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Textiles: Function and Symbolism
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Social and Ritual Systems
of Sumba, Eastern Indonesia

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Capstone Approval Page

Capstone Title:

Textiles: Function and Symbolism within the Social and Ritual Systems of Sumba, Eastern Indonesia

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This thesis focuses on the place of textiles within the traditional social and ritual systems of Sumba, Eastern Indonesia; also considered is the cosmological significance of motifs depicted in these cloths as they relate to Sumbanese rituals. Textiles are cultural condensations in woven form. As such, they provide a window into the cosmologies of the people producing them. This research examines the social uses of Sumbanese textiles and also attempts to uncover dominant ritual symbols depicted therein through utilizing Turner’s analytical framework of symbolic analysis (1967:19-47). The rituals examined for this purpose are confined to marriage and funeral ceremonies. Aspects of Sumbanese social organization were examined to identify the role of textiles in such systems. A study of marriage and funeral ceremonies elucidated the cosmological significance of the symbols employed both in these rites and in the textiles central to these rituals. It was found that textiles are powerful markers of individual and group identity. Symbolic analysis revealed mamuli to be a dominant ritual symbol of marriage, and textiles themselves to be a dominant ritual symbol of both marriage and funeral rituals. Today, traditional textiles are changing rapidly. This research reveals the pressing need for further documentation of these cultural treasures.
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INTRODUCTION

Indonesian textiles are known all the world over for their striking beauty and ingenuity of design; so much so that the Indonesian names for types of textiles - batik and ikat especially - have "been adopted internationally as generic terms" (Gillow 1992:9).

The difference between Western and Native appreciation for traditional Indonesian textiles is vast, as Hoskins (1988:137) explains:

Sumbanese who are aware that ritual objects from their island are the subject of reverent scrutiny by foreign eyes express an ambivalence towards the Western category of "art". Although appreciation in the traditional context depends on remembering the history of the object and linking it to the lives of famous predecessors, for Western eyes it is the aesthetic elements which assume priority: the skill in design, craftsmanship in execution, and meaning of detail.

What to Western art collectors represent a curio from another land, or a unique piece of 'tribal art', are to Indonesians woven condensations of their cultures. A traditional textile quite literally represents their worldviews, ways of life, and traditional values, written into the warp and weft.

This research will examine motifs found in the traditional textiles of Sumba, located in Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT)\(^1\), an eastern province of Indonesia; further evidence will occasionally be drawn from other islands of this province. NTT is an ideal locus for such a study; it is an area of incredible ethnographic diversity that is united by particular overarching cultural patterns. As a result, this is a region in which common cosmological ideas are symbolized in both strikingly similar and different manners. This play on cultural themes and variations is an incredible source of comparative data: its wide-ranging implications for future research will be discussed in the last section of this paper.

\(^1\) Nusa Tenggara Timur will be referred to as NTT for the remainder of this paper.
As will be shown, textiles, and the symbols they convey, have a place of profound importance in NTT's rich and varied cultures. Textiles have a central place throughout the local people's life cycle, filling a variety of functions from swaddling cloths to shrouds. Aside from being worn, they are presented at all major ceremonies and rituals, and in some cases represent something of a currency in these eastern islands of Indonesia. While this paper focuses on Sumbanese textiles, the nearby island of Savu (Sabu) provides a particularly striking comparative example of the profound meaning embedded in Eastern Indonesian textiles.

Among the Savunese, textiles transmit closely guarded secrets among the women who produce them; according to James Fox (1977:98-99),

Men will know which Blossom [unit of moiety] they belong to, but they will rarely know more than that. Women know about the Seeds [smaller genealogical unit], and this knowledge is crucial for the arrangement of marriages as well as for many aspects of life-cycle ceremonies, particularly funerals. But knowledge about these groups is not open to discussion; in fact, it is not transmitted verbally. Rather, it is passed on from mother to daughter as a visual display system embodied in the motifs on women's sarongs. ... these motifs are so important that, it is said, if ever a woman dared to wear the wrong sarong at a funeral, the other women would tear it from her body and drive her away.

Production of such textiles has a long history in NTT; these textiles continue to be produced today, serving both their original, traditional functions as well as a thriving tourist market. Works from this region are known for their rich symbolism which serves as an extended metaphor for the cosmologies of the ethnic groups producing the textiles, providing valuable information for anthropologists. From careful examination of a piece, for example, one may glean information concerning the society’s social structure, including issues of ethnicity, gender and hierarchy. Evidence of culture contact and change may also be present in the structure of the textiles, as will be shown later in this paper.
Due to the profound cosmological and historical significance of motifs found in traditional Indonesian textiles, these symbols can reveal much about the culture producing them. This project seeks to examine two areas of interest: the place of textiles within Indonesian societies, and the meanings of the most salient symbols employed in these pieces. The first issues to be addressed include the method of producing textiles and the ways in which these cloths are used on Sumba. Following this is a brief examination of Sumbanese history, as reflected in its textiles, and the specific properties of cloths from East and West Sumba. As necessary background information in the study of textiles, some of the most salient features of Eastern Indonesian cosmology will then be addressed; these cosmological concepts directly inform both the social and ritual systems of Sumba. Sumbanese social organization, and the roles which textiles play within this system, will also be examined. An in-depth look at marriage and funeral ceremonies will not only elucidate the diverse functions of textiles within these rituals, but will also provide insight into the cosmological significance of the symbols found in these cloths. While the social and ritual use of textiles is the main focus of this paper, ritual symbols found therein will be explored, as well.

To better understand the implications of the ritual symbols depicted in textiles, I utilized Turner's analytical framework of symbolic analysis, detailed in his classic work The Forest of Symbols (19-47). This framework was used in a cursory examination of the ritual symbols that are employed in marriage and funeral ceremonies and are depicted in textiles. Analysis of these motifs will be conducted in a selective manner as they fit in with the analysis of dominant symbols.

Dominant symbols have three defining characteristics. They display condensation, in which "Many things and actions are represented in a single formation" (Turner 1967:28). These
symbols unify disparate significata, which “are interconnected by virtue of their common possession of analogous qualities or by association in fact or thought” (Turner 1967:28). Finally, dominant symbols polarize the ‘ideological’ and the ‘sensory’ realms of experience (Turner 1967:28). Such symbols tend to be foci of interaction (Turner 1967:22).

As already stated, the focus of this project is the textile traditions of Sumba, primarily those of warp *ikat* and supplementary warp. While supplementary warp is found on very few islands, warp *ikat* is practiced widely by traditional cultures in Sumatra, Kalimantan (Borneo), Sulawesi (Celebes), the Halmahera and Tanimbar Islands, and on the islands of NTT, including but not limited to: Sumba, Flores, Roti (Rote), Ndao, Savu (Sabu), Alor, and Timor (see map 1).

**METHODOLOGY**

The first step of this project was to familiarize myself with the diversity of textiles in NTT. My goal during this period was to learn how to identify the genre of textiles by studying the culturally diagnostic features\(^2\) of the cloths, such as the dominant motifs employed, use of space, and color schemes. I proceeded to do this through reading available literature on the subject and by reviewing catalogues of textile collections of various universities and museums. This phase of the research was essential to the success of the project; I was to use what I had learned during this stage of the research to select a particular culture’s textile traditions, allowing for an analysis of its worldviews, as expressed in textiles.

After studying numerous photographs of textiles and reading their descriptions, I was ready to perform a survey of the collection of the Northern Illinois University Anthropology Museum (October 11 and 18, 2000) and the private collection of Dr. Andrea Molnar (October 2000).

\(^2\) These features are central to the identification of the ethnolinguistic group producing the textiles.
These surveys were an excellent source of information. Not only did they test my newfound skills of recognizing the origin of particular textiles, but I also had the opportunity to see firsthand examples of what I had studied in books. Under the guidance of Dr. Andrea Molnar, their origin was identified by comparing them to textiles of known origin, and by employing the diagnostic features I had learned during my review of the literature. The results of the surveys of the NIU collections are listed in the appendix.

After my initial studies and the collections surveys, I decided to focus my attention on the textiles of Sumba. The primary reason for this decision is the nature of symbolic expression in Sumbanese textiles. While textiles from other islands of NTT are characterized by rather abstract symbolism, Sumbanese symbolism, particularly from the eastern half of the island, is particularly explicit. As the primary focus of this project is the symbolism in traditional textiles, the explicit nature of Sumbanese symbolism greatly facilitated my analysis. An added benefit of studying Sumbanese textiles is the fact that Sumba is among the more widely documented of the Eastern Indonesian islands, in terms of both culture and of textiles.

While I was learning the distinguishing features of the various textiles of NTT, I was also acquiring background information on textile production in NTT. To fully appreciate the textiles I was studying, it was essential to become familiar with the history and technique of textile production in this region, and to become aware of pertinent issues affecting Eastern Indonesian textiles today. In the following discussion, I have used specific examples from Sumba whenever possible; otherwise, the information pertains to the rest of NTT in general.
BACKGROUND

TECHNIQUES OF TEXTILE PRODUCTION

The nature of Indonesian textiles is somewhat paradoxical: “Considering the complexity of the customs that have evolved around textiles among Indonesians, it is surprising to discover the basic simplicity of their clothing components. The form from which all major Indonesian costume originates is a rectangle” (Gittinger 1979:52). According to Gillow, there are four main categories of clothing in NTT. They are: “kain [BI]³, which wraps around the waist and legs; sarongs [BI] made of a smaller kain sewn into a tube-shape; selendang [BI] breast and shoulder cloths; and selimut [BI], large wrap-around mantles or blankets” (1992:15).

A time-consuming, labor-intensive system of production surrounds these types of clothing. In the following sections, I will discuss the materials from which the textiles are made, how the cloths are produced, and their various methods of decoration.

Thread and dyes

Sumbanese textiles are traditionally woven from “handspun cotton yarns, locally grown and spun... After the cotton yarn is spun, it is strengthened with a sizing of different solutions. This sizing could be made from cassava, rice, or a corn meal mixture” (Van Gelder 1979:36). Van Gelder (1979:36) cites both “geographic and economic” factors in the place of cotton in weaving- in the case of Sumba, for example, it is locally grown and is therefore inexpensive, and is quite durable.

The two primary dyes found in traditional Sumbanese textiles are blue (from indigo) and a rust-red (kombu) from the bark of the kombu (Morinda citrifolia) tree (Van Gelder 1979:36).

³ BI = Bahasa Indonesia, the Indonesian language
Indigo (*Indigofera tinctoria*) is native to Southeast Asia, and is a principle dye in the textile traditions of many Indonesian islands. The following is a summary of the time consuming process of preparing an indigo dye bath:

To dye blue a coconut shell full of natural indigo is added to a water-based solution of lime and molasses sugar...The mixture is stirred and left till the following morning when it will be ready for use. Through germination the sugar transforms the insoluble indigo blue into soluble indigo white while lime turns the solution alkaline. Sometimes the sap of the *tingi* tree (*Ceriops candolleiana*) is added as a fixing agent to accelerate the process (Gillow 1992:30).

The process involved for *kombu* red is quite different. In order for *kombu* red to set, the threads must first be pretreated; the ingredients of this pretreatment determine the resulting shade of red (Warming 1981:69). As Warming notes, dyeing thread *kombu* red is a time consuming process, as after pretreatment, the threads must be left out in the sun; this may range from three days to three months (1981:69). The exact process of preparing a *kombu* dye bath is shrouded in secrecy⁴ and varies from dyer to dyer; the general process is as follows:

...the red dye is made from the root of the *Morinda citrofolia* tree (or *mengkudu* as it is called in Indonesian) from *loba* bark, and from lye of wood ashes. The *mengkudu* dye is a mordant dye; that is, it needs a substance (usually a metallic compound) to fix the pigment onto the fiber. In this case, the *mengkudu* root contains the red pigment and the *loba* bark contains one or more aluminum compounds that act as the mordant. The ashes, which give lye when leached in water, make the liquid alkaline and probably improve the solubility of the pigment as in the case of indigo (Warming 1981:69).

The intensity of the resulting colors is determined by both quantity and duration of dippings in the dye bath.

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⁴ Dyeing traditions are strictly kept within the confines of noble families.
A black dye mud may also be used to color threads; the people Wewewa, West Sumba usually resort to this technique, as the cool climate does not allow for the cultivation of indigo (Geirnaert 1989:73).

The backstrap loom

Sumbanese weavings are traditionally created on body tension, or backstrap, looms. These tools of relative simplicity produce amazingly complex textiles. While the weaving itself falls into the women's domain, men often produce the weaving implements (Fischer 1979:13).

Gillow (1992:27) provides a succinct description of the mechanics behind the backstrap loom:

Frameless, its essential elements consist of a breast beam and a warp beam that are joined together by the warp threads, and a belt with a back-rest made of wood or hide, which is tied to the breast beam. The warp beam can be attached to any convenient pole or tree. The weaver sits with legs outstretched on the floor or ground with the belt around her waist. By bracing herself against this backstrap she is able to keep the warp threads stretched out before her under the required tension. By leaning backwards or forwards she can tauten or slacken the warps at will.

This type of loom has both advantages and limitations. Such an apparatus is easily and inexpensively constructed, is portable, and quite easily stored (Gillow 1992:27, Barnes 1989:34). Another advantage is its ability to produce both continuous and discontinuous warp pieces (Gillow 1992:27) (see fig 1). With this type of loom, however, limitations are placed on both the length and the width of the textile produced. Cloths are typically rather narrow, as they are limited by the weaver's arm span (Gillow 1992:29). Additionally, “…the length of the finished cloth is restricted by the length - and hence the weight - of warp that the weaver can easily bear against with her back” (Gillow 1992:29). While the structure of the loom may indeed be simple, the weaving process itself is quite complex

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5 This process requires a lot of physical strength. The work becomes less strenuous when the arms are closer together.
6 For an excellent, detailed account of the mechanics of weaving, see Traditional Indonesian Textiles by John Gillow.
**Ikat**

The term *ikat*, from the Malay word *mengikat* ("to tie") neatly summarizes this method of textile ornamentation. The process of ikatting is a long and complicated one, requiring great skill and patience:

All tying and subsequent dyeing takes place before the threads are woven together...[the warp] is arranged on a pair of parallel bars, which are at the top and bottom of the warp. After having been bound tightly in pre-determined designs...the threads are steeped in a dye vat and set out to dry. When the bindings are removed, the patterns appear in the original colour of the threads, that is undyed, against a dyed background, the unbound part having absorbed the dye. The dyeing process may be repeated as many times as needed, resulting in various colour combinations. In warp *ikat*, the *ikat*-decorated and dyed vertical threads are then fitted onto the warp and cloth beams of the weaving loom. The final pattern of the cloth is evident at this stage; the weft thread will be mono-coloured and undecorated (Kartiwa 1993: VII-VIII).

At this point, the undecorated weft threads are woven across the decorated warp.

Of particular advantage to the weaver is the availability of synthetic binding materials. Traditionally, weavers used natural vegetable fibers to bind and demarcate their designs before dyeing a piece (Kartiwa 1993: VII). Today, however, a colored variety of raffia is available to local weavers, enabling the establishment of a sort of color-coding system which greatly simplifies the tying process.

**Supplementary warp, *kabakil*, and additional decoration**

A technique closely identified with Sumbanese textiles is supplementary warp. In supplementary warp, (said to be more difficult than supplementary weft, which employs this technique along the weft), "...extra warp threads contrasting in material and color to the regular warp and weft threads float over and under the surface of the plain background cloth (Warming 1981:136). The resulting decoration closely resembles embroidery. While supplementary warp is
by far more characteristic of East Sumba, supplementary warp floats are also found in West Sumba (Geirnaert 1989:58). Supplementary warp is thought to be a very early form of ornamentation (O’Neil 1976:11), and is considered to be an inspiration to ikat motifs (Adams 1971:33). Sadly, this method of decoration is rapidly attaining the status of a dying art: “Because learning to weave lau pahekung demands long hours of practice, many noblewomen today find it hard to interest their daughters in learning this old art7. Only certain noblewomen of East Sumba are entitled to own the pattern models and perform the technique of supplementary warp weaving, and they in turn teach it only to their daughters” (Warming 1981:137). The learning curve involved in lau pahekung is indeed great:

A young girl begins her training by making her own pattern model of sticks and string, copied from a simple geometric motif found on an old model. As she grows older, she learns to make models that have progressively more complicated motifs. But learning the actual weaving itself comes much later. Not until a girl is about eighteen years old and has already mastered the art of making an ikat weaving does she attempt to weave a sarong patterned in supplementary warp (Warming 1981:137-138).

