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IN TRANSIT-
Cultural Perspectives on Toba Batak and Toraja Textiles

Sub-thesis
30%

PRESENTED IN PART FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE MASTER OF ARTS (VISUAL ARTS)
IN TRANSIT - consists of research into the changing meanings of ceremonial textiles, their context of production and use, and the cultural influences which mediate between cloth and audience. The Studio practice component (70%) resulted in autobiographical, narrative woven textiles dealing with sense of self and place through multiple views and cartographic references. These works were exhibited at the Canberra School of Art Gallery from March 24 to April 2, 1994. The Sub-thesis (30%) investigates issues associated with Toraja and Toba Batak textiles (of Indonesia) such as, the role of textiles in notions of 'tradition' and 'identity', their representation in textile literature, museums and galleries, and explores some contemporary perspectives on tourist and regional influences. The Report documents the background to the project, developments and nature of the study undertaken.
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Australian National Gallery 1981.1129
From: Maxwell 1991: 130-131
1.0 INTRODUCTION

This paper proposes that cultural perspective is fundamental to the 'readings' of textiles. The same cloth in different contexts will serve diverse purposes and function variously according to the environment and audience before which it appears. The audience's perspective, although culturally bound is not static and unchanging, but is complicated by social, political and economic factors. Just as exposure to different situations informs opinions, the framing of cultural interpretation and representations influences the meanings and values applied to an object - cloth is no exception. These ideas will be explored by examining some traditional cloths produced and used by the Toba Batak and Toraja peoples' of Indonesia and the different ritual situations in which they function, both in Indonesia and in the wider world.

The many possible 'readings' from cloth depend on the background of the viewer, their position in relation to the object and the cultural context of both cloth and interpreter. James Clifford puts it succinctly;

"ethnographic texts are orchestrations of multi-vocal exchanges occurring in politically charged situations. The subjectivities produced in these often unequal exchanges - whether of "natives" or of visiting participant observers - are constructed domains of truth, serious fictions." ¹

He is referring here to strategies of writing and representation, although the statement can also be applied to the collecting and display of ethnographic textiles.

The particular cultural groups of this study share similar experiences of origin, relative isolation, social and religious practices and have adapted to external influences in different ways. Textiles are one mode of exploring changing traditions and values, both within the cultures themselves and internationally. 'Traditional textile' is a term commonly used to describe cloth from a

¹ Clifford 1988:10
particular ethnic or cultural group and while useful in
differentiating between industrial or non-ritualised cloth it is a
problematic notion, difficult to define or determine and suggesting a
static, non-evolutionary process of production. Textiles, as with most
other forms of cultural material, reflect the systems of meaning by
which a group identifies and maintains its values and reality and can
visually reflect adaptation to changing influences and beliefs.

Textile scholarship relies on conventions of Western anthropological
and ethnographic study of 'traditional' uses and meanings. However,
these understandings, although based on close, personal association
and observations, are nevertheless formulated from the perspective
of a person outside the ethnic group in question, and are conditioned
by the values of the dominant Euro-American academic institutions.
Just as debate and difference of opinion is held as a strength of
Western culture and politics, cultural beliefs and understandings are
likely to differ within a specific ethnic group. Thus, what gets
communicated about traditions will vary, especially in the rapidly
changing diversity of a country like Indonesia. Some scholars
working within the disciplines of anthropology, ethnography,
museology and cultural theory have made major shifts in approaches
taken in the presentation of people of 'other' backgrounds, by
acknowledging the difficult nature of cross cultural distortions and
imbalance. Analyses put forward by Price 1989; Hillier 1991;
Stocking (ed) 1985; Geertz 1973; Said 1978 and Clifford 1986, 1988 have
informed my journey of discovery in cross cultural reading and
representation.

In the preface of To Speak With Cloth Mattibelle Gittinger, the
matriarchal and influential figure in Asian textile studies, says

"that textiles deserve to be considered as valuable primary
source material, subject to as much scrutiny as kinship
structures for the anthropologist and ancient chronicles for
the historian." 2

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2 Gittinger 1989:8
I believe Indonesian textiles also deserve to have their more recent history scrutinised - the impact of collectors, museums, tourists, art dealers, scholars and the effects of modernisation and politics on indigenous cloth. Textiles are not singular, either in design or construction, but can be read in a multi-layered way, depending on context. This paper will be structured from three main perspectives and explores the debates and understandings of ceremonial cloth in different contexts with different viewers.

The beginning examines ways in which information about the textiles is presented and considers some of the framing devices of scholarship and exhibitions. The social, religious and political information about the Toba Batak and Toraja cultures provides one context in which particular textiles have ascribed meanings and functions. This includes origin myths of the textiles and beliefs about them - such as notions of protection, renewal, ancestral connections; reinforcing social hierarchy through circulation and exchange; and the gendered identity of textiles as 'female'. This information is gathered from the English language literature, anthropology and ethnography studies, especially that focusing on textiles, which in turn is based on early Dutch studies and more recent field studies by textile scholars. One problematic aspect of this literature is that most is written in the "ethnographic present", with oblique references to changes or prefaced by terms such as "traditionally". Inevitably, it becomes difficult to separate the current customs from those of the past and this leads to a tendency to perpetuate myths of "primitive timelessness." Commentaries will sometimes mention changes or adaptations, but often in a regretful and nostalgic manner, that reinforces an unrealistic viewpoint that cultures should or could, halt development at a 'classical' or convenient period.

Many cloths have been brought into Western environments, and the second section will look at the cultural framework which determines the role of museums, exhibitions, private collectors and scholarship in attributing different perspectives and values to the textiles. For many people, including myself, museums and galleries are the first introduction to the textiles of other cultures. While there has been a

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3 Price 1989, Chapter 4
considerable critique of the form many so called 'primitive art' exhibitions take, very little debate has focused on comparable key textile shows, and the messages they convey. These exhibitions transplant the textiles from the indigenous context into a Western art museum environment and aesthetic. Here meanings change, just as the textiles themselves have been influenced and "understood by reference to the history of other cloths, other objects and other cultures". Some of the ways in which textiles are received by audiences - whether through an interest in the 'exotic', the appeal of seemingly cohesive and unchanging cultures, or as complex cultural documents - will be explored in conjunction with the relevant literature and forms these exhibitions take.

The third section will deal with the impact of changing cultural and political influences, such as modernisation and tourism, on the textiles used and produced currently in these regions. The ways in which Toba Batak, Toraja and other Indonesian groups are representing their culture and themselves to outsiders, will be described from my point of view as a visitor. The promotion of ethnicity, within the Indonesian government's political slogan of 'Unity in Diversity', appears to bring mixed messages in the interpretation of ethnic identity. Tourism is an important economic and social factor in providing jobs and markets for one's artefacts - whether old, newly old or obvious souvenirs. The ways in which Batak and Toraja identity is being produced, packaged and presented to both an Indonesian and foreign audience is explored in relation to textiles. Cultural identity is rapidly undergoing changes and "tourism tends to involve the state in new relationships to ethnic groups and specifically involve it in new processes of cultural change."  

The conclusion highlights the futility of trying to 'capture a culture' through the collection of its artefacts or the translation of its customs. It is important to acknowledge mediating factors such as history, politics and cultural context, which produce any particular

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4 A lecture by Julie Ewington in Dunedin, New Zealand in 1991 on this subject influenced and encouraged the beginnings of this research project. See Ewington 1991
5 Maxwell 1990:27
6 Wood 1984:362
'reading'. Difference does not invalidate interpretations. 'Meaning' is negotiated anew between objects and participants during each and every interaction.
Toraja funeral 'tongkonan', platform for body and decorated site - at village near Marante, 1993.

Toraja funeral - Deri village. Guest receiving shelter, decorated with various Indonesian textiles. 1993

fig. 2
2.0 TEXTUAL INTERPRETATIONS

2.1 CULTURAL FRAMING

Understandings of cultures are framed by one's knowledge of the historical, religious and social structuring of that society. The form this framing takes, depends on the cultural perspective and empirical knowledge of the person interpreting and/or presenting the "other" culture, and the motivation behind it. For instance, in the case of the Toraja and Toba Batak, my access to these people was first through one aspect of the material culture, that is, their textiles. A whole sequence of events and experiences have occurred to bring me to this interest - prior general and specific textile study, exhibitions, publications, travel and exposure to the textiles of a wide range of different cultures, and my practice as a textile artist. My outlook is inevitably shaped by a Western education and experience, with specific Indonesian textile information being mediated through collection choices, museum display, ethnographic, anthropological and textile disciplines - again products of Western academies.

Within the Toraja and Batak cultures, textile meanings and functions are also understood and conditioned by one's position, experience, status, wealth, traditions and religion. The use of textiles in symbolic rituals and as a means of cultural or regional identification is widespread, leading to a great diversity of designs, patterns, technique and associations. In the Indonesian archipelago, the textiles produced and used, form a part of everyday and ceremonial occasions to affirm ones' place in society and in the spiritual and religious realm. The ways in which meanings accrue and the translation process occurs, is a complex and difficult one to attempt to unravel. For instance, Gittinger states that for the Toba Batak,

"the ulos (cloth) is a symbol of creation and fertility. In the very process of weaving the woman creates a new object - a united whole - from seemingly disparate elements. The cloth emerges as the finished expression of the material time invested in each throw of the weft. The cloth thus becomes a
metaphor for both time and fruition. We can see in the ritual functions of the ulos reflections of such interpretations. 7

Statements such as this provide a fascinating insight into the cloth, but whose metaphor is it - the maker's, user's, anthropologist's or textile scholar's? Is it a romanticisation and simplification of a culture perceived to be closer to nature, and therefore purer than that of the observer? Or does it derive from observations of the technical processes, and trying to make sense of that?

To some extent, all of these elements come into the interpretations and readings of 'traditional textiles'. Clifford Geertz in referring to ethnographic description and anthropological writing states that

"what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to."

He continues:

"most of what we need to comprehend a particular event, ritual, custom, idea or whatever is insinuated as background information before the thing itself is directly examined."

However, within the literature of textiles, the object is of primary interest and interpretation and presentation of the data, is dependent on the authors' perspective, motivations and access to information. The approach the writer takes is usually derived from a particular cultural, historical or aesthetic bias, or combination of these elements. For instance, in many ethnography's, male rituals and artefacts are the focus of attention, but textiles of Southeast Asia are produced exclusively by women and are able to

"show history from a different perspective by reflecting a female view of the contact between different cultures, and are

7Gittinger 1975:23
8Geertz 1973:9
Dutch ethnographers began to record various aspects of the textile arts of Indonesia in the early part of this century with the comprehensive work of Alfred Buhler and Jager Gerlings being seminal texts for more recent studies. One of the more recent and influential exhibitions and publications, which impacted on museum and private collecting, was **Splendid Symbols - Textiles and Tradition in Indonesia** at The Textile Museum, Washington D.C. (1979), curated by Mattibelle Gittinger, who is the author of the book which accompanied the exhibition. This publication brought together much of the earlier scholarship, presenting the cultural information and textiles in an accessible way and with extensive colour reproductions. In a sense, this is the first publication to 'popularise' Indonesian textiles moving the works out of ethnographical or anthropological departments and into the museum aesthetic. It brought the creative endeavours of the women of Southeast Asia to a wider audience and also signalled the beginning of the National Gallery of Australia's collection.

At the time of the **Splendid Symbols** exhibition, Gittinger also organised an associated meeting of international scholars, "Indonesian Textiles- Irene Emery Roundtable on Museum Textiles" publishing the proceedings under the same title ("1979 Proceedings"). The papers in this text generally provide very detailed and informative insights into the textiles and their contexts of production and use. References to specific works include:

- **Maxwell 1990:24**

At least in the English language texts with which I am familiar.

Robyn Maxwell, at the Museum Seminar associated with the exhibition "Beyond the Java Sea" at the Australian Museum, confirmed that James Mollison, then Director of the Australian National Gallery, saw the 'Splendid Symbols' exhibition and instigated a collection policy at the gallery for Indonesian textiles, which has subsequently been widened to inclued textiles from other areas of Asia.
specific, and scholarly analysis of motifs, myths, technical puzzles, ethnic, social and religious contexts, bringing intensive language studies, fieldwork, historical and comparative research to the interpretation of textiles. This appears to be a model which other museums have used to combine exhibitions of Indonesian textiles with symposia and published papers.

These authors have backgrounds in various academic disciplines, with specialities on Indonesia and bring to their papers a depth of culturally specific understanding which my paper cannot possibly meet. However, in looking into the broader range of textile literature, it is worth mentioning some of the textual styles that such textile 'readings' offer.

Langewis and Wagner in Decorative Art in Indonesian Textiles (1964) have compared design motifs and historical influences, placing great importance on original sources of motifs, using pictorial analysis of the cloth as the basis for interpretation. The authors divide their study into technical processes, such as ikat, batik, plangi and supplementary weft, with a focus on the style and arrangement of the motifs, their similar or different visual influences in, for example, Dongson designs or patola cloths. A typical example of the text seeks to demonstrate that information is derived from the cloths primarily through stylistic analysis, rather than studying meaning or function within the 'original' cultural context.

"If a comparison is made of decorated cloths originating from different groups of the Indonesian population but decorated by the same technique, varying designs of the same object can be distinguished. Thus, on the island of Sumba for instance, the human figure and its stylised representation are still clearly recognisable in decorative art as applied to woven material; but

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13 With titles such as; "Figure Shark and Pattern Crocodile: The Foundations of the Textile Traditions of Roti and Ndao" by James J. Fox; "Blessing Shawls: The social Meaning of Sipirok Batak Ulos" by Susan Rodgers-Siregar; "On the Origin and Nature of Larangan: Forbidden Batik Patterns from the Central Javanese Principalities" by Alit Veldhuisen-Djajasoebrata

14 Examples of these include Indonesian Textiles Symposium (Volger & Welk eds. 1985) To Speak with Cloth (Gittinger ed.1989) Woven Messages (Majlis & Bauer 1991).
the ornamentation of the most important cloths made by the Toradjas in Central Celebes, namely those emanating from the weaving centres of Galumpang and Rongkong, is purely geometrical, though it also comprises portrayals of ancestral figures. These, however, have changed their shape to such an extent in the course of time that their original form is barely recognisable, even though the basic elements have remained intact. This phenomenon can be explained only by the fact that the Toradjas' particular gift for textile decoration was highly susceptible to the influence of the metrical character of the Dongson style, which spread to their decorative art as a whole". 15

Where other groups have come into contact with cultural movements that reached Indonesia through maritime trade, such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, Langewis and Wagner acknowledge the impact of these artistic forms on the design choices made. The text is illustrated with extensive black and white photographs and line drawings and a classification chart of techniques and elements represented, such as animal or human figure, geometrical or composite designs. This type of formal analysis tends to lead to a particular academic way of understanding influence and dispersal of style by comparing and contrasting elements. This methodology, through its focus on aesthetic analysis divorces the textiles from people and culture.

Another book which focuses on aesthetics and principally textiles from the 19th century is Early Indonesian Textiles from Three Island Cultures - Sumba , Toraja , Lampung. This is a catalogue, written by the authors to accompany the exhibition of their collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and reflects the populist rhetoric of this type of institution.

"Toraja textiles radiate power. An impression of sheer size is conveyed even when the actual scale is small...Toraja textile patterns are always exuberant, uncompromising, direct - never extraneously ornamental, and rarely figural. Execution is

15 Langewis and Wagner 1964:14
painstaking and precise, as in the razor-sharp ikat and burnished finish of No.25, or the technical complexity of Nos. 21 and 22... Rhythmic, metrically paced, Toraja textiles seem consciously framed to draw the eye in progressive stages directly to the center, where balance and repetition develop extraordinary tension." 16 (See figure 1)

With the majority of the text couched in such a racy evocative style, one finds brief descriptions of relevant cultural contexts, local names and motif analysis, drawn from a few key texts. 17 Concentrating on textiles from the 19th century, with a few from the late 18th century, this collection is presented in large, studio format colour images, seductive in quality and detail, re-enforcing the aesthetic attributes and values created through connoisseurship and rarity.

