with dye-resistant material (such as strips of palm leaf) prior to fabric construction. When immersed in a dye bath, the uncovered
areas of the threads take up the dye. Further colours can be obtained by successively rearranging the resist-protected areas and immersing the threads in the dye bath again. On completion of dyeing, the resist material is removed and the threads are arranged carefully before weaving. The resist may be applied to the warp, the weft or to both sets of threads. Resultant products are referred to respectively as warp-ikat, weft-ikat or double-ikat, with warp threads, weft threads or both sets of threads being patterned. Since in double-ikat both sets of threads are patterned and overlap in the final design, this is the most complicated type. Weiner commented:

Double-ikat is the most difficult to design and weave because the dyed and undyed portions must line up to form the intricate pattern.

[Weiner, 1992]

It should be noted that another ikat variant, not used traditionally in Indonesia, is compound-ikat. Like double-ikat, the relevant process associated with compound-ikat relies on resist dyeing of both warp and weft threads prior to immersions in dye baths. With compound-ikat each set of threads produces an independent design, whereas in double-ikat both sets of patterned threads overlap in the final woven design.

In order to enhance the clarity of the intended design it is important to allow the patterned threads to dominate in the final woven cloth. Larsen observed:

Whereas most ikats are plain woven, almost all warp-ikats are cloths in which the warp yarn dominates the weft because it is either heavier or more densely crammed. The inverse is true of weft-ikat. Double ikats tend to be woven in a balanced plain weave.

[Larsen, 1976, p.29]

A typical visual characteristic of any of the ikat variants is a feather-like effect which is caused by the colour in the dye bath bleeding under the resisting material, and by slight movement of threads caused by the strains imposed during the weaving process.
The constituent fibres of yarns used for ikat production vary depending on the location of production and availability. Traditionally, in Indonesia, yarns of cotton, either grown and spun locally or imported from other parts of the archipelago, were used. Occasionally silk was used. The finest ikats relied on the finest yarns, and the latter were imported invariably from outside the archipelago.

When used as clothing, ikats are worn in the form of rectangular shoulder or waist cloths, or as wrap-around skirts or tubular sarongs.

In Indonesia ikats were considered to possess a myriad of ritualistic, ceremonial and spiritual functions. Referring principally to warp-ikats, Warming and Gaworski commented that they:

…have a ritual and spiritual value that extends beyond the mere physical object. Textiles are required for ceremonies, but not just as traditional dress for participants. The cloths themselves are a necessary part of the ritual. Warp-ikat cloths act as burial shrouds, as part of exchange of gifts before marriage, and as a way of preserving local history and legends. [Warming and Gaworski, 1981, p. 79]

The close relationship between textiles and culture extends to a time when many of the island peoples came into contact with a bronze-using culture originating in what is now the northern part of Vietnam [Warming and Gaworski, 1981, p. 54]. This Dong-Son culture, as it is known, was the source of certain styles of decoration which combined with indigenous symbols and motifs to provide the extensive range of designs evident in the warp-ikats produced in Indonesia in the past few hundred years.

Although the forces of Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and, to a lesser extent, European colonialism had a dramatic impact on the culture and beliefs of the inhabitants of Java (the most densely populated island historically and in modern times) the lives of certain indigenous island peoples, even during the first decade of the twenty-first century, have remained largely unaffected since Dong-Son times [highlighted a few decades ago by Warming and Gaworski, 1981, p.79]. It is among these more remote communities that cotton warp-ikat is widely dispersed. Weft-ikat
production is less extensive and is evident in parts of Sumatra, East Java, Sulawesi and Bali [Kartiwa, 1987, px]. Double-ikat weaving appears to be practised only in the Balinese village of Tenganan [Warming and Gaworski, 1981, p. 108]. Some of the regional variations in ikat design across the archipelago are highlighted below.

Variations in production procedures were widespread across the archipelago. The best-known cotton warp-ikats are those of East Sumba. Other important locations are Sulawesi, Timor, Sawu and Rote. Weft-ikat production was less extensive and was evident in parts of Sumatra, East Java, Sulawesi and Bali [Kartiwa, 1987, p.x]. Among the most exquisite weft-ikats are those from the Palembang region of south Sumatra. Double-ikat patterned cloths were made in Tenganan, a village located in the east of the island of Bali [Warming and Gaworski, 1981, p.108]. A range of weft-ikats was also produced on Bali. Some of the more important regional variations in technique and decoration are identified below.

Cotton warp-ikats from East Sumba are known as hinggi. Much valued as ritual and prestige objects, these were worn by men as waist and shoulder cloths. The principal compositional characteristic is a series of horizontal bands, three to eleven in number, containing a great variety of motifs derived from the realms of legend, sacred rite and such diverse foreign sources as Chinese porcelains or Dutch coins [Larsen, 1976, p.150]. Probably the most common motif is the horse; its use in ikat decoration being a reflection of its past status in Sumbanese daily life as a measure of wealth [Warming and Gaworski, 1981, p.81]. Another prominent motif is the so-called skull tree, a reminder of past ritualistic head hunting. Other common motifs include the shrimp, the snake, the Chinese dragon (believed to be adapted from imported Chinese ceramics), the rooster, standing human figure, deer, monkey, lizard, crocodile, fish, insects, sea horse, cockatoo and various other birds [Hann and Thomson, 1993, p.12].

Cotton warp-ikats were produced by the Toradja people of central Sulawesi. These invariably depict large-scale geometric patterns in blue, white and black against a dominant red background. The geometry of the Toradja ikats has been interpreted as human figures in schematic form and
has, on occasions, been considered to resemble some patterns produced by native North Americans. [Jager Gerlings, 1952, pp.110-111 and Larsen, 1976, p.149].