Warming (1981:138) recounts an incident in which this technique disappeared altogether from an East Sumbanese village:

...upon inquiring about the supplementary warp sarong, we were told that no one knew how to weave them anymore. Just a short time before our visit, the last woman in the village with the right to use the pattern models had died. Since no daughter of hers had learned the technique, all of her models were buried with her. No woman is allowed to weave these sarong unless she owns the pattern models, so not only were the motifs of this woman’s family lost but the techniques itself disappeared, ending a tradition in Kaliuda stretching back many generations.

7 The availability of ready-made clothing, along with demands on the girls’ time, such as school, make learning this technique less attractive to the young Sumbanese women of today.
Kabakil, a refining method of finishing textiles, is found in many Sumbanese textiles of good quality. In this technique, “a simple warp-patterned border [kabakil] is woven along the bottom edges of warp ikat and plain weavings using a small loom set up with warp threads of several colors. The fringe of a finished Sumbanese cloth is made up of its unwoven warp threads, and these become the weft threads of the woven kabakil border” (Warming 1981:38). Kabakil is the sole means of decoration in Laboyan men’s cloths in West Sumba (Warming 1981:138).

Supplementary weft is found in many West Sumbanese textiles, along with tufted embroidery (Geirmaert 1989:58). Elaborate shell and beadwork⁸ is found in East (and West) Sumbanese textiles of high-ranking women. Other regional peculiarities will be addressed later in the paper.

The rhythm of textile production

The practice of weaving traditionally fits into the “overall pattern” of Sumbanese women’s lives (Kahlenberg 1977:7). During the rainy season (typically November - February in NTT), agriculture becomes the primary concern (Mauchenheimer 1999:3); additionally, the high levels of humidity at this time of year make spinning difficult (Warming 1981:75). Thus, weaving in NTT must follow the seasons. Spinning must be done in the dry season, while tie-dyeing may be done at any time of year. Many rainy afternoons are passed warping up the loom and tying designs (Warming 1981:75). By the end of the rainy season, the cloth should be ready for dyeing and weaving. In following the patterns of nature, “A weaving made according to the rhythm of the seasons will take at least one full year or more to complete” (Warming 1981:76).

⁸ Unusual shells and beads acquired through trade traditionally increased the value of such pieces.
THE STATE OF TEXTILES TODAY

Indonesian textiles have in the past years become objects of fascination for the rest of the world. Witness the incredible number of web sites alone that are dedicated to the sale of "authentic" Indonesian textiles. Tourism and increased consumer demands have produced immense pressure on weavers to create what is today disparagingly referred to as 'airport art'. With the obvious economic rewards that accompany a fast pace of production, weavers must cut corners to keep up with consumer demand. This noticeably affects three crucial aspects of a weaving: material, dye, and motif.

To produce a textile for the tourist market that is made of homespun cotton would be far too time consuming; as a result, weavers now use store-bought threads. These threads are far less durable and much less soft than homespun cotton (personal observation based on anthropology museum collections survey).

Synthetic dyes allow for untraditional color combinations; although bright and innovative, to Western eyes they can be, as James Fox writes (1977:100), quite garish. There are distinct advantages in using these synthetic dyes. They are dramatically less time consuming, and do not stain hands indefinitely, as with indigo. And, something which must be of relief to the dyers, unlike indigo, synthetic dyes do not smell like a rotting corpse.

What is most alarming of all, however, is the extreme oversimplification of traditional motifs. As infinite numbers of authors have noted and I myself was able to observe through the collections survey I undertook (see appendix), motifs in mass-produced textiles are much larger, and much more simple, than those found on traditional textiles. These exaggerated, almost caricaturistic, motifs are indeed helpful in identifying salient motifs found in traditional textiles, but are of little more value than that- especially to those who produce them. Writing about the
mass-produced textiles so prevalent in Indonesia today, Fischer (1979:13) comments, “Labor-saving devices for producing traditional cloths would be by definition meaningless...In traditional terms there are no shortcuts to producing a fine textile...In traditional terms shoddy textiles cannot be produced”. An additional alarming trend is the inversion of Sumbanese textile patterns- “The top and bottom patterning on hinggi mantles are usually mirror images of each other, but those now produced for the tourist market often have a design which can be read all the way down the textile, so the hinggi can be used as a hanging rather than as a garment” (Gillow 1992:75-76). One final twist brought about by the increased demands of the tourist market is that young Sumbanese men are now creating supplementary warp pieces, and in the process, enjoying sizable economic benefits (Gillow 1992:117). Such a thing was literally unheard of in the past.

Before condemning the effects of tourism too quickly, it is important to note that the mass production of textiles represents an important source of income to families in this economically depressed region of Indonesia. Outside of ritual situations, many people of NTT are content to wear commercially produced textiles.

While it may be an easy target, tourism is not the only source of change in the textiles of NTT. As with any manifestation of culture, Indonesian textiles never have, and never will, exist in a vacuum. The many distinct ethnic groups of NTT do not live in isolation; ethnic groups of the region exert a mutual influence on each other, which may be seen in their textiles. The case of Roti (Rote), Ndao, and Savu (Sabu) may serve as an example. Ndao lies between Roti and Savu, and its textile motifs represent a clear point of transition between the textile traditions of the other two islands, with some Ndaonese cloths resembling those of Rote, and others
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resembling those of Savu (Fox 1977:100). Ndaonese men often travel to Rote during the dry season to work as jewelers; Fox (1977:100) writes that,

...it became a common practice for Ndaonese men to take orders for Rotinese-type cloth to be produced on Ndao. They would take back with them to Ndao samples of the old cloth that their wives and daughters were supposed to copy. Eventually the cloth that Ndaonese women produced for Roti influenced the cloth that they produced for themselves.

Textile production is today a major source of income for the Ndaonese, with the majority of their textiles being sold to the Rotinese (Fox 1977:100). The production of textiles on Roti, in turn, is decreasing- and to keep up with the demand, Ndaonese women have had to adopt new strategies in creating textiles. The responses to this pressure have resulted in the following situation:

To meet the demand, cloth is produced in large quantities with purchased thread and chemical dyes. Formerly each cloth was tied separately; now several cloths may be tied as once. The introduction of new colors- yellow, green, orange- has greatly increased the complexity of the ikat process, while the simultaneous tying of a number of pieces has forced an enlargement of all motifs. The result is a lively cloth with bright, striking patterns but by comparison with traditional pieces, this cloth may appear almost garish. An even greater change has occurred in the use of motifs. Motifs have a purely decorative, not a social function. Although some cloth is a direct copy of Rotinese cloth, other cloth consists of a total jumble of motifs... (Fox 1977:100).

Whether coming from Westernization through colonial powers, commodification by tourists, or internal exchange of ideas, textiles in NTT are changing⁹. There exists a very real need for research and documentation in order to preserve these precious traditions.

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SUMBA IN CONTEXT

After learning the above essential background information, I needed to focus specifically on Sumba and its textiles. The first step in this process was to learn about the Sumbanese people and their culture.

Geography, environment, and livelihood

NTT is composed of three major islands—Timor, Flores, and Sumba, and numerous other smaller islands. Sumba itself is located south of Flores, and to the west of Timor. What makes this island so unique is the fact that “...it is at present the only sizable Indonesian island with a pagan majority. About three fourths of the people remain adherents of marapu religion, involving the worship of ancestors, local tutelary deities and various minor spirits through a system of prayer, feasting and sacrifice” (Hoskins 1988:123).

Sumba is divided into two regions, West Sumba and East Sumba, which are distinct enough to warrant separate discussions— in terms of landscape and climate, ethnolinguistic groups and modes of living, and in terms of the textiles they produce.

East Sumba is a rough, arid land; its “economic life is rather precarious, and focuses mainly of the export of horses, cattle and textiles to other islands” (Hoskins 1988:123). This part of the island is divided into coastal lowlands and central highlands (Adams 1969:4). The highlands contain the majority of the East Sumbanese population, as the greater amount of rainfall ensures a greater amount of natural resources (Adams 1969:4). The highlands support the cultivation of rice, fruits, betel and areca nuts, and the horses for which the region is so famous.

10 Language is an important marker of ethnic identity in Sumba; for a summary of the languages found on this island, see A Guide to the People and Languages of Nusa Tenggara by Grimes et al.
The environment of the coast is hot and dry, and sees maize as the staple crop; cotton is well-suited to the climate, and textiles form an important aspect of coastal social and ritual life (Adams 1969:4-5).

West Sumba features a varied landscape; the resources available in its mountains and forests have remained an attraction throughout Sumbanese history. As such, the population of West Sumba is higher than that of East Sumba (Hoskins 1988:124). The environment of West Sumba is able to support the cultivation of wet rice in some areas, as well as such cash crops as coffee and cloves (Hoskins 1988:124). Water buffaloes are a major export item to other islands in NTT (Hoskins 1988:124).

The ethnic groups of Sumba

The East/West dichotomy permeates all levels of discussion about Sumba—this holds true for the distribution of its ethnic groups, as well. East Sumba is characterized by cultural, ethnic, and linguistic uniformity (Hoskins 1988:123). It is composed of eight traditional domains and one language grouping, that of Kambera (Grimes, et al. 1997:67). There are a number of dialects present within the Kambera language grouping, which exist in varying degrees of mutual intelligibility. A 1989 estimate places the population of this region at 200,000 (Grimes, et al. 1997:68). Sabu (Savu) speakers are found on the north and northeast coasts of East Sumba (Grimes, et al. 1997:67) This has implications for the textile traditions of Sumba, as Sumbanese oral tradition holds that in ancient times, it was a Sabunese (Savunese) who brought the art of dyeing to Sumba. (Hoskins 1988:129). This story is still revered today; before this art may be taught to an apprentice, the permission of the spirit of the Sabunese woman must be secured through the sacrifice of a chicken (Hoskins 1988:129).
As opposed to East Sumba's uniformity, West Sumba contains many distinct ethnic and linguistic groups; this very diversity seems to present a problem for classification. The exact number of groups seems to vary among authors, with a range from eight to twelve (Grimes, et al. 1997, Hoskins 1988, Hoskins 1993). As outlined in Grimes, et al., (1997) who counts eight groups, the representative ethnolinguistic divisions of West Sumba are as follows: Anakalangu (1981: 14,000); Kodi (1987: 40,000); Lamboya (25,000); Laura, including Mbukambero (10,000); and Mamboru (1981: 16,000).

**History of Sumba and its implications for textiles**

Textiles make for an excellent visual record of a civilization's history, as foreign influences are literally woven into the cloth itself (Solyom 1973:15). To fully understand the significance of Sumbanese textiles, it is important to briefly review the history of this island.

*Autochthonous*

Textiles are perishable goods and their very impermanence creates problems in determining the ancient motifs which predate those of the Dong Son. O'Neil (1976:3) cites such figures as birds, animals, frontal human figures and the tree of life as "an older and distinctively Indonesian tradition".

Kartiwa cites the plaiting of vegetation (for shelter, baskets, etc) as the predecessor of weaving; she writes, "This basic skill was the foundation for weaving cloth, being based on the principle of inter-weaving straight or vertical elements with transversal or horizontal elements" (1993:1). Fischer (1979:9) believes that tattooing was the primary source of weaving. However it may have been that weaving developed in NTT, Bronwen and Garret Solyom tentatively suggest that cave art may have been the source for motifs found in traditional Sumbanese textiles (1979:31).
Dong Son

Most scholars agree that warp ikat was introduced by the Dong Son people of northern Vietnam, who migrated to the area between the eighth and second centuries BC (Gillow 1992:10). This method of decoration blended with the native weaving tradition to produce the rich textile heritage still present on Sumba today. The Dong Son people brought with them the backstrap continuously warped loom and the art of warp ikat which it produced (Gillow 1992:10). The Dong Son are particularly famous for their massive bronze drums. Many NTT textile motifs that are still present today, including the rhomb and key, spirals, and tree of life are present as well in these ancient ritual objects (Gillow 1992:10).

Hindu/Buddhist

The India Hindu-Buddhist cultures are recognized as a major source of influence on the textiles of NTT. The eighth century AD saw the rise of great Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms in Java and Bali; the influence of the Indianized states was confined mainly to these two islands in the early years of Hindu-Buddhist states. With the eventual spread of Hindu-Buddhist ideas to NTT came the luxurious patola cloths from Gujerat, India. The motif from which the cloth derives its name (see fig 2) is said to represent ancient Hindu temple floor plans (Fischer 1979:10). The patola motif soon came to be manipulated by local Sumbanese nobility and later European colonialists; “...merchants from the Dutch East India Company brought the richly patterned patola silks available in India as gifts to the highest headmen of the islands with which they traded, in recognition of rank. The noblemen returned this recognition in a tribute of textiles and other goods. As a result, the patola designs became the exclusive property of the nobility...” (Woolworth 1978:3).
It is interesting to note that while the *patola*’s presence is expansive throughout NTT, Adams questions whether the Sumbanese version of the *patola* in fact originated in India, or if it is actually native to the island (1969:147).

Kartiwa cites the *tumpal* (isosceles triangle) as an example of a motif that while present in Hindu-Buddhist textiles, was also present in the textiles of NTT prior to the Hindu/Buddhist migrations (1993:7). While she offers no suggestion about the significance of the motif to Native peoples, for the Hindu-Buddhists, it “symbolizes Dewi Sri, the goddess of rice and prosperity, wife of Dewa Wishnu. It is also a streamlined version of the bamboo shoot, symbol of power that grows from within, and some see in it an abstract representation of man” (Kartiwa 1993:7).

**China**

Incorporation of Chinese motifs began with the spread of Chinese ceramics throughout Indonesia, beginning in the tenth century AD (Fischer 1979:10). While adaptation of Chinese motifs is found predominantly in the western portion of the Indonesian archipelago, for instance among the batiks of the north coast of Java, some ‘dragons’, or *naga*, which appear on Sumbanese textiles have a distinctly Chinese flavor to them. These particular *naga* are thought to have been adopted from Chinese ceramics which were in circulation in NTT at this time (Alpert 1977:79).

**Islam**

NTT is an overwhelmingly Christian province in an overwhelmingly Muslim nation; apart from certain regions of the island, Islamic influence in Sumba is negligible. However, the so-called ‘pegasus’ motif, which represents the winged horse Mohammed rode on his flight out of the desert is depicted in some Sumbanese textiles, notably *hinggi*. Kartiwa (1993:7) sees Islamic influence in the textiles of NTT in that “...the tendency [in Islamic art] is towards flora...
and fauna with particular emphasis on birds and the development of geometrical curves which are akin to Arabic script”. The Makassarese from Sulawesi and the Endenese from Flores represent two of the larger sources of contact with Islam that Sumba was to experience.

*Europe*

While it may not have been equal, Indonesian and European textiles exerted a mutual influence on each other. Woolworth (1978:3) writes of “The mysterious quality of the Indonesian *ikat* designs, which did not reveal the complex technique by which they were achieved even when the fabric was taken apart...”; as Europe had no true *ikat* tradition to speak of, Indonesian *ikats* became their inspiration. This European fascination with *ikats* had the added effect of increasing the trade value of these cloths (Woolworth 1978:3). Woolworth (1978:3) credits European colonialists with contributing “inadvertently to the diversity seen today in the styles of the Indonesian cloths”, for instance through their manipulation of the *patola* cloths on Sumba. Perhaps the most easily identified motif adopted from Europeans is the ‘rampant lion’ motif of the Dutch heraldry. This ubiquitous motif was found on almost everything Dutch that circulated throughout Sumba. Rather than copying this motif directly, however, the Sumbanese indigenized the motif; “In borrowing the motif...the Sumbanese modify the forms so that the lions lose their savage expression, and the rectangular European shield is transformed into a base for a blossoming plant” (Adams 1971:32).