The majority of other books approach Indonesian textiles by presenting historical, anthropological or ethnographic studies and show the important roles of textiles in group and cultural identity. In other studies many textiles are assessed for importance and beauty by the quality of weave, materials, fineness, sharpness or detail of patterning and colour, but this can be deceptive, if the cultural context and local system of values do not fit that description. External aesthetic evaluations are inevitable when making selections for a collection or publication, however most of the authors in this category stress the socio-religious symbolism, connections of the living with the dead, the cycles of fertility and growth, and the import and export of iconography and visual influences. 18 For example;

"Within the Toraja textile world there is a distinctive cotton decorative tradition with painted and stamped designs depicting either ceremonial or pastoral scenes. One such remarkable piece...portrays ducks and the children who tend them in a field

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16 Holmgren and Spertus 1989:19
17 In the chapter on Toraja references are; Jager Gerlings 1952, Kruyt 1938 , Schuster 1965, Van der Veen 1965, Nooy-Palm 1979,80,86, Khan Majlis 1984
of ripening rice replete with circular cultivated fish ponds. This unique, painted and stamped cotton manifests essential symbolic motifs of indigenous Toraja religion. This cloth relates to the right,(sphere) the rising sun, and the rituals pertaining to the rice cycle."  

While some of the literature mentioned above, discusses recent changes in attitude or the function of textiles, most discuss the textiles and cultures in the "ethnographic present", with oblique references to changes which have taken place or a 'traditional' prehistory. Inevitably, it becomes difficult to separate the current customs from those of the past and this leads to a tendency to perpetuate myths of "primitive timelessness " of the cultures and the production of their artefacts.  

The eyes of a textile writer, connoisseur or collector are not naked but endowed with a discriminating vision, that is fitted with a kind of optical device which reflects their own learned cultural background. The same is true of the weaver, informant or ritual specialist that makes or uses a textile - their cultural context frames perception and values. When looking at artefacts from other peoples, the aesthetic framework in which the work is produced needs to be acknowledged in order to "expand the aesthetic experience beyond our own narrowly culture - bound line of vision". Anthropological contextualisation helps provide insights into the social, economic, ritual or aesthetic surroundings of "other" cultures, but the outsiders will usually value objects based on their own aesthetics, with or without the knowledge of local understandings.

A few articles and books have explored the relatively recent religious, political and economic changes on Sulawesi and Northern Sumatra, including the impact of collectors and tourists, on ethnic identity and changing textile approaches. While exploring the

19 Crystal 1979:53
20 Price 1989, Chapter 4
21 Price 1989:93
historical 'unanswered questions' in regard to Toraja sacred cloths called *maa’* and *sarita*, Nooy-Palm states;


In rituals nowadays, the Toraja are apt to decorate with imported Sumba cloths, batiks, and cheap towels, to compensate for the lack of old *maa’* and *sarita*. Moreover, the sacred cloths sell so well on the antique market that fake ones are being fabricated.”

22

Changing use and valuation of textiles and traditions associated with them, is discussed further in later sections. However, in discussing cultural framing through the literature, it is important to acknowledge that some authors have warned about the lack of availability of valuable textiles.

“Traditions will not be preserved by removing and preserving their objects eight thousand miles away from where they were made, used and revered. I feel strongly that museums in particular should be exemplary in this regard. Museums that promote travel trips to the interior of Sarawak and New Guinea to enable tourists to collect the "best, old, unusual" examples of traditional art are probably violating their own canons of ethics and preservation. True preservation surely has something to do with maintaining and promoting the art in its context.”

Fischer suggests the investment of

"appropriate capital which, perhaps, would help Indonesian museums to collect and maintain scarce examples and enable local artisans to produce high-quality cloths, or, merely, to produce textiles again.”

22 Nooy-Palm 1989:163

23 Fischer 1980:347. Prof. James Fox of the Pacific School of Research, ANU, from 1984-86 organised a competition/project for weavers from Western Timor to stimulate renewed textile production and encouragement in the use of traditional designs and material like locally grown cotton and natural dyes. Initial advance payment to the weavers was from the Australian Ambassador's Aid project with the woven results being sold in Australia through the National Gallery Shop and private sales.
At issue, is not whether it is appropriate for the West to enjoy these objects, but whether the balance has tipped so that textile scholars have greater access to the cloths than the people who have produced them! The majority of the literature has not accounted for the relation of contemporary culture to tradition, or the nature of influence, innovation and change taking place.
Various ulos for sale, Simandino village.

Ulos sitoluntubo (detail) with "Jesus Kristus" twinned in border.

Photographed at Simandino village, Samosir, Lake Toba, Sumatra. 1993
2.2 HISTORICAL, SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES

The forms in which Indonesian historical or cultural information is presented is at least as diverse as the approximately 250 language groups or 13,000 islands which make up the archipelago. Access to information about Indonesia, is shaped by a long history of cross cultural contact, through trade, missionaries, colonisation, economic and political alliance or dominance, academic fieldwork and scholarship, popular and travel writings and documentaries. Positions shift and are disputed, with the current situation only being understood in the context of the variety of historical influences and the layering of successive cultural waves.

Migrations from Southeast Asia, including the Dongson culture, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, Chinese settlers, Dutch Colonialism, Christian Missionaries, the Japanese during WW II and more recently multi-national corporations and tourism, have all impacted to a greater or lesser extent on the cultural traditions and material culture of the Indonesian archipelago. Boundaries between culture often do not coincide with political boundaries - trade and art traditions have a long history of crossing the boundaries drawn on maps by scholars, colonial governments, or politicians. As Taylor has observed in Beyond the Java Sea (1992), objects from overseas often became prized heirlooms, the fundamental design motifs copied and transformed into the local aesthetic, for religious or cultural expression.

When the first Europeans arrived in the Indonesian archipelago they found a varying collection of principalities and kingdoms, which were occasionally at war with each other, but also formed an inter-island and international network for trade. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to open the trade routes to Southeast Asia and India, capturing the Molucca Islands (the famous Spice Islands of clove and nutmeg) in 1512. While seen as pioneers from a European perspective, to the Indonesians long involved in coastal trade with a wide range of foreign peoples the Portuguese were just another group of traders who found their way to the spice islands and did not initially represent a fundamental alteration to
Indonesian society. However superior firepower and an aggressive spirit gave them an edge over their Asian counterparts, which allowed the Portuguese to build trade infrastructure, such as stable ports and shipping routes to secure their source of trade goods.

The initial success of the Portuguese encouraged other European nations to send ships to the region - notably the English, Dutch and Spanish, each vying for control over aspects of trade. In 1602 the Dutch Estates General granted a charter to the United East-India Company to trade, make treaties, build forts, maintain troops and operate courts of law, in all the land from the Cape of Good Hope to the Straits of Magellan. After capturing Melaka (called Malacca in the West and located in present day Malaysia) from the Portuguese in 1641 the Dutch had a monopoly on the trade, making Batavia their capital, from which goods were transhipped throughout Asia, including Persia, India, Ceylon, Japan and Europe. During the seventeenth century, after various alliances with local leaders, the Dutch were eventually able to expel all other European and Asian merchants from the Moluccan spice trade, and focus the production in more easily policed areas. 24

The Dutch, through the VOC (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, United East India Company) used a 'divide and rule' strategy, exploiting conflicts between the Javanese kingdoms and making various rulers and courts on the outer islands their vassals in order to dominate trade. The later colonial government used indirect rule, establishing district chiefs, frequently misreading or ignoring local hierarchies and traditions of decision making. European and Asian trade items of silver, ceramics and textiles were important in maintaining imperialistic rule over diverse groups, especially focused on the coastal areas.

Except for the spice monopoly, the regional courts of Indonesia's outer islands were seen as trade emporia, and were dominated by...

"indigenous peoples exchanging Indonesian products and imported goods in local and international markets. Courts

24 Taylor 1991:304
provided the entryway for foreign ideas, including the Hindu and Buddhist concepts of divine kingship around which Indonesian rulers originally organised courts, as well as the Islamic religion to which the court's rulers and population converted” 25

Taylor observes that courts were the avenue through which foreign artistic techniques or aesthetic motifs were introduced to inland peoples, although the dependency was mutual, for a court required a hinterland to supply products and soldiers in times of need.

The Dutch missionaries in many cases followed the soldiers in their campaigns to extend Dutch domination. Where Islam had established itself firmly, the missionaries faced an almost impossible task. Therefore, they concentrated most of their efforts on those whom they called the Indonesian heidenen (heathen) such as the Bataks in Sumatra, the Dayaks in Kalimantan, the Toraja and Manadonese in Sulawesi and the non-Moslem populations on the islands of East Indonesia and West Irian. The Toba Batak and Toraja people, who are the subject of this study, fall into this missionary sphere of influence.

Dutch colonisation of Indonesia lasted for 300 or 350 years depending on which history you read and in which province the counting begins and ends. The Batak country in North Sumatra was only conquered in 1907, although contact with the outside world existed before this. Batak refers to people of six ethnic groups spread over the mountainous highland of northern Sumatra. They now number approximately 3 million, making them the fourth largest ethnic group among the 300 different peoples of Indonesia. Each of the six Batak ethnic groups have different kinship systems, language, customs and religions due to different settlement patterns, influences and mythological ideas concerning ancestry. 26

The Toba Batak are the largest and probably most studied of all the groups and live on the western and southern area of Lake Toba and

25 ibid:306
26 Sibeth 1991:7
Samosir Island, the legendary 'homeland' of all Bataks. Toba Batak people trace their ancestry to a single common ancestor called Si Raja Batak who lived at the foot of Pusuk Bukit volcano on the western shore of Lake Toba and whose two sons founded the first families from which all Batak descent lines are based.

The geography of the Batak land, of steep mountains, deep valleys carved by rivers, with thick forest on the plateaus and slopes, all a 1000 metres above sea level, meant that the region was fairly inaccessible during the early periods of colonial, scientific and missionary development. At the beginning of the 19th century, Islam gained a strong hold in the area to the south of Batakland with the Mandailing and Ankola Batak now predominantly Moslem, while the Toba Bataks were increasingly Christianised by the German Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft from 1864 onwards. 27

The name, 'Toraja' is applied to a number of ethnic groups which inhabit the mountain regions of Southwest and Central Sulawesi. Cultural anthropologists and linguists use prefixes Sa'dan Toraja, Tac' Toraja and Mamasa Toraja to distinguish different people and regions although the people refer to themselves as Toraja. Some anthropologists classify the Toraja of Sulawesi, the Dayaks of Kalimantan and the Bataks of Sumatra as Proto-Malay, people of the first migration from Indo-China via the Malay peninsula, although this view is considered out of fashion by others. 28

The origin and associations of the Toraja name varies depending on source. The Bugis and Makassarese people of the coastal area appear to have applied the term to the Sa'dan highlanders after their 17th century military campaigns. However, prior to the 20th century and the beginning of the formation of a collective identity, Sa'dan highlanders commonly referred to themselves by using the name of their village. Bigalke also suggests that

"to refer to "the Toraja" before ethnic consciousness led the peoples of the Sa'dan highlands to perceive themselves as a

27 ibid:11
28 Sandarupa 1984: 4
unity, a people, which began in the 1930's, conveys a misleading sense of singularity without signalling one's recognition of the diversity that existed."  

According to their traditions, the Toraja originally came from the mythical island of Pongko', from a fleet of eight praos, driven off course by a storm and ending up on the South Sulawesi coast. This has been used as one explanation for the origin of the curving roof and vessel shaped houses. Toraja mythology says the ancestors came via sailing vessels from the South, up the Sa'dan river, then were forced into the mountainous regions by later migrations.  

Rivalries between Toraja 'big men' afforded the Dutch an opportunity to penetrate the highlands of Sulawesi from 1905, although they had established a permanent trading station at Ujung Pandang (formerly Makassar) from the late 17th century.

"The Dutch allegedly penetrated the highland as a part of their new "Ethical Policy" to promote the welfare and education of local peoples. However, there were other factors in their decision to annex upland Sulawesi."  

The cost of fighting Islamic Acehnese forces encouraged the Dutch to see the pagan population as possible converts to Christianity to protect the hinterlands from the spread of Islam. Although some chiefs resisted the colonial forces, the majority did not. Bigalke suggests that Pong Tiku (a 'National Hero', who resisted the Dutch soldiers) and others have an heightened importance today because their stories;

"served the uses of a rising Christian elite beginning in the 1930's, the Japanese during the occupation of 1942-45 and Indonesian nationalist historians up to the present."  

29 Bigalke 1981:16  
30 Sandarupa 1984:5  
31 Adams 1988:97  
The effects of Dutch administration pulled Torajans away from kinship-based communities towards a territorial basis of organisation, in contrast to the traditional Torajan political system. Missionaries from the Protestant Dutch Reformed Church arrived in 1913, shortly after colonial administration was in place, and modelled their work on the standard 19th century missionary philosophy

"that it was necessary to have a sound cultural understanding of the locals before one could attempt to manipulate the religious and cultural system in ways that would lead to conversion".  

While the coastal towns of Sulawesi have had contact with Europeans and other traders for more than 300 years the central highlands were one of the last regions of Indonesia to become known to outsiders. In 1905 the government of the Dutch East Indies abandoned its policy of non-intervention and allowed colonial forces and missionaries into the region, bringing about a period of cultural change.

Both the Toraja and Toba Batak people have a similar history of contact up until Indonesian independence. Relatively isolated by geography; bound by strong kinship relationships; social and religious beliefs; and a shared belief in the dual cosmos, in which the living and dead co-exist, with the dead believed to have continuous and controlling power over the living. Both groups resisted Islam although Christian missionaries and the Dutch administration gradually impacted on traditional ways. The Toraja and Toba Batak have had different experiences and have responded in different ways to the political, religious and economic changes since the Second World War.

The Japanese occupation of 1942-45 and the Dutch return, brought hardships for the Toraja. With independence, almost 15 years of guerrilla warfare ensued, led by Islamic rebels of South Sulawesi.

"Although physical movement throughout the island was impeded by violence, social and ideological movement was

33 Adams 1988:102-3
enormous. Children of former slaves and children of aristocrats were for the first time schooled together, learned the Indonesian language and Indonesian nationalism, converted to Christianity (with its egalitarian rhetoric), and developed curiosities and appetites that the limited world of the highlands...could not possibly satisfy".  

The significance of ceremonial cloths may be traced to the role of gift exchange in the confirmation of kinship and other forms of social obligation. The Toba Batak have a complex kinship system based on patrilineal lineages with subordinate clans and sub-clans. Groups of lineages form margas (from the Sanskrit mrga or custom) denoting "sub clans" from which present day families derive their names, which are then grouped into larger clans which trace their ancestry from the fabled Si Raja Batak of Divine origin. A lineage became a marga as soon as the descendants of a famous chief were sufficiently wealthy and numerous to organise a horja festival in honour of the ancestor who became a sombaon (the highest level in the world of the dead).

Marriage is not a private matter as it joins two marga and defines the relationship between these two kinship groups in accordance with adat or custom. All the Batak agree that there are certain preferred relationships between partners which are intended to continue an already existing relationship into the next generation. An ideal match is thought to be a marriage between a man and a daughter of his mother's brother, but a marriage with a parallel "cousin", ie. the daughter of his fathers brother, is strictly forbidden and incestuous. It is important to preserve the relationship of the kinship group of the wife-givers (hulahula) and the wife-takers (boru). In simple terms men of marga A take their wives from marga B. Marga B take their wives from marga C, who take their wives from marga A. In this cycle of exchange the hulahula or boru relationships remain constant.  

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34 Volkman 1990:93
35 Sibeth 1991:60
As a result of this system, every Batak has a role both as a superior and a subordinate to fellow members and works to maintain this network of dependence between individual family groups. Part of this obligation is initially established when gifts are exchanged at an official adat ceremony to establish the ties of kinship. These gifts—called piso (knife) from the bridegroom's family consist of money, rice or other objects of value, and are considered the male elements as opposed to the female return gifts of ulos (cloths, jewellery, household objects). 36

Children receive their father's family name and are counted as members of his family, while the wives retain their marga name. Although she is passed into the "possession" of her husband's marga, she retains her marga of origin since the hulahula relationship to the male relatives of the mother is also of significance.

The political units are considered the village (huta or umban) which have village chiefs or raja (which comes from the Sanskrit language, but unlike India, the Batak raja only ruled a small group of people). The raja's power is restricted with the position derived from the family which founded the village and owned the surrounding land. The raja is responsible for receiving, lodging and looking after strangers, acting as representative to the outside world, sorting legal disputes, laying down sentences, leading festivals, religious ceremonies, or military campaigns but he must also work in agreement with his boru as part of the kinship obligations.

