Press Release

*Fibres of Life: IKAT Textiles of the Indonesian Archipelago*
Following the footsteps of a vanishing craft

September 14, 2017

The University Museum and Art Gallery (UMAG) will present *Fibres of Life: IKAT Textiles of the Indonesian Archipelago* from September 15 (tomorrow) to November 26, 2017. With the exhibition and the publication of *Ikat Textiles of the Indonesian Archipelago*, UMAG offers a comprehensive overview of the profusion of ikat styles found across the Indonesian archipelago.

An opening ceremony of the exhibition was held at UMAG today (September 14). Officiating guests included Consul of Information and Socio-Cultural Affairs from the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia in Hong Kong Mrs Yuni Suryati, Collector of Pusaka Collection Mr Peter Ten Hoopen and UMAG Director Dr Florian Knothe.

UMAG hopes to contribute to the broader project by means of this exhibition and publication, which shows ikat culture through a close reading of examples from over fifty weaving regions and a brief introduction to the conditions, beliefs and customs of the various peoples who have created and used them. The Pusaka Collection reveals the stylistic spectrum of the archipelago's ikat, while also showing remarkable correspondences rooted in time or sculpted by inter-island cultural exchanges. It is rich in superb and rare ikat textiles, many with few known cognates and some of them probably unique.

Looking at Peter Ten Hoopen's Pusaka Collection from a scholarly point of view, it is worth acknowledging how it illustrates the concept of ‘unity in diversity’, which the young state of Indonesia chose as its motto upon independence. Here, the interwoven-ness of styles from its islands matter, as do their marked individuality and idiosyncrasies. Moreover, it allows for the study not just of the people’s finery, but also of their daily attire, which is lamentably absent in most collections.

An ironic illustration of the effect of this collecting method comes from Ili Mandiri on Flores. As its dark red bridewealth sarongs have been prized and venerated by the local population, this is what most sophisticated collections have aimed to obtain. The simple but lovely indigo sarongs for everyday use have been almost entirely ignored by collectors. Hence they nearly always end up worn to shreds and very few survive—rarer now than the precious and respected, hence eagerly collected, bridewealth sarongs.

What knowledge is conserved about ikat textiles and their use in the Indonesian archipelago consists primarily of the records of missionary and scientific fieldwork, predominantly compiled by non-Indonesians. The coverage is thin—many weaving regions are covered by only one or two sources, and several regions have never been studied in any detail. Much traditional knowledge is being lost, especially in the more remote island regions in the Indonesian archipelago, which require concerted effort if any trace of their culture is to survive.
Details of the Exhibition

Period: September 15, 2017 (Friday) to November 26, 2017 (Sunday)

Opening Hours:
09:30 – 18:00 (Monday to Saturday)
13:00 – 18:00 (Sunday)

Closed on University and Public Holidays

Venue: 1/F T.T. Tsui Building, UMAG, HKU, 90 Bonham Road, Pokfulam

Tel/Email: (852) 2241 5500 (General Enquiry) / museum@hku.hk

Admission: Free

Website: http://www.umag.hku.hk/en/

Connect with UMAG on social media:
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/umag.hku
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Instagram: #IKAT, #Textiles, #IndonesianArchipelago, #UMAG
Weibo: @香港大學美術博物館 UMAG

About University Museum and Art Gallery of the University of Hong Kong (UMAG)
UMAG was founded in 1953 as the Fung Ping Shan Museum. It was originally established as the Fung Ping Shan Library in 1932 in honour of its benefactor. For more information on UMAG, please click here.

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~ End ~
Intimately interwoven with the ethos of headhunting, this design features large spirit figures (antu) with skull-like heads. Their scaled torsos are probably the weaver’s interpretation of the fish-scale reinforced jackets of Iban warriors. Iban weavers see themselves as operating at the interface of the physical and spiritual worlds. In the process of spiritually empowering textiles, they risk interference from supernatural entities. The figures on the bottom row of this cloth, depicted with one crocodilian and one human hand, probably signal that the weaver was struggling with the spiritual power of the crocodile. Only a weaver of great technical skill and mental prowess could have produced a pua of such size and subject matter.