**SUMBANESE TEXTILES**

The next issues I will address are the specific properties and uses of Sumbanese textiles. Familiarity with these cloths is crucial for any sort of future analysis. An overview of the various
functions of cloth in Sumbanese cultures is also essential in attempting to understand their place within the Sumbanese world, and for providing direction for future research.

**PROPERTIES**

In speaking of Sumba, Geirnaert (1989:78) writes, “The cosmological well-being of the island is conceived of in terms which are borrowed entirely from the realm of textiles”. It is possible to glimpse the profound cosmological significance of textiles on Sumba when one looks at the geographical distribution of *ikat* on the island. As Geirnaert (1989:78) points out, in the Sumbanese worldview, “*ikat* is allowed only at the eastern and western tips of Sumba. It is necessary to tie (*ikat*) both ends of the island in order to keep the “vital fluids” from flowing out. In between, no *ikat* should be done, so that these fluids can circulate freely”.

Within Sumba alone there exists remarkable textile diversity. This diversity may relate to theme; the *mamuli* motif is the central feature of West Sumbanese textiles, while it is rare in the East (Adams 1971:35, caption 9). This diversity may relate to style, as well. Generally speaking, East Sumbanese textiles are remarkably representational, while West Sumbanese textile design is “more abstract and densely patterned” (Hoskins 1988:128).

While differences obviously exist between the textile traditions of East and West Sumba, they are, at the same time, intimately related. For example, “The names of the [West Sumbanese] motifs indicate that they are a miniaturization of the Eastern ones, with the animals presented for bride price payments decomposed into their various parts (eyes, tails, feet)” (Hoskins 1988:128-29).

East and West Sumbanese textiles are often discussed in very different evaluative terms. The supplementary warp pieces of the east are widely seen as the most outstanding of their kind.

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*Mamuli*, metal objects fashioned in the shape of female genitalia, are central to marriage rites. They will be discussed in detail later in this paper.
in all of Indonesia (Hitchcock 1991, Warming 1981). In fact, one may say that all of Sumba is best known for its supplementary warp tradition. In the universal appreciation of East Sumbanese textiles, those of West Sumba are often overlooked; “...the cloths of West Sumba might be considered respectable but unbotrusive...[they] share the common fate of being overshadowed by their sumptuous eastern cousins” (Geirnaert 1989:57).

This distinction between East and West actually sets the tone for the remainder of the paper, as distinctions between the two are not limited to their textiles.

**EAST SUMBANESE TEXTILES**

The “unusually large, bold patterns” (Hoskins 1988:128) of East Sumbanese textiles are especially well-suited for a symbolic analysis, due to their explicit nature. While sharp regional distinctions in West Sumba require that textiles are discussed on a regional basis, East Sumba exhibits sufficient uniformity (Hoskins 1988:123) to allow for Eastern Sumbanese textiles to be discussed as one unit.

**Hinggi**

*Hinggi* (see fig 3) are “Large blankets always woven in pairs- one piece worn as a waist garment or *sarong*, the other draped over the shoulder” (Alpert 1977:79). Two types of ikatted *hinggi* exist, both of which are worn only by men. *Hinggi kaworu* are worn by commoners and are recognized by their coloration: white and blue (indigo). (Warming 1981:70). *Hinggi kombu* were once worn only by the regional king, the people in his service, and his slaves (Warming 1981:79). *Hinggi kombu* are characterized by an additional two colors- ‘*kombu red*’ a rustish-red tone, and occasionally, black. The production of *hinggi kombu* is therefore more labor intensive than its simpler counterpart (*hinggi kaworu*), as the cloth undergoes two more dyeings. Added to
this is the fact that *kombu* trees, the source of *kombu* dye, are rather scarce; these two factors contribute to the higher value of *hinggi kombu*. *Hinggi* of both kinds feature an impressive array of beautifully rendered, representational motifs.

**Rohubanggi**

A more uncommon type of East Sumbanese clothing is the *rohubanggi*, the battle dress of Sumbanese kings. Such a cloth, narrow and extremely long (seven meters by 75 centimeters) was wrapped around the king's waist before leaving for battle; it was believed that the *rohubanggi* would impart invulnerability and extra strength to its wearer (Warming 1981:78). This type of textile is no longer made today.

**Lau Pahudu/Pahekung**

This is a woman's *sarong* that features both supplementary warp and *ikat* (see fig 4). Albert (1977:79) notes that, "Other features of traditional *lau* might include stained design highlights; a fringe (*wonogiri*) on which trade beads might be strung; or a *katipa*, a narrow beaded strand". The bands of supplementary warp found on *lau* may take the form of *patola* variations. More common, however, is the human male figure that is so well-known. Sumbanese weavers claim that this motif dates back to ancient times; and indeed, scholars of textiles refer to these motifs as 'Neolithic-style human figures' (Warming 1981). Some of these figures include: "*Tukakihu*, a standing man with both arms pointing downward, *pahudu kalatahu*, a dancing man holding one hand up and one down, and *anatolomili*, a dancing man with both arms raised" (Warming 1981:137). Other common figures executed in supplementary warp include Chinese-inspired dragons, skull trees, and various animals. Such pieces are the traditional reserve of noble women.
Quincey 24

Lau hada

Alpert (1977:79) describes these now uncommon pieces as “Women’s waist garments using old trade beads and nassa shells to depict an unusual variety of fanciful animals or human characters. Now rare, such lau are associated with the highest rank of nobility...” (see fig 5).

WEST SUMBANESE TEXTILES

The preference for East Sumbanese cloth exhibited by art collectors and the general public alike is echoed by the East Sumbanese themselves. As Geirnaert (1989:75) notes, “In matters of textiles, there is no doubt that the East Sumbanese feel immensely superior. I have never seen a woman from East Sumba wear West Sumbanese cloth; in fact women of high status openly discredit the weaving done in the west”. However, as she also points out, “…their contempt obscures the fact that if West Sumbanese have copied motifs from the eastern part of the island, exchanges in the opposite direction do occur, particularly on such occasions as intermarriages. Thus an East Sumbanese man’s cloth may have West Sumbanese elements…” (Gittinger 1979:75).

Though overshadowed by their neighbors to the east, West Sumbanese textiles are undergoing a kind of modern-day renaissance, and are not to be ignored (Geirnaert 1989:63). Danielle Geirnaert provides an excellent regional synopsis of the extremely diverse textiles of West Sumba in Mattiabelle Gittinger’s To Speak with Cloth (1979:57-79). The following summary of the regional properties of West Sumbanese textiles is derived from her piece in this work.

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12This example also serves as an indication of how East Sumbanese ethnic self-identity is constructed through belittling the textiles of West Sumba.
Women’s clothing in West Sumba is known as ye (also lau, lawu). Ye are tubular sarongs, whose manners of decoration and wearing vary from region to region. For ceremonial occasions, women wear an additional piece of cloth over one shoulder. The men of West Sumba wear hanggi (see fig 6). Hanggi are comprised of two flat (as opposed to the women’s tubular) pieces of cloth; one is folded around the waist, and the other hangs over the shoulder.

As varied as West Sumbanese textiles may be, they do share a number of similarities. Geirnaert recognizes four categories of cloth on West Sumba: ikats, plain cloths, cloths with selected warp floats, and those with supplementary weft. She notes that cloths from any of these categories may feature additional decoration by twining or tufted embroidery (see fig 7).

The political situation of West Sumba is based upon a system of competitive feasting, as will be discussed in greater detail below. In such a system, “matters of dress are just as revealing as verbal behavior for the study of social hierarchy. Traditional and modern apparel is imaginatively combined for the purpose of making social prerogatives explicit, and one is certainly expected to do so” (61). As dress is indicative of social status, it is also reveals other details about a person. An additional constant throughout West Sumba is the presence of borders, either twined or woven, as indicating that the wearer has been circumcised and is considered by his community to be an adult. A particularly common motif in West Sumba is the cassava liana (lua) (see fig 8). This motif often serves the function of designating borders (64).

The administrative units of West Sumba were changed from their original forms to what they are today by the Dutch. Geirnaert (1989:62) notes that the original regencies featured “remarkable homogeneity; different clans wear the same patterns”. West Sumbanese textiles will be discussed below in terms of the original major regencies.

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13The cassava liana has a prominent place in creation myths throughout Eastern Indonesia, and it is said that this vine once connected the upper and lower worlds.
Loli

The Lolinese are viewed throughout West Sumba as well-off and pretentious; this impression comes in part from their textiles— from the thickness of the cloths to the width of *lambelekko* (65). This stereotype is especially held on to by the Kodinese, the traditional enemies of Loli.

The Lolinese prefer heavier textiles; these thick cloths are thought to “provide extra protection from destructive powers and thus insure longevity” (64). A relatively new technique (1960s) practiced in Loli is *lambelekko*, which resembles the supplementary warp of East Sumba in appearance, while being quite differently executed (63). Lolinese textiles are characterized by deeply ingrained color symbolism. Dark colors are meant for mature women, while bright blues are appropriate for younger girls (63). Contrasting colors are a feature of not only Lolinese, but West Sumbanese textiles in general. When writing of *lambelekko* designs in Loli, Geirnaert (63-64) remarks, “As elsewhere in West Sumba, what really matters is that designs should contrast strongly with the background in order to produce a light-dark impression which is considered to be like “life” (*hidup*) [BI] and not like “death” (*mati*) [BI], that is to say, dull. The same principles and associations apply to the indigo *ikat* process in Kodi for instance. Implicit is the idea that a person’s life cycle is bright in the beginning and dark at the end”. Favored motifs for the *lambelekko* include *mamuli* (see fig 9) (ear pendants) and traditional Sumbanese houses (64).

Laboya and Wanokaka

Laboya is today a conservative, traditional area of West Sumba. The textiles found in this region are “almost entirely white” (66). Women’s *ye* may feature red, yellow, and black stripes, with a fringe dipped in indigo. Men’s *hanggi* have thin yellow and red stripes at the selvages,
with twined borders (66). As would be expected, women exclusively spin and weave; either sex may twine the borders. However, the task of plying and twisting the fringe falls exclusively into the men’s domain. Geirmaert notes that this process is similar to the traditionally masculine job of plying liana vines to make rope (1989:66). A particularly intriguing aspect of Laboyan textiles is the intentionally uneven treatment of the hanggi, which is constructed of two panels:

...the two halves of the textile are deliberately unequal in size. One panel is always slightly longer and wider than the other...Although the patterns are exactly the same for both parts, the threads tend to be tamped more firmly in one panel than in the other; hence the height of the twined border is greater on one side...before the two panels of the hanggi are sewn together, one of them is turned over. As a result one side of the twined border is the inverse image of the other: white diamonds, for instance, become black...it is explicitly stated that the largest panel with the widest kailb 'ra represents a man while the smaller one is a woman (66).

This asymmetry is not a feature of the ye, which are consistently placed at a lower market value than the hanggi (67). To date, there is no tradition of lambelekko in Laboya/Wanokaka. However, there is a growing tradition of ikat in this region.

Memboro

The traditionally monochrome, plain cloth textiles of Memboro are best known for their tufted embroidery. The embroidery, executed in familiar motifs such as horses and shrimp, is performed by men (68). Human figures were proscribed (68). The cloths are traditionally either white or black, with embroidery along the seams to make the piece more attractive (68). The only other means of decoration is twined borders, which in the past were the strictly enforced reserve of the nobility (68). The twining, ideally executed in red thread, depicted motifs borrowed from East Sumba (68). Female members of the nobility were also known to add a beaded border at the bottom of their skirts (68). A final peculiarity of Memboronese textiles is the composition of the ye: while it is a tubular skirt as with the rest of West Sumba, it is
constructed from three panels, rather than two, the mode of construction in the rest of West Sumba. This composition is similar to the Endenese of Flores, with whom the people of Memboro are in regular contact (68). In fact, Endehnese sarongs often appear at ceremonial gatherings. Neither ikat nor lambelekko are produced in Memboro (68).

**Kodi**

According to Geirmaert (1989:68), “Textiles from Kodi exhibit the greatest textile variety in all of West Sumba, particularly in female dress”. The Kodinese favor thinner textiles, as opposed to Lolinese who favor thicker cloths: “Weavers from other regions...deliberately choose the thinner version because they do not want to imitate Lolinese exuberance which they judge as being pure arrogance”14 (64). While the previously discussed regions often feature plain, white textiles, Kodinese cloths are often dark and ikatted (69).

One variety of hanggi is the hanggi gundu that is predominantly dyed with indigo, with only a few narrow colored bands (70). The lau gundu is the female counterpart to the hanggi gundu, with a similar restrained mode of decoration. A more recent innovation is the application of ikat to the borders.

In the past, ikat was the special reserve of the nobility. Women’s ikatted skirts, the wola, represent a dynamic and ever changing tradition in West Sumbanese weaving. Through time, both the shape and themes of motifs have been altered; in fact, it is a great challenge for Kodinese to remember how their women dressed even a few decades ago (69). Men’s tie-dyed textiles are called hanggi wola remba, which “represents a snake, usually a python, and it is a

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14Geirmaert (1989:58) notes that in the face of the unifying effects of Bahasa Indonesia, “Enmities that date from headhunting days are fading. Nevertheless old ties remain strong and at times matters of dress provide a way of expressing pride in one’s own group”. 

highly sacred textile” (68). This is a historically conservative textile, changing very little over
time.

Geirnaert (1989:70) hypothesizes that “all textiles in Kodi, both male and female, are
considered to be snake’s skins”. All other textiles are placed under some lesser snake category,
with the hanggi wola remba representing the python, the most supreme of all snakes on Sumba.
Geirnaert theorized that the sacred nature of this cloth has restricted much change over time
(1989:71). While the association of snakes and textiles is followed much less today than before,
the hanggi wola rembu is still the object of reverence, and is still today ideally handspun (71).

Again in an effort to contradict the Lolinese, the Kodinese style of lambelekko (which is
also the name of women’s modern skirts) “is a conscious reaction to the Lolinese lambelekko.
The warp is set up with only a single yarn instead of the two used in Loli, and the weft consists
of a double yarn instead of three as in Loli...Kodinese ladies readily laugh at the “pretentious”
Lolinese lambelekko and find their won far more exquisite” (71).

As was indicated in the above section, textiles convey much about the wearer. The
wearer’s social status and rank, as well as their ethnicity and gender are all revealed by their
clothing. It is in this manner that textiles provide a window into the Sumbanese systems of
political organization, which will be discussed in greater detail later in this paper.

USES OF TEXTILES ON SUMBA

Textiles have a variety of functions in all of Sumba. While one might suppose that shelter
from the elements is the primary significance of textiles in NTT, Adams suggests another theory.
Interestingly, “The Europeans formerly resident in Sumba stress that costume for the living is not
the foremost purpose of the decorated textiles. The handsomest cloths are carefully kept for
dressing the dead and for giving as gifts” (Adams 1969:156). This quote is extremely revealing. The position of cloth in Sumbanese ritual is one of immense importance, as will be discussed later in the paper. The ritual significance of cloth is what justifies “...the incredible amount of time Indonesian women spent preparing fibers, collecting natural dyestuffs, dyeing thread and fabrics and waving. These activities were a major part of the daily and seasonal rhythms of life” (Woolworth 1978:4).

Covering for the body, however, is still obviously an important function of cloth in NTT. Of course, Sumbanese do not always wear traditional dress. “As elsewhere in Indonesia”, writes Geirnaert (1989:62), “urban educated people wear Western clothes, but when they are invited to a ceremony in the desa [village], they take care to wear either a hanggi or a ye over the Western clothing. This is a sign of respect towards the hosts”.

