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Ikat from Timor and its outer islands: insular and interwoven

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The research presented in this thesis was largely a lonely endeavour, consisting of a visual analysis of design details and poring over thousands of microscopic images. However, Chapter 4, titled ‘Asymmetry – in defiance of ikat’s technical diktat’, particularly the section on sought complexity, would not have gained the same depth and breadth without the input provided by Pak Kinga Lauren, a Sumbanese collector-*cum*-dealer based on Bali. We have been acquainted since the early 1980s, but really got to know each other during this investigation as we jointly explored the world of courtly East Sumban ikat. As described in said chapter, at one time I publicly shared an image of a *hinggi*, an ikated men’s wrap from his native island, that had just been added to Group A of the Reference Set. Kinga Lauren instantly pointed to a minute design detail I had overlooked which proved that the cloth was far more complicated than it appeared. In fact, it combined two design complications (*hondu kihhil* and *hondu walla*, neither of them known from the literature) and required substantively more work than I had realized. Kinga Lauren also reported he had never seen such a combination of complications in his entire 40 years of collecting and trading, and stressed that the minute detail was made to be overlooked, and thus served as a hidden key revealing not only a greater level of complexity but also an investment in time and energy such as could only have been considered at Sumba’s highest courts.

This discovery of *hondu kihhil walla* set us on a joint path of exploration to see if we could find more examples. I revisited this investigation’s Reference Set (which has a substantial overlap with M. J. Adams’s reference set comprising 300 Sumbanese *hinggi* kept at Dutch and other European museums) and next rescanned all the hundreds of specimens in search of hidden keys, finding twenty-two examples. Kinga Lauren did the same with his trading stock, equally consisting of hundreds of specimens and found four more. The total encountered amounted to approximately 4 per cent of all the cloths investigated – which, having been selected by museum curators and private collectors already constituted a set with a quality far above average.

While studying and restudying these cloths with eyes now highly alert to visual trickery, I discovered other ways in which weavers concealed extreme levels of complexity, such as pattern compression. However, had it not been for Kinga Lauren’s recognition of the *hondu kihhil walla* construction, I might well not only have overlooked these, but also might not have understood a fundamental aspect of apex ikat weaving on Sumba and a few other islands, to wit, that they were made in a spirit of competition and with a level of sophistication such as we typically find only in highly developed societies. The weavers who produced such immensely time-consuming garments were not after applause from the masses. On the contrary, they ensured that these masses would remain unaware of the design virtuosity and pecuniary emulation that went into them, transforming them into the ultimate status symbols: those that only the narrowest of in-groups are able to recognize.

Much gratitude is due to all my friends in the Indonesian textile community (listed

below under ‘Private collections’), who allowed me to study and publish macro photographs of their textiles – visual elements that greatly facilitated the study of a group of widely shared motifs, as well as techniques to achieve asymmetry. Generally speaking, the unfailing readiness, both institutional and personal, to support this investigation when photographic materials or usage rights were asked for, was extremely heartening.

I would also like to express gratitude to my copy editor Peter Richardus, whose dedication to linguistic perfection improved this work in myriad small ways that, taken together, increased my confidence in presenting it to the world.

Most gratitude however, is reserved for my wife Ineke ten Hoopen, for whom this project was a ‘lonely endeavour’ of another kind. I thank her for enduring my many hours of seclusion, so closely following the years of work on *Ikat Textiles of the Indonesian Archipelago*. I am also grateful to her for helping me with the numerous sessions of natural light photography, which often required speedy working before the winds, so common in our cape climate, would ruffle the carefully laid out textiles with their neatly brushed-out fringes. Without her loving support this work would not have been possible.

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Institutions

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Australia.
British Museum, London, United Kingdom.
Burke Museum, Seattle, USA.
Deutsches Textilmuseum, Krefeld, Germany.
Fundação Oriente, Lisbon, Portugal.
Museum der Kulturen, Basel, Switzerland.

Museum der Weltkulturen, Frankfurt, Germany.
Museum Nasional, Jakarta, Indonesia.
Museum Siwalima, Ambon, Indonesia.
Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Leiden, Netherlands.
Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum, Cologne, Germany.
Yale University Art Gallery, Stamford, USA.

Private collections

John Ang, Malaysia.
Balian-Tardieu, Dubai.
Marvin Berk and Dennis Kord, Mexico,
Georges Breguet, Switzerland.
Helga Conrad, Switzerland.
Pierre Dugard, France.
Hamka Gassing, Indonesia
Susi Johnston, Indonesia.
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CURRICULUM VITAE

Hans Peter Herman (Peter) ten Hoopen was born on 22 May 1944 in Enschede, the Netherlands, and completed his Gymnasium B education at the Corderius Lyceum in Amersfoort in 1964. He started out as a journalist and translator. From 1968 to 1971 he lived in and travelled through the Middle East and South Asia, conducting journalistic research and recording ethnic music in Afghanistan, now curated by the Smithsonian Institution (Washington, DC). During his extensive traveling in 65 countries in subsequent years he witnessed the ongoing decline of many indigenous traditions. This experience affected him deeply and in 1976 led to his initiative to assemble a reference collection of particularly imperilled Indonesian ikat textiles – meticulously documented on a level not previously attempted.

Recognition for his first novels (he debuted in 1976 with *Een gestolen leven*) and short stories set in the tropics, led to an appointment as writer in residence at the University of Michigan during the academic year 1984-1985, where ten Hoopen taught creative writing. Throughout the remainder of the 20th century he kept writing in three fields: journalism, belles-lettres and advertising.

From 2000 to 2010, building on his international background and general management training, he worked as a consultant, providing expert advice on cross-cultural effectiveness around the world. In the process he developed new research software and wrote as well as co-authored several handbooks on coaching and leadership. Two of the latter were based on fine-grained ethnographic research of corporate cultures.

Since his retirement in 2010 Peter ten Hoopen has been focussing on documenting of the above-mentioned, by then extensive reference collection of Indonesian ikat textiles. This has led to major exhibitions at the Museu do Oriente in Lisbon (2014-2015 and 2019-2020) and at the Museum and Art Gallery, the University of Hong Kong (2017-2018), for which he authored or edited the catalogues. His collecting and documenting since the mid-1970s culminated in the publication of his *Ikat Textiles of the Indonesian Archipelago* (2018) and the research reported in the present PhD thesis.