Ceremonial textiles may be seen as significant symbols of Toraja social and religious beliefs, acting to reinforce hierarchies of position and relationships. Traditional Toraja religious beliefs have their origins in concerns for the inter-relationship between people, their domesticated animals and plants and the spirit of nature and ancestors. The Toraja divide their world into two closely related and mutually needed aspects. The world of the living is defined as a temporary one which will be continued in the next or eternal world after death. There are rituals for each sphere—the Eastern sphere of

rising sun, rice, fertility, and the realm of the West, the setting sun and death.

Status is very important among the Toraja for this determines how one will be treated on one's death and in the after life. Property is important, as is the accumulation of wealth, for these riches can be spent by giving feasts, to gain prestige and the right to be buried according to a superior funeral rite. Textiles play an important role within these rituals, as symbols of wealth and status. (See figure 2)

The deceased of high rank, can only ascend to the upper world and become an 'active' ancestor, protecting the pa'rapuan and watching over the rice, after a time consuming and expensive internment is completed. This involves obligations and exchanges of buffalo or pig, to maintain connections of blood and marriage, friendship or acquaintance, village or bua' (social network) and are of great social importance.

Priests belong to the to makaka class. Their highest order is the to burkake, which is divided into two categories, the toburake tattiku' (tattiku' means small bird) who are priestesses and to the to burkake tamolang (tambolang means a stork) who are male transvestites representing hemaphrodites. The to burake preside at the bua' ritual, a high feast of great importance as the culmination of the entire Toraja ritual cycle. In the celebrations the to minaa also play a role; these priests are specialists in tribal lore and genealogies, contributing litanies accompanied by offerings. Rice priests, the to indo' padang (guardians, literally 'mothers' of the land) are charged with the celebration of the rice ritual.

The to ma'dampi' is the medicine man who heals one or more patients in a maro or ma'bugi ritual, which are exorcism rituals. All these priests are associated with life ceremonies, while the tomebalun 'he who wraps (the corpse)’, is the death priest.37

There are also specialists for non-religious tasks among the Toraja - people who hew out the burial tombs in the rocks or cliffs, men who

37 Nooy-Palm 1988:16
carry the corpse to the tomb, iron and goldsmiths, carpenters, men who make tau-tau or effigies and wood carvers. It seems the only areas with ikat weavers are in the Rongkong and Galumpang districts, small areas in the west from which other people trade for the specialised cloths. Finding specific information on these regions has proved impossible so the assumption is made that this general information applies to them. There are currently few weavers in the Sa'dan area, and those that are seem to cater for the tourists primarily.

After an elaborate Torajan burial ceremony, the body (of a high class person) is usually placed in a hole in the cliffs, with carved, clothed, wooden effigies (tau tau) to represent the deceased. At one time, these effigies, with movable limbs were reputedly clad in bark cloth that was changed in a ritual once a year, but nowadays they are dressed in woven cloths like those worn by the villagers. Only those of high rank or wealth can afford to commission these statues, and to have family graves in the cliffs.

Most Toraja are now Christians, with some adherents to Aluk to Dolo, the "old" religion. Forced to choose religions by fears of Islamic conversion by guerrillas during political unrest in the 1950's, the majority selected Christianity. Both the Indonesian authorities and the guerrillas disapproved of the Torajas' old religion, although later it was classified as part of Hindu Dharma, a state recognised religion associated with the religion of Bali. In 1981 statistics, 15% of the population called themselves adherents of the Aluk to Dolo, but many facets of the old religion have been incorporated into local Christian practice, and into ongoing ceremonies.

The missionary work of the Dutch Reformed Church in the 1920's established schools and worked out a response to an obviously significant, but distressingly "Pagan" ritual system. The missionaries distinguished between custom or tradition (adat) and what they considered a pagan religion (aluk). This separation continues to inform the Toraja view of themselves.

38 Sandarupa 1984:33
"The division of a formerly unitary concept of aluk - an ancestral legacy encompassing both thought and action may be thought of as the first significant decentering in the modern Toraja world." 39

Today many Toraja live in other areas due to over population and the resultant land shortage, insufficient employment in agriculture, preference for other professions etc. Torajan people living outside the area help to keep the old traditions and tongkonan alive through financial contributions (for buffalo, rice, gifts etc) while also introducing new ideas and attitudes during visits for important family ceremonies. The rush of Toraja emigration began when new national policies opened Jakarta's doors to foreign investment, with work opportunities in the oil and timber companies in Kalimantan, mines and forests of Irian Jaya, and cities of Sulawesi and Java. In 1985, the Toraja church estimated that 230,000 Toraja lived outside of Tana Toraja, with a local population of 350,000. 40

Toraja society is stratified into three levels. Highest are the nobility, known as to parengnge'.

"Rengnge' refers to the way women carry their baskets, so the title means figuratively: to carry a heavy load, or responsibility. Second comes a class of free people: to makaka and lastly a class (formerly) of slaves: to kaunan."41

The criteria for status are birth, achievements and wealth and is determined by one's place in the ranking system and within the family group. Individuals with extensive knowledge and well versed in adat, are highly esteemed and with wealth and power have the requirements needed to reach Puya, the "Land of Souls".42

Traditionally a Toraja belongs to both one's father's family group and to one's mother's. For upper class it was not sufficient to know only

39 Volkman 1990:92
40 ibid:94
41 Nooy Palm 1988:15
42 Sandarupa 1984:52
the names of one's ancestors, their deeds were also important, especially when they had founded a house, and were revered as a first ancestor. The ancestor or founder of a house (*tongkonan*), watches over his living descendants from the hereafter, which he has reached thanks to their ministrations. The descendants form a group called a *parapuan* or *rapu*, with the *tongkonan* as the centre for celebrations. A Toraja will belong to a number of groups from both mother and fathers' side, although due to the need to actively reinforce connections through time and expense, a choice of *tongkonan* is generally made.

These *tongkonan* are structures with complex symbolism, carvings, tall sweeping saddle back roofs, made of local materials, in and around which celebrations and rituals are held. The word *tongkonan* derives from the verb *tongkon* - to sit down or assist at one's funeral ceremony - and implies a dwelling place and centre of ritual. The construction follows precise rules of number, size and directionality and requires great resources. It must face north, because the realm of gods is the north and east, from which they can enter the house through the front entrance. 43 "Symbols of status, wealth and fertility were incised and painted on the exterior". This continues in some houses constructed more recently and may derive from carved coffins and *maa'* cloths.44 Socially and symbolically the decorated *tongkonan* used to represent the high status of the owner's genealogical ties to important ancestors and currently represents one's social networks through the ritual activities centred around a house.

From this brief historical and cultural outline of the Toba Bataks and Torajan people, it is important to note that both groups have very complex and highly structured social organisations, that have adapted to significant changes. The religious and social structures have been studied by many anthropologists. 45 Inevitably however, mediating factors of history, period and informants' perspectives,

43 ibid:27
44 Volkman 1990:95, Nooy-Palm 1989:179
academic training and intentions, make this knowledge provisional and positional.

Information in these texts, in turn have been used by scholars with a specific interest in the role and significance of textiles within the respective societies. Only a handful of anthropologists or sociologists have written detailed studies of the textiles in relation to the social and religious organisation of the Batak or Torajan societies. Each (naturally?) refers to the other, with infrequent admissions of conflict or differing opinion. This tends to reinforce an 'etic' point of view - that is, the circulation of knowledge remains within the observers context - without necessarily being retested as meaningful or appropriate interpretations to the original producers or users. While valuing and accepting prior investigations which make this information accessible, a mind open to the variables in 'reading' textiles and their context is important.
Toba Batak *ulos pinunsaan* - ritual cloths for clothing, wrapping and shroud. From Porsea district, North Sumatra. Cotton and natural dyes, supplementary warp and weft, warp ikat and twining.

Right - Australian National Gallery 1984.256 125.0 x 225.0 cm
Left - detail from *pinunsaan* purchased at Ambarita, Samosir 1993.
Shows end panels with male (left) and female (right) schematic patterning. (After Gittinger 1975:20-21)
2.3 TEXTILES AS DOCUMENTS

In all societies, textiles represent one way of making statements about one's identity, status, wealth, social standing and cultural or personal values. Clothing and decoration are used to publicly announce one's position and viewpoint, whether it is worn as a form of protest to society's norms - such as women wearing trousers in the 19th century, or punks of the 1980's - or as a display of rank and privilege such as Royal regalia, High Court Judges or haute couture. Each society has its own way of making statements about important religious or secular events and reinforcing the beliefs through decorating the body and ritual environment.

By publicly displaying items which a cultural group has ascribed meaning to, such as business suits, uniforms, ecclesiastical garments, flags and banners, the textiles are being used to communicate about values and belief systems. How much of the message is understood, beyond the superficial level, is dependent on the knowledge and understanding the viewer has of the cultural codes and layered symbolism on display. Public exhibitions or celebrations, such as festivals, parades and weddings, often have a core of significance which crosses cultural boundaries and can be understood as a community celebration. Outsiders do not need to know the specifics of people or event, to recognise a shared experience of celebration or mourning. On the other hand, with religious or private personal rituals, elements of symbolic or ritual value, such as fetishes, shamans or textiles may require a deeper knowledge of the cultural group, before recognition occurs. The meanings of ceremonial regalia or decorations, which at one time may have been understood within a traditional framework, can often no longer be pinned down specifically, due to changing contexts and shifting values.

By choosing two different ethnic groups who have common origins, I aim to show how each has adapted textile traditions through changing circumstances and influences. Both the Toraja and Toba Batak people are mountain dwelling people with shared origins in the Dongson culture, who maintained traditional lifestyles and animist beliefs until missionaries and the Dutch extended their
colonial administration into the highlands at the beginning of this century. Belief in a continuous and controlling presence of the spirits of ancestors and the beneficial or harmful acts they can bring to the living, is a shared tradition, as with many other ethnic groups within Indonesia. This two way relationship between the living and the dead requires rituals, and textiles are one item which assists in the mediation process with the spirits.

Central to this study of the Toba Batak and Toraja peoples is the issue of 'tradition'. 'Traditions' may be invented, or customs undergo innovation and

"change up to a point, though evidently the requirement that it must appear compatible or even identical with precedent imposes substantial limitations on it. 'Custom' cannot afford to be invariant, because even in 'traditional' societies life is not so."

'Invented traditions' include those actually

"constructed and formally instituted and those emerging in a less easily traceable manner within a brief and dateable period - a matter of a few years perhaps and establishing themselves with great rapidity." 46

'Traditional' meanings evolve and adapt, or are applied in new ways to different circumstances. The use of textiles in 'traditional' or 'customary' rituals and as a means of cultural or regional identification spreads across most of the world. In the Indonesian archipelago, the textiles produced form a vital part of ceremonial occasions which affirm ones' place in society and in the spiritual and religious realm. They are documents which can be 'read', if one has the appropriate knowledge and language, just as clothing and decorative textiles in the Western contexts can be 'read' for important statements on cultural values.

46 Hobsbawn and Ranger 1983:1-2
Indonesian textiles are one accompaniment to a rich mythology and ritual system of beliefs and some of the contexts of use and readings, will be explored in the next section. This includes myths about origins - both of people and textiles; discussion about textiles as 'female'; textiles which reinforce religious and social hierarchies and cultural identity through rituals of death, renewal, protection and fertility. It is important to keep in mind that this learning is presented as a second or third generation view, which inevitably "reframes and repositions their cultural and social connotations" in the light of different viewpoints.\(^{47}\)

For the purpose of this study, I am arguing that textiles are documents which can be examined in relation to myths of origin, ie. where people have come from; origins and subsequent influences on the textiles can be explored through analysis of design elements. Recent studies have been reassessing origins and meanings associated with cloth, particularly as documents of female experience and history.\(^{48}\)

In the case of textiles from Southeast Asia which are produced exclusively by women,

"textiles are able to show history from a different perspective by reflecting a female view of the contact between different cultures, and are an alternative to the princely epics of war, succession and dominance, textiles also remind us that many cultures and traditions existed outside the powerful court centres and kingdoms that dominate most accounts of Southeast Asian history." \(^{49}\)

In many cultures, special ritual expertise and knowledge establishes status, and for women of Southeast Asia, this often includes prowess at weaving important cloths. Within the division of labour, textiles are the womens' art form and are associated with the female component in the dual cosmos and complement the male, opposite

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\(^{47}\) Price 1989:4  
\(^{48}\) See for example, Weiner & Schneider (eds) 1989, Heringa 1991, Niessen 1985  
\(^{49}\) Maxwell 1990:24
characteristics. The entire process, with rare exceptions, is the craft of women - from preparing the threads, dyes, patterns to weaving and decorating - and represents women's major artistic and creative outlet.

Tightly arranged patterns of geometric and curvilinear scrolls, diamonds and hooked lozenge shapes, are design characteristics which are associated with early Southeast Asian bronze articles. These appear on both house carvings and textiles of the Toraja and Batak regions, suggesting a common source and aesthetic. Langewis and Wagner (1964) have analysed the decorative arts of Indonesia primarily by isolating motifs and looking for sources and influences, placing great importance on the influence of the Dongson culture from the 7th century B.C. on Indonesian design. Taylor, in Beyond the Java Sea, suggests that recent criticism of the diffusionist theory of the dominance of proto-Vietnamese Dongson bronze styles, is leading to new ideas about sources of artistic influence on Indonesian designs, suggesting an independent but common origin within the region. He also states, that design motifs could have travelled on textiles (it would be unusual if they had not), in addition to ceramics and bronzes, but that the textiles have not survived in their original form. 50 Certainly design influences from Indian trade textiles of the last few centuries, such as patolas are commonly accepted and well documented.

Some textiles can be 'read' in a direct sense, with words of blessing or greetings woven in; or figuratively, in the symbols of wealth and prosperity; or 'read' in a more abstract way by knowledgeable people able to assess particular situations such as births or marriages. This study examines some of the varieties of cloth from the Toraja and Batak people which are used to convey messages, reinforce family relationships or connections with ancestors and define hierarchies and social links through ceremony and gift exchanges. (See figure 3)

For example, Toraja families of importance have two forms of ceremonial cloths (amongst many others), generically known as ma'a and sarita, which are flown from bamboo poles and used in a

50 Taylor 1991:67
variety of other ways during rituals for family groups, such as weddings and funerals. They are used as a medium between heaven and earth, between ancestors, the gods, spirits and people. Each important cloth is considered to have magical powers and is given a "personal" name. It is believed that the cloths will bless their owners and bring prosperity, through health and an increase in animals and crops. The holy ma'a and sarita are displayed and read in the context of ceremonies of both the East and West realms and "symbolise that these two spheres are complimentary to each other." 51

The Toba Batak of Northern Sumatra also have two cloth types which can be 'read' by experts for divination and prophesy - the ulos ragidup ('design of life') and the ulos pinunsaan, a regional variation. It is believed that the origin of the ulos ragidup stems from the Batak mythical heroine, who brought them the skill to weave the ragidup patterns, to supplement the indigo ulos sibolang which they already possessed. 52

The ragidup and pinunsaan textiles have gender specific patterns at the ends, with both male and female elements in each cloth, as well as other bands of geometric patterning. (See figure 4) The combination of motifs is regarded as having strong magical properties, able to communicate with the spirits, and act as a mnemonic device for the spiritually enlightened to interpret whether the cloth could protect from or dispel evil. In times of personal difficulties, a Batak village priest might prescribe a particular cloth or design, such as a ulos ragidup be woven as a cure.53 Interestingly, little mention is made in the literature of the knowledge the weavers must have in the making of the patterns, although Gittinger suggests that there is an integral connection between the manner of weaving (structurally unusual and complex) and "its cultural significance as a cloth imbued with the blessings of long life." 54

51 Nooy-Palm 1980:83-93
52 Gittinger 1975:22
53 ibid:13-29, Maxwell 1990:119
54 Gittinger 1975:25
I believe that we should also be wary about reading too much into design motifs. In undertaking a detailed analysis and translation of motifs in a Batak ulos ragidup, Gittinger seems frustrated with some of the answers received.