Textiles serve a number of other important functions, functioning as objects of trade on Sumba. In fact, cloth was never outright bought on Sumba, but instead was traded as part of a complex system of exchange (Woolworth 1978:3). However, this is changing: Geirnaert (1989:77) writes of West Sumba, for instance, “The development of a market economy and the increasing demand for cash to pay taxes and school fees have encouraged men and women to look at textile production as a slight contribution to the family’s economy”. Income resulting from the sale of textiles usually goes to the woman (Hitchcock 1991:123). Aside from its economic benefits, weaving may function as a means to increase social standing, with a well-executed cloth evoking admiration (Van Gelder 1979:35).

Cloths are trade goods in the sense of bridal prestations, and are also exchanged for other goods. In eastern Sumba, for instance, textiles from the coastal lowlands are exchanged for staples with the highland peoples. Here again is an example of how these cloths function as
important markers of ethnic identity, in that they emphasize the distinction between highland people who do not have their own weaving traditions, and coastal peoples, who are very proud of their textiles. The exchange of textiles also has the important function of affirming kinship ties, exhibiting or asserting status, and may even be part of a blood price. As part of adat law, the payment of textiles helps “traditional charges to restore disturbed social equilibrium” (Therik 1989:18) and has the additional function of protecting against “natural disaster, bad luck, evil spirit and others” (Therik 1989:18) through the power of particular motifs.

On Sumba, textiles are literally in constant circulation (Alpert 1977:79). It is important to note that in these trade relationships, there is often an element of competition, especially concerning the exchange of textiles. The market economy is relatively new to the Sumbanese people, and they continue to practice their own special blend of capitalism.

Before investigating the cosmological significance of the motifs found in textiles, it is necessary to make a general review of the cosmological benchmarks of Eastern Indonesian cultures. This background information will provide insight into the marriage and funeral rituals to be discussed, as well as the place of textiles within these social and ritual systems. The relevance of the following themes will become clear throughout the paper, and it is important to keep them in mind during the course of this research.
NOTES ON EASTERN INDONESIAN COSMOLOGY

Relationship with the Creator and the Spirits/Ancestors¹⁵

In general, the people of Eastern Indonesia have much closer relationships with their ancestors than their Creator figure. The Creator is rarely addressed directly in ritual or daily life; the relationship may be generalized as distant, with undertones of fear on the part of the people.

The Sumbanese are no exception to this pattern. In Rindi (an East Sumbanese traditional domain), the Creator is referred to as ‘the one whose name is not mentioned, whose title is not uttered’, or ‘the silent and the still, the obscure and the dark’ (Forth 1981:84).

Ambiguity of gender

Another gloss for the Creator in Rindi is ‘the common, communal mother and father’ (Forth 1981:83). Further, the most common way of referring to the Creator is ‘the one who makes and the one who plaits’ (Forth 1981:201). These refer to both male and female activities, as Forth notes. ‘Making’ refers to male labors such as raising livestock, while ‘plaiting’ is a reference to the female activity of plaiting baskets (Forth 1981:84). This concept is closely related to the male/female dualisms and ideas of totality which permeate Eastern Indonesian societies, as will be discussed below.

The relationships of the people with the ancestors and spirits¹⁶ in Austronesia tend to be much closer. As with other Austronesian societies, Sumbanese spirits (marapu) fall into a multitude of categories. Sumbanese, as with other Austronesian peoples, are very concerned with ideas of continuity. Common themes linked to ancestor beliefs include ideas of protection and life-generating potential, as well as danger and punishment. Associated with these notions are

¹⁵For a discussion of Sumbanese relationships with God and with the ancestors, see Rindi: An Ethnographic Study of a Traditional Domain in Eastern Sumba by Gregory Forth (1981).
¹⁶For a discussion of Eastern Indonesian spirit categories, see Forth’s (1998) Beneath the Volcano.
ideas of 'inside' versus 'outside' spirits, and the transformation from one to the other.

Maintaining relationships with the ancestors is crucial in ensuring the continuity of the group. This is done through sacrifice and maintenance of ancestral 'landmarks', such as tombs, ancestral houses, etc., and through recognition in such ceremonies as marriages and funerals.

The concern for continuity is not entirely one-sided. On Sumba, for instance, a man traditionally 'sought a name' for himself so that he would be remembered by his survivors in perpetuity. This was traditionally accomplished through headhunting. Headhunting has been replaced today with a system of competitive feasting on Sumba, through which men still seek a name. This seeking of a name is an essential component of Sumbanese social structure, particularly in West Sumba; this quest for prestige and remembrance inspires the actions of many Sumbanese.

*Ancestral Spirits*

Eastern Indonesian societies adhere to beliefs in the notion of a separable soul, which leaves the body during sleep, trance, illness, and death. A 'soul' that wants to remain near the village after death presents a great danger to the living, and exorcistic rituals are very common. Any dealings with the spirit realm is fraught with danger. Ideas of spiritual danger permeate the hierarchy of villages. For example, ritual doubles, who also happen to be slaves, are often called upon to stand in for a noble person during rituals. The ritual double dons the clothing of the noble and acts as if he or she were the noble person. If the spirits become jealous, their anger will be directed toward the ritual double.

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17 Further information on headhunting may be found in *Headhunting and the Social Imagination in Southeast Asia* by Janet Hoskins (1996).
Dualisms

Many aspects of Austronesian cosmology may be categorized as ‘dualisms’\(^{18}\). Ideas of totality and complementarity are the bedrock of Eastern Indonesian cosmologies. The following is a cursory look at some of the more central dualisms found in Austronesian societies, which relate to textiles and the ritual system:

*Sacred and profane:* Durkheim’s famous schema in which he opposed the sacred and profane certainly does not hold up when looked at with a view to Austronesian societies. These cultures represent a way of life that is intimately linked with the ‘spirit realm’. Spirits are everywhere, and there is no sharp division between ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ life.

*Heat and coolness:* The concept of heat and coolness is another distinguishing aspect of Austronesia. Heat is associated with danger; a ‘bad’ death is also referred to as a ‘hot’ death. In Sumba, the skull tree is said to steam with rage when it needs a new head; cloth, on the other hand, has a cooling effect.

*Right and left:* The right is associated with masculinity and the world of the living, while the left is associated with femininity and the world of the dead. As will be discussed further in the paper, in Sumbanese funerals, for example, the clothing of the deceased is tied to the left, whereas in life, it is tied to the right.

*Male and female:* Gender is a central issue in traditional Austronesian cultures. This is strongly tied to notions of precedence in both daily and ritual life. Many objects have gender associations, and often occur in male/female or husband/wife pairs. Associated motifs are also loaded with gender symbolism. The idea of ‘completeness’ requiring the presence of both genders is

\(^{18}\)References to such dualisms are quite common in ritual speech. See Webb Keane’s (1997) *Signs of Recognition* or *Power in Performance* by Joel Kuipers (1990) for discussions of Sumbanese ritual language.
illustrated in the Sumbanese conception of the Creator as both male and female. This is a very common dualism in Austronesia, with many objects given gender classification. Pigs and textiles are considered symbolically feminine, while water buffalo and metal objects are symbolically valued as masculine. Certain activities are given genders, as well. Weaving is seen as a female activity, while headhunting is a male activity. The spirits are, again, categorically female. Additional dualisms include (but are not limited to) purity/impurity, above/below, trunk/tip, a classification often referring to ancestral clans, and head/tail, a classification often referring to the layout of a village.

SUMBANESE SOCIETY

This section will focus on the social use of traditional textiles in the following two areas: the political construction of East and West Sumba and its accompanying type of social stratification, and the sexual division of labor and knowledge; all of these topics are very closely related to Sumbanese textiles, as will be illustrated below. In fact, it is nearly impossible to discuss Sumbanese textiles without reference to Sumbanese social structure. In the course of this discussion, the significance of particular textile motifs regarding Sumbanese social organization will come to light.

Three determinants of status exist on Sumba: “descent, ritual precedence and the acquisition of wealth objects through exchange” (Hoskins 1988:120). Among the determinants of ritual precedence are heirloom goods, which of course include textiles (Hoskins 1988:120).

Kahlenberg (1977:8) writes of Indonesian social organization, “The primary social and political organization is the clan, which is divided into distinct rank groups of “nobles”,
“freemen”, and “slaves”. This type of organization is present in Sumba; while slavery\textsuperscript{19} as an institution no longer formally exists, the stigma of being descended of a landless slave family is still very much alive. Forth estimates that “Almost half of the people in domains such as Rindi are descended from slaves, once bought and sold by their masters, and still living in a relationship of economic dependency” (Hoskins 1988:123).

Within the clan are many ‘houses’; Hoskins (1988:124) defines a ‘house’ as: “a complex unit made up of a core of the descendants of a single patrilineal ancestor, in-marrying women, and slaves and dependents”. Houses are united by a “widespread system of affinal ties which form the backbone of the Sumbanese political and religious organization” (Hoskins 1988:131). Additionally, “These ties are dramatically re-enacted at alliance exchanges which accompany weddings, funerals, feasts and the transfer of land or property. Ancestral spirits are addressed on these occasions, valuable textiles and jewelry are displayed, and sacrifices are offered to secure their blessings” (Hoskins 1988:131). The exchange of textiles is an essential element of affirming these affinal ties. Clans and notions of continuity are often depicted through botanical metaphor in ritual speech (Hoskins 1988:120); botanical symbolism, especially the cassava liana vine, is very common in textiles.

Generally speaking, West Sumba may be characterized as a more open society in which status is achieved, rather than ascribed, through a complex system of competitive feasting and exchange (Hoskins 1988:124). This competitive feasting, compared to the potlatches of the Northwest Coast by many scholars (see Hoskins 1988, Gittinger 1979) is a replacement for

\textsuperscript{19}Eastern Indonesian slavery, in its many forms, is a fascinating institution. Traditionally, slaves were cared for as if they were their master’s own children: for example, they were allotted land to work, and their bridewealths were taken care of by their masters (Molnar, personal communication, December 6, 2000). For a history of colonial-era slavery on Sumba, see Sumba and the Slave Trade by Rodney Needham (1983).
headhunting\textsuperscript{20}, the traditional means of attaining status until the early 1900s. West Sumba was characterized as “a state of endemic war and headhunting in pre-colonial times” (Hoskins 1988:123). Hoskins (1988:124) writes of West Sumba as being “competitive and achievement-oriented”. In West Sumba, it may be said that the acquisition and display of wealth attained through exchange relationships, including fine textiles, is a way to attain status, rather than to display it.

The more culturally homogenous East Sumba is characterized by a rigid social structure, in which status is ascribed, rather than achieved. Hoskins (1988:123) writes, “Ownership of herds of horses and cattle and the few irrigated rice fields is controlled by the nobility, a small and diminishing elite who also control the marriages and funerals of the commoner population because of their exclusive ownership of the wealth which circulates in exchanges”.

The distinction between the social organization on the two halves of the island is well-illustrated by the treatment of heirloom goods; Hoskins (1988:134) treats this subject in her discussion of the distinction between ‘relic’ and ‘regalia’. She writes:

Relic is used...in the sense of an object cherished for its associations with an exceptional person, place or event; a relic is thus a physical mnemonic and even substitute for a narrative history. Regalia, on the other hand, are the distinguishing symbols or rank, office, order and social class. Most regalia are, of course, also relics, because they derive their importance from a past history of events, but their splendid appearance and craftsmanship is also seen as a marker of aristocratic rank.

Given the nature of West and East Sumbanese societies, it comes as no surprise that goods in West Sumba take on the role of relic, while in East Sumba, they are conceived as regalia. Take, for example, the \textit{mamuli}—a metal (usually gold) object exchanged as part of

\textsuperscript{20}Headhunting was a means of procuring the spiritual ‘essence’ of an enemy, perceived as a sort of wealth, which in turn influenced the fertility of the headhunter’s fields (Molnar, personal communication, December 6, 2000).
bridewealth and displayed during ritual occasions; as the counterpart to textiles in marriage exchanges, the mamuli motif had quite a prominent place in Sumbanese textiles.

The treatment of mamuli is very revealing of the social climate in which they exist. In the more flexible and dynamic societies of West Sumba, mamuli are frequently taken down and worn/displayed on ritual occasions, since:

...a more individualistic and shifting social system has created a social climate where wearing and displaying valuables identifies the wearer with their power. No ritual substitutes are used to act out public dramas for the audience at feasts, and the owners of gold valuables themselves dance out in front of the spectators decked out in all their finery. The ostentatious display of wealth objects legitimates the position of the house which has acquired it, showing a charismatic power to attract and hold onto valuables. In a more competitive system of feasting and exchange, the valuable-as-displayed wealth establishes status rather than simply demonstrating it, since prestige and social ran are defined by wealth and accomplishments, not merely descent. (Hoskins 1988:135).

The mamuli (worn as pendants or as earrings) are very dangerous to the wearer, because they are infused with “heat”, being so closely connected to the ancestors. In rigidly stratified East Sumba, a “name slave” will take the part of ritual doubles by wearing the mamuli on behalf of the noble person, by “diffusing the “heat” of the sacred object onto his or her own less significant person” (Hoskins 1988:134). These precious objects are rarely removed from the lofts of houses, “Since these valuables are part of the hidden but widely known regalia of the nobility, they do not have to be shown to outsiders to represent the authority of their owners” (Hoskins 1988:135).

Textiles have a conspicuous place within these systems; O’Neil (1976:13) writes, “can be seen as definers of social relations and particularly as the means of signifying status, position and wealth”. Textiles are an excellent marker of status. The following are some examples of how this is so:
Across NTT,

Cloths are important symbols of social prestige and power in the cultures of these islands. Ownership, in terms of both quantity and quality, typically indicates higher social rank in a community. Obtaining the cotton or silks and the dyeing and weaving especially of better quality cloths involves considerable funds, a great amount of time, and requires highly specialized knowledge and skills. A family must be wealthy to undertake these tasks itself, to purchase the product form others or have the power to obtain cloths through adat (customary) gift exchange (Moss 1979:63).

Sumba is no exception to this rule. Historically, the production of weaving was strictly under the domain of noble Sumbanese women (both East and West). “Not surprisingly”, writes Warming (1981:78):

> the most exquisite textiles are owned by the kings and nobles. The scarcity of materials, especially dyestuffs, needed for making warp ikat cloths is one factor that naturally limits the number of people that can weave good-quality cloth. The upper classes, by virtue of their wealth and status, have access to the best materials, and this shows in the superior color of their weavings. The women of the royal families and the nobility also have time to devote to weaving since they do not have to work in the fields. They use this time to experiment and refine their skills, and if the need arises, they can call on the most skillful weavers in their area to help them make their cloth. Generally, then, the textiles made by the upper-class women are technically finer than those of the common people”.

While the bulk of their traditional power has been removed, both under the Dutch and Indonesian realms, Sumbanese nobility still hold sway over the world of Sumba. Adams writes of traditional leaders that, “People still regard the traditional ruler with awe and fear as a mortal possessed of super-human powers” (1971:31). As an extension of this, the Sumbanese nobility still holds sway over the world of textiles, as well. Geimaert notes that female descendants of former West Sumbanese traditional leaders are today key figures in determining the latest fashions (1989:58).
Not only was the production of textiles under the domain of nobility, but particular motifs and modes of decoration were, as well. Restrictions were placed in all of Sumba on women’s sarongs decorated with supplementary warp, and in East Sumba on ikat-decorated textiles; these were the special reserve of the nobility and royalty (Warming 1981:78). Further restrictions relate to the hinggi kombu of East Sumba- these were the special reserve of the king, his retainers, and his slaves (Warming 1981:79). Adams (1971:31) writes of traditional Sumbanese kings that, “He is considered the direct heir of a great Deity who, with his servants and noble companions, descended from the heavens to the island of Sumba, bringing with him the complex and rigid rules by which the society is ordered”. The punishment for wearing clothing reserved for upper class was severe- anyone caught wearing royal clothing was promptly executed. With Dutch interference in local politics and a booming export trade in textiles in the 1920s, the traditional kings saw their power greatly diminishing and the sanctions on textiles were eventually lifted; today, men of all ranks wear hinggi kombu (Warming 1981:79).