As pointed out by Kartiwa, trade in Timor cloths outside the area was long-standing, especially to non-weaving areas such as Irian Jaya [Kartiwa, 1987, p.80]. Supplementary-weft decoration is often used in conjunction with warp-ikat. Brilliant red bands and stripes or large-scale blue ikat patterns are typical. Motifs include various birds, horses, lizards and human figures. As pointed out by Gittinger, subtle variations in decoration and technique, including tonal qualities of colour and variations in band width were apparent from area to area within Timor, but these variations were barely perceptible to the vast majority of outsiders [Gittinger, 1985, p.175].

The most important characteristic of ikat textiles produced on Sawu Island was that their designs denoted membership in a female-aligned clan system that controlled life-crisis rituals [Hann and Thomson, 1993, p.12]. Delicate white geometric and floral motifs against a dark blue or black background are the principal decorative feature [Warming and Gaworski, 1981, p.83]. Motifs were taken from Portuguese, Dutch and other European sources [Hann and Thomson, 1993, p.12].

Probably the most important single source influencing the design of Indonesian textiles is the resist-dyed cloths of India. Most renowned of these resist-dyed cloths are the double-ikat silks from Gujarat and Orissa. Such cloths featured as precious trade goods, and were traded extensively throughout much of South and Southeast Asia, initially through the activities of Indian, Arab and Chinese traders and, from the seventeenth century onwards, Portuguese, British and Dutch merchants who used them as exchange goods for precious spices such as nutmeg, mace, cloves and pepper [Sreenivasam, 1989, pp.11 and 35]. Their design had a profound effect on the design of ikats and other textiles in many parts of Indonesia. Known as *patola*, and produced in Orissa and Gujarat, they were used as temple hangings, bridal gifts and shrouds, and were worn at court appearances, classical dance events, weddings and funerals [Weiner, 1992].
The word *patola* (with singular *patolu*) appeared in various forms as early as the fourteenth century CE in India and in accounts of early-sixteenth-century European commentators. The latter documents are reviewed by Guy [1998, p.26]. Not surprisingly, in coastal Indian towns such as Orissa, ikat designs were inspired by the sea and included various sea animals and fish. Flowers and stripes were also common and arrowhead-type effects were in widespread use on the borders of saris [Weiner, 1992]. In South India, lotus blossoms, four-petalled flowers and swastika-type designs, as well as stylised peacocks, parrots, lions and elephants, were common [Weiner, 1992]. Checks and squares containing small motifs were also used. Ikats from Gujarat commonly depicted diamonds and rosettes.

The influence of Indian *patola* cloth design can be detected in the design of textiles in many parts of Indonesia. This is notable in the case of warp-ikats produced on the island of Rote, in particular through the use of various octagon-shaped floral motifs, known as the black motif in Rote and as the *jelamprang* motif elsewhere in Indonesia [Gittinger, 1985, p.185]. This motif can be detected readily on various Indian *patola* cloths.

In the western part of Flores, textile patterning was traditionally through the use of songket weaving (a supplementary-weft patterning technique discussed below). Elsewhere on the island warp-ikat patterned textiles were produced. A wide range of sources of patterning can be identified. In the isolated central region, the ikats produced by the Ngada are generally blue-black in colouring and show simple triangular, square and zigzag shapes, revealing very little influence from outside sources [Gittinger, 1985, pp.168 - 169]. Substantial foreign influence is evident in the textiles produced elsewhere across the island. In some cases European designs were adapted, or compositional arrangements typical of Sumba were imitated [Gittinger, 1985, p.169]. The design of Indian *patola* cloths had a major impact here also.

The Batak people of North Sumatra produced cotton warp-ikats with simple arrowhead effects or diamond shapes, in white against a single background colour. Among the most exquisite weft-ikats are those from the Palembang region. In terms of design, these ikats show a bewilderingly
wide-ranging iconography. Motifs include complex arrangements of ship and mountain images, snakes, decorative floral and arabesque forms, as well as various geometric patterns [Gittinger, 1985, p.103]. The most renowned of Bali’s textiles are the double-ikat patterned cloths made in Tenganan, a village located in the east of the island. These cloths, which are known as geringsing, show a range of stylised floral and geometric motifs as well as various human figures. The style of the human figures has been compared to thirteenth- and fourteenth-century temple decoration in central Java, thus suggesting that similarly-patterned textiles may have been produced in Java in the past [Gittinger, 1985, p.149]. A range of weft-ikats was also produced in Bali, showing not only geometric and floral compositions, but also various figural scenes drawn from Hindu mythology.

3.5 Batik
The word batik is used to refer to wax- (or sometimes paste-) resist-pattering techniques and the resultant textile products. The derivation is apparently from the Javanese ambitik meaning to mark with small dots [Steinmann, 1947]. The process, as it is practised in many parts of the world, involves the application of hot molten wax to selected areas on the fabric’s surface. On solidification of the wax, the fabric is immersed in a dye bath. The wax acts as a barrier to the dye and take-up only occurs in the un-waxed areas of the fabric.

Wax may be applied by one of several methods, using various implements. Most common is the Javanese canting (pronounced tjanting), an implement consisting of a small vessel of thin copper (which holds the molten wax) with one or more spouts (through which the molten wax flows) and a handle of reed or bamboo. Wax, or other forms of resist, may also be applied using blocks of various kinds as well as stencils. In the production of monochromatic batiks, the resist is applied once only prior to one dye bath treatment. With polychromatic batiks, more than one dyeing takes place together with an equivalent number of resist applications. Subsequent to dyeing, the resist is removed either by scraping, especially when brittle waxes have been used, or by boiling.
Occasionally batiks show a peculiar veining effect, caused if a brittle wax mixture is used which, on cracking during immersion in the dye bath, permits dye to penetrate through to the fabric’s surface. Although this cracking effect is popularly associated with batik products the world over, and is typically evident on screen-printed imitations, it is generally not pronounced on the higher-quality batiks (such as the finer qualities produced in central Java). Often, especially in cases where the batik is destined for a tourist market, the cracking effect is encouraged deliberately.