"When questioned about the significance of designs other than those in the pinar halak (gender specific band) the Batak tend to give platitudinous explanations that they are wishes for children, riches, esteem and honour. Such a lack of detailed knowledge prevents a full understanding of the total intellectual scheme represented, but we may assume with confidence that the designs are traditional and stem from a venerable past." 55

However, she does go on to say that "it is evident that a diverse body of semi-private mythology centres on this particular type of ulos." 56 Perhaps in her attempt to apply western style schematic analysis across the broad spectrum of cloths and regional differences, some of the magical or interpretive elements which make these cloths special, are withheld, or no longer clearly defined. Meanings of motifs can change - from the weavers' original intention or context-to develop additional symbolism through new uses.

"The task of decoding motifs and symbols may initially appear rewarding. But in many instances the historical sources of the motif tell us little or nothing about what such patterns mean for the maker or user of a particular cloth." 57

Maxwell also notes that within Southeast Asian textile art two trends towards changing meanings are apparent - that is, motifs which originally may have had religious or philosophical meaning become decorative and elements chosen for their ornamental qualities become imbued with religious and philosophical significance in the new cultural context.

55 ibid:20
56 ibid.:21
57 Maxwell 1990:396
Toraja *sarita* - sacred heirloom. This type of cloth was made by a paste-resist dyeing process in the Netherlands and exported to Sulawesi from 1880 to around 1930. It is likely that a locally made prototype was the model for the imported cloths, however they also seem to have encouraged the Toraja to further develop their own paste batik and stamped *sarita*. Cotton and indigo dyes. 17.6 x 487.0 cm
Australian National Gallery 1980.1653

fig. 5
2.3.1 Toraja Textiles

The Toraja are aware that some *ma'a* and *sarita* textiles came from abroad, but as time went on the cloths became shrouded in mystery and the upper world or heavens were considered the place of origin. Poems tell of a supreme deity "enclosed inside a curtain of an old short wide fabric with a cross motif on it." \(^58\) When the prominent ancestors descended to earth from heaven, the first abode of man, it is believed they brought the holy *ma'a* with them. (See figure 3)

The origins of fabrics are connected with myths. Some are thought to have come from heaven, some brought by ancestors and some appeared "all of a sudden". Toraja are also aware that many came from elsewhere - *sarita to lambang* means *sarita* brought by people fording a river (*lambang* - also translates as floating) which is interpreted as *sarita* coming from outside Tana Toraja. Another cloth called *ma'a* to norrong means *ma'a* brought by swimming, that is coming across the waters. \(^59\)

Heirloom textiles are an important accompaniment to wealthy peoples' funerals and include *ma'a*, *sarita* and ikats when possible. Covered with *ma'a*, the body of the deceased is laid out in the *tongkonan*, which is decorated with sacred cloths. Later, the body is carried in a bier decorated with *ma'a* and placed in a tower construction shaped like a Toraja house. (See figure 2) In the final stages, the body will be placed in a stone vault, a rock chamber decorated with a carved wooden effigy that is supposed to house the soul of the deceased, dressed in clothing and a turban of *sarita*. \(^60\)

Textiles that fit into the *ma'a* (or *mawa*) category are local and Javanese batik, Indian patola and patola imitation and Indian printed textiles. They are generally wide rectangles of cloth as opposed to the *sarita* which are long, narrow fabrics. Toraja designs included stamped and painted cloths and boldly patterned plangi resists. \(^61\)

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\(^{58}\) Van der Veen 1965:83 cited in Nooy-Palm 1980:83-83
\(^{59}\) Nooy-Palm 1989:169
\(^{60}\) ibid:167
\(^{61}\) Gittinger 1979:204
Locally made ma'a show influences from Indian patola in layout, such as rows of triangles at the ends, border designs and colour preference for red, but contain scenes which are typically Toraja, such as buffalo, tongkonan, people, ducks, leaf and flower ornaments, crosses and cowrie-shell motifs. Classification of ma'a by the Toraja is based on the leading motif or predominant design, however, many variations of styles and names exist, including a "personal" name if it concerns an important cloth.  

The similarity of designs on tongkonan (traditional houses), coffins and sarita provides an interesting puzzle about origin and influences. One recent study suggests the motifs on ma'a had an effect on designs used in carving of tongkonan since the highly carved houses are a relatively recent convention. The art of carving coffins predates carved tongkonan with the carved and painted designs on houses mirroring coffins. Some ma'a are made by stamping the cloth with carved blocks of wood or bamboo, as well as painted motifs. The details and types of designs carved on wooden panels, reflect the social rank of the family. It is not known whether the designs on the sarita had a similar function, but ownership of one of these sacred cloths was an indicator of high rank and value (measured in numbers of buffalo).  

Dutch factory-made sarita, block printed with tendrils, leaf and cowrie-shell motifs and then indigo dyed, were traded and sought after in Sulawesi as an important category of ritual textile. An indigenous prototype is the most likely model for the factory-made sarita, but this is only conjecture. J.W. van Nouhuys established that the cotton mills had produced these block printed fabrics since 1880, which meant that they had probably reached Tana Toraja more than twenty years before the Toraja were subjected by the Dutch, and continued to be exported until about 1930. It appears that the imported sarita also impacted on the locally produced versions.  

(See figure 5)

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62 Nooy-Palm 1989:167-168  
63 ibid:179  
64 Hauser-Schaublin 1989 185-193  
Toraja *ma'a* - sacred textile  
Handspun cotton, natural dyes painting, block printing 47.4 x 78.8  
Australiana National Gallery 1981.1146

fig. 6
A variety of technical skills, composition and colour are used on the locally produced ma'a or sarita cloths, including wax resist, hand painting, stamping with bamboo and printing with carved wooden blocks. In these pieces beeswax was used as the resist substance whereas the Dutch used a combination of other substances. 66

Images include people pounding rice, buffalo and herd men, ducks, creepers, women carrying baskets on their backs and men carrying loads. One cloth depicts Tulangdidi the legendary woman who weaves or spin in the moon and who is associated with the rice cycles. Segments of moon represent various of these stages. Imported ma'a seem to have influenced locally produced work - the layout of some showing Indian influence from patolas or Javanese batiks. Examples include, rows of triangles at the cloth ends, a preference for red as the main colour and an abundance of tendrils, leaves, and flowers usually transformed by the Toraja hand. 67

Many designs display a

"central window within a small repetitively patterned field, through which can be seen cameo impressions of Toraja village and agricultural life." 68

Sarita are used at festivals of both the Eastern and Western spheres of ritual life. 69 The same is true of ma'a, but those preferred for Eastern ceremonies tend to have motifs associated with fertility, such as the cow-in corral design. 70 The East relates to ceremonies of renewal, fertility, well-being of man, animals and crops, while the West is the realm of the ancestors and death rituals.

"The use of textiles as hangings and banners at ceremonies that focus on fertility and renewal is especially evident among the Torajanese. Fine textiles form a symbolic link between participants in Toraja feasts of renewal and their family's ancestors. Huge cloths are hung from the walls of temporary

66 Gittinger 1979:203
67 Nooy Palm 1989:172
68 Maxwell 1990:369
69 Nooy-Palm 1986:Chapter2
70 Nooy-Palm 1989:166
shelters erected to accommodate guests and billow like sails from the peaks of the curved peaks of the traditional houses. Many symbols of fertility are evident on these Torajan textiles and on the decorative costume worn on these ceremonial occasions. 

Nooy-Palm (1986,1989) also documents in great detail the specific, and general symbolism of ma'a and sarita cloths and their function within different rituals. In addition to the direct symbols of fertility, it is believed that especially powerful and sacred cloths are imbued with magical capacities to bring their owners prosperity. She mentions one cloth, purchased for the Royal Tropical Institute which had a personal name Telo-telo Langi or "Summit of Heaven". "The family that owned it had become Christian, so that the function of the textile, once sacred, was obsolete". It could be seen also that it brought prosperity in a different way, through the sale to a wealthy and prestigious institution.

One ma'a in the National Gallery of Australia collection is a seamless circular textile, in which the unwoven warp may have been woven in with a needle. It is painted and stamped with symbols of wealth and abundance - buffaloes inside a corral in the characteristic Toraja style of combining profile and aerial perspective; dashes and crosses may represent other buffaloes, dogs or fowls; and the large black crosses represent heavenly stars or spots (doti langi'). "Ma'a cloths with the doti langi' motif are displayed particularly at the Toraja rituals celebrating the agricultural cycle and feasts of merit." The symbolism in the circular cloth can be understood in relation to the agricultural cycle, fertility and the repetition of generations. (See figure 6)

An other form of powerful textile which does not have as accessible, easily recognized motifs as the ma'a, are the ceremonial hangings or shrouds, which are associated with death and rituals of the west. These huge warp ikat cloths which were displayed at the funerals of the nobility, were dyed and woven in the Rongkong and Galampung

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71 Maxwell 1990:139-142
72 Nooy-Palm 1989:168
73 Maxwell 1990:142
Toraja - *porilonjong* - ceremonial hanging or shroud from Rongkong district.
Cotton, natural dyes, warp ikat 132.5 x 434.0
Australian National Gallery 1985:616
From Maxwell 1990:81
regions and traded to other Toraja groups. Although striking for size and the vividness of forms, very little seems to be known about the motifs and possible meanings. The comparative ethnographer, Carl Schuster identified metrically repetitive patterns in the sekomandi cloth, calling them

"genealogical patterns ... best understood as representing (or as having represented originally) a succession of deceased ancestors, whose arrangement in connected series provides an image of the social fabric."  

The sekong or seko pattern consists of hooked diamonds or a series of arrow like forms and is "still a popular Toraja design, though the term itself now has no known meaning other than the name of this pattern and some of the textiles on which it appears". These textiles are dramatically large pieces (approximately 260 x 150 cm) consisting of four panels sewn together, with ikat or striped bands flanking a central 'window' of interlocking designs. (See figure 1)

Anthropomorphic figures appear on some of the pori lonjong (long ikat cloth, which can be up to 10 metres in length), and are used as ceremonial cloths, hung up over wooden frames as partitions, or as wall hangings to protect and demarcate a ritual site. They are distinguished by a broad central panel with patterns of rhombs, crosses, zigzags or figures, organised in transverse rows, often with mirror image panels and side bands. Side bands are a common element on all Toraja ikat textiles, as with most Iban pua, and are "evidently an archaic design feature". (See figure 7)

The weaving districts of Rongkong and Galumpang were destroyed, or very disrupted during the civil upheavals following independence when the inhabitants were evacuated or imprisoned at the coast.

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74 Crystal 1979:58, Holmgren and Spertus 1989:62-68
76 Maxwell 1990:131
77 ibid.
"Cultural artefacts and their communal context were both lost. Christianity and Islam forcibly replaced the animist beliefs that informed the iconography and usage of ritual weavings, and the essential reasons for making such cloths therefore disappeared. Nineteenth-century observers failed to explore the significance of textile patterns in Toraja culture, and because almost no early examples remain, information about the meaning of designs is now virtually unavailable." 78

Since returning to their valleys, Toraja weavers have renewed ikat work on a small scale geared for the tourist market of Rantepao. Contemporary examples use harsh and fugitive dyes and are coarse in pattern and texture. Circumstantial evidence suggests that the quality of ikat patterns and weaving may be slowly improving, partly due to the external interest in these textiles.79

78 Holmgren & Spertus 1989:19
79 Robyn Maxwell indicated after seeing slides from my trip, that the increase in quantity and quality of textiles was noticeable from her time in Sulawesi ten years previously.
Toba Batak 'traditional' dances and costumes performed for visitors outside carved Batak houses. Musicians are located in balcony area. Simandino village and museum. 1993
While the Toraja have traditions of valuing and using imported and locally made textiles, the Toba Batak of Sumatra, have maintained a continuous weaving tradition, with Niessen (1985) naming and identifying over 40 different types. Within the Toba Batak hierarchical structure, textiles help to reinforce family relationships, defining the links through ceremony and gift exchanges of the appropriate type of cloth relative to the age and social status of the receiver and occasion. Daily attire is generally western style, or sarong and kebaya (long blouse), but for adat ceremonies, traditional textiles are worn as shoulder shawl, headscarf or skirt cloth over western dress.

An ulos is required to be worn over the shoulder during adat, or custom ceremonies, especially during dancing, which is believed to be a form of prayer. The cloth is said to "mediate between the humans and the spirit world." The maternal grandparents envelop a new child in a ritual carrying cloth, the ulos mangiring, an action evoking the protective qualities of the cloth. The ragi hotang -the name is derived from the markings on rattan - containing bands of ikat lines in dashes, symbolises long life to the Batak. When given to a daughter pregnant with her first child it becomes the daughters' ulos ni tondi "soul cloth" and the designs encode her future. Time and the temporal theme, is depicted variously by the ulos-in the structure of its round warp, some of its decorative features and in its circulating social role. Fertility comes into focus in the ulos, as the bride, rice-land, textiles or any gift at all bestowed by the wife givers on the wife takers, is believed to transfer life generating powers.

Perhaps this is one of the reasons why weaving still flourishes amongst the Toba Batak. The creation of gifts which are identified as 'female' and made by women, contribute to the economy and social structure, as well as to family uses or obligations. Within the literature, frequent mention is made that particular people have the

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80 Niessen 1985a:13
81 Maxwell 1990:95, Niessen 1985:231
knowledge to read cloths for divination and prophesy, but the knowledge the weavers must have in the making of such cloths is overlooked. Perhaps this is not articulated, because standard weaving motifs and ordering principles are followed (with variations) with the cloth acting as a mnemonic devise for the spiritually enlightened. The combination of patterning was regarded by the Batak as having strong magical properties and especially knowledgeable people could interpret and check that the ragidup design would bring good luck to a particular individual.

For ceremonies of transition from one state to another (weddings, birth of children, funerals, transfer of bones etc.) traditional ulos with particular patterning, social symbolisms and hence value, are used for presentations to reassert kinship relationships. The presentation of an ulos ragidup from the father of the bride to the mother of the bridegroom is an important symbolic act. The Toba Batak call all the gifts from the brides' family (hulahula) to the husbands' family (boru) by the name ulos (the generic Batak term for handcrafted textiles), while the gifts made in the opposite direction - from bride-takers to bride-givers are known as piso (knife). This term is metaphorical, in that the gifts are usually masculine ie. money, pigs, land, rice and not actually knives or swords. Gifts in the ulos category require the transfer of traditionally woven textiles. 82

In marriage rites there is a focus when the bride and groom are enveloped in a single textile "amid blessings for fertility and a harmonious life." 83. Another cloth wrapped around the shoulder of the groom's mother represents the union of the extended lineage. The choice of cloth to be presented at a Toba Batak wedding is determined by the potential wearer's age and status and by the closeness of the family ties between giver and receiver. 84

The gift of textiles symbolises the sharing of superior soul forces and may be called upon in times of sickness or adversity. Future requests

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82 Gittinger 1979:20, Maxwell 1990:95
83 Gittinger 1979:20
84 Maxwell 1990:94-95
for the symbolically imbued *ulos na so ra buruk* "the *ulos* that never wears out" is a textile metaphor for arable land. Textiles are used to represent not only the joining of families, but of destinies, through mutual support relationships.

Warping, the winding of threads which creates the structure, is symbolic of time and continuity of life forces. The *ulos ragidup* draws specifically on this symbolism, with the section of unwoven warp thread widely considered the magical element of a ritual textile.

"Consequently severing the unwoven and uncut warp - the fringe-to-be - is a sacred act and ceremonies mark this stage in the making of traditional textiles in many cultures".  

One cloth the *ulos lobu lobu* is a circular black textile with uncut warp and is said to symbolise the repetitions of generations, hence as an omen it is an appropriate remedy prescribed for a mother whose infants are sickly or dying.