Two of the motifs traditionally associated with East Sumbanese nobility are the rampant lions and patola designs. It is no coincidence that these are foreign motifs- as Hoskins feels that the use of foreign concepts and ideas was traditionally a means of legitimizing one’s power in Sumbanese society (1993:29). Textiles with the patola motif, required in all royal rituals, are so closely linked with notions of authority that its name is actually incorporated into the formal title of East Sumbanese nobility: hunda rangga ru patola (Adams 1971:33).

It should be noted that adoption of foreign motifs by the aristocracy was not at all arbitrary. While it was noted above that foreign things impart legitimacy to Sumbanese leaders, the explanation may be deeper than this- there is a logic to the adoption of foreign motifs.
Adams cites a case in which a piece of Chinese porcelain (again, such pieces have been shown to have influenced Sumbanese textile design) was adopted as a piece of royal treasure. The scene on the piece depicts the very common ‘willow’ pattern. This particular piece showed a complex scene of Chinese buildings, costumes and a bridge over a stream. In explaining why the plate served as the most sacred serving dish for the Ancestor Deities of the community, an Elder traced over the narrow jagged lines of a fence in the lower right section of the plate, saying, “There, the eight stages of the journey (from the Upperworld) of the Ancestor Deities,” and completely ignored the rest of the designs (Adams 1971:34, footnote 3).

When asked to identify motifs on textiles whether they be indigenous or foreign, Adams found that Sumbanese typically referred to the motif as ‘royal’; for instance, the ‘royal deer’ motif, or the ‘royal horse’ motif (1971:30-31). Adams supplies three reasons why all motifs on hinggi are considered ‘royal’. First of all, she writes, “For everyone in the community, the designs in these colorful luxury cloths are symbols of royal prestige. This is their broadest, most inclusive meaning, the most commonly heard reference made by persons of all classes in identifying the designs” (1971:30). Adams (1971:30) found that it is the “character of the forms” represented on the textiles which impart their royal standing; “...the Sumbanese translate special qualities of phenomena such as large size, unusual features or high degree of complexity as signs of the ‘supra-ordinary powers of royalty’ maramba and the ‘ruler’ na maramba at its summit” (30). Therefore, she continues,

Large horse figures will be referred to as ndjara maramba ‘royal horses’ meaning the extra-fine ones which are put in the service of the king who formally owns all the livestock in his district. In the same way, the human figures which are first identified as humans are then said to represent ‘servants’ ata, because the king is characterized by his dominion over many servants and because all persons in the district will claim to be ‘servants’ of the king (31).
The second reason involves the elements of royal ritual depicted on textiles, and the third is related to the deliberate adoption of prestige symbols, such as rampant lions or the *patola*, into the textiles (Adams 1971:32).

Even the layout of textiles is related to the social order. East Sumbanese *hinggi* provide an excellent example of this:

Each *hinggi* has three to five bands arranged to the top and to the bottom of a single center band. Sumbanese say these horizontal bands in which the animal and human figures appear represent the layout of the traditional Sumbanese village. The king lives in the center of the village, surrounded by his nobles, who are in turn encircled by the commoners, while slaves live on the outer edge...The center section of a *hinggi*, like the center of the village, is thus reserved for royalty, while the bands on both the top and bottom...represent the other social classes- nobles, commoners, and near the fringe, slaves (Warming 1981:82).

It is important to note, however, that while "Animal figures almost always appear in the top and bottom bands...the choice of animal has no relation to the class the band represents" (Warming 1981:82). As has already been noted, Sumbanese men wear a second *hinggi*, over one shoulder, on special occasions. Warming (1981:82) notes that "When East Sumbanese men wear the second *hinggi* of a pair they are careful to keep the center [the band associated with royalty] at the highest point over their right shoulder to show respect for their king".

It must be pointed out that although the bulk of their formal power was dissolved by the Indonesian government, Sumbanese nobility still exert immense influence on the daily affairs of Sumbanese people. A good example of this comes from Geirnaert’s writings concerning the textiles of West Sumba; she provides an anecdote concerning "...how powerful matters of hierarchy can be in all Sumbanese social relationships, including those that play a part in the teaching and learning processes" (1979:74). The story concerns a noblewoman from East Sumba, who claims to have spread the East Sumbanese method of supplementary warp into
West Sumba. This woman’s claims were found by Geirnaert (1989:74) to be untrue, as the author had met a West Sumbanese woman who knew the technique prior to the noblewoman’s visit; “Curiously...she did not refute the noblewoman’s claim to have introduced it [the East Sumbanese method of supplementary warp]...The illustrates a general unwillingness among West Sumbanese women to dispute a noble person’s statements”.

The largely conservative supplementary warp patterns fall under the domain of noblewomen on Sumba. These patterns, which are the exclusive reserve of noble women’s skirts, are the foci of an extremely interesting method of inheritance. Due to the immense complexity and difficulty in executing East Sumbanese supplementary warp, special models are created as guides for the weavers- “The schematic design is executed with reeds as weft and cotton string as warp. On the loom, the weaver inserts similar reeds into warp strands in order to guide the weaving of designs in royal women’s skirts” (Adams 1971:33, caption 6). Warming (1981:136) writes, “Sumbanese say that the lau pahekung is a very old type of weaving and that its motifs have not changed since ancient times...Each generation of weavers copies the figures on the model exactly, adding none of the individual variations that enliven Sumbanese ikat cloths”. These models are “kept carefully guarded in royal houses, and knowledge of the technique is limited to a few noblewomen and their assistants...When a noblewoman dies, her models are distributed among her royal kinsmen” (Adams 1971:33).

While motifs and quality of weaving are indicators of status, so, too, is the manner in which a piece is worn. All across East Sumba and growing more common in West Sumba is the fact that “...the length of the front flap [of a man’s cloth] indicates the wearer’s status. For the high nobility it nearly sweeps the ground, whereas for commoners it should not hang below the calf” (Warming 1981:61).
Another topic which falls under the realm of social organization is that of the sexual division of labor and knowledge—two themes which are intimately linked with the production of textiles on Sumba. Regarding sexual division of labor, women typically have every task associated with producing textiles. While it is not uncommon in NTT for the men to craft the weaving implements themselves, “weaving in Southeast Asia is universally woman’s work. In Sumba during the nineteenth century, women even planted and harvested the cotton for spinning” (Solyom 1973:8). Producing textiles is so closely connected with femininity in NTT that textiles are themselves valued as symbolically female.

The masculine counterparts to weaving include headhunting and especially metalwork. While this point will be expanded upon in more detail in the following sections, it is perhaps appropriate at this point to recount an Iban myth regarding the femininity of textiles versus the masculinity of metalwork: “When Salampandai, the creator god, fashions human beings from clay, each is asked to decide between a sword and a spinning wheel. Those who choose the sword become men, and those who choose the spinning wheel are created women” (Solyom 1973:10).

There are two branches of esoteric knowledge associated with textile production on Sumba: symbolism and herbal medicine.

It was shown earlier how Savunese women transmit secret, esoteric knowledge through their textiles; this knowledge of kinship is passed through the generations via cloth—men never learn the secrets woven into Savunese textiles. On Sumba, however, it is the men who have the deep understanding of the symbols found in the textiles.

Geirnaert notes that in West Sumba, the women understand the practicalities of weaving—both the techniques of, and the taboos behind, textile production. However, “no matter how old
they were, women were unable to tackle the topic of the symbolic significance of textiles. This particular subject could be discussed with men only” (Geirmaert 1989:77). This can best be explained in reference to the cosmological concepts of the Sumbanese people, and is related to the complementary, but conflicting, ideas of life and death. It will be shown that many of the motifs found in textiles have profound reference to matters of the afterlife and of ancestors. Knowledge of the afterlife is opposed to ideas of continuity and fertility, which fall into the sphere of women. Men fear that exposure to the esoteric knowledge pertaining to death and ancestors will negate the women’s life-giving potential; therefore, for their own protection and that of the lineage, men shield women from such dangerous knowledge (Geirmaert 1989:77) This is why, Geirmaert (1989:77) explains, “Female textiles are less related to cosmological themes”. Additionally, “This may be one reason why female textiles have undergone a renewal which was thought to be too dangerous for male cloths”, male cloths being extremely conservative (Geirmaert 1989:77-78).

While death may belong in the domain of men, life and continuity fall into the sphere of women. The women of Sumba control their own esoteric knowledge. In Sumba, indigo is far more than just a dyestuff. The indigo dye bath smells like a rotting corpse (Hoskins 1988:132) and is surrounded by a number of taboos, as it is thought to be polluting. However, this plant also represents a powerful method of control to the women who understand its properties:

The secrets of indigo dyeing can be interpreted as part of an occult tradition of female resistance to the forcible alienation of the products of their labors. There is an undercurrent of resentment to losing daughters, cloths and powers to the male world. By developing an expertise in textile dyeing which also involves herbal preparations which permit control over menstrual bleeding, contraception, abortion and miscarriages, women show that they can exclude men from a domain which is their own. What to men is a fearful and polluting activity becomes for older women a way to regain control over their own destinies, and also often a source of additional wealth (Hoskins 1988:132).
Below are some of the many motifs found in textiles which pertain to the social organization of Sumbanese societies. The following motifs depict many of the ideas discussed above, such as headhunting, gender, and notions of royalty.

**MOTIF**

- *patola ratu* and rampant lions

**SIGNIFICANCE**

- In keeping with the theme of prestige items having a foreign origin, the rampant lions are derived from objects of Dutch heraldry. Additionally, Sumbanese say that the *patola* motif “was brought by their ancestors when they came from foreign countries” (Therik 1989:90).

- *mamuli*

**SIGNIFICANCE**

- These objects convey totality as it relates to gender. While the mamuli explicitly represents femininity, it is crafted from metal, a symbolically masculine material.

- *human figures*

**SIGNIFICANCE**

- Adams (1971) notes that all humans are said to be ‘servants of the king’; the human figures represented in Sumbanese textiles are often *marupu*, or ancestors—the Sumbanese aristocracy claims to be directly descended from the founding ancestors. In addition to these figures, “Behind such groups loom the outlines of ancestors, shadowy faces and figures somewhere between the forces of the visible and the invisible. These are not unlike *Marupu*, the great spirits or deities with innumerable forms and faces that inhabit every aspect of the Sumbanese world” (Alpert 1977:80).

- *skull tree*

**SIGNIFICANCE**

- Traditionally, headhunting was the most common means of attaining status in West Sumba, and of affirming status in East Sumba. Headhunting was traditional revenge for horse theft (Therik 1989:86).

- *horses*

**SIGNIFICANCE**

- Horses were the exclusive reserve of Sumbanese aristocracy. Hoskins (1988:125) notes that, “Depictions of
horses always include the tail trimmed to stand erect, which is a mark of the stallions used in races and warfare”. Horse racing is an activity of the elite, being either a mechanism to display or achieve social status. Especially in East Sumba, horses equal wealth (Warming 1981:80).

- water buffalo

These animals were again the exclusive reserve of the nobility, and were slaughtered at funerals for maramba, or the nobility (Therik 1989:88)

- deer

Once plentiful on Sumba, these animals were at one time hunted exclusively by the elite (Therik 1989).

- hunting dogs

Favorites dogs were traditionally ritually slain upon death of king (Alpert 1977:80)

- turtle

According to Hoskins (1988:120), turtles are associated with the ruling class; their “Leadership abilities associated with the turtle include wisdom, diplomacy and especially seniority, since the turtle is one of the oldest animals in the sea”.

- crocodile

Warming (1981:82) writes, “The most dangerous animal found on Sumba, the crocodile, is also connected with royalty and with the afterlife. Since the king was considered all-powerful, he could be as brave and dangerous as the crocodile when provoked”.

- fish

According to Therik, flat fish that are displayed in profile view with both eyes visible represent human spirits and tribal founders; this fish is not eaten (1989:84)

- sea worms

Sea worms are harvested during annual rituals; the troughs in which they are
stored are kept in the lofts of “important houses” (Hoskins 1988:135).

• cockatoo
• This is an “aristocratic symbol”, according to Alpert (1977:82); this has to do with its “beautiful crest and swift, destructive beak” (Adams 1971:32).

SYMBOLIC ANALYSIS

Now that we have considered the large role of textiles in Indonesian social life, and have become familiar with some of the social implications of various motifs, I will turn to the examination of two Sumbanese rituals. A knowledge of Sumbanese social organization is invaluable in attempting to gain an understanding of the local ritual system, including rules of ritual precedence which are directly derived from the social organization of the groups in question. Rituals, in enacting a society’s cosmological concepts, are significant in the interpretation of the motifs found in textiles. By addressing rituals which involve objects symbolized in textiles, we may gain great insight into the cosmological significance of these motifs.

For the analysis of Sumbanese textiles, it seemed natural to turn to Victor Tuner’s framework of symbolic analysis, which addresses ritual symbols. This form of analysis is particularly appropriate given the nature of Indonesian textiles, as these “contain symbolism pertinent” to rituals (Kahlenberg 1977:8).

In his classic book *The Forest of Symbols* (1967:19-47), Turner laid out his ideas regarding ritual symbolism, particularly in terms of dominant symbols. In this work, Turner
reveals the complexity of symbolic analysis and the many aspects of a ritual symbol which must be considered.

To understand Turner’s way of looking at ritual symbols, it is important to review his definition of both ritual and symbol. To Turner (1967:19), a ritual is “prescribed formal behavior for occasions not given over to technological routine, having reference to beliefs in mystical beings or powers”. He defined symbols as “the smallest unit of ritual which still retains the specific properties of ritual behavior...the ultimate unit of specific structure in a ritual context” (1967:19). Turner notes that ritual symbols become a factor in social action (1967:20); symbols he encountered among the Ndembu (an African tribe), “were, empirically, objects, activities, relationships, events, gestures, and spatial units in a ritual situation” (19).

Turner (1967:28) outlined three aspects of dominant ritual symbols: 1) condensation, in which “Many things and actions are represented in a single formation” 2) unification of disparate significata; the significata “are interconnected by virtue of their common possession of analogous qualities or by association in fact or thought. Such qualities or links of association may in themselves be quite trivial or random or widely distributed over a range of phenomena. Their very generality enables them to bracket together the most diverse ideas and phenomena” and 3) polarization of meaning, the two ‘poles’ being ‘ideological’ and ‘sensory’. Ritual symbols produce action; dominant symbols become the foci of interaction (Turner 1967:22). That is to say, “Groups mobilize around them, worship before them, perform other symbolic activities near them, and add other symbolic objects to them, often to make composite shrines” (Turner 1967:22).

Turner opposes instrumental symbols and dominant symbols. An instrumental symbol “must be seen in terms of its wider context, i.e., in terms of the total system of symbols which
makes up a given kind of ritual. Each kind of ritual has its specific mode of interrelating symbols. This mode is often dependent upon the ostensible purposes of that kind of ritual” (1967:32). On the other hand, dominant symbols are symbols that not only stand for the fulfillment of the ritual, but also refer to values that are regarded as ends in themselves- they posses, in Turner’s words, a sort of autonomy (1967:20).

Three classes of data are useful to the anthropologist in analyzing ritual symbols: “external form and observable characteristics”, the local exegesis, and “significant contexts largely worked out by the anthropologist” (1967:20). All three classes of data were utilized in this research, whenever possible.