Generally, machine-woven cotton fabrics are used since these allow finer graphic details than can be achieved using coarser hand-woven fabrics. The traditional use of batik, particularly in Asia, is in festive or ceremonial dress. In recent times the fabric has been made up into various western-style apparel items including men’s shirts and women’s dresses, blouses and skirts. Whilst batik has developed as a craft in many parts of Asia, Africa and Europe, it is probably in Java, one of the principal islands of the Indonesian archipelago, where the product has reached its highest level of aesthetic excellence. In Indonesia, the principal areas of production included the areas in and around the central Javanese sultanates of Surakarta (Solo) and Yogyakarta (Yogya), the coastal areas of Cirebon, Indramayu, Pekalongan and Lasem and the areas in and around Garut in West Java. There is also some production in Nusa Tenggara, especially in Bali. Some of the more important regional variants in the process and the resultant products were described previously by Hann [1992].

3.6 Pelangi
Pelangi, or tie-and-dye, when used in its basic form, is a relatively straightforward means of decorating textiles. The technique is practised world-wide especially in the Indian sub-continent, parts of North and West Africa, Japan and parts of Southeast Asia including Indonesia. Pieces of cloth are wrapped and tied tightly with yarn or string so that dye will only penetrate to the unbound areas of the cloth. Probably the simplest form of decoration achieved using the technique is a light circle against a dyed background. These designs are produced by using the fingertips or nails to pull up small portions of the fabric and by tying firmly these bunched areas with waxed yarn or similar material. After dyeing, these tied portions are
untied to reveal undyed areas of greater or lesser size. Alternatively the elevated areas may be tied at their bases with the upper parts left free; after dyeing, ring-shaped undyed areas will result. On occasions, small pebbles, glass beads, grains of rice, or other seeds, are tied in to the fabric bunches; such additions may enhance the regularity of design in the resultant dyed fabric.

When thin fabrics are being decorated, the lengthy work of tying can be shortened by folding the fabric and tying two or more layers at a time. Folding twice can thus give four layers of cloth. It has been observed that simultaneous treatment of several fabrics was encountered in India (especially Rajasthan) as well as Indonesia and Japan [Bühler, 1954].

The vast majority of pelangi products necessitate only one dyeing operation. Where this is the case, one set of ties is made and the cloth is placed in the dye bath once only. Patterns are thus reserved in the natural colour of the fabric against a one-colour background. Multi-coloured tie-and-dye products are not as common and necessitate the use of more than one dye bath. Each new dye bath requires the fresh tying of resists.

In Indonesia the principal producing regions were Sumatra (particularly the area in and around Palembang), Java, Lombok and Bali. Often silk, rather than cotton fabric, was used. In Sumatra and Java, the dominant background colour to fabrics was generally red or reddish purple and the resisted areas took the form of circles, rings, lozenges, or more complex motifs [Bühler, 1954]. Pelangi fabrics were used as shawls, sashes, and sarongs as well as wall hangings [Bühler, 1954].

A variant of the pelangi technique, known as tritik (in Indonesia), relies on the use of stitch work. A length of strong thread is sewn into the fabric using a series of short stitches. The thread is subsequently drawn tight and close-packed folds form in the fabric. On immersion in the dye bath, the dye will be unable to penetrate to the tightest drawn portions of the fabric and will penetrate sparingly to the close-packed folds. These stitched resists were occasionally combined with the more simple tying technique outlined above; examples include the so-called kain-kembangan cloths of
central Java, which have tritik-patterned borders. The red silk pelangi cloths of Palembang (south Sumatra) are probably the most outstanding of those produced in Indonesia. The compositional layout of these cloths is very similar to that of the so-called patola double-ikat cloths of Gujarat [Hann and Thomson, 1993, p.16]. Bühler observed that loosely woven Chinese silks were often used for pelangi products in Palembang (Sumatra) and in the eastern part of Java. Three fabrics, each folded twice, were on occasions tied with resists simultaneously. A piece of work was therefore composed of twelve layers of fabric held in place by loose stitches along the edges [Bühler, 1954].
4. Further Observations on Production Techniques

There is rich diversity in the weaving and dyeing processes used to produce textiles in Nusa Tenggara. As noted earlier, one of the most widely used techniques in Nusa Tenggara (and elsewhere in Indonesia) is *ikat* (literally ‘to tie’ or ‘to bind’). Before weaving begins, threads are pre-dyed, according to the pattern which the weaver wishes to create. This is a delicate and time-consuming process. The most commonly used *ikat* technique is warp-ikat, in which the warp (lengthwise) threads are bound and pre-dyed. Meanwhile, the weft (crosswise) threads are of one colour.

Figure 5: Warp-ikat
The pre-dyed warp threads have been arranged on the loom, in East Sumba.

Weft-ikat weaving is also found in some parts of Nusa Tenggara, for example in the village of Tanglad on the Balinese island of Nusa Penida. Here it is the weft threads which are pre-dyed to create the desired pattern, whilst the warps are of just one colour.

Figure 6: Weft-ikat
The weft threads have been dyed and are ready for use in weaving, in Tanglad, Nusa Penida, Bali.
As observed previously, the village of Tenganan Pegeringsingan in Bali is renowned for its production of double-ikat cloths, called geringsing, in which both the warp and the weft threads are pre-dyed. Double-ikat is an immensely laborious procedure and is used to create only the most sacred cloths.