This circulating metaphor is also significant in the *ulos ragidup* (*ragi idup* - life pattern) the most important and symbolically charged cloth. It consists of three separately woven panels, generally either red or black, with the central one containing warp ikat stripes and substituted white end panels, which contain specific geometric elements referring to gender. The insertion of the second (white) warp to form ends has spiritual and supernatural significance relating to a notion of an unbroken, circulating warp as a metaphor linking male and female realms. The terms used to describe these geometric designs, *boa* (male) and *pina halak* (female) also refer to key elements in the kinship system. (See figure 3)

In the *ulos ragidup* there is an integral connection between the manner of weaving and "its cultural significance as a cloth imbued with blessings of long life.". The warp with its continuous passage round the loom may have symbolic links to time and continuity, with  

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85 Gittinger 1979:24, citing Vergouwen 1964:84-85  
86 Maxwell 1990:146  
87 Niessen 1985:154
Toba Batak *ulos mangiring*, Length: 171 cm, width: 58 cm (left)
Toba Batak *ulos sitoluntuho*, Length: 212 cm, width: 88 cm (right)

the unique process of interlocking new white warps into the centre of the ragidup seen to lengthen time or bestow additional life. 88

The most widely recognised patterning row in the ragidup, the top row in the white panel is called pinar halak - broadly translated as "the personification of a human being" and the characteristics determine whether it is male or female, although groups differ in criteria applied in deciding this. Most important is that the cloth's designs include both male and female elements. The weaver establishes the male-female duality inherent in the cloth by weaving both the important pinar halak patterns, before continuing with weaving the ends. Gittinger suggests that "thus the Batak enrich their simple cloths with a host of metaphoric intent centering on time, fruition and protection or strength." 89. Maxwell notes the Simulangun Batak bulang (head cloth) and the Toba Batak ulos ragidup have the elaborate supplementary weft end sections woven with an inserted second warp, instead of woven separately, then sewn in, as the ulos pinunsaan is constructed.

"This difficult and lengthy procedure can only be understood through an awareness of the supernatural powers that these traditional cloths are thought to possess and the notion of the unbroken, circulating warp as a metaphor linking male and female realms." 90

Twined motifs on ragidup and pinunsaan and other textile types bear similarities with those motifs carved and painted on the outside walls of traditional Batak houses and rice barns. In the past it was the men who twined the borders on textiles. Men knowledgeable about architecture or a person skilled in carving and painting house decoration would also twine borders. The colours of paint and dye, although derived from different plant and earth sources are the same - red, white and black. The reason, Gittinger says, Batak men have traditionally done the twining may lie in the magical nature ascribed to the three colours and the use of such three coloured

88 Gittinger 1975:13-29
89 ibid:19,26
90 Maxwell 1990:121
strings by men in sacred ceremonies. In the ritual context, the three coloured threads symbolise the triad of cosmic levels - the lower, middle and upper worlds. The overall tripartite design configuration of the cloth may also refer to these levels. 91

Although few people can speak of the meaning of the designs in the twined borders, a "prospective buyer usually consults an elder who has the ability to determine if the designs of a particular cloth will 'harmonise' with his tondi or soul." Gittinger, while seeking out and providing names for pattern rows on a ragidup from Balige, also seems disappointed that "people seem incapable of naming all of the designs and what identities may be found do not lead to profound interpretations." 92

It is evident from the various sources that a diverse range of mythology may be attributed to the ragidup and the patterns within these cloths.

"The designs of scrolls, diamonds, hooked lozenge shapes, circles, tangents and squared meanders speak also of their antiquity. These forms and their arrangement in tightly zoned and segmented areas are characteristics of the design complexes associated with the early bronze casting period in Southeast Asia." 93

Sandra Niessen in her thesis Motifs of Life in Toba Batak Texts and Textiles (1985) goes into the analysis of the spatial divisions, ordering principles and structural differences of cloths in an extensive way. Links with the wider concerns of life are demonstrated as for example, with the bindu matoga motif, a symbol of power and a decorative feature referred to as the "essence of house" motif, or the organising principle of houses.

Niessen compares terms and design elements which relate to textiles, for example; round textiles (with uncut warps) with the walls of the

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91 Gittinger 1975:18-22
92 ibid:18-19
93 ibid:22
villages; walls of houses in which carved and painted *sirat* motifs are found and walls of villages which used to be fortified by pointed bamboo slats also called *sirat*. *Sirat* also refers to the twined borders on some *ulos*, and means letters or writing. In some cloths actual words can be read in the borders. Both walls and textiles share the property of having been constructed to protect the inhabitant/owners/wearers physically and spiritually. Niessen expands this association through additional linguistic, visual and ritual data.94

The issue of 'tradition', as in 'traditional textiles' underpins this study - how it develops, is defined, represented and responds to changes. The Toba Batak ceremonial *ulos* tend to follow quite structured formats, in that most are either visually or physically structured in three sections - a central ikat panel with two side bands, supplementary weft patterning and twined designs on the ends. The three parts of the textile have associations with the social structure of three *margas*, or family groups, which have traditionally defined gender relationships for support and exchange. While many variations in the cloths exist, stylistically and technically the form an *ulos* takes appears to be closely linked with local dyeing and weaving specialities, and the structural symbolism of the culture.

Conversely, the Toraja have valued, utilised and absorbed imported cloths and a diverse range of techniques into their traditional textile forms. Indian, Javanese and Dutch printed fabrics, locally painted and stamped designs, bound resist dyed cloth and elaborate ikats, all are valued for ceremonial purposes. The sacred textiles take many forms both physically and in design, and appear to have overlapping and interrelated functions relating to the dual cosmos; the connections of living and dead, fertility and ancestors, and Eastern and Western spheres of religious and ritual life.

The Toraja and Toba Batak share traditions in the role textiles play within the larger social and religious picture. Textiles can be seen as metaphors for time, continuity, fertility, making connections with the past and bestowing blessings for the future. They can be read as

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94 Niessen 1985
reinforcing social and economic hierarchies, linking the male/female realms and past/present relationships.

The notion of textiles as documents of cultural exchange and interaction, is not a new one. With contact from other nationalities, foreign design and patterning characteristics, materials and expectations, the prescribed rituals and accoutrements have changed - and continue to do so. Some traditions become obsolete, with the associated cloths no longer required or valued in the same way, while new textile variations are produced, modified and adapted to changing social and cultural transitions.
Textile exhibition displayed "the objects for no reason than the sheer enjoyment of them." at the Colonial Institute, 1901

From Niessen "ATale that 1001 Batak Textiles Tell about Twelve European Museums: ACollection History" In Gittinger (ed) 1989
3.0 MUSEUM PRESENTATIONS

3.1 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

The aim of this chapter is to examine the issues involved in institutional and private collecting of textiles and ways in which the Western context affects the representation of ethnographic textiles and responses to them. How museums, exhibitions and publications condition our understanding and knowledge of other cultures through 'educational' or 'aesthetic' models of presentation. The forms that some collections have taken historically will be examined, along with more recent exhibitions and debates concerning 'other' cultures. While there is very little literature on issues specific to the collection of textiles, this section will attempt to apply some questions raised in other studies, to the case of Indonesian textiles.

Collecting and academia present a double edged sword in dealing with the material culture of other groups, especially since colonisation and economic imbalance affect the relationship between the makers/users and the collector, whether private or institution. I believe that the textile literature fails to acknowledge adequately the issues relating to promotion and collection which tends to result in a form of cultural colonisation and exploitation. Research that has been published has developed from basic technical and design descriptions and appreciations of the physical appearances, into gradually more in-depth readings of the cloth and its cultural context. However, there appears to be very little criticism or questioning of the purpose and impact generally of the Western accumulation of the textile objects and the acquired knowledge attributed to objects through anthropological and other studies.

Clifford in Objects and Selves discusses studies which explore the various ways in which collecting and display, can be seen as a crucial process of Western identity formation.
"Gathered artefacts - whether they find their way into curio cabinets, private living rooms, museums of ethnography, folklore or fine art - function within a developing capitalist "system of objects". By virtue of this system, a world of value is created and a meaningful deployment and circulation of artefacts maintained." 95

This notion of value and the circulation of artefacts can also extend to the nature of knowledge, how it is applied and who has access to it. Museums and galleries as public institutions have an important role in the presentation and transference of information about other cultures, including representations of their own cultures. "The inclusions in all collections reflect wider cultural rules - of rational taxonomy, of gender, of aesthetics." 96

The institutional or personal aims and ideologies of the collection and display of the products of a society - be it toys, utensils, clothing and art - are continually changing, a reflection of shifting historical, political and economic allegiances, as they have since collecting began.

The initial contact European explorers and traders had with people from Asia, Africa and America, stimulated them to collect artefacts as curiosities and exotic tributes to royalty and sponsors. On the European Continent, the "Royal Cabinets of Curiosities" were founded to "house the exotic tributes - the rare and precious gifts royalty received from foreign ambassadors - and any other objects that were considered strange enough to warrant inclusion." 97 The imperial powers and interests world-wide of the reigning monarch and his dynasty were reflected in these collections, many of which have evolved into various important Art, Anthropology, Ethnology, Natural History, Archaeology and Prehistory museums in Europe. A brief history of a few of the institutions which have important collections of Indonesian textiles, will provide examples of the changing attitudes toward

96 Clifford, 1988:218
97 Frese 1960:6
collecting cultural artefacts and the formation of Western perspectives towards museums.

In the Netherlands important collections from the Far-East, Indonesia and West-Africa, together with an extensive private collection of antiquities and curiosities given to the Dutch nation by the diplomat, traveller and geographer P.F. B. von Siebold, formed the beginning of the National Museum of Ethnology, Leyden. In 1837 the transfer of the "Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden" of King Willem I extended the new institute. The commission set up to investigate the museum proposal, reported that such a museum "would adorn the nation, support the arts and sciences, and serve the honour and fame of our Venerated King as well as His Honourable Government." 99

Other European museums were founded on a similar basis, with Royal Collections becoming state run institutions, such as the "Musee de l'Homme" and the Viennese "Museum fur Volkerkunde". These developed out of natural history or colonial museums, with their "function of collecting and storing materials belonging to the original natural environment before its rapid transformation by the white settlers." 100 However for the purpose of this study, such collections reveal little. Ethnographic collections of objects from the Far East and Indonesia, in the past tended to favour art and religious items of exceptional value and seldom or never included specimens of everyday use or those resulting from Western cultural contact.

Following von Siebold's example of arranging objects by place of origin, the Leyden collection was arranged according to what were considered racial or cultural groupings; a method which, according to von Siebold, gave the best impression of a "people's relative progress", "the condition of their arts" and the "nature of past exchanges with other peoples". 101 This method came to be

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98 Chapman 1985:24
99 cited in Frese 1960:7 from Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, Overzicht van de geschiedenis van het Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde 1937:9
100 Frese 1960:21
101 Chapman 1985:24 citing von Siebold 1843
known as "the geographical system". He advocated inter-cultural comparisons and defended the fundamental unity of mankind, suggesting that the Classics, representing only part of history, should not monopolise human research, but encourage study which will "reveal apparent and hidden contacts, relations and migrations" and "missing links", as later Darwinians would say.102

In the mid-19th century, the alternative method of display, was that of a comparative system organising objects, on a natural history model, according to class, order, species and variety. E.F. Jomard of the Kings' Library in Paris first proposed this 'typological' system, being a precursor of evolutionary thoughts on the development of culture. The evolutionary approach was taken up by other European and American collectors including Pitt Rivers in Oxford and Otis T. Mason, the Smithsonian's first curator of anthropology. This museum classification system

"demanded that a subject first be analysed in all its developmental variety; from these particulars the larger historical picture-a progression through the stages of savagery, barbarism, and enlightenment-could be drawn." 103

The influence and publications of the various Scientific Societies of this period, which impacted on collectors included the phrenologist Charles Bray (1838;1841), Darwin's Origin of the Species in 1859 and the developments in archaeology. The realization that

"the span of man's life on earth could not be encompassed by the biblical chronology or interpreted in the light of the biblical record had a sudden and often traumatic impact." 104
The typological classification system, which brought together similar types of objects from different regions and cultures, was used to demonstrate human cultural evolution, for example the "way in which early tools and weapons were gradually developed in unbroken continuity from natural forms by a process of "unconscious selection." However, the developmental and biologically inspired classification and conventional display approach to objects was not widely accepted and the practice of investigating objects as elements isolated from their cultural context was seriously challenged by Boas in 1887.

Many museum and private collections were extended following world fairs or Colonial expositions which brought people and objects together, often in more systematic and documented ways, from all over the world. Besides the opportunity for museums to explore the idea of temporary exhibitions and experiment with display methods, the colonial collections reinforced the successes of the expansionist movement elsewhere and conditioned the nationalist movement at home. The modern department store has its origins in the great 19th century worlds fairs, in which the display stimulates audience desire for mostly inaccessible commodities.

Museums (of all periods) can be seen as social metaphors, representing the relationship of their own history to other cultures, reflecting and mapping out ideas of taste and values. It seems that just as political competition over territory and economic dominance prevailed in the various European empires, at home the display of wealth and 'progress' achieved in and through the colonies was of equal importance.

As an example of shifting political bases, the history of the 'Koloniaal Museum' at Haarlem of 1865 is interesting. In 1926 it changed to the Colonial Institute and moved to Amsterdam. A

105 Chapman 1985:31 citing Pitt Rivers 1867
106 Arnoldi 1992:444 citing Jacknis "Franz Boas and Exhibits" 77-80
107 Frese 1960:13
Dutch weekly article at the time of the official inauguration reflects attitudes of the period:

"...from now on this building will be a reminder every day, every hour, to the Dutch people of the Dutch possession of "Insuline", the magnificent group of islands that places this small nation, situated between the Dollard and Scheile rivers, among the ranks of the great nations of the world. Although we are in the Netherlands, we feel as if we are standing on the soil of the Dutch East Indies." 108

The founders believed scientific research into the resources and products of the colony, their applicability and marketability, would stimulate trade and industry both at home and in the colonies. The museum also had a role in educating the general public and provided "special parcels containing tropical products to be used in schools." 109

After Indonesia declared its independence in 1945 the name was changed to 'Indisch Institute' and in 1950 became the Royal Tropical Institute, with the Tropenmuseum as part of the larger institute. The main themes continue to be rural development, health care and culture, aiming to

"make a contribution to sustainable improvements in living conditions of the most vulnerable groups in developing countries. Essential elements of the almost always multi disciplinary projects are research and training." 110

In this brief history, it is interesting to note how emphasis has changed from possession to assistance, making its "expertise available to developing countries and seeks cooperation with institutes and organisations in these countries." 111 Debates regarding the relationship of wealthy nations to developing

108 Woudsma:1990:3
109 ibid:5
110 Woudsma 1990:47
111 ibid.
countries in regard to their cultural and artistic products continue.
Installation shots of Textiles of Southeast Asia: Tradition, Trade and Transformation 1991 Curated by Robyn Maxwell, at the Australian National Gallery, Canberra.

fig. 11
3.2 EXHIBITION INFLUENCES

Recent exhibitions of Indonesian textiles are presented in a climate of increasing discourses regarding the nature of ethnographic and artistic displays in foreign countries. Clifford has commented that it is important to consider how societal elements of a culture - both material and conceptual - condition the configuration of forms of meanings and are conditioned by those configurations. That is, what and whose criteria validate an authentic cultural or artistic product and whose voice is the most authoritative.

"The history of collections (not limited to museums) is central to an understanding of how those societal groups that invented anthropology and modern art have appropriated exotic things, facts and meanings." 112

Ethnographic museums are trying to dispel the myth of intrinsic 'primitiveness' held for some time by stressing the complexity and sophistication of traditional ways of life, criticising imperial domination and attacking the ideology that supports it. However, Durrans recently states that some museums and books dealing with contemporary or recent cultures often borrow the "chronological device, suggesting (even if claiming otherwise) that people alive today can be graded on a scale of social evolution." In addition, Durrans also suggests that exhibitions of 'other' cultures in museums of metropolitan powers have wide political and economic implications for developing countries.

"Prominent western ethnographic museums increasingly operate in a diplomatic mode, in order to establish or maintain possibilities for further collecting and research, as well as to assist the foreign policy objectives of their funding authorities." 113

112 Clifford 1988:220-221
113 Durrans 1988:145-150
Anthropology and related ethnography institutions, emerged as adjuncts of European expansion and colonialism, although the ways in which they served each other and continue to serve political ends, are complex and contradictory. Today,

"neo-colonialism and transnational corporations are major factors in the world of ethnographic museums. If exhibitions and catalogues can hardly avoid mentioning imperial dominance, this is discreetly done so as to close its history at the end of the colonial era itself, at political independence." 114

Trade benefits and economic diplomacy become more subtle in the post-colonial period, with transnational companies appearing in lists as sponsors of exhibitions and symposiums. Examples of this for textiles include; sponsorship by PT Caltex and the Ford Foundation for Indonesian Textiles - Irene Emery Round Table on Museum Textiles, 1979; and Beyond the Java Sea, in 1991, was made possible by grants from Chevron USA, Inc., the Texaco Foundation and the Smithsonian Institution Special Exhibition Fund, with transportation by Garuda Indonesian Airways. 115 While it is important to get sponsorship funding for such major undertakings, it is interesting to note that oil companies predominate in the transnational lists. The discovery of oil in the late 1960's and a change of government and subsequent shift in policies regarding openness to the West, can not be overlooked when considering the rapid increase in profiling the cultures of the Indonesian archipelago.