The complexity of symbolic analysis is apparent throughout The Forest of Symbols, and it becomes clear that many additional aspects of symbols must be considered for this type of analysis to be complete. For instance, Turner writes that “Some of the meanings of important symbols may themselves be symbols, each with its own system of meanings” (1967:21). He also states that “the symbol is an independent force which is itself a product of many opposed forces (1967:45), and advises the treatment of symbols as ‘dynamic factors’ and not ‘timeless entities’ (1967:44). Additionally, it is important to not treat symbols as objects only (1967:44), and it is imperative to consider their exact ritual context (1967:45). Many “levels” of interpretation, as well as “behavior directed toward each symbol” (1967:45) must be considered, as well. Finally, Turner (1967:29) wrote that “it has long been recognized in anthropological literature that ritual symbols are stimuli of emotion” and that it is “...possible, and indeed necessary, to analyze symbols in a context of observed emotions” (1967:39). However, Turner did warn that as these emotions are “often associated with the mimesis of interpersonal and intergroup conflict, such
emotions and acts of behavior obtain no place among the official, verbal meanings attributed to such dominant symbols” (1967:39).

I decided to examine two rituals which effect every Sumbanese: marriages and funerals, as these pertain to textile motifs as dominant symbols. During the course of research, it became clear that these two ceremonies exhibit remarkable parallels. The marriage and funeral ceremonies of the noble class will be focused on in the following sections. This is because these tend to have a greater amount of trappings of symbolic value, which will add to the symbolic analysis. As Forth points out in reference to such extras, “As with the other special funerary customs of the nobles...these usages indicated no more than an elaboration of certain themes common to all funerals, and not any systematic difference in ideology concerning death or the fate of the dead between the social classes” (1981:199).

**MARRIAGE**

The relationship between cloth and marriage on Sumba is a close one. In fact, before she may marry, a girl must show competency in weaving (see, for example, Geirnaert-Martin 1992:114): “Before she marries, a girl has to know the arts of plaiting, spinning and weaving. As long as a young woman does not master these techniques, she is considered as unmarriageable; one of the wife’s principle duties is to “make a supply of cloths to be given to her husband's wife-takers whenever there is a funeral, a wedding or any other festive occasion” (Geirnaert-Martin 1992:115). When mothers are angry, they scold their daughters by saying that ‘they will never be able to make their own cloths nor feed their own pigs’; this is a Laboya equivalent for being a ‘good for nothing’ (Geirnaert-Martin 1992:114).
In the initial marriage negotiations, the go-between representing the groom is referred to as wunang—literally, “the heddle of the loom” (Adams 1969:50). If the man’s offer is accepted by the woman’s parents, “they offer...a textile called “the tying together, the connecting cloth,” as follows: one hinggi, men’s cloth, and one lau, women’s cloth” (Adams 1969:50).

Two themes that are strongly represented in marriage rites are continuity and male/female opposition and complementarity. Before the actual marriage, the affines of the couple undergo intense negotiations in which marriage prestations are determined. In a society with a still-developing market economy, “Exchange relations are the major focus of Sumbanese interest...Labor, services, women, food, and goods are exchanged between interacting social groups. For most of these exchanges, marriage determines the participants, structures their relations, and fixes the character of the exchange. Marriage provides the archetypal pattern for exchange (Adams 1969:47); textiles, as it will be shown, play a major role in such exchange.

The groom’s family always presents ‘male’ gifts, including horses, water buffalo, slaves, and metal goods, (especially mamuli, but also including weapons, jewelry). Mamuli, it will be remembered, are one of the most common motifs in Sumbanese textiles. The counterprestations of the bride’s family include gifts traditionally valued as ‘female’, including textiles, beadwork, ivory bracelets, porcelain, pigs, and ‘personal attendants’ (Adams 1969:46, Hoskins 1988:126). As in most ritual occasions, adat impresses “threshold quantities” on goods to be exchanged (Adams 1969:48). In marriage, “the number of mamuli and textiles is set at eight. The number eight connotes completeness” (Adams 1969:48). Additionally, “In negotiations concerning the exchanges, the groom cannot be asked for higher quantities than the adat requires; on the other hand, his not being able to supply adat quantities is a legitimate basis for breaking off the plans for marriage” (Adams 1969:48). Additionally, “Even numbers, like in the case of textiles, evoke
the conjunction of male and female elements, plenitude and coolness that lead to fertility and regeneration” (Geirnaert-Martin 1992:143).

The male goods are frequently depicted in Sumbanese women's cloth, and female motifs are found on men’s cloths. The depiction of female goods in female textiles was formerly tabooed. At first glance, the prohibition of representing female goods on female textiles makes little sense. However, it is important to keep in mind the principles of duality and complementarity present in Sumbanese culture. As Hoskins (1988:129) writes,

...textiles present icons of the male goods exchanged in order to obtain a wife (livestock, weapons, mamuli), and in both areas [East and West Sumba] it is taboo to depict pigs, ivory bracelets, clothing or other female goods on the textiles. Like the mamuli, the textile encapsulates the pattern of exchanges of which it is part: male cloths are covered with the omega shaped emblems of female sexuality, while female sarongs are spotted with the buffalo eye and horse's tail of the groom’s marriage gifts. The two can exist only in tandem, as part of a balanced transaction, so that each partial image reminds the owner of its missing counterpart.

To simplify the above list of prestation and counterprestation, Adams (1969:46) writes, “The essential exchange is a gift of a metal object and a living creature, which calls forth a countergift of a cloth and a living creature”. Hoskins (1988:132-33) writes about this complementary gift set:

Cloth and the ephemeral transitions of the female life cycle are opposed to metal, which is associated with the male world of gold and iron valuables which are stored in lineage house attics. Swords, spears and knives are part of a sacred patrimony which is passed vertically, down through the generations of a single patrician, rather than horizontally, in marriage exchanges which follow the paths of women. The ancestry of men is traced through the ancestry of land and metal goods, which are described in a ritual couplet which recalls their invulnerability: indestructible wealth is “the cloth that does not tear, the pig that will not get sick”...forming a metaphoric skeleton of metal which symbolizes the immortality of the male descent group.

The vulnerability of cloth is linked to the vulnerability of women, exchanged along with textiles in return for metal goods. Like the sarongs that they produce the women are beautiful, but (in a world of frequent death in childbirth) often
poignantly fragile. They reproduce within the confines of their husband's lineage house, and create new descendants who will bear his clan name, and not their own.

One metal good in particular is especially important in this exchange- the *mamuli*, an omega-shaped gold pendant which is meant to represent female genitalia and is a central motif in male cloths, particularly in West Sumba. *Mamuli* are in constant circulation among marriage groups. They are presented by the groom's family to the bride's, with the intention of "replacing the girl's dark eyes" (Hoskins 1988:126), and substituting for her absence. In Kodi, West Sumba, there is always a *mamuli* exchanged that has special significance:

...the formal groom's payment must include one *mamuli* designated as "the pendant to pull out the floorboards." It is a specific compensation paid to the mother for the pain of childbirth, when the floorboards of the house are pulled out to allow the blood of delivery to flow out onto the floor. The sword and spear are called the "sword to open the way" and "the spear to guard the path"...since they assure the safety of the groom's party as they return home from the house of their new affines. The names given to these objects show how the exchanged goods themselves are believed to make the emotional trauma of separation easier to take, and assure their bearers of protection and safety on a dangerous journey (Hoskins 1988:127).

The *mamuli* is also a symbol of continuity. Given along with each *mamuli* are usually ten head of livestock (water buffalo or horses). The animals are always presented in pairs of male and female, thus ensuring continuity of these important animals. The *mamuli* itself, given that what it represents, symbolizes the female capacity for reproduction and "the generation of descendants and marriage ties in the system of ritual exchange which operates across the whole island" (Hoskins 1988:126). And while Sumbanese women and female valuables are seen as ephemeral, it is important to note that the *mamuli*, a symbol of womanhood itself, is created from metal- a material classified as 'indestructible', thus an emblem of continuity, as well. Additionally, "the same animals depicted on the textile bands are also found on the tips of
mamuli, symbolic representations of the power and authority of the wife-givers, portrayed as conventionally male” (Hoskins 1988:128). Adams notes that there are actually two variety of mamuli in East Sumba— one bare and unadorned which is valued as feminine, and the other decorated with the above creatures, which is valued as masculine (1969:48). Following the concept in which animals are presented in male/female pairs, so too are mamuli. Cloths follow this pattern, as well— both men’s and women’s cloths (ideally in equal numbers) will be presented by the family of the bride. (Adams 1969:40). The presence of both genders connotes totality, as shown in reference to the Creator figure in an earlier section concerning Eastern Indonesian cosmology. The Creator figure, it will be remembered, embodies both genders, and thus represents a state of completeness.

Mamuli also function as a “substitute for livestock” in affinal exchange during the marriage process (Hoskins 1993:193).

Additional symbolism of the mamuli also reveals more about the male/female opposition pair. The mamuli are often flanked by representations of animals, including horses, water buffaloes, roosters, cockatoos, pythons, and goats (Hoskins 1988:125). The presence of these male animals ensures totality by both sexes being represented. It must be noted that the figures flanking the mamuli are also prevalent in Sumbanese textiles. The significance of these animals is not to be ignored, as they give great insight into Sumbanese culture:

Depictions of horses always include the tail trimmed to stand erect, which is a mark of the stallions used in races and warfare. Sometimes, male warriors holding swords and shields are depicted, or the skull-tree where the heads of victims from inter regional headhunting raids are hung. These images can be interpreted as representations of the wealth and power of the men who give mamuli to acquire wives. Horses and buffaloes are used to pay bride price in marriage exchanges, and wild animals such as the python or cockatoo may be among the wild spirits of “powers of the earth and sea” who
magically help young men to build up a herd of livestock or succeed as warriors (Hoskins 1988:125).

The wearing of mamuli differs among the people of West and East Sumba:

In Rindi, East Sumba, mamuli paid for the bride are exactly matched against the textiles received from the wife-givers. On future ceremonial occasions, they will be worn by male descendants of the house, but never by the bride herself. In West Sumba, it is the bride herself who is adorned at the moment that she is brought out of her natal home to be presented to her new husband. At a Kodi wedding of wealth families, she will wear many layers of fine textiles, mamuli strung from gold chains around her neck, ivory bracelets, heirloom beads at the wrist, a tabelo crescent-shaped gold forehead ornament, and may possibly even be given a fine riding horse by her natal family (Hoskins 1988:127).

Hoskins (1988:126) describes the fascinating proceedings of an East Sumbanese marriage ceremony, involving the use of slaves as ritual doubles. This ritual of the nobility is particularly important, as it encapsulates several aspects of Sumbanese cosmology—ritualized combat, spirit danger, and social hierarchy; all are in some way related to textiles. Hoskins summarizes this phase of the marriage ceremony:

...the principle of ritual substitution is used in noble marriages, where the bride’s slave or personal servant is the “adorned one”...veiled and dressed in golden finery and ritually transferred to her new home on horseback. The “seizing” of the adorned substitute is marked by ritualized combat between the men who have come to take the bride and her female attendants, who pelt the intruders with garbage. Small additional payments of pendants and coins are thrown in their direction to placate them, and the bridal substitute is carried to the mount and eventually into her new home. During the period of dancing, sacrifices and festivities which follows, the bridal substitute must remain in seclusion, confined demurely inside her new husband’s home—while the actual bride may come and go as she pleases.

After this rite, two cloths are dedicated to the Marapu (ancestors), and “are not to be sold or taken away by anyone” (Adams 1996:52).

In both West and East Sumba, there is one specific action which seals marriage negotiations; this should be remembered when reading the section regarding funerals: “...the
The conclusion of marriage negotiations comes when the girl is moved from the inside, left side of the house (where she is still a member of her father’s household) to the outside, right veranda (where the guests are seated, and she joins them as a new member of their party). The seal of acceptance consists in metal goods—a sword and spear which are the “sacred pathway of alliance”...and bring news of the negotiations up to the ancestral spirits” (Hoskins 1988:127). In this part of the ritual, the bride is removed from the left, feminine half of the house to the right, which is valued as masculine (Forth 1981:377)—her transfer to her husband’s world is now complete.

RITUAL SYMBOLS

Examining textiles with a view to marriage reveals much about textiles and their place in the marriage rituals. Studying marriage with a view to textiles and motifs found therein, offers much insight into the nature of Sumbanese marriage rituals.

Textiles play essential roles in marriages, for example, as part of the exchange process, and as dressing for the ritual double. The importance of textiles to the new couple does not end after the ceremony; among the Laboya, “In the past, the first task of a newly married woman consisted of making a pair of hanggi for her husband and a pair of ye for herself” (Geirnaert-Martin 1992:144). Without this knowledge of weaving, it was traditionally inconceivable for a girl to become married.

Motifs found in these textiles pointed to numerous instrumental symbols which are found in the marriage ceremony. The principle motifs include buffalo, horses, mamuli, and liana vines, which carry the connotation of continuity.
I would argue that *mamuli*, a prominent motif in Sumbanese textiles, also represent a dominant symbol of Sumbanese marriage ceremonies, as they fit the three defining criteria of dominant symbols. The broad notion of marriage is condensed and represented in a concise way through the *mamuli*. A number of disparate significata are unified by the *mamuli*. These include: opposition to femininity as embodied by textiles; patriliny and ancestry; invulnerability; both masculinity and femininity, as it is a metal (and therefore male) object which takes the form of female genitalia; a substitute for the bride’s absence; continuity; the female capacity for reproduction; authority of the wife-givers; and the embodiment of spiritual heat and danger. The *mamuli* neatly polarizes the ideological and sensory aspects of marriage. It represents the continuity of the clan, and also functions as a ‘substitute’ for the daughter, thus acknowledging the bride’s family’s loss— that is, the emotional, sensory aspect of marriage. It can be seen, therefore, that while *mamuli* embody the fulfillment of the marriage ritual, they also represent values which are ends in themselves.

**FUNERALS**

The relationship between cloth and funerals on Sumba is unbreakable. In fact, among the royalty and nobility, the finest quality kain are often never worn or displayed, but put aside in anticipation of the funeral, to be wrapped around the corpse (Alpert 1977:80).

Cloths are in permanent circulation on Sumba, and “At the news of death, almost everyone who is related or even acquainted with the deceased will bring a gift of cloth to express sorrow” (Hoskins 1993:194). Adams (1969:156) explains in part the thought behind these sumptuous funerals: “The living feel obligated to bury the powerful members of the community as richly as possible, because otherwise the dead would be angry and cause much distress and
Textiles play a major role in funerals. Cloth has further functions in funeral rites; "...women are most identified with cloth...The dead of both sexes are "feminized" by being wrapped in a textile shroud, mourned by women's songs, and transformed into the invisible marapu spirits which dwell in the upper reaches of the lofts of Sumbanese houses" (Hoskins 1988:12). It should also be noted, however, that between the layers of cloth will be stuffed pieces of gold jewelry (Adams 1969:66), jewelry being a 'male' gift. A further function of textiles in funeral ceremonies is as a substitute for the corpse: "When a body is irrevocably lost (as in deaths through drowning), some of the person's belongings may be placed in the grave to represent the corpse- most often his betel pouch, accompanied by a weapon, headcloth, and some clothing" (Hoskins 1993:327).

Barnes (1989:17) writes of the relationship of textiles to funerals: "Cloths may be included to provide something to wear for the deceased in the next world, or they may be used to represent, in illustrated form, objects treasured by the ancestors: i.e., symbolically represent grave gifts. But apparently they also gather forces which help man to pass through rituals of transition". According to Adams (1969:66), the textiles are brought by the deceased to the afterworld, where they are "to be given out as gifts to relatives and friends". "...the decorated textiles linked with the dead maramba function both to identify him and to protect him against uncontrollable cosmic forces" (Adams 1969:166). Furthermore,

Before the corpse is buried, the soul remains in the vicinity of the dead man's residence, but after the funeral the soul goes on a trip to the afterworld. If the soul is not properly buried, it is refused entry to the afterworld; therefore it floats around and becomes a threat to the living. Important conditions for entry, examined by the ancestral pair or the guardian of the gate, are family ties and valuable possessions. Without sufficient danga- grave gifts in the form of horses, buffalo, gold ornaments, textiles and other valuables- the dead soul is sent away and must continue to wander about in the vicinity of the body (Adams 1969:156-57).
There is an explicit link between textiles and death in Sumba. Uncut, continuous warps represent continuity— the continuity of generations, of a people, of the island, and of one’s own life; “...to cut the unwoven part of the warp to make a flat cloth out of a tubular one is potentially a dangerous activity that may lead to death” (Geirmaert-Martin 1992:92).