A question which has often been asked is whether the double-ikat technique of Tenganan is indigenous or whether it reached Bali from elsewhere. Double-ikat is extremely rare and, other than its production in Bali, is produced in only a few parts of the world (including small quantities in Gujarat and Japan). Gittinger hints at ‘a possible historical relationship between the processes of Bali and Gujarat’, saying that this ‘has not been proven but is
probable’ [Gittinger, 1982, p.153]. Holmgren and Spertus [1991] come to a similar conclusion, whilst Ramseyer [1991, p.134] reports that some villagers in Tenganan have in their blood an enzyme which is frequently found in people of the Indian sub-continent but only very rarely elsewhere, implying that the people and their weaving technique originated in India. On the other hand, Hitchcock [1991, p.82] claims:

... the people of Tenganan, who claim to be the descendants of the pre-Hindu inhabitants of Bali, are more isolationist than their fellow islanders, and it seems possible that the [double-ikat] method was developed independently in Indonesia. [Hitchcock, 1991, p.82]

After the ikat cloths, it is the supplementary weft and songket textiles which form the most notable group in Nusa Tenggara. Supplementary weft is a technique found widely throughout the region. In addition to the main weft threads, supplementary weft threads of different colours are introduced to produce a pattern which stands proud of the surface of the cloth. Songket is a specialised form of supplementary weft often used in Bali and NTB. Metallic thread, coloured silver or gold, is employed for
the supplementary weft. In some cases the metallic weft appears only in relatively small areas of the finished textile. However, in other cases the metallic thread dominates, producing a very heavy cloth which shimmers with exquisite detail.

Supplementary warp is a technique which plays a relatively minor role in the Nusa Tenggara region. Supplementary warp threads of different colours are introduced to produce a pattern which stands proud of the surface of the cloth.

Weaving in Nusa Tenggara is carried out on two different types of loom: the back-strap (or body-tension) loom and the shaft loom. Local variants of both of these types of loom are found throughout Indonesia. With back-strap (or body-tension) looms; the weaver sits cross legged on the floor or with her feet stretched out before her.

Figure 12: Songket
A weaver in Pringgasela, East Lombok, weaves a supplementary weft songket.

Figure 13: Supplementary warp
Produced in Nuntio Village, KiE Sub-district, South Central Timor
In the case of shaft looms, known in Indonesian as *alat tenun bukan mesin* (ATBM, non-mechanised weaving instrument). The weaver sits on a seat at one end of a large wooden framework. Shaft looms are much faster to operate than back-strap looms and their use is widely encouraged by local government officials who are keen to promote local craft industries.

Figure 15: Shaft loom
A weaver in Karangasem, Bali, produces narrow sashes on her loom.

Back-strap looms can be bundled up when not in use and stored away, and so are suitable for home use. The ATBM, however, requires more space and a permanent location: once set up it cannot easily be dismantled and moved. The ATBM is therefore more likely to be found in a workshop.

Figure 14: Back-strap loom
A weaver in Bima starts work on a supplementary weft songket.
Several dyeing techniques are found in Nusa Tenggara, especially in Bali. As explained previously, batik is the process by which wax is applied to the cloth before dyeing; the exposed area receives the dye while the covered area resists it. The process is repeated as many times as necessary, dependent on the number of colours required.

Also mentioned previously was pelangi, or tie-and-dye, where sections of the cloth are bunched together and tied with thread before dyeing. The tightly tied areas resist the dye; when the threads are removed, and the cloth is opened out, a simple pattern unfolds. Pelangi is widely used in Java, but Bali appears to be the furthest east that this technique is used.

Prada is a type of cloth produced in the princely courts of Bali. The process consists of applying gold dust or gold paint to the surface of a plain coloured textile; unlike almost all other textile crafts in this region it is performed by men. The resulting textile is spectacular, stiff and should never be washed. It is used for ceremonial clothing and for adorning statues of deities.
5. Diffusion, Distribution and Origin of Motifs and Patterns

There has been much debate about the origins of the designs which characterise the textiles of Bali and Nusa Tenggara (and indeed of other parts of Indonesia). It is recognised generally that some of the designs and individual motifs which occur in the textiles of this region have diffused from other parts of the world (particularly India and to some extent China and Europe), but there is no doubt that many of the features which we find in these cloths are indigenous. In some cases, the weavers and users of these textiles may be well aware of the foreign origin of particular designs, whilst in others there may no longer be any consciousness that certain motifs or patterns have their origin elsewhere. Once adopted, the significance, symbolism or visual structure of borrowed elements sometimes shift in subtle ways. From the huge variety of patterns found in the region, those considered here are: stripes, checks, hook-and-rhomb, patola, tumpal, tree of skulls, mysterious human/lizard, kiping and ucik.

Parallel stripes of alternating colours constitute perhaps the simplest of all patterns. They are found throughout the region, from the kamben (hip wrappers) woven in Sukarara in Central Lombok, NTB, to the mau (blankets) of Timor, NTT (where they are often found in combination with other design motifs).

Figure 19: Parallel stripes
Musicians at a wedding wear multi-coloured striped hip wrappers.
Woven in Sukarara, Central Lombok.
The check design, similar to that found on Scottish plaid and tartans, is characteristic of the humble day-to-day sarung worn by men, and also in the more expensive silk versions of the same garment. Curiously, despite its ubiquity, the design has received little attention from textile researchers. Langewis and Wagner [1964], for example, in their major work on design in Indonesia textiles, make no mention of the check and provide no examples of it. An exception is Hitchcock, who notes that ‘…subtle differences in colour and the arrangement of the checks are sometimes said to indicate the island of origin’ [Hitchcock, 1991, p.100].

The check design is widespread. It is found in sarung Samarinda (from the city of Samarinda in East Kalimantan) and among the Bugis, Mandar and Donggala people of southern and central Sulawesi. It is also characteristic of the sarung nggoli of Bima.

Figure 20: Sarung nggoli, Bima, NTB
A check design produced from the intersection of bands and stripes. Purchased from the weaver in Raba, Bima, in 2005.

Figure 21: Sarung nggoli, Bima, NTB
A check design produced by a female pupil at Junior High School Number 3 in Kumbe, Bima, and presented to the author when he visited the school in 2006.

A common Indonesian term for check design sarongs is sarung pelekat or plekat. This name originates from the name of the town of Pulicat, which was the Dutch headquarters in India throughout most of the 17th century. As the Dutch were actively trading in textiles at this time between the Coromandel coast of India - where Pulicat is located - and their colonies in what was to become Indonesia [Gittinger, 1982, p.114], we can hypothesise that the check design may have reached Indonesia from southern India in the 17th century.
The hook-and-rhomb motif – a series of four or eight hooks placed around or within a rhombus or lozenge – appears in many different interpretations in the textiles of the central highlands of the island of Timor, NTT. According to Warming and Gaworski the hook-and-rhomb is a highly stylised representation of a lizard,

… which can be traced back to the Dong-Son period of influence in Indonesia more than two thousand years ago and links it to the local Timor mythology surrounding the lizard cult.