From the late 1960's increasing numbers of Americans, Australians and other foreigners, were working in Indonesia, providing opportunities to learn about the various cultures and collect interesting ritual or everyday artefacts. Large numbers of travellers wandered through Indonesia as part of the 'hippie' trail to or from Europe in the 1960's and 1970's. Many items collected during this contact subsequently have ended up on the

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114 ibid.149-150
115 Taylor 1991: frontispiece
international dealers market or are gifted to city or regional museums. In a very basic survey of museums and art galleries in Australia and New Zealand, gifts form an important aspect of collections, supplemented by purchasing through dealers and in some cases, directly in the field. 116

The availability of the textiles on the international art market since the late 1970's also reflects the high number of cloths being sold out of a country which does not have heritage protection or require documentation on textiles of value, unlike bronze or stone items. Textiles are classified as 'handicrafts' and are not monitored, even though many styles are no longer able to be made due to the loss or degeneration of those craft skills. Certainly many handicraft textiles are produced, but these tend to reflect commercial demands, rather than the 'excellence' required of an art gallery.

Most of the Asian textiles in National Gallery of Australia have come from European or private collections, which have remained outside their place of origin for some time. Due to the high humidity, voracious rodent and insect populations and limited availability of controlled environments, textiles in Indonesia tend to deteriorate rather quickly. From the early colonial textile collections and subsequent purchases by private and institutional buyers, many of these textiles are conserved in better condition than in the examples remaining in Indonesia. Some forms are unknown, except in foreign museums.

The National Gallery of Australia has been acquiring Asian textiles since 1979. The collection was initially proposed by curator Ruth McNicholl who "recognised the beauty, rarity and current availability of exceptional cloths".117 She encouraged the Gallery Director to attend the Splendid Symbols exhibition and a committee of scholars was subsequently convened to advise on

116 Indonesian Textiles: Irene Emery Round Table on Museum Textiles edited by Gittinger, includes information about Indonesian textiles in USA collections, up to 1979. I sent out survey letters in January 1993 to Australian and New Zealand museums and galleries to get a sense of these collections.

117 Maxwell 1984/5:2 Australian National Gallery News
acquisitions submitted by dealers. This collection policy culminated in a major exhibition in 1990, Textiles of Southeast Asia - Tradition, Trade and Transformation, curated by Robyn Maxwell.(See figure 11) Textiles from Indonesia form the largest part of the collection, with textiles from other areas of Southeast Asia gradually being extended.

"While buying only what has been on the international art market...the Gallery has nonetheless been able to assemble a very varied and comprehensive group of textiles. As the ANG is not a museum of ethnography but a repository of art, an overriding consideration has been to represent the highest possible standards of particular types."\textsuperscript{118}

Within the art gallery context of white walls and wooden or plain floors, the textile is likely to be looked at with a different set of assumptions than if it was in an ethnography museum, village market or being used in a ceremony. While information from each context may overlap, there are different set of values and languages which are used. As an example of priorities and values, the ANG states-"the aim is to establish a collection showing examples of the highest aesthetic quality as well as age."\textsuperscript{119} Hence history, rarity, quality of design, pattern, colour and execution become determining factors in the choices made.

While I believe that notions of 'aesthetic quality' are culturally constructed, this does not rule out the possibility of shared understandings and appreciation, whether intuitive or learned. When shown in galleries that also exhibit historical and contemporary paintings, sculptures and other art forms from indigenous and first world peoples, a dialogue may be encouraged. \textsuperscript{120} The presentation through display and supporting text, within the ethnographic context, may be around how the textile 'fits in' to the wider social structure, while the art

\textsuperscript{118} ibid
\textsuperscript{119} From the ANG Annual Report 1979/80:42
\textsuperscript{120} The issues of wealth imbalance, power and control of cultural heritage are generally unacknowledged in the exhibition form, although it may be being debated 'behind the scenes' and in journals.
curator will present its' 'specialness' or 'excellence'. In the Aboriginal and Asian Art sections of the NGA extended label are used in displays while I believe other sections could also benefit from this form of labelling, assisting visitors with a 'way into' the art on display. Meaning is always relative - the object is ascribed a different role in each situation - 'narrated' in different 'languages'.
3.3 INTERPRATIVE FRAMEWORKS

The pristine gallery space functions on many different levels, depending on how one looks at it. It provides a site for commentary on issues of artistic, social and cultural significance protecting and presenting artefacts of contemporary or historical merit. A substantial industry supports and surrounds the art world - artists, educators, funding bodies, directors and gallery staff (including security and cleaning personnel), historians, publications, patrons, visitors, students, private collectors, dealers and so on. The museum or gallery provides a haven for contemplation, an opportunity to lift the spirits, challenge ones thinking, to puzzle and discuss or simply divert and give time out from daily routine. In the West, the museum is viewed as a sign of a mature, developed, 'cultured' society.

The museum and gallery can also be viewed as an expensive luxury, indulging the fancies of the rich and powerful, at the expense of people who cannot afford to protect their cultural objects against exploitation. James Clifford, in reference to the "Histories of the Tribal and Modern" exhibition writes:

"it is ...not a history of redemption or of discovery, but of reclassification. This other history assumes that "art" is not universal, but a changing Western cultural category. The fact that rather abruptly, in the space of a few decades, a large class of non-western artefacts came to be redefined as art is a taxonomic shift that requires critical historical discussion, not celebration. That this construction of a generous category of art pitched at a global scale occurs just as the planets' tribal peoples come massively under European political, economic and evangelical dominion cannot be irrelevant."  121

Debates about modes of representation and what museums and galleries do in the representation of cultures, is being widely discussed in some literature. 122 If as Handler suggests "collections

121 Clifford 1985a:164-77
122 See titles such as Museum News, Poetics and Politics of Museum Display, Museum and Communities etc
are being seen less as timeless and universally valued treasure troves and more as historically contingent assemblages of value and meaning" then the potential for future exhibitions is exciting.  

However, most institutions modify policy slowly and have pressures from funding organisations and patrons whose interests are generally in minimum controversy and to impress 'the public' as much as possible.

Within the textile world the research and display of work for exhibitions and their accompanying catalogues has predominantly taken two forms. That of the anthropological display, contextualising through other objects, dioramas of possible scenes such as markets, families or models of wedding couples in 'traditional' dress indicating regional differences. These displays suggest the role of textiles within the wider cultural framework. The second, transforms works into a western aesthetic mode - displaying works as self explanatory, objects which have inherent value because they are displayed within an authoritative context - the gallery.

Both modes tend to exclude and limit understandings because of the prior knowledge and expectations which the audience bring with them. Within the anthropological mode, the evolutionary paradigm often prevails, although this may be denied by those presenting the work. 'True' understanding is often marginalised because socialisation and education has all too frequently highlighted the difference between the viewer and some exotic 'other', rather than as an experience beyond the limits of one's range.

The second form of exhibition presupposes an audience which is visually sensitive and able to bring to the viewing an openness to the aesthetic experience. However, in the case of textiles all too often this has focused on one's amazement, at skill, detail, fineness of technique, colour, boldness and designs without an analysis of the layers of meanings possible in the interpretative act. Textiles are texts, but frequently written in a form that requires dedication to the process of deciphering.

123 Handler 1992:21
"Just as glossing exotic arts as 'anonymous' frees Westerners from the laborious task of determining and acknowledging the individual authorship of particular pieces, claims that Primitives have no concept corresponding to our notion of "works of art" dispenses with the need to take native aesthetic frameworks seriously." 124

By supplementing ethnographic discourse on objects with information on the aesthetic values of the culture, greater cross cultural communication and understandings may be reached. There is not one solution for display of objects outside their original context that sits comfortably for all involved. The fact that museums and galleries are starting to address the issue in a minor way is a healthy beginning. One also needs to discuss the motivation and roles art historians, sociologists, and anthropologists have all played in bringing work from other cultures into the Western limelight.

The validation that the West can give to artists and the cultural products from non-western countries, is very powerful. Recognition of political dissidents, ethnic minorities or marginalised peoples from outside the country can provide a certain degree of support and protection for the artists working in difficult situations. Museums and galleries are places of power. They can be intimidating - projecting images of authority and knowledge - and difficult to question on their rights of 'ownership' of information and objects. This is especially so if one is from outside that world.

The previous chapter examined some of the indigenous contexts and roles of traditional textiles. This section has outlined some of the changing historical taxonomies of collection and presentation. The final chapter looks at the Indonesian representations of its 'traditional textiles' within contexts of a modernising and rapidly changing society.

124 Price 1989:89
Toraja wedding platform, decorated with blue and white sarita, ikats, and other fabrics, kris, and beaded decorations.

Bride and groom with attendants, dressed in a mixture of 'traditional' items and westernised clothes.  
4.0 INDONESIAN REPRESENTATIONS

4.1 PACKAGING ETHNICITY

Tourist: "a temporarily leisured person who voluntarily visits a place away from home for the purpose of experiencing a change" 125

Tourism: "mass recreational nomadism undertaken in foreign parts in quest of the exotic." 126

Tournare: "to turn or circulate" is the Latin origin of the word tourism - one who is seen as an intermediary who moves back and forth between home and a "foreign" destination.

One of the prime attractions of ethnic tourism is that of difference, experiencing the 'exotic' local customs and cultural artefacts (architecture, music, theatre, clothing, carving, painting etc.), with an unusual or tropical environment an added bonus.

"The tourist endeavours to make contact with a different reality, manifest in undomesticated nature, in relics from the past, particularly an alien past, or in the behaviour of culturally distinctive strangers. The tourist seeks further to incorporate this encounter with the exotic into an "authentic" experience."127

However, the search for the authentic or exotic is self-defeating because the effect of the observer on the observed, immediately changes the dynamics of the object of study. The tourist presence is one factor which can affect the 'traditional, unspoilt native', who modifies their behaviour for gain, to what is perceived to be appealing to the tourist and through a desire to be more like the visitors. While there are obviously many other factors which affect

125 Smith 1989:1
126 van den Berghe & Keyes 1984:344-345
127 ibid:345
or initiate cultural changes, especially national or global politics, the search for 'authenticity' of experience presupposes that some experiences are more 'original' than others, when in fact they can only be different. A Californian attending a Torajan funeral may feel like they were having an encounter with the 'exotic' but so might a Torajan going to Buckingham Palace.

With increased numbers of people travelling, 'culture' often becomes an event staged with 'traditional' clothing, dance and music, at set times of the day. Daily life is likely to have undergone major changes and be much more complex than the stereotypes presented in travel books, but it is the symbols and experiences of 'difference' for which people travel. As an example, the Toraja culture is promoted through a few key elements: "animist funeral celebrations", "traditional, thatched, boat like houses", and "dramatic buffalo sacrifices". These elements are very real, but it is these symbols which are becoming "re-integrated cultural markers of the re-created identity" within the modern Indonesian state.128

When the state sponsors tourism it begins to mediate cultural change in new ways - through redefining "custom" and "authenticity" within the culture involved, and secondly by redefining the relationship to the rest of society.129 Tourism can provide a renewed sense of ethnic identity, and an economic rationale for that identity. It brings about new forms of state intervention in presenting cultures. Tourism may also be a useful lever within the political sphere for ethnic groups.

"To the extent that tourism facilitates a reassertion of ethnicity, it may provide both the social-psychological and the economic basis for local claims against the cultural imperialism of the centre."130

129 Wood 1984:368
130 ibid: 371
In the early decades of the 20th century the Batak area was opened up and made relatively accessible. From 1890 an active tourist trade existed in Northern Sumatra, providing "ethnographic" souvenirs for mantelpieces, representing a journey to the "cannibals". The Batak and Torajan cultures continue to be produced, packaged and presented to both an Indonesian and foreign audience.

"The trade in souvenirs has not basically changed in recent decades. The appearance of the individual objects has altered to suit the changing taste of the customers, and new forms have been developed. To this day however, the works of the craftsmen and artist craftsmen have represented a Batak culture which has ceased to exist." 131

Toby Volkman, has studied the impact of tourism and modernisation on Torajan life. Pressure comes from both external demands ie. tourist agencies, local and national politics and "internal reformulations." She suggests that the shaping of ethnic reality may not be direct or obvious-

"It may be a subtle shift in the way the world is viewed, the way pieces of a cultural puzzle are taken apart and fit together in new ways to create an object, or many objects, that can be consumed: purchased, photographed, even eaten, but above all, narrated, understood." 132

Kathleen Adams' dissertation on Toraja is one of the few I have read which openly acknowledges the role previous anthropologists have had in shaping notions of ethnic identity, culture and history. Her writing moves away from the distant observer and documenter of 'otherness', to include her own presence in the writings and her relationship to the events written about.

131 Sibeth 1991:229
132 Volkman 1990:91
On an initial bus trip to Toraja, she describes how the reactions of the local people changed when she explained that she was not a "touris" (tourist) but an anthropologist.

"It was evident that many of these Torajans had either direct or indirect encounters with anthropologists. For these Torajans, "anthropologists" (anthropology or ahli anthropologi) constituted a known category of outsiders with a specific set of interests. Just as anthropologists studied Torajans, it seemed that Torajans studied anthropologists.".133

In another incident reflecting the impact of outside studies on sense of identity Adams relates the following story.

"Upon discovering that I was an anthropology student, one charismatic Toraja bureaucrat asked me if I knew Dr Crystal. He proceeded to tell me that Dr. Crystal's book about the Toraja had changed his life. For he did not realise until he had read Dr Crystal's book how proud he should be of his ethnic group. As he declared, "The great Dr Crystal writes that probably no other area mirrors the fundamentals of Southeast Asia as well as Tana Toraja." It was clear that his exposure to anthropological literature had affected his perceptions of his own identity."134

In 1972 a team from the National Geographic was invited to the Sulawesi highlands to do a story on the funeral of a Toraja nobleman, the Puang of Sangalla' an aluk aristocrat. This was also the first funeral to be recorded by both outside media (a film crew backed by Ringo Starr) and by the Toraja themselves in a bilingual (English/Indonesian, not Torajan) booklet explaining the history of the Puang and the ritual. Tourism in the Toraja area has been

133 Adams 1988:14-15
134 Adams 1988:xiv, xv (introduction)
actively promoted since 1974, when the Pacific Area Travel Association declared Toraja a "main destination", appealing to those desiring the exotic, ethnographically rich, off-the beaten-track experience. Numbers have increased rapidly, with approximately 40,000 annual foreign visitors in 1989, an airport built, roads improved, hotels, restaurants and souvenir shops increasing in number with subsequent employment which would not have been there before. However, Volkman states that much of the profits would be spent in the provincial capital of Ujung Pandang in the south, with limited cash flow into the local community.  

"Tourism requires the construction of an object, an itinerary, a commentary. Although a guide friend observed to me that Toraja tourism is "fact finding", the facts have been created- framed, labelled, named, reproduced- by a complex interplay among Toraja, tourists, and the industry."  

Volkman's paper analyses the reshaping of three indigenous media - the Toraja house, the effigy, and mortuary ritual. I have been influenced by this model. The following section builds on the textile information presented earlier - for both the Toraja and Toba Bataks - to show ways in which the textiles are undergoing changes in function and are being adapted to new situations.

135 Volkman 1990:94
136 ibid:94-95
In the past, locally produced and imported sarita and ma’a would be used at funeral and renewal ceremonies as a means of communicating with the ancestors and reinforcing positions of rank and status. These cloths would contain symbols of prosperity, village life and possibly abstracted ancestor images (sekong), on locally made cloths, with imported Indian patolas or block printed cloths also making statements about wealth and social standing. At the Toraja wedding I attended in July 1993, the wedding platform was decorated in a mixture of elements - red cloth canopy, beaded kandaure’ (apparently a symbol of abundance and splendour), blue and white sarita, Rongkong ikats, Sumba ikats, kris (swords), a white lace table cloth, orchids, plants and fake rocks. The wedding attire appeared to be very western, except for head-dresses and the accompanying attendants and dancers who were wearing the beaded kandaure’. These decorated objects are worn by dancers over their back or hung from poles in front of houses at various ceremonies to reinforce a family’s well-being.