A particularly fascinating aspect of Sumbanese funerals is the construction of tombs. These monuments vary in their degree of elaboration, but all are full of many motifs found in textiles.

Regarding tombs, the difference between East and West Sumbanese social organization appears once again. Here there is an important distinction between East and West Sumba:

In the east, the graves cannot be constructed until after the death of their occupant, so royal funerals are often delayed for several years while family members assemble the resources to stage an impressive ceremony. In most of West Sumba, however, living men can organize the construction of their own stone tombs, starting with the long process of dragging the boulders with human labor from faraway quarries (Hoskins 1988:136).

As the tomb is not sought after until the person in question is deceased, in East Sumba the major funeral ceremonies often occur years after the actual death, occurring in the form of secondary burials (Adams 1969:62). The West Sumbanese process of acquiring a tomb is closely tied to notions of prestige and feasting; ideally, in a move which will greatly increase one’s prestige, the tomb is acquired while the person in question is still alive. Hoskins (1988:136) describes the process:

Huge limestone boulders, weighing from ten to thirty tons, are lifted onto a wooden platform called a “ship” (tena) and dragged with vines to a hilltop village. A textile banner hung on top of the stone is the “mast” which allows the ship to sail forward to its destination, while the participants are urged on by the singing of songs which narrate the earlier travels of ancestral heroes. Grave building is thus an occasion for staging a series of prestige feasts when the wealth and importance of local leaders are tested by their ability to marshal labor and redistribute meat.
Hoskins (1988:136) notes that, “Stone carvings on western tombs emphasize large buffalo horns as signs of wealth (perhaps because buffaloes are needed in wet rice cultivation) while horses, sea creatures and botanical motifs are more common in the east”; all of these figures are common motifs in Sumbanese textiles (see fig 10).

The ship imagery is important—watery scenes in textiles are said to represent the ‘watery underworld’, a dwelling place of the spirits to where the deceased is headed. This is linked to the fact that the stone being moved to the village becomes a ship when a textile ‘mast’ is raised. This may also be related to pan-Indonesian concepts of a ‘ship of the dead’ or ‘soul ship’, which conveys the soul of the departed to the next world.

One of the first stages of funeral ceremonies is to wrap the deceased in textiles, the number of which is determined by the deceased’s wealth and position within the community. “In keeping with the importance of burial rites”, Warming (1981:100) continues, “Sumbanese say that the finest hinggi were always saved to place in the tomb or bury with the king”. These textiles play a crucial role in the funeral ceremony. The way in which the dead person is dressed is characterized by inversion; so, too, with the cloths which wrap him. An additional function in distinguishing the corpse as a corpse is the method in which it is dressed, through the principle of inversion. Forth (1981:172) writes:

By contrast to the living, who put on clothes according to the rule ‘to move to the right’, i.e., anti-clockwise around the body (as viewed from above), clothes must be placed on the corpse the other way around, in accordance with the rule ‘to move to the left’. The end of a man’s head-cloth, which is normally placed erect on the left side, is thus disposed toward the right on a corpse”.

All body bindings are tied to the left, the side associated with death; at the moment after the corpse is lowered into the casket, the ‘topknot’ binding is untied; “this part of the bundle seems
to represent the dead person’s hair... Since the crown and the knot of hair are associated with the soul in Rindi, it would appear, then, that untying the top of the bundle is symbolic of releasing the soul” (Forth 1981:181).

Warming (1981:100) describes the next phase of a funeral; that of an East Sumbanese king:

The kings of Sumba are gradually dying off, and though the modern burial ceremony is still impressive, it is not as lavish an affair as it was in the past, when months were spent preparing for it. Shortly after death, the body of the king was tied in a crouching position, wrapped in hinggi- sometimes as many as two hundred- and kept in a specially constructed house until the day of the ceremony. Guests coming from all over Sumba brought gifts of textiles and jewelry to be displayed with the body.

When all the guests had arrived and the preparations were complete, a burial procession to the gravesite began, led by a slave dressed in the king’s clothing and riding the king’s favorite horse. As the procession moved, this slave fell into a trance and through him the king spoke, issuing his last orders before his spirit left for the afterlife. At the gravesite, the horse was killed, and it is said that the slave, too, was sacrificed so that he might continue to serve his master. The “horse and rider” motif often seen on Sumbanese hinggi is a representation of this custom.

The role of the sacrificed slave was to “make a way to the upper world, build a house, and perform services there” (Adams 1969:66). Gittinger (1979:159) notes that often after the funerals of East Sumbanese noblemen, the slave is “considered a free man”.

In Rindi, during contemporary funerals, part of the funeral procession features someone walking with a metal bowl, filled with betel and areca nut; underneath this bowl is a cloth, the type determined by the deceased’s gender (Forth 1981:181). Forth (1981:181) continues, “Thereafter follows a man leading a stallion, designated as the mount of the deceased. The horse, on which the soul rides to the grave, should be held on the animal’s left side, since contrary to the living, who mount and dismount on the right, the dead do so on the left”.

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Regarding horses, which are also very commonly depicted in Sumbanese textiles, it is no longer as common to sacrifice them upon the death of their masters- they are now often passed on to new masters. With this change, however, came a shift in the process of the funeral itself, requiring a new rite; this rite was designed to separate Ra Honggoro’s soul from the horse and end his attachment to it, so he would not be jealous of its new master and cause the horse to sicken, fall, or be stolen” (Hoskins 1993:253).

Another animal which is often shown on textiles is the water buffalo; these animals are sacrificed at the end of the ceremony:

The funeral sacrifice must be performed in front of the dead man’s house by members of his origin village or their representatives...The animal’s livers were inspected to confirm that Ra Honggoro’s soul had left on its journey to the afterworld, and their bodies were cut in half latitudinally, separating the head and front legs from the rear quarters. This division of sacrificial meat is done only at funerals; it represents the separation of the dead man’s body into the maternal contribution (the “life” received from affines), which must be returned to the origin village, and the paternal contribution, which remains in his village and is divided among the guests (Hoskins 1988:253).

Sea symbolism is found in both textiles and on tombs. The association of sea symbolism with the concept of the soul ship is clear; furthermore, “ancestors...[adopt] the form of shrimps, of crabs and of small fish, [and] absorb liquid in the ancestral fountainhead or in the sea ‘to refill themselves with life’ (Geirnaert-Martin 103). Shrimp are further associated with death and rebirth in that they shed their shell periodically throughout their life. A further connection between sea symbolism and the underworld is that ancestral spirits often reside near watery places, such as springs and lakes.

The motifs on the decorated textiles of deceased maramba, or nobility, are very revealing. According to Adams (1969:166), particular motifs function to identify the deceased as
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a maramba- these include: “deer hunting, cockfights, skull trees, useful plants and trees... and certain animals that convey special powers...”. Adams (1969:167) identifies a second function of the motifs on the textiles: as “symbols of the passage to the other world, which is essentially a passage through the under world of water and of the upperworld of the firmament”. Adams (1969:167) provides insight into the meaning behind the motifs found in textiles, in their relation to funerals:

In this connection, creatures that participate in both environments, such as crocodiles, snakes, or winged snake-dragons, may be meaningful symbols of the way. Another apt symbol of the dangerous passage of the soul is the shrimp, which escapes from its old shell and experiences a vulnerable period until it acquires a new protective covering. Deer, birds, and horses suggest a means of transport...As vehicles, they...may symbolically carry the maramba through the stations of the sea and the layers of heaven...Human figures may represent steersmen or passengers who accompany the master to the other world...Plant motifs also occur repeatedly in litanies and other oral literature as a means of ascending and descending to sources of power, and as “ladders to go above or to go below” may help ensure passage.

Snakes, most especially pythons, have special significance as the manifestations of ancestors that come to earth (Geirnaert-Martin 1992:37). These animals are to be dealt with with reverence- they are not to be killed, they are to be treated as humans, and when a python carcass is found, it is to be buried in a grave, “with a gravestone built specially for him” (Geirnaert-Martin 1992:37). The plant ladders in textiles take the form of bamboo pillars located near the corpse- these serve as ladders to the sky, so often referred to in ritual speech. The water associated with parts of the underworld and the soul’s journey to that place is thought to have cooling properties, easing the spiritual danger, associated with heat, that is inherent in death. (Forth 1981:203). Additional symbolism present in both funerals and textiles includes roosters; during the funeral procession of an East Sumbanese nobleman, a functionary in the procession
will carry a cockerel under his left arm (note the symbolism of the left). Forth (1981:197-98) writes of this custom:

While no one in Rindi could explain the significance of the cockerel carried to the grave, it seems fairly clear that it is related to the general custom, whenever a new grave is dug, of placing a small chick at the centre of the area to be excavated so that it will scratch the earth. Afterwards, the bird, called the ‘chicken that sweeps the grave’...is left tied to a small stake close to the grave, preferably...to be trampled on and killed during the burial, though this is not done deliberately. On no account may the bird be kept and raised, for it belongs to the dead and is considered hot.

The crocodile, another motif in Sumbanese textiles, is an additional symbol associated with death on Sumba:

The reptile is also dangerous in the afterlife because, according to Sumbanese beliefs, the last obstacle a soul must overcome before reaching the land of gods is a river infested with crocodiles. If the proper arrangements have been made by the family of the deceased, the soul may safely cross this river. But if the customs have not been followed exactly, the soul will fall into the river and be eaten by the crocodiles (Warming 1981:82).

The similarities between the funeral and marriage ceremonies are striking. In fact, Hoskins (1988:132) writes that “The ceremonies of weddings and funerals are modeled after each other”. One example of this includes the use of a ritual double dressed in the master’s clothing, and the double’s riding of the master’s horse. And just as the bride’s slave or servant accompanies her to her new husband’s village, so too does the servant of the king accompany him to the ‘underworld’. Furthermore, Gittinger (1979:159,164) notes that regarding the ritual doubles in both marriage and funeral ceremonies, “…the investiture is the enabling instrument. It is because they wear the decorated textiles so closely bound to the noble class that the substitutes are able to become the ritual surrogates”.
The guests at the funeral bring gifts of textiles. These are presented along the same lines of social exchanges as those dictating marriage prestations. "Sympathy and condolences are also expressed through gift of textile. It is similar to the custom of sending wreath or cards in modern society, but textiles gift is more compassionate as it has a symbolical meaning as to be used to wipe the tears of the mourners [sic]" (Therik 1989:24). Here, too, is an element of social stratification, "The people will also feel very pleased if their textile gift is also buried together with the corpse, as seen at the funeral of a headman or a local nobleman" (Therik 1989:24). In West Sumba, a man will be buried in his ancestral village, while "a married woman’s funeral is held in her husband’s village, the final act in the exchange drama that brought her there" (Hoskins 1993:244-45). Upon notice of the death in East Sumba, "The invitation of affines is carried out by ritual speakers and formalized with the exchange of a metal pendant (mamuli)-given by the wife-taker- for a small cloth"; this cloth will either be a man’s cloth or a woman’s skirt, depending on the gender of the deceased (Forth 1981: 183-84).

A further link to marriage is the disposition of the corpse during the ceremonies; as with weddings, "the bride and corpse are both placed in the right, front corner of the house, veiled and wrapped in fine indigo textiles during the transitional period (Hoskins 1988:132). In both cases, it is textiles which facilitate the transformation into a new state or status.

Toward the conclusion of a West Sumbanese funeral, "Funeral gifts were redistributed to reciprocate those individuals who had been generous to the house of the dead man: textiles were given to those who brought horses or buffalo, and livestock were given to two of the wife-givers, who brought impressive pigs" (Hoskins 1993:255). Once again, the parallel with marriage is notable- textiles, the ‘female’ gift, were given to those who supplied water buffalo and horses, the ‘male’ gifts in marriage exchanges. During the funeral procession in East Sumba, there is
always a balance of sexes, just as with marriage gifts- there will always be an equal number of men and women participating in the funeral march (Forth 1981:197). Additionally, “That the dead are symbolically feminine is most clearly expressed in the Rindi idea that when the soul is taken to the afterworld by the deceased’s forbears, it is ritually incorporated there in precisely the same way as a bride, when...she is brought by the wife-takers into her husband’s village” (Forth 1981:205). Furthermore,

In ritual, the idea is reflected by an arresting resemblance between a corpse prepared for burial and a bride’s substitute just before she is taken from the wife-giver’s house...both assume the same position, sitting motionless in the right front corner of the house; the heads of both are veiled in red cloth; both are attended by women who weep and perform exhortatory chants in anticipation of the addressee’s departure; and both are carried from the house by men while the women attempt to hinder their passage (Forth 1981:206).

RITUAL SYMBOLS

While there are many parallels that exist between marriage ceremonies and funerals, the mamuli, which I believe functions as a dominant symbol for marriage, does not serve that function in funerals.

Throughout my research I encountered many different instrumental symbols employed in funerals that are also found on cloths. These include: water life, horses, water buffalo, roosters, snakes, crocodiles, deer, and plant life.

However, I could find no one symbol among these that functioned as a dominant symbol, no symbol which summarized the funeral ceremonies and stood on its own as a representation of widely held values.
DISCUSSION - TEXTILES AS DOMINANT SYMBOL

While my examination of marriage and funeral ceremonies was indeed by no means exhaustive, it did lead me to draw the following conclusion: textiles themselves are a dominant ritual symbol of both marriages and funerals.

Textiles meet all of the criteria which Turner (1967:19-47) used to define dominant ritual symbols. Textiles condense a wide range of ideas concerning many crucial aspects of Sumbanese culture, such as social organization, marriage and funeral ceremonies and all that they entail. As shown in this paper, textiles at different times represent the following themes: marriage, affinal relations, exchange, masculinity, femininity, totality, death, corpses, sails, spiritual danger, substitution, and compassion, all while indicating the social standing of the ritual participants.

Textiles as symbols unify disparate significata; the common thread running through the above themes is continuity. Life, as represented by marriage and its accompanying theme of fertility, is linked with death, as represented by funerals; what completes the cycle is the ancestors. The continuity brought about by marriage is briefly disrupted by death; however, the dead will soon attain the status of ancestor, who will fill a protective role, one of life-generating potential, thus further ensuring the continuity of the clan. Textiles are a vivid representation of the cyclicality of life in Eastern Indonesia. On another level, Hoskins (1988:132) refers to textiles as, “master symbol for all the transitions in a woman’s life, wrapping her as an infant, a bride and a corpse”.

Finally, textiles as symbols polarize the ideological and the sensory. Perhaps the best example of this is the role of textiles as funeral gifts. They are presented along affinal lines, which are determined by ideology and strictly adhered to. However, as Therik (1989:63) noted,
textiles serve to wipe away the tears of the mourners, thereby symbolizing cleansing, along the sensory lines. 

Turner (1967:22) also said of dominant symbols that, “Groups mobilize around them, worship before them, perform other symbolic activities near them, and add other symbolic objects to them, often to make composite shrines”. People do mobilize around textiles, which truly are foci of interaction, as illustrated by their role in the complex exchange networks of Sumba. Symbolic activities performed near the textiles include the many rituals discussed in this paper that are involved in both marriage and funeral ceremonies. Other symbolic objects are indeed added to the textiles; as has been shown, textiles contain a vast number of motifs which are themselves instrumental symbols in the rituals discussed above.

Additionally, Gittinger (1979:159) writes of textiles that, “they create totally new symbols when combined with other objects; thus the great stone dragged to mark the grave of an important noble becomes a ship conveyance when two large hinggi are mounted on it as sails”.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This research will most likely serve as the basis for my master’s thesis; the scope of the topic, the place of textiles and the meaning of their motifs in Austronesian societies, is practically limitless. Geirnaert-Martin, for instance, suggests studying textiles as part of a “textile system” (1992:93) in an attempt to gain control over this immense topic. The following are three areas which I would particularly like to pursue.