[Warming and Gaworski, 1981, p.92]

One of the author’s informants in South Central Timor, however, saw no association with lizards. Rather, he called the rhomb lotis, which in the Uab Meto language of Central Timor means ‘to appear’ or ‘to arise’, whilst the hooks he called kaif or, more formally, kaifmnutu’, meaning ‘to pull’ or ‘to tug’ [Gomer Liufeto, personal communication].
Patola cloths were exported from India to Southeast Asia in large quantities throughout the 17th century (Gittinger, 1982, pp.52-155). They have had an important influence on textile design in the cloths of much of Indonesia, particularly in the form of an octagonal motif which contains other floral or geometric themes.

Figure 26: Influence of patola
Octagonal motif derived from patola, Lio, Flores

The tumpal motif is widespread throughout Indonesia: it consists of a row of triangles, usually along the edge or the end of a textile. The triangles may be monochrome or they may contain within them other patterns.

Figure 27: Tumpal
A double row of tumpal motifs runs along the edge of a weft-ikat cloth from Lombok.
Other design motifs, however, are restricted to very specific districts and to specific types of cloth. An example is the tree of skulls, specific to East Sumba. It is found in the *hinggi* (men’s blankets) woven for the use of aristocrats in this highly hierarchical society.

The significance of the tree of skulls motif, according to Moss, is that it emphasises the wearer’s status in a strictly ordered society:

> Performance of sacred rites was rigidly adhered to on Sumba in order to maintain order in the universe and among mortals on earth. Events from these rites were depicted in the cloths, and even though today much of this tradition is no longer honoured, the motifs are commonly used and their meanings usually understood. … The skull tree, upon which the heads of the vanquished enemy were hung and which appears in motifs on *hinggi*, refers to a sacred rite that insures a prosperous future.  

[Moss, 1979, p.68]

Another localised motif is the mysterious and rather sinister figure found in the *kepala* (central section) of a weft-ikat sarong woven by the Selayar-speaking community in the village of Kertasari, Sumbawa Barat, NTB. Is this figure a horned lizard with a large tail? Or is it perhaps a human being with penis augmentation (*palang*) as is found in many human figures in the textiles of this region [Zahorka, 2003]? The mystery regarding this motif is emphasised still further by the fact that the owner of this cloth did not wish to comment on the design, whilst another local informant refused to acknowledge that there was anything to be seen other than a vague abstract pattern. In some districts, commonly
used motifs have names which are widely recognised, but to the untutored eye it may be impossible to see any relationship between the motif and the name. For instance, a recurrent motif used in songket woven in the village of Sukarara in Central Lombok, NTB, is known as *kiping*. In the Sasak language of Lombok this means ‘palm leaf’, but the link between the design and the name is not obvious. In other cases, the name itself may no longer be meaningful even to native speakers of the local language. An example is the *ucik* motif also found on songket from Sukarara. Native speakers of Sasak have been unable to tell the author what this word means.

![Figure 30: Kiping (‘palm leaf’) motif](image1)

Figure 30: *Kiping* (‘palm leaf’) motif
Songket from Sukarara, Central Lombok

![Figure 31: Ucik motif](image2)

Figure 31: *Ucik* motif
Songket from Sukarara, Central Lombok, NTB.
Native speakers of Sasak are unable to explain what the term *ucik* means.
6. Functions: Quotidian and Ritual

The textiles of Nusa Tenggara are produced for a variety of purposes, from humble daily wear to elaborate cloths required for ceremonial purposes. In this section we consider just a few examples.

*Kain geringsing*, the sacred double-ikat cloths of Tenganan Pegeringsingan in Bali, have many functions. One, according to Ramseyer [1991, p.128] is to cover the genitals of the deceased during a funeral ceremony. At the end of the ceremony the cloth is removed and, as it has lost its sacred power by this point, is sold to tourists. *Slempang*, from the village of Waliang, in the district of Karangasem, Bali, is a stole almost 6m in length worn by Hindu priests during temple ceremonies. *Kamben* and *saput* - different sizes of waist wrapper – are worn by Sasak men in Lombok, on special occasions such as wedding ceremonies.

*Sarung nggoli*, a check sarong, from Bima on the island of Sumbawa, NTB, is an everyday item of clothing for men. *Mau* – usually translated as ‘blanket’ – is a waist wrapper worn by men in South Central Timor, NTT. (Similar large blankets produced in the Toraja area of Sulawesi are known as *mawa*, suggesting a common etymological source.)

*Figure 32: Kamben and saput*
Members of the groom’s party arriving at the bride’s home during a village wedding in Central Lombok, NTB. The men wear *kamben* (inner, longer hip wrappers) and *saput* (outer, shorter hip wrappers). Onlookers wear *sabuk* (waist cloths).
Mau ana’ (literally ‘small blanket’) is a shoulder sash used in South Central Timor, used for ritual gift giving, particularly in natoni ceremonies when visitors are welcomed to a district, a village, a school or some other institution. In some contexts – small rural primary schools, for instance – having to provide a mau ana’ for every member of a visiting party constitutes a considerable financial burden. In some villages, where parents are too poor to make financial contributions to their children’s education, the female members of the family weave mau ana’ which they donate to the school in preparation for the next visiting dignitary.