At two funerals I attended kandaure’ were also hung from poles near the funeral bier, along with substantial quantities of red fabric hung from the houses and shelters built for the guests, defining the ritual area. The coffin at one appeared to be covered in many cloths, the platform was decorated with cloth flags, poles were wrapped in Sumba ikats. Prominently at the front was a painting or print on velvet of the 'Last Supper'. At the other funeral, the site was decorated in a similar way but with a prominent pulpit draped with a cloth displaying a large cross. This combining of decorations may indicate the adaptation and acceptance of customary aluk’ traditions with Christian symbols.

I travelled to Indonesia in May &June 1993 for field research - spending two weeks in Northern Sumatra, two and a half weeks in Sulawesi and five days in Jakarta. My contact with the cultural groups studied is therefore in the category of 'informed, special interest tourist'. Unlike other studies in which the use of textiles could be observed over a longer period, my impressions are more like a snapshot, with chance affecting my observations.

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138 Maxwell 1990:60
The purpose built bamboo guest receiving areas were extensively wrapped in red cloth, with the poles decorated in cloths from all over Indonesia; batiks, ikats from Flores, Sumba and Iban, as well as industrial fabrics. Cloths from other Indonesian sources were less expensive in the markets than ikats from Rongkong or Galumpang, which may be a factor in the extensive use of the imported textiles. However, the use of imported cloths could follow the precedent of trade cloths and Indian patola.

The guests attending the funeral dressed in a mixture of styles - tee-shirt and trousers or sarong for the men, with the women wearing sarongs and shirts, conical bamboo hats and carrying betel-nut bags. Both sexes wore a shoulder cloth, the styles including printed or waxed batik, woven plaids, Batak cloths, Toraja inlay, Buginese silks and knitted black and silver scarves. The betel-nut bags were generally small draw string bags made of batik, local cloths, or beaded with carving motifs, although one woman even carried a fur purse!

Two villages, Sa'dan and Marante, two of the many "Obyek Wisata" (tourist objects) with traditional houses and cliff graves, are known as weaving centres in the Sa'dan area, with several women weaving, but also selling cloth from other regions. (See figure 13) The weavers I spoke to seem to indicate that tourists were their principal customers, with one, Linda Galugu of Sa'dan explaining that it was better for her to sell an ikat cloth from elsewhere because she could make more of a profit than on what she wove herself. The style of cloth she wove was paramba, a long striped cloth used by high class people as a decoration around a temporary house built for a ceremony. This style of fabric could be found made up as shirts, as well as bolts approximately 10 metres long. Another type of cloth commonly seen was called paruki - this was a single coloured warp, approximately 40 x 120 cm, with inlay designs of various bright colours, depicting images such as tongkonan (traditional houses), ricebarns, buffalo, kris (knives or swords), butterflies, and abstract designs as in the carvings. Linda Galugu said these were woven for the tourists and that Torajan people didn't use them, although a variation of this cloth appeared made up into betel-nut bags.
In the Batak area by contrast, weaving has continued to be an important activity producing for local needs as well as tourists. Weaving is carried on in three main types of sites - home based (individually or in small groups), weaving centres and factories. Weaving seems to be an important source of income and anyone over 15 years old who wants to learn to weave is encouraged. I was told weavers who are proficient do not have to work in the fields as the weaving income contributes to the family needs. On Samosir Island at the village of Lumban Suhisuhi, most of the weavers were working on a similar style of cloth - multi coloured stripes or fine ikat spots in the central panel and wide edge bands with gold thread inlaid in geometric patterns - which I believe is made for the Karo Batak, who have more fertile soil and trade with the Toba Batak.

At the 'Paloma Hand Weaving Cloth Centre' on Samosir Island, several women were weaving and preparing yarns, with an older gentleman, H.A.R. Sitanggang, overseeing the selling. He told me that he had gone to an industry run course in Medan 10 years previously to learn chemical dyeing and other weaving styles, he then came back and taught about 50 local people. I suspect some of the new patterns may have been introduced at this time, especially the gold geometric inlay in bright colour combinations as seen in many other places. This would need to be confirmed by another source, but the style is not usually identified in the literature as Toba Batak. Mr Sitanggang said that only sibolang and ragi hidup variations were woven before the introduction of this new style. After explaining I was a student and expressing interest in the older styles, one lady appeared with some very fine and beautiful old indigo suri-suri and sibolang cloths which were "family pieces".

In the city of Pematang Siantar I went to two "sweat shops" - factories producing hand woven cloth for both the local and tourist market - one with about 40 looms the other about 60. They are rickety 4-shaft wooden floor looms, with metal heddles, overhead jack with a fly shuttle mechanism attached to a beater (as weavers beat, lever clicked and shuttle moved). Plain sections were woven rapidly, with inlay patterns inserted by hand, using short pre-cut
yarns which were hanging by the loom. Warps are wound 100 metres long making about 40 pieces of 2 metres. The complicated inlay pieces take 2 days to weave, while they weave 2-3 pieces a day of the simpler style - a serious production when multiplied by the number of weavers working! There were few variations in the designs of the inlay, but they were executed in many bright colour combinations - this was seen as "modern" and more desirable.

Both factories also wove hiou bola palaka (Simalungang name) or ulos ragi hotang style (black centres with dashes of white ikat, maroon borders, with geometric supplementary weft across both ends of the cloth and badly done twining on the fringes). I bought a couple of pieces from them for 7,500 rupiahs each - a pittance at about A$4.50. Interestingly the shop had fabric lengths made into western style shirts for men and women, mens' neck ties, overshot fabric combined with leather in handbags as well as sarong and selendang cloths. Items such as these were seen at many markets and stalls for sale to both local people and visitors.

The obvious stylistic changes I noticed in the cloths was the use of bright, multiple colours which are chosen by preference rather than association with any traditional meanings; simplified overshot patterning of the Bataks; Christian messages or place names in the twined borders, ikat or inlay; representational motifs such as houses, buffalos and swords; smaller pieces adapted for tables or walls. With figurative elements being incorporated into Torajan ikats, I wondered if the Flores, Iban and Sumba ikats being sold had encouraged this transition.

In trying to communicate with the weavers I found the language barrier very frustrating - one feels so incompetent and lazy as a speaker of the so-called 'international language'. Most of the people I met who spoke reasonable English were youngish men and except for one person, mainly had little interest or knowledge of textiles. Information and translations are slanted by the guides' perspective and the desire to sell or present the 'official' version of traditions.
I now have a much greater appreciation of the time and energy scholars put into learning local languages! In fact many of the weavers I met had either Batak or Torajan names for their tools and work, which adds a further dimension to translations. By pointing at cloths and drawing motifs, one Torajan weaver (Linda Gulugu) was able to write down the names for me and give an indication of the meaning eg. rice barn or dancing figures. However to get beyond this and beyond 'ceremonial cloth' or 'for high class people' to detailed meanings was not possible in these circumstances. She could be seen as working within a 'new' or 'invented' tradition in which meaning may not be relevant beyond economic benefits.

The use of specific cloth for ritual functions is undergoing as many changes as the cultural symbols and ceremonies themselves. I suspect that many earlier meanings or interpretations are no longer known, or have been adapted and simplified through external influences. My language barrier hindered the possibility of more extensive information being made available, however it did not seem that evidence was being consciously withheld.

One cannot say that tourism is good or bad for the Torajan or Batak peoples - it is one aspect of general change, of modernisation, industrialisation, increased wealth, mobility and availability of consumer goods. In the process of presenting 'a culture' (the traditions, religious beliefs and symbols) one wonders what gets lost, gained or distorted in an effort to "explain". Perhaps for indigenous people, in the desire to maintain an identity under increasing pressure, aspects become simplified and stereotyped (such as at Taman Mini in Jakarta) enabling outsiders to recognise a "culture" and for those within to feel some ethnic pride within a slowly homogenising society.
Toraja tourist stalls.
Left - Linda Galugu and her sister Yuliana Biatong sell their own weavings, other Torajan and Indonesian imported textiles.
Right - *Tau tau* figure and miscellaneous carved and painted items in another stall.
Promotion of cultural pride and ethnic identity seemed to be the main intention of national and regional museums in Indonesia. However the general impression was of insufficient funding for collecting, curatorial input, conservation and display, resulting in rather tired and dated exhibition cases. As a casual, but slightly informed visitor, interested in the cultural and aesthetic context of textiles and other objects, it was hard not to be disappointed with many of the displays. From my privileged position of having travelled, gained opportunities through education and exposure to a wide range of museum and cultural institutions, I acknowledge that it is inevitable that comparisons of standards and approach will be made which may not always be appropriate. It is likely that my impressions and expectations will differ from those of the average Indonesian school group or visitor.

In the museums in regional capitals like Medan and Ujung Pandang, propaganda and 'politically correct' displays have a much more overt role in comparison to western museums. These included photographs of important political leaders with many institutes and monuments referring to the independence struggle. While museums have the job of reflecting the Governments' policy of "Unity in Diversity", the sheer range of cultures and cultural objects that comprise the Indonesian archipelago make it a difficult task to avoid superficiality and a glossing over of differences.

*Taman Mini Indonesia Indah* ("Beautiful Indonesia in Miniature Park") is a large complex near Jakarta, consisting of pavilions representing the 27 classified regions, different religions, wildlife, flora and fauna gardens, science centre, various museums (stamps, transport, culture), and mini train with stations and a cable car ride over a lake with scaled islands of the archipelago. It seems to be the showcase for Indonesian diversity - each region being represented by a mixture of reproduction or transplanted original 'traditional' style buildings. Some of these had displays of arts, crafts and everyday articles specific to that region, while others were bare. The extent and type of displays varied greatly. During the building of
the park there was widespread opposition to its construction, questioning the use of public funds, the eviction and inadequate compensation to residents, and challenging the cultural definition of Indonesia that the park was likely to make. In 1972, Suharto threatened to use his executive powers, making clear his conception of the project:

"He went on to reveal that the project was intended to make Indonesia known to tourists and to raise national consciousness. As he put it, since there were so few remains of Madjapahit and Sriwidjaja, new things were needed to raise national consciousness and pride." 139

When I was there large groups of Indonesians were visiting the complex - tourists exploring the 'exotic' in their own land? The experience of the park would be quite divorced from the reality of both city and village Indonesian lives, especially if they did not come from that region.

The Torajan and Batak complexes both had beautifully carved and painted buildings, based on the traditional style of thatched curving roofs, raised up on heavy logs and solid walls, with complimentary rice barns and open platforms. The Bataks have a large 2 storied building of wood with external panels painted in a documentary, realistic way representing life in the region (rice harvesting, village scenes etc). The interior had display cases showing differences in the Batak groups with couples dressed in regional variations of costumes and head-dresses, with other cases showing kitchens and utensils, musical instruments, *pusakas* (calenders) magical staffs and so on.

Museum Indonesia, set within Taman Mini gives an overview of the range of cultures in a lovely, spacious, air-conditioned three-storied building. Arranged by region for some items, but mostly by function - puppets, fishing nets and traps, jewellery, clothing and pottery -

gives one a chance to compare and contrast styles, although the labelling was not always clear. Textiles are displayed along with other domestic or cultural items by region and included a few pieces which were not of the courtly style. Toraja textiles are not well represented, but I did not see into the storeroom or talk with a curator, to get a better idea about this. I suspect that older Toraja ikats fetch such a good price on the International art market, that they may not be readily available for local museums. A single large case of figures of bridal couples, each dressed in regional wedding attire showed the diversity of stylistic influences, although some of the figures were rather romantically dressed eg. strange cotton pants and shirt for Irian Jaya groom - perhaps Muslim modesty of covering dictated that such liberties be taken.

While the Museum Nasional Indonesia complex seems to be comparatively well funded, (a recent phenomenon) the Museum Tekstil (Textile) in Jakarta seemed to have a sense of neglect, but nevertheless had some wonderful pieces on display. The museum is located in a colonial house and garden, with courtyard, side wing and many smaller rooms off a central grand hall way complete with crystal chandeliers. Display cases line the main building and contain textiles stapled to a background or pinned over cloth wrapped poles, without a clear regional or stylistic order that I could discern - although batik fabrics are in separate cases to weavings. The cases did have temperature and humidity monitors in them, although except for some obviously new pieces, the gold and silver looked very tarnished. The elaborate and courtly fabrics seem to dominate, with few of the simple plaids and plain cloth evident. This can give a rather distorted view of Indonesian textile traditions, but then most museums and galleries collect high status items rather the ordinary. No Torajan cloth and only one ragi hidup and one suri-suri from the Batak regions were displayed, although I believe there may be more in storage there. Unfortunately I was unable to make contact with the curatorial staff to follow up on this.

Regional Museums are apparently on the increase throughout Indonesia. In the village of Simanindo on Samosir Island there is an old adat house that has been restored and now functions as a
museum, with Batak dancing performed for visitors outside several other traditional houses. Formerly the home of a Batak King, the Museum Huta Bolon Simanindo has a modest collection of brass cooking utensils, spears, *krises*, weapons, ceramics, carvings and textiles, clearly displayed and labelled. The textiles shown seemed to be a mixture of old and new, as in many of the museums, but with the majority of Toba Batak cloth types represented. (see figure 8)

There is obviously a lot of pride taken in the complex, with most of the people we met asking if we'd seen it. The village named "Huta Bolon" is a small closed square, surrounded by a rampart, on which tall bamboo grows. Inside the compound is a row of four dwelling houses facing the mountain, with a row of *sopos* or rice barns opposite the houses and in the centre is a slaughter pole or *borotan* decorated to represent a tree of life, to which the buffalo is tied during dances and ceremonies. The dancing, despite being performed for the tourist revenue, maintains 'traditional' dance and music and was the only occasion I saw *ulos* (traditional cloth) being worn and used. Six musicians were on the balcony of one house, playing a variety of instruments - gongs, clarinets, drums and bamboo wind and percussion instruments - with a variety of rhythms and sounds to accompany different dances. About six men and six women were dressed in traditional *ulos* -*sibolang*, *suri-suri*, *runjat*, *jogia sopipol* with *ragi hotung* or *mangiring* - worn over the shoulders and *tali-tali* head-dresses. The dancers were led by a head man dressed in black trousers and shirt, wearing a maroon *ragidup*, a cloth head-dress and carrying a carved staff. All the dancers had fresh green leaves in their hair or head-dresses, with narrow (or folded) *ulos* over each shoulder.

The museum provided an outline of the dance names and symbolism (in about six different languages). The dances included one praying to the "sky, earth and everything else that God may give those who take part in the ceremony, sons and daughters, wealth and health". Another was performed dancing around a buffalo which will be slaughtered and the meat "distributed to the participants and those entitled to receive it according to tradition." In the Gondang Pangurason dance "the ghost of an ancestor enters the body of the
dancers and gives them a blessing, with holy water.” Towards the end guests are "invited to dance with the head of ceremony as a sign of invitation, they receive an ulos" which people wore over the shoulder while in a line following the Batak dancers. I found it interesting that many Indonesian people in the audience got up and danced, along with a smattering of foreign tourists. The performers also incorporated a nice way of getting the ulos back, by the way the line of dancers moved.

The Simalungun Museum is a small regional museum in the city of Pematang Siantar, between Medan and Lake Toba. This city acts as an important crossroads, culturally and geographically for the Batak regions and Northern Sumatra. The museum was in a traditional Simalungun house with thatched curving roof, steep steps to the upper inner level, wooden slats as walls and gaps for light. The textiles were on two models in a display case with numbers pinned to different sections indicating names of ulos types. In another case about 10 pieces were jammed in near the glass, obviously suffering from deterioration; all were labelled with the name of the cloth style and special or ordinary use, for male or females. There seemed to be no systematic attempt to show the range of cloths or those of different importance. When asked whether some cloths have more value or status than others, Martha from Sibala Guest House acting as guide and translator, gave monetary value. Being a business woman, that is how she sees things, but also being Javanese she is an outsider. Although married to a well connected Batak, Martha didn't know much detail about the cloths, other than that they were for wearing on special occasions for "respect" and "tradition."