**EAST AND WEST SUMBA - COMPARATIVE RESEARCH**

The cultures of Sumba fall under the cultural unit called ‘Austronesia’, and as such display remarkable similarities. However, there are many differences between East and West
Sumbanese cosmologies, as was briefly discussed earlier in this paper. I am particularly intrigued by the disparate social organizations of the two regions, and would like to investigate in greater depth the relationship between textiles, ritual, and the nature of social hierarchy/political organization in these two regions. A motif which appears in both East and West Sumbanese textiles that I am particularly eager to research is the so-called tree of life.

**NUSA TENGGARA TIMUR - COMPARATIVE RESEARCH**

Much potential for future comparative research also exists in the area of the remainder of NTT. I want to explore two important themes: the use of textiles in the rest of NTT as opposed to Sumba, and also an investigation of various motifs’ significance across NTT. For example, scholars have pointed out a difference between the significance of human figures as depicted in the cloths of Sumba and Timor islands. Therik (1989:27) writes of this, “A certain human figure in Sumba symbolizes praise to the ancestors, while in Timor, human figures symbolizes power and authority of a king or kingdom with extensive territory of governing; it is represented expressionistly [sic]: study legs and long and strong arms”. Additionally, evidence pertaining to the significance of Sumbanese motifs may be found through an investigation of the motifs of other islands. For example, Forth (1998:93) writes of the *ja heda* figure of Flores; this is a “horse-headed wooden statue with a long serpentine body found in some major Nage villages” (93). The *ja heda* is associated with *naga*, a spirit manifestation taking the form of what might be glossed as “dragon”. Such a being provides clues for a deeper understanding of the *naga* figures in Sumbanese cloths, which may themselves be viewed as horses (Molnar, personal communication, October 18, 2000).
OTHER RITUALS

In the interest of analyzing ritual symbols, it goes without saying that it is best to analyze as many rituals as possible. Three rituals especially meriting further pursuit, with a view to textiles and ritual symbolism: headhunting, the harvest of sea worms, and the pasola.

Headhunting

The link between headhunting and textiles is very strong. The fact that andung, or skull trees, are a familiar motif both in ikat and supplementary warp pieces from Sumba hints at this relationship. The link between the two is very deep.

There are numerous indications from other Austronesian cultures which point to such a relationship. Among Iban of Kalimantan and the Belu of Timor, for example, there exists “a symbolic triad” (Gittinger 1979:31) between textiles, headhunting, and fertility. Of this triad, Gittinger (1979:31) writes, “The great blanket-like textiles called pua of the Iban...were integral to their headhunting ceremonies. Heads newly taken by warriors were once received by the women and collected in pua or shoulder cloths and carried amid great ceremony through the longhouse”. This ceremony, in turn, was also associated with a ritual concerning the procurement of abundant rice (Gittinger 1979:31). Among the Belu,

...another illustration of the links between headhunting, fertility, and textiles is found. A new mother used to be confined to her home for one to two months after giving birth. On her first appearance after this seclusion, she was ceremonially carried from the house attired in the clothing and decorations of a headhunter...The mother (the headhunter) returned bearing an appropriate contribution of new life, with prospects for prosperity and continued existence for the social group. The textiles and ornaments used in this ritual were invested with concepts of protection and fertility (Gittinger 1979:32-33).

Furthermore, it appears that headhunting was once the male equivalent of weaving, in that women who can’t weave are considered unmarriageable, so too with men- headhunting was
helpful in making a good match. Hoskins (1989:422) writes of a young West Sumbanese orphan who lived in the late 1800s: “He seemed unlikely to make a good match until he demonstrated his own bravery and restored a portion of his family honor by taking a head on his own”.

As on Timor, on Sumba there is an association with cutting the warp and headhunting (Geirmaert-Martin 1992:92-93). Geirmaert-Martin (1992:92) notes that “cutting the unwoven part of the warp marks a change of situation or of status”. Among the people of the Molo region of Timor, “...the uncut selimut traditionally was used in the initiation rites for headhunters. After taking the first head and earning the title of meo, the new headhunter was ceremonially attired with headbands, ornaments, and a hip wrapper whose warps were cut immediately before being put on” (Geirmaert-Martin 1992:93). Additionally, Geirmaert writes of the hidden headhunting references in spinning implements (1989:77).

**Sea Worm Harvest**

Sea worms are another explicit motif found in Sumbanese textiles; these refer, among other things, to the annual sea worm harvest, a major ritual event among coastal West Sumbanese. As part of a ritual complex, this gathering of swarming sea worms, or *nyale* (Laboya), occurs at the peak of the rainy season. Its aim is to procure agricultural fertility and abundance for the year to come (Geirmaert-Martin 1992:11). This rite has the additional aim of reasserting “the bonds between the living and the spirits of the ancestors” (Geirmaert-Martin 1992:12). The condition of the *nyale*, or sea worms, is indicative of the future prosperity of the people:

1. If the *nyale* appear in great number and are clean, it means they will have a grand harvest and the field will yield good rice.
2. If the *nyale* that appear are biting each other and are a little bit dirty, it means their rice will be attacked by rats.
3. If the nyale that appear are filthy, it means rain is going to disturb their harvesting.
4. If nyale do not appear at all, it means they are going to experience severe famine. (Boro 1995:26).

Symbols associated with this harvest that appear on textiles include sea worms and ancestors.

**Pasola**

The *pasola* is a ritual timed to coincide with the sea worm harvest (Hoskins 1993:352-56). According to Boro (1995:6), “The essence and meaning of *pasola* are not only found in skills of the horse-riders and their blood spurting after being hit by enemies’ spear during the fighting contest, but also in Seven Mantras- magic spells uttered by leader of *pasola* ceremony to their gods [sic]”. This indicates a need to further investigate the ritual language associated with this ritual. The main activity associated with *pasola* is a sort of jousting match. It is not uncommon for contestants to die during the match; cuts are expected. Indeed, “*Pasola* celebration is considered meaningless if there is no blood bleeding [sic]” (Boro 1995:11). The spilling of blood is linked with both continuity and fertility and for the atonement of any transgressions which may have transpired within the community (Boro 1995:11).

According to West Sumbanese, the *pasola* is a celebration in anticipation of the arrival of the *nyale* (Boro 1995:26). Symbols associated with *pasola* that may appear on textiles include horses, ancestors, and, due to its association with *pasola*, sea worms.

**TEXTILE MOTIFS DEPICTED IN OTHER MEDIA**

Textiles, of course, are not the only form of material culture which may convey dominant symbols; indeed there is a dynamic which occurs between the production of textiles and other media. Seeking in different forms of media the ritual symbols depicted in textiles as they relate
to the rituals detailed above will help to bolster my findings. Solyom (1973:14) agrees with this approach of investigating other media: "It is...difficult to determine what, if anything, these motifs may mean and to identify their derivation or symbolic significance for the people who use the cloths. They should be studied in relation to the motifs found on other objects of the culture". Objects which may also contain such symbolism include tombs, houses, carved wooden objects, jewelry, and hair combs, all of which depict themes represented in textiles. One area in particular that appears promising for this type of research is tattooing.

**Tattoos**

Fischer (1979:9) suggests an evolutionary schema for tattoos and textiles, in which "Materials for clothing and ceremonial use in Indonesia have evolved from symbolic skin covering (tattoo) to reeds and simple fibers, to bark cloth, to wild and cultivated cotton, to local and imported silk, and finally to synthetic threads". Regardless of their origin, tattoos and textiles are very closely related. According to Hoskins (1988:130), "The same motifs which are tied into textiles are also tattooed onto women's bodies". Following their textiles, tattoos in West Sumba are more abstract and geometric than those found in East Sumba (Hoskins 1988:130). Hoskins describes the process:

The tattooing is often performed as a "rite of maturity" after a woman has married and conceived her first child. It is therefore a badge of reproductive success, which also marks the fact that the woman has been fully incorporated into her husband's patrilineage. She is transferred first from her natal home wrapped in fine textiles which "accompany" her into her new home. Later, her more elevated status as the producer of descendants for the house is marked by applying motifs taken from textiles directly onto the skin of her body. It is the objects exchanged for her - depicted on the *mamuli* and the textiles - which finally objectify her own senior status among women".
It is interesting to note that the bride will never wear the textiles in which she was wrapped (Hoskins 1988:127), yet her tattoos will reflect the motifs found in those very textiles. Motifs found in tattoos may also mirror patterns found on house posts. The time remaining for such a study is limited; “Apart from a few rare cases tattooing is no longer practiced. It is a painful and serious health hazard because of the risk of blood poisoning” (Geirnaert-Martin 1992:85). As a result, it is mainly women over 50 who currently have tattoos (Geirnaert-Martin 1992:185).

CONCLUSION

The following passage provides an apt summary for the results of my research:

For many Indonesian peoples, life was and still sometimes is punctuated by the presence of mysterious forces, spirits, and ancestral souls. Constant efforts through magical means were required for the maintenance of balanced harmony amongst these powers to facilitate peaceful living. The power of artistic creativity had a place in the making of ritual textiles which contributed to balancing of supernatural forces through magic and religious functions. Since death, spirits, and fertility served as major shapes in life’s conceptual topography, they became understandably primary foci for creative imagery in textiles. In the context of social prestige and as symbols or rank and authority, ritual cloths also provided aesthetic accents to secular ceremonial life on important occasions (Solyom 1979:31).

Through the course of this investigation, I learned of the incredibly important place which textiles hold in Sumbanese society. These cloths are crucial elements in the construction of individual identity. As dress, they indicate such things as the wearer’s gender, age group, ethnicity, and social standing within his or her community. Textiles also serve to establish group identity. In the case of West Sumba, for example, different ethnolinguistic groups intentionally maintain distinct textile traditions, in the interest of expressing ethnic identity and pride. In the
same vein, distinctions are drawn between highlander and coast dweller, and between the people of East Sumba and of West Sumba, as well.

As exchange items, high quality textiles are the means to wealth and prestige, as in the case of West Sumba, or a way in which to demonstrate high social standing, as in East Sumba. These cloths, presented at all major Sumbanese rites, are in constant circulation along affinal lines. This transfer of textiles serves to maintain relationships with affines, and as such, is a further means to acquiring, or maintaining, prestige.

Marriage and funeral ceremonies are two such occasions in which such cloths are presented as gifts. These rituals, which involve acting upon the objects depicted in textiles, such as mamuli, horses, and water buffalo, provide insight into the cosmological significance of these ritual symbols.

Textiles serve as tangible metaphors of various ethnic groups’ cosmologies, and as such are a rich source of information for the anthropologist. In filling their roles of exchange goods and of identity markers, and through their depiction of salient ritual symbols, textiles quite literally embody entire cultural and ideological practices.
APPENDIX
Table 1. Results of Collection Survey, Northern Illinois University Anthropology Museum. (Collection identification number in bold print)

96-1-1
- Sumba
- recent production- more obvious horses
- produced on back-strap loom
- store-bought dyes, thread
- symmetrical with widest band in middle- follows proper form (band may be vertical or horizontal)
- lacking small details, e.g. lizards, sea worms, etc.
- dragon-like horse motif: these two animals originally combined, naga motif eventually becomes horse (see Forth about naga/horse combination, pictures of horse rider)

96-1-2
- Central-West Timor
- grey-brown piece; natural dyes, homespun thread; 4 panels
- machine washed- twisted fringe, uniform fading
- chickens, flowers

96-1-10
- Sumba
- recent production- lobsters too large, plethora of roosters, skull tree arranged in Christmas tree shape, geometric busywork in center- lacks small hidden lizards, etc.
- mass-produced- motifs cut off at edges; imitates traditional style in that panels are sewn together down the warp
- store-bought dyes (too orangey), thread
- sea worms present

96-1-12
- Sumba
- variation of 96-1-10; roosters, geometric designs
- store-bought dye and thread (although thicker than usual)

96-1-17
- Timor
- Provenance based on coloration of whole piece, color combos in bands
- recent- too simple
96-1-25
- Flores- Sikka/Ende border region
- machine-made (nubs, stitching), store-bought threads; synthetic dyes imitating techniques of natural dyes
- uncut sarong; 3 weft-wise panels, central panel more flowery

96-1-35
- Timor, Soe region, Central West Timor
- very good piece!
- Provenance based on bands of supplementary weft lizards
- intricate bands at borders
- three panels
- Natural dyes and threads, no stiffness
- attempted symmetry
- fading in sections (from more vibrant red to faded watermelon) due to sun bleaching of exposed panels while worn on body

96-1-36
- West Timor- border with East (coloration, thin bands)
- natural dyes (indigo quite faded), homespun thread
- cendrawasi motif- borrowed motif, not at all common in Timorese textiles (Papuan motif, resembles peacock)
- variation of 4 + 1 diamond shape
- not a busy piece- lower status

96-1-45
- Flores- Nage
- provenance- small flowers in off-center blue band- possible nage (tamarind) flowers; sa’o waja (cult house) motif- features only roof, not entire house; few explicit motifs in this region
- recent production- blue border on one side, not on other
- machine-produced
- natural dyes- indigo (fades in places over time); hand spun cotton thread [me- look into further- third, unfaded panel appears to have synthetic threads in red and brown]
- appears to have three bands of supplementary weft white-ish lines at ends of piece- actually not: machine produced textiles tend to have slightly reversed (in colors) wrong side
96-1-47
- Timor
  - recent production- exaggerated features (e.g. Portuguese muskets); single skulls from skull tree turned into human figures with legs turned back on themselves and male-type headdresses
  - mass produced, one panel only; no borders, motifs cut off on edges
  - store-bought dyes (too orangey) and thread
  - anthropomorphic lizards

96-2-2
- Sumba - good traditional piece
  - natural dyes, hand spun thread
  - sarong: well-worn, altered for display
  - supplementary weft panel and striped, geometric panel: two different pieces- sewn together along weft (modern pieces- pieced together warp-wise)
  - 4 + 1 motif, sideways-diamond shape in skulls, bodies
  - stylized skulls; proper skull tree form; headdresses; sea horses; sea worms; stars
  - busy borders framing supplementary weft panel

96-2-22
- Savu
  - synthetic dyes (bright yellow), store-bought thread
  - attempt to maintain traditional flavor- coloration & tones (especially in ikat portion), asymmetry
  - muskets- Timorese influence [me- triangle motif (tumpal) becomes muskets?]

96-2-41
- Timor - Atoni
  - natural dyes, hand spun cotton, 2 panels
  - funeral piece?- high quality, length for wrapping corpse- probably high-status individual: important cosmological elements, warrior representations
  - probably no more than 70 years
  - MOTIFS PRESENT:
    - male warriors- legs bent back upon themselves, gold nobility earrings, shields, spears, some with buffalo horn headdresses
    - combination lizard/warrior
    - sharks- repetition
    - shark/squid one way, smaller crocodile other way
    - muskets
    - traditional knives (notably larger than muskets)
    - large crocodile motif
    - large lizard- monitor?, forked tongue
Map 1. Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT): all unshaded areas. From Mauchenheimer (1999:21)
Figure 1. Backstrap loom. From Gillow (1992:28).
A backstrap loom with a continuous warp.

A backstrap loom with a discontinuous warp.
Figure 2. *Hinggi* featuring a simple *patola* motif in the center band. From Gillow (1992:20).
Figure 3. *Hinggi.* From Gittinger (1979:160).
Figure 4. *Lau pahudu* featuring supplementary warp. From Gittinger (1979:163).
Figure 5. *Lau hadn*. From Gittinger (1979:165).
Figure 6. *Hanggi*. From Gittinger (1979:161). Note *mamuli* motifs.
Figure 7. *lau pahuatu* featuring tufted embroidery. From Gittinger (1979:162).
Figure 8. Cassava creeper motif. From Geimaert-Martin (1992:97).
Figure 10. *Penji*, a Sumbanese tomb marker. Note mamuli, turtle, and horserider motifs. Also present are cassava creeper and sea symbolism, all found in Sumbanese textiles. From Hoskins (1988:121).
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