South Central Timor is by no means the only part of Indonesia where ritual gift giving of cloths is a cultural practice. It is extremely common among the Batak of North Sumatra, whilst Moss records that in the Lio area of Flores, NTT, cloth is exchanged ‘…both for income and kinship reinforcement … principally among relatives.’[Moss, 1979, p.63]

Sigi iki is a shoulder sash worn on formal occasions in the island of Rote, for instance by musicians when playing kebalai music. Fox describes the everyday dress of the men of Rote as he observed them in the early 1970s:

Primary school children in Rote wear sigi iki shoulder sashes when performing kebalai music.
Their attire is unique in Indonesia. Instead of a headcloth, men wear a broad sombrero-like palm hat, modelled on that of the seventeenth-century Portuguese. Their traditional tie-and-dye cloths [sic; Fox is referring to ikat here] combine native design motifs with patola patterns taken from Gujarati cloths imported, as elite trade goods, by the Dutch East India Company in the eighteenth century. Except when working, a Rotinese\footnote{Roti and Rote are alternative spellings of the name of the island. The latter is preferred currently by the people themselves.} man wears one of these cloths folded and draped over his shoulder. Together, cloths and hats are ideal visible badges and are worn as a conscious mark of differentiation.

The situation described by Fox has not changed greatly over the subsequent three decades.

\textit{Rabi}, a warp ikat tube sarong from Ndao, NTT, is an item of daily clothing for women. \textit{Hinggi}, usually translated as ‘blanket’, is a large warp-ikat textile from East Sumba. It has multiple uses, from daily wear, as a status marker and for wrapping corpses during the long period which may elapse before a funeral takes place.

Figure 36: \textit{Hinggi}

An umbu or aristocrat in East Sumba wears a hinggi (warp-ikat waist wrapper), a tiara kawaru (blue head band) and a matching shirt.

[Fox, 1989, p.67]
7. Cultural Islands

A striking feature of textile production in Nusa Tenggara is that many of the communities which weave – often no larger than a single village – are ethnically and culturally distinct from the majority community which surrounds them. Some of these ‘cultural islands’ produce textiles purely for their own use whilst others produce them for sale to the wider community.

It has already been noted above that the population of the small village of Tenganan Pegeringsingan in southeast Bali, world famous for its double-ikat *geringsing* textiles, shares some genetic features with the people of India. The people of Tenganan also adhere to a unique highly ritualistic belief system – sometimes called *Bali Aga* or Ancient Bali - which preceded the arrival of Hinduism in Bali between the 11th and 15th centuries. Whereas most Balinese house altars are oriented towards the volcano at the centre of the island or towards the sunrise, the house altars of Tenganan (an inland village) are oriented towards the sea. Whilst most Balinese cremate their dead, the people of Tenganan are buried naked, face down, pointing towards the sea [Ramseyer, 1991, p.134]. Tenganan thus constitutes a very clear instance of a cultural island, a community which is culturally distinct from the majority community around it.

The *geringsing* cloths produced in Tenganan have many functions within the village, mainly associated with warding off evil. However, the cloths are also highly prized throughout the rest of Bali, although often for quite different ceremonial purposes.

The small village of Tanglad in the centre of the island of Nusa Penida, and its neighbour, the even smaller village of Julingan, produce *kain cepuk*, weft-ikat cloths which are admired throughout Bali for their magically protective powers. In the past, *cepuk* textiles were produced in other parts of Bali, but it is those of Nusa Penida which have always been best known and it is in Nusa Penida that the weft-ikat skills are still maintained. Life in Nusa Penida is much harsher than in mainland Bali. The land is poorer
and rainfall is much lower, quite unlike the tropical lushness which characterises central Bali. Historically, the Kingdom of Klungkung used Nusa Penida as a place of exile for criminals and trouble makers.

The people of Nusa Penida, though Balinese, are culturally distinct from the people of the mainland of Bali and are somewhat feared by mainlanders. Nabholz-Kartaschoff, commenting on Nusa Penida, observed that:

… in the ideology of many Balinese, the mysterious cepuk cloths are associated with Nusa Penida, the origin of all evil and magic, personified in the divine and demonic figure of Ratu Gede Mas Mecaling who, in the company of his myrmidons, annually visits the whole of Bali with crop failures, sickness and death.

[Nabholz-Kartaschoff, 1991, p.114]

The village of Bayan in West Lombok adhere to a belief system known as wetu telu, a much localised (and frequently misunderstood) variant of Islam. The village uses an eight year calendar. Once in every two cycles – once every 16 years, therefore – the tomb of the ulama who first brought Islam to the area is refurbished in a ceremony called Gawe Alif. According to Anwar [2008], one stage in the refurbishment process consists of the weaving of a plain white cloth, 17 metres in length, for placing around and over the top of the tomb. Before weaving begins, the thread which is to be used is taken in procession to a nearby river, washed and then smeared in cooked rice. This procession to purify the thread before weaving is known as Menasin. The weaving is then carried out in turns by a team of 17 village women. (The significance of the number 17 appears to have been lost.) The ‘cultural island’ of Bayan, surrounded by a community which practises mainstream Islam, produces no other textiles apart from this one cloth once in every 16 years.

The inland village of Pringgasela, in the district of East Lombok, is well known throughout Lombok and further afield for its production of good quality songket. The villagers are also involved with other crafts such as basket making and the weaving of mats. Despite its extensive trading with other parts of Lombok, this one village constitutes a ‘cultural island’
because the population speak Samawa, the language of the western part of the island of Sumbawa. The village is completely surrounded by speakers of Sasak, the indigenous language of Lombok.

![Figure 37: Pringgasela, East Lombok](image)
Members of the Samawa minority in Pringgasela sell their textiles to visitors from the Sasak majority population of Lombok.

![Figure 38: Pringgasela, East Lombok](image)
Women of the Samawa-speaking community of Pringgasela also weave baskets and mats.