In Medan, I visited the Museum Negeri Propinsi Sumatera Utara - museum for Northern Sumatra. On the ground floor were displays of natural sciences and political photographs, and upstairs, objects from the seven peoples of the region -Nias, Ache and the 5 Batak groups (Toba, Karo, Simulungan, Mandaling/Angkola, Pak Pak/Dairi). Each group was represented by traditional wedding outfits, which seemed to be predominantly recent fabrics or those from 1982 when the museum was established. Other cases had

140 Quotes from information sheet
ceremonial cloths pinned, draped or folded as in headgear, with labels in Indonesian and English, giving the name of the cloth, male or female use, and "shawl" or "cloth for ceremony"- no further information about particular cloth and ceremony connections. The museum provided an opportunity to compare styles from the different groups and learn local names, such as ulos sadum for the commonly seen Toba black background cloth with a bright colour inlay of flowers, figures and geometric elements. There appeared to be no attempt to show older hand spun and dyed examples, with some cases showing older pieces next to recent without differentiation, but this is characteristic of all the museums I visited. Issues of availability and cost no doubt come into the decisions, but I suspect that the museums have different priorities than those of western collections, in determining the types of works for display.

The museum guide who was determined to show us around, (until I gave him a tip and said I needed time to draw), said people can tell status at weddings by the cloths worn and given, although he also mentioned poor people can borrow cloths if need be for a special occasion. He did not understand my question whether borrowing cloths confused status - obviously there is a lot more to status than what you're wearing ! The museum also had a backstrap loom and Malay style floor loom set up, among other aspects of material culture including ceramics, baskets, musical instruments, agricultural tools, metal work etc. No attempts are made to date anything, so it is hard to make comparisons or know whether the objects are still used, or if they are historical - a physical case of the "primitive timelessness" myth.

During a tour around the highlights of Tana Toraja, we stopped at a museum at Buntu Kalando, near Sangalla. This was an extended Tongkonan (traditional ceremonial house) which had display cases with coins, spears, baskets, pottery, some fabric - a sarita, Galumpang ikat and Sumba ikat, musical instruments, fish trap baskets, wooden containers and upstairs more cloths. These were obviously old examples of ma'a and sarita and three large pieces of Indian block printed cloth. Imanuel our guide didn't believe me when I pointed out the Indian cloths saying in reply "Toraja believe from here, how
I guess he is too young without an interest or understanding in cloth traditions and not from the high class. Also after time, imported textiles become local. The cloths would deteriorate quickly in those conditions - open to the climate, bugs and human hands - a sad situation, yet part of the same tradition which requires new textiles to be produced or imported.

The final museum I went to was the La Galligo, located within Fort Rotterdam in Ujung Pandang. This is an enclosed Dutch square with terraced houses, church and large administrative buildings, which contain the museum. The textile section followed on from other aspects of "People and Culture" section, showing processing and dyeing stages for cotton and silk, several looms and examples of cloth from different areas of Sulawesi. The obligatory wedding couples in traditional outfits - the Torajan bride was wearing beaded kandaure decoration over a dress (similar to dancers and guest receivers seen at a funeral), the groom in a sarong, striped fabric over the shoulder, and a kris belted at waist with ikat cloth. He certainly wasn't like the groom at the recent wedding we'd attended!

The textiles seemed to be the best documented and displayed of all the items in the collection - labelled with region and name of cloth. Other sections were sparse on objects but with complex signs showing various kingdoms, dynasties, periods of invasion and conquests etc. There were fine models of ship types, especially the Buginese Prahu or Pinisi - the notorious pirate ships which sailed widely and are still built south of Ujung Pandang.

It appears to me that the cloth in museums in Indonesia are the ones that are appreciated, recognised and used by people for important ceremonies, especially weddings. Emphasis is not on age, technical ingenuity or beauty etc, although these elements were present, but on using cloth as a cultural identifier and to help reinforce rituals which maintain traditional links in societies undergoing change. In selecting Torajan ikats to study, I was making an aesthetic choice, yet these cloths are not widely represented in collections or apparently widely used within the culture. Differences between local and
external valuations and understandings become quickly apparent when making comparisons.

Why did I find the majority of Indonesian museums such depressing places? Limited funds can make things appear shabby, but it is more than dusty display cases - there seems to be a lack of spirit - perhaps due to general government bureaucracy. The history of Indonesian museums is also built on Western models - that is, the Dutch colonial and ethnographic museums of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, and reflect the 'outsiders' perspective. While Indonesian ethnic groups are encompassed under the "Unity in Diversity" statement, funding for projects which encourage difference and ethnic pride, does not seem available except where it is expedient for the foreign dollar or in the Jakarta showcase of Taman Mini. It will be interesting to see the forms the museums evolve into over a longer independent period.

Being used to seeing textiles conserved and carefully presented when in museums or galleries in the West, it is hard to overcome this bias and not feel sad at some of the treatment the textiles receive. Textiles of Indonesia are a form of expression which is predominantly female. It is a female tradition and is one of their contributions to the wider society, both economically and socially, reflecting their view, as formed and modified by events and influences. The Indonesian archipelago has the widest range of textiles of any region in the world - textiles which reflect and reinforce spiritual, cosmological and community concerns. These aspects are quickly losing importance as the Indonesian state with its military government tries to realise its policy of "Unity in Diversity". However, I suspect unity is being pushed in contrast to diversity, except where it is useful in terms of tourist dollars or other political advantages. Indonesian television also produces images of a conglomerate culture - the modern international state with simplified and stereotyped versions of 'culture'. Each of the diverse ethnic groups are being modified, with those most in contact with outside influences changing faster than others. Indonesian museums are going to have to act quickly if they want to collect and reflect the 'traditional' artefacts of the cultures within. This may not
be their aim, but I believe it is important to be able to explore a country's history from within that region, both for visitors and locals alike.

Old and new textiles are sold in a variety of ways for both local needs and to tourists. In many situations it was difficult to look at items carefully without someone thinking you would buy. Asking a price was even more dangerous because the assumption is that you are entering the bargaining process!

There are certainly 'fixed price' stores in the cities, but everywhere else is a matter of bargaining, a national past-time. In Jakarta, Sarinah department store is well patronized by foreigners and locals alike. The first two floors could be anywhere in the world - international cosmetics, jeans, music, clothes, McDonalds etc, while the top two floors had every imaginable thing derived from a handcraft tradition and now produced en mass. Most regions seemed represented and made me wonder just where the Batak or Torajan souvenirs are actually made - another can of worms! Batik fabric, both real and printed, dominated the clothing section, while carving, painting, basketry, bamboo products, leather, ikat weaving, silver and metal work were all well represented, with some amazing adaptations to 'modern' uses. While Indonesia is rapidly becoming an industrialised nation, a thriving industry exists in marketing "ethnic" products, both internally and for export. Many similar items appeared in smaller tourist shops in Sumatra and Sulawesi, suggesting a fairly extensive distribution network.

A contrast to Sarinah is the antique market along Jalan Surabaya - a series of small dark crowded stalls selling a mixture of old, newly old and new items. Again most areas seemed represented, along with Dutch and Chinese ceramics, silver, carved masks, figures, animals, baskets and textiles - most of which were rather sad, being stuffed into cupboards, or hanging in front of the stall, fading, getting dirty etc. Only one stall had good pieces, carefully protected. Showing an interest in a Lampung style ship cloth, the price started at $100 and while I continued to look the price fell to $65 and I wasn't even bargaining!
At most places where tourists are staying or visiting there are shops or stalls, varying from bamboo shelters to the front room of a house or restaurant to self contained shops. In places with more shops, such as Tomok or Rantepao the range of items from other places was more extensive and reflected greater cross-cultural blending. One village, Ambarita, had a narrow street lined both sides with stalls and once it became known that I was looking at ragidups and suri-suri people would hold out their pieces, saying "look look", "good price", until it became rather overwhelming.

In Rantepao I met a guide and general entrepreneur who knew about Torajan articles, especially textiles and bronzes. He has bought things from villages to sell to dealers in Bali, and has guided various European 'treasure seekers'. He certainly knew the different types of Torajan fabrics, bringing several to the guest house for me to look at, and saying they were for sale. Certainly these pieces were of a better standard, design and colour use, than seen in most stalls - the skills seem to exist, but perhaps the incentive to produce works of better quality is lacking.

Many of the shops are dominated by table runners with buffalos and tongkonans in ikat with only remnants of the earlier aesthetics and scale. (See figure 1) Buffalos are promoted as 'typically Torajan' and the majority of tourists are interested in buying small, easily recognizable items, therefore encouraging their production.

As a postscript, the following is a conversation I overheard in a guesthouse in Rantepao, Sulawesi, between a Canadian and a Singaporean man.

"It's all a Balinisation of carving. Where's all the old artefacts? I'd love a real primitive carving for my dining table."

"Everything one sees is touristy - perhaps one has to go the village to find real things."
"Balinese is high culture - Torajans and Bataks are supposed to be primitive - at a different stage of development. This culture isn't primitive - I saw a guy wearing an American tee-shirt in the village - they probably have a television and electricity."

"I'd rather buy old things than these mass produced items."

At the beginning of my research, I followed the view promoted in the majority of the literature investigating the 'traditional textiles' of Indonesia. This perspective suggests that by an analysis of the social, religious and cultural context in which textiles function, and by relating this to a detailed analysis of design motifs, one would arrive at an understanding of the symbolic value and meaning of significant textiles.

However, first impressions can be naive and misleading, with subsequent studies serving as many questions as answers. As my studies progressed, I became increasingly aware of the many factors which affect different interpretations of the value and perception of Indonesian textiles. Many of these mediating factors - colonization,adventures, colonialism, marketing, tourism - increasingly became the story, as much as any other original or transforming. Nothing pops up immediately but is formed by a sequence of historical and influential influences, this flow of change may increase. Access to the culture and the country of the Textile Bank and Toraja for people from outside the culture. Fluctuation has been formed by prior anthropological, sociological or other literary literature. Each point of contact presents a variable on the view on the material culture of the people under study and the possible meanings which become attached.

When "old" traditional objects come into a different cultural framework in that of origin, the associations and understanding shift. Although the object in the same understanding of its function and interpretation of its meanings and values may change. This shift can be in a greater or lesser degree. For example, Batak people from one side may have &trade;he profession and furniture and
5.0 CONCLUSION

In the last twenty years, Indonesian textiles have been exhibited, circulated, studied and narrated to a greater extent than ever before. Cultures in which textiles have a connective function, linking humans, animals and plants to the wider community and cosmos, are tempting visions in today's fractured world.

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However first impressions can be naive and misleading, with subsequent studies raising as many questions as answers. As my studies progressed, I became increasingly aware of the many factors which affect different interpretations of the value and perception of Indonesian textiles. Many of these mediating factors - colonisation, academia, exhibitions, marketing, tourism - increasingly become the story, as much as any other 'original' or 'true' meaning. Nothing pops up immaculately but is formed by a sequence of histories and influences, although the rate of change may increase. Access to the culture and the textiles of the Toba Batak and Toraja for people from outside the culture, inevitably has been framed by prior anthropological, sociological or travellers' literature. Each point of contact presents a variation to the view on the material culture of the people under study and the possible meanings which become attached.

When their 'traditional' objects come into a different cultural framework to that of origin, the associations and understandings shift. Although the object is the same, understanding of its function and interpretation of its meanings and values may change. This shift can be to a greater or lesser degree. For example, Batak people from one area may have names for particular ulos (cloths) and...
designs, know the circulation history of the cloth, its lucky or unlucky associations and the original weaver. This same textile is sold to someone from a distant Toba Batak village and then given to a relative living in Jakarta. This person is likely to know the general name of the cloth, possibly its region of origin and that it is worn for ceremonies or given for weddings. He or she however, may consider themselves a modern city dweller, more interested in Paris fashions than traditional village customs and sells it through an antique dealer. The *ulos* is bought by a private collector, museum or gallery, is photographed, conserved, stored carefully and occasionally studied and displayed. Each situation contains choices and evaluations of the relative worth and the semiotic function of the cloth for its possessor.

The museum or gallery environment - because of the conventions which have developed about what that environment is - conditions and mediates responses to the textiles or any other object on display. The gallery context validates and elevates; educating and in turn stimulating the desire for further collecting and in some cases new production.

Perspectives in analysing and writing about textiles or other cultural material, also tend to be culturally conditioned (including myself as author) but fortunately, do not have to be static. Cultural information aids in trying to understand the significance attached to traditional textiles, yet this material is provisional, dependent on place, participants and intentions. 'Cultural information' in this context is inclusive of the Indonesian village environment, anthropologist and textile researchers', gallery curator observations, the setting created by ethnographic museum diorama and other situations of display. Each has its own varied history and influences which condition the audience response to 'traditional textiles'.

The issue of 'tradition' is another strata of this study - the vital link to systems of belief, religion and social structure; who defines, represents and maintains traditions; how it is packaged and marketed in the modern world. Tradition is a 'catch-all' word, encompassing notions of both general and specific associations, hinting at
invariance yet adapting to changes necessary to fit within structured beliefs. Traditions are not fixed, yet frequently narrated as if there was a 'golden time' or 'original meaning'. Textiles which were once considered vital to the customs and the well-being of the Batak and Toraja are increasingly becoming less important as religious practices change and social and economic factors transform so-called 'traditional' practices.

Cloths considered of a high standard - either in age, execution, origin or ritual purpose - are prestige items and indicate a degree of power and privilege to their owners not available to the general population. Textiles, even historical ones are viewed by the Indonesian Government as handicrafts and are not considered prohibited exports, subject to licence control. Stone, metal and Chinese porcelain are protected items, but not textiles. Until government export control and finance is available for supporting regional artists and collections, many unique skills and items will become inaccessible to the younger generation. In the last twenty years, due to the increased awareness and appreciation of their aesthetic value, a large number of textiles have been sold through the international art market, making these works inaccessible to local scholars, textile artists or the new generation exploring what it means to be 'Batak', 'Torajan' or 'Indonesian'.

Changing attitudes and an imbalance of wealth affect the relationship between the people who have traditionally made and used so-called 'tribal' textiles and those collecting and preserving them now. Court textiles have always relied on a patronage system. Smaller regional or ethnic styles, while perhaps more rigidly proscribed have been affected to a greater degree by shifting economic or religious factors, such as continuing migration, education and devaluation of the traditional beliefs in favour of one of the world religions.

Prior to and after independence in 1948, political and cultural upheavals have put increasing pressure on ethnic minorities trying to maintain a sense of identity. Inevitably, a certain arbitrary element affects how cultures are represented - choices are made
about which material articles, traditions, social and religious boundaries are to be preserved and presented. Local perspectives, prejudices and bias impact on any decisions. In the rush towards modernisation and industrialisation the Indonesian government, projects mixed messages about the country's ethnic diversity and the cultural values each group has to contribute. If the political will was evident, interesting and culturally appropriate models of presenting the cultural richness could be explored, instead of relying on Western style theme parks and museums. As Clifford has commented, it is important to consider how societal elements of a culture - both material and conceptual - condition the configuration of forms of meaning and in turn are conditioned by those configurations. In other words, whose and what criteria validate an authentic cultural or artistic product, and whose voice is the most authoritative.

The discovery of oil, changes in political openness to the west, aid projects and the 'hippie trail' all signalled an increase in the number of westerners working and travelling through Indonesia. Only a few of the many small collections subsequently became serious passions, turning into professional careers in writing, collecting and curatorial fields for the owners. Other westerners enter the field of textile research through different routes including academic study.

Much of the literature on Indonesian textiles uses the convention of 'ethnographic present' in writing about the textiles. This can be rather misleading when trying to look beyond traditions to current practices. In many cases, when changes are discussed it is with regret or nostalgia for earlier standards and does not account for the influences of contemporary culture on reformulations of identity.

The modern space of gallery and glossy book impact in a new way to the earlier presentations of Indonesian textiles in curiosity cabinets. Here, the western aesthetic dominates. The individual object - as opposed to the group or makers - is studied, photographed, narrated, displayed, cared for and appreciated. The origins and cultural context of the textiles are substituted for a new body of knowledge, a

141 Clifford 1988:215-251
different history and a changing set of meanings - it becomes an art object.

These new situations and influences from the Eurocentric 'centre', may in turn affect the production and significance of cloth in the 'periphery'. However, the debates surrounding the presentation of works from 'other' cultures in the western context, has not filtered into the realm of ethnographic textile discourses, reflecting the conservative and imperialistic approach generally taken.

This paper has outlined influences and episodes which have triggered re-evaluations and re-assessments of Indonesian ethnographic textiles. Crucial to this study has been the realisation that every 'reading' of an object or context is mediated by a complex and multi-layered sequence of events and perspectives. The valuing and function of the textiles, like all systems of meaning, are in transition.
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