The three villages of Kertasari, Meraran and Labuh Mapin, in the District of West Sumbawa, produce (or, in the past, have produced) weft-ikat *sarung* which are marketed in Lombok and other coastal communities.
The population of the villages originates from the island of Selayar in Sulawesi Selatan and they speak the Selayar language. The head teacher of the Kertasari village primary school, who comes from Sumbawa Barat, has to use an interpreter when he addresses parents’ meetings. Seemingly, the villages were established ‘at the time of DI’ (‘Darul Islam’, the rebellion in South Sulawesi between 1950 and 1965, led by Kahar Muzakkar). The people fled Selayar in search of a more peaceful and secure environment. The main source of income in Kertasari is seaweed farming. This is affected by the tide and other factors; when the tide comes in then the harvesting of seaweed has to stop. Weaving is common in the village but of relatively minor importance economically; seaweed harvesting is much more profitable. When the author visited the village most of the population, including the weavers, were out in the seaweed beds and so there was no weaving to be seen. The author was informed that the weavers in Kertasari produce ‘sarung seperti kain Bima’ (sarongs similar to Bima textiles) and that they use ‘benang toko dari Surabaya’ (shop thread from Surabaya in East Java, i.e. commercially manufactured thread) not home produced cotton thread. Remembering how popular silk is in Sulawesi Selatan the author asked whether any of the weavers used silk. The answer was no; if they used silk then the communities to whom they market their goods would not be able to afford to buy them.

When asked where the sarongs were marketed, the author was informed that the main markets were Lombok and other pesisir (coastal) communities. They believe that their sarung were popular because they were considered to be halus (fine quality) and hangat (warm).

The author was also informed that some of the weavers in the village worked as individuals, and others worked in groups. The villagers complained that they received no support from the local government for marketing their textiles and they pointed out how little income they gained from weaving in comparison with seaweed harvesting, where ‘even a small child can earn 10,000 rupiah a day’ (about 55 British pence).

The people of the inland village of Meraran are a mixture of Selayar people and the majority community of Samawa. The people who originated from
Selayar are referred to by the Samawa majority as *Orang Labuh*, i.e. People of the Anchorage.

Boti is located in a remote corner of the highlands of the District of South Central Timor. This kingdom, which is no larger than a single village, has its own faith system, and follows a calendar based on a ten-day week. On the ninth day of the week, the day of rest, the people gather in a communal building in order to spin cotton and weave together. Most men in Boti keep their hair very long, either in a tight ponytail or in a frizzy style. Same sex members of the community greet each other by carefully touching noses, tip to tip. The culture of this village kingdom is thus markedly distinct from that of the majority community which surrounds it. It is likely that – before the arrival of the Dutch colonialists and Christianity – most of highland Timor consisted of small village kingdoms like this one. Boti is therefore unique in having managed to preserve its cultural identity.

The textiles of Boti maintain the highest standards of traditional weaving, employing homespun cotton thread and natural dyes. The textiles produced here are primarily for the use of the people themselves, though a small number are sold to the very rare passing foreigner. Many people in the majority community in surrounding villages also weave, but their products are
markedly different, both in the materials which they use (commercially produced thread) and in design.

Kampung Ndao is situated on the south-western fringe of Ba’a, the only port on the island of Rote and the capital of the district of Rote Ndao. Although Ba’a is a district capital it is actually little more than a large village. The population of Kampung Ndao originate from the island of Ndao and speak the Ndao language, whereas the majority population around them speak the Rote language. There are other Ndao communities in coastal areas on the island of Timor.

Ndao weavings are popular and widely known throughout the district of Rote Ndao. It seems likely that the majority of these textiles are no longer produced on the island of Ndao itself but that they are woven by Ndao people in Kampung Ndao on the island of Rote and possibly by other Ndao communities on the island of Timor.

In each of the seven ‘cultural islands’ considered here, a cultural minority group is distinct from the adjacent majority. The distinctiveness may be due to the fact that the members of the community have preserved a way of life that was once more widespread (Bayan and Boti, for example), because the people originated elsewhere and have brought their traditions with them (Pringgasela, Kertasari and Kampung Ndao) or because geographical isolation has led to the development of cultural characteristics which are specifically local (Tanglad in Nusa Penida, for instance). Tenganan Pegeringsingan is a particularly complex case: the people may originally have come from elsewhere, but they also maintain ancient pre-Hindu Balinese ways.
Some of these cultural islands produce textiles for their own specific requirements (Bayan and Boti), whilst Pringgasela, Kertasari, Kampung Ndao and Tanglad produce textiles for sale to other communities as well as for their own consumption. Once again, Tenganan Pegeringsingan is an exception: its double-ikat cloths play a crucially important role in the village itself, but these cloths are also traded to other parts of Bali where they play different functions.

Of course, textile production is not restricted to these seven cultural islands. It is widespread in majority communities in Bali, Lombok, Sumbawa, Bima, Flores, Timor and elsewhere in Nusa Tenggara.
8. Continuity, Decline and Innovation

The ‘traditional’ textiles of Nusa Tenggara do not exist in conditions of frozen stability. The contexts in which they are produced and used are dynamic, subject to constantly fluctuating economic and cultural forces. In response, the techniques of textile production, the cultural significance of textiles and the functions which they play are also subject to change. Thus in this richly diverse region we can find evidence of continuity, decline and innovation occurring side-by-side. Here are some examples.

8.1 Continuity
The ‘Bronze Weaver’, a 25 cm high bronze statue of a female weaver, found in the island of Flores, has been radio-carbon dated to the 6th century CE. Technically very accurate, the statue shows a woman weaving, using the supplementary weft technique in more or less the same way that it is still used today [National Gallery of Australia, 2006; Barnes, 2007; Anonymous, 2007]. This suggests that weaving, and in particular a supplementary weft technique, has been employed in Nusa Tenggara for at least 1,400 years and possibly longer.

There is evidence that the weft-ikat kain cepuk, similar to those being woven today in Tanglad on the island of Nusa Penida, have been in production in Bali for at least six centuries. Nabholz-Kartaschoff states:

… in a version of the East Javanese Malat epic of the 14th and 15th centuries it is related that the hero, Prince Panji, wore a cepuk as a sabuk or sash.

[Nabholz-Kartaschoff, 1991, p.102]

Old Javanese literature also provides evidence that the double-ikat geringsing cloths of Tenganan, Bali, have been in use at least since the 14th century. Ramseyer [1991, p.130] refers to an ode written by Prapanca in 1365 in honour of King Hayam Wuruk of Majapahit, East Java. The ode records that the curtains of the king’s carriage were made of kain geringsing.
In terms of design, we have already seen that some motifs, such as the hook-and-rhomb, have been found throughout Southeast Asia for two millennia. Tarling reminds us just how ancient this cultural exchange within mainland and insular Southeast Asia is:

[There was] very frequent inter-island contact and trade, already well developed before any direct impact from the Indian, Chinese or Islamic traditions. … most of this contact between islands, especially in the Philippines, Borneo and eastern Indonesia during the first millennium CE, was probably following inter-island links established as much as two thousand years earlier.  

[Tarling 1992, p.135]

Other design motifs, such as those derived from patola and possibly the common check design of everyday sarung, were brought to Nusa Tenggara from India in the 17th century.

8.2 Decline

The weaving of endek (weft-ikat) cloths on ATBM (shaft looms) began to flourish in Gianyar, Bali, in the 1950s and reached a peak in the early 1990s. Production declined sharply since then and in the village of Pejeng it had died out completely by the first decade of the twenty-first century, leading to widespread unemployment [Tjokorda Agung Pemayun, personal communication].

The weaving of weft-ikat sarung by the Selayar minority in the village of Meraran, West Sumbawa, NTB, has ended within living memory, although it continues in Kertasari and possibly also in Labuh Mapin. All the weaving equipment used by villagers in Meraran has been bought by traders to sell to tourists in Bali. If, as indicated previously, weaving came to this area with the arrival of the Selayar people in the 1950s and early 1960s, then the history of weaving in Meraran lasted only a few decades.
8.3 Innovation

In a relatively short period of time there have been dramatic changes in the types of thread and dyes used by weavers from the minority Ndao community on the island of Rote, NTT. Locally produced cotton and natural dyes have been replaced by factory produced coloured thread. Some observers might perceive these changes as evidence of ‘decline’, others as evidence of an ability to adapt and survive.

In the village of Pejeng, in the district of Gianyar, Bali, Tjokorda Agung Pemayun, a local aristocrat, has been developing a small group of *batik tulis* specialists, in an effort to create work opportunities for those suffering from the collapse of *endek* weaving. He has established two workshops, one producing more subtle and conventional styles of batik for the domestic market, the other producing simpler and more striking designs for the foreign tourist market.

Batik paintings are now being produced in Bali (and in Central Java) for the domestic and foreign tourist markets. They often depict ‘typical’ scenes such as village markets or worshippers on their way to temple.
ceremonies. However, these are highly idealised representations and many
details are inaccurate. In one painting which purportedly shows a
procession carrying offerings to a temple ceremony, a man carries a yoke
(\textit{pikul}) over his shoulders, with heavy panniers of goods suspended from
both ends. In fact such a thing would never be seen in a temple procession
and is likely to be found only in a market or an agricultural context.
Similarly, the tall ceremonial umbrellas which are apparently shading the
offerings are normally used to honour representations of deities, not the
offerings for those deities [Ketut Santrawan, personal communication].

\textbf{Figure 43: Batik painting, Bali, produced for the tourist trade}
The scene depicts worshippers taking offerings to a Hindu temple, but several aspects are
unrealistic.

‘Sumba-like’ blankets – very simple versions of the \textit{hinggi} of East Sumba
– are now being produced in large numbers on shaft looms (ATBM) in
East Java (and thus are not strictly speaking Nusa Tenggara textiles). They
are sold in tourist destinations in Bali.

\textbf{Figure 44: Sumba-like textile and genuine \textit{hinggi} from Sumba}
The Sumba-like warp-ikat textile
on the left, produced for sale to
tourists in Bali, is simple and crude
in comparison with a genuine
\textit{hinggi} from East Sumba, NTT, on
the right.
In recent years, cheap versions of *kain prada* - the Balinese cloths in which gold dust or gold paint is applied directly to the surface of the textile - have become easily available. They are now found in many secular contexts, not only in Bali but in other parts of Indonesia as well. Their function appears to be to contribute to an atmosphere of solemnity and seriousness, for example as table cloths in seminar rooms.

*Figure 45: Balinese kain prada used for secular purposes*
Decoration for tables in a seminar room in a hotel in Bima, NTB
9. Conclusion

It is a source of wonder that, in such a small area – with land mass smaller than Scotland – and in a population of just twelve million, cultural diversity thrives in Nusa Tenggara on a large scale. In the context of great ethnic and religious variation, the textiles of this region are extraordinarily varied, in terms of their weaving and dyeing processes, in their design, in their functions and in the meanings attributed to them. There is equal variation in the roles which these textiles play in the economies of the local communities which manufacture them, trade them and purchase them.

The textile producing communities of Nusa Tenggara have demonstrated their ability to adapt to changing social contexts and, from time to time, to borrow uninhibitedly from outside sources. At the same time, they have succeeded also in achieving continuity over many centuries, indeed for even longer.

Much remains to be discovered about the textiles of this region:

- Researchers have already paid considerable attention to the textiles of Bali (for example Hauser-Schäublin et al.), Bima (Hitchcock), East Sumba (Forshee) and some parts of Flores (Barnes). Other areas in this region, however, have been relatively neglected, particularly Lombok, Sumbawa, Timor and Rote.

- The concept of ‘cultural islands’ requires further exploration both within Nusa Tenggara and more widely in Indonesia.

- Much work needs to be focused on ethno-linguistic issues relating to textiles (the terminology of looms, the weaving and dyeing processes, and textile patterns), both with reference to Nusa Tenggara itself as well as the rest of Indonesia.
References


**Provenance of the collection**

The items in the accompanying exhibition are drawn from the collection of Hywel Coleman OBE, Honorary Senior Research Fellow in the School of Education, University of Leeds. He is a consultant to the Ministry of National Education, Indonesia, and he has been collecting Indonesian textiles since 1973.

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