(38)同獵頭的主題緊密交織在一起，此作品描繪了大型的神明“安圖”有著骷髏似的頭顱。他們覆蓋鱗片的身軀大約是來自織工對於伊班武士身上所披魚鱗戰袍的解讀。伊班的織工們認為自己是在塵世和靈界的交界線上作工。他們冒險介入靈體，將屬靈能力注入織物。這件作品底行上的形象有著兩顆分別是鱷魚和人類的頭顱，大概是預示著該織工正在同鱷魚的靈力進行角斗。只有一位有著偉大技藝和超凡精神勇力的織工，才有可能製作出如此大尺寸和這個主題的“普阿”。

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<td>Pua, ritual blanket</td>
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<td>Warp ikat in medium hand-spun cotton</td>
<td>中等手工經織棉</td>
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<td>1880–1920</td>
<td>1880 年至 1920 年</td>
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Patterned in red, cream and rare indigo, the figures on this pua represent Gajah Meram, the 'Broody Elephant' of Ibanic folklore. Powerful and rare in the lexicography of Iban designs, Gajah Meram is a metaphor for any great warrior that the weaver wishes to pay homage to. His head is always exaggerated to indicate that he returned from battle with his head secured firmly to his body—in direct contrast to a decapitated head, which is always shown as a tiny seed on a torso. Outlines in white and blue have been used to lend the figure a heightened sense of mystery and power.

(圖 74) 這件“普阿”以紅色，奶白色，以及少見的靛藍為圖案，描繪了“噶加梅仁”，伊班民間傳說中的“沉思大象”。“噶加梅仁”在伊班設計語彙辭典中是強大而稀少的，他是織工向所有偉大戰士致以敬意所採用的隱喻。他頭顱的尺寸通常被誇大，用來指代他從戰場中歸來卻毫髮無傷，作為強烈對比，一顆被斬首的頭顱通常被描繪成為軀體上的一粒微小的種子。以白色和藍色勾勒的輪廓使得這一形象添加了不少神秘和能力無邊的意味。
This large pua is adorned with several distinct figural types. The most prominent have large, labyrinthine faces, and represent giant, ghostly creatures of power encountered in dreams. Such creatures are often associated with deities or ancestral spirits. The smaller female figures on the bottom row have elaborate headdresses and hold human skulls, with other heads lying at their feet. Like Gajaj Meram (the ‘Broody Elephant’), they are shown with larger than normal heads, and may be the weaver’s interpretation of that popular design.

Flowers (Ndona)  
Endenese people  
Semba, men’s wrap  
Warp ikat in fine hand-spun cotton  
1930–1945

The main body of this cloth is decorated with a star-like jilamprang motif. In the borders, three strips of tumpal (triangular) patterns interrupt the main design. Lateral borders of this type fell out of favour in neighbouring Ende by around 1930, but remained in use in Ndona, where textile designs were more conservative.
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<td>Flores (Lio)</td>
<td>Nggela people</td>
<td>Lawo, sarong</td>
<td>Warp ikat in fine hand-spun cotton</td>
<td>1920–1930</td>
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<td>(Image 99)</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Made for families of high standing, sarongs of this type are sometimes called lawo keli mara—probably after the large mountain-shaped motifs in the borders that resemble Keli Mara on Flores. But the motifs may be more ancient, perhaps derived from designs on patola or other cloths imported from India. It is common for Southeast Asian weavers to incorporate borrowed motifs into their designs, some of which become associated with features of the local landscape over time. Known as chhabdi bhat or basket patterns in Gujarat, the star-like jilamprang designs and tumpal (triangular) patterns are further elements drawn from Indian prototypes.</td>
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| Flores (probably Palue) | Palue people | Tama, sarong | Warp ikat in medium hand-spun cotton | 19th or early 20th c. |

(Imag 99) 為德高望重的家族而織造的這種圍裙有時候也被稱為“拉沃克里馬拉”，其命名可能是來源於織物邊緣描繪的大型山脈狀圖形，很像是花島的克里馬拉山。但這些圖形可能更為古老，有可能是起源自“派多拉”織物或其他從印度進口織物上的圖案。南亞的織工藝術家將外來的圖形融會貫通至他們自己的設計中，甚至有些同本地風景結合在一起，這是司空見慣的。被稱為“吉藍普朗”的星星形狀的圖形和被稱為“唐帕爾”的三角形狀，正是從印度的原型中脫胎而出，此原型既古吉拉特織物上被稱為“查布蒂巴特”或者花籃圖形的花紋。
Textiles from Palue in East Flores often feature individual motifs built up using dots and separated by narrow vertical stripes, particularly sarongs. The diamond-shaped lozenges on this example may represent similar hook and rhomb designs in lozenges called ‘kaif’ that are used in various regions on Timor. The large X-shaped designs in the end borders appear to be angular emulations of jilamprang (star) motifs from Indian patola. The indigo accent stripes were probably done in silk coloured with Perkin's mauve and methyl violet—early chemical dyes that were developed in 1854 and occasionally used in the archipelago.

Luxury textiles imported from India were a valuable commodity in Southeast Asia from at least as early as the 14th century. They had a profound impact on local designs. The layout and distinct tumpal (triangular pattern) borders on this luka semba—a cloth worn by male members of the nobility—were inspired by double-ikat cloths from Gujarat called patola. In keeping with the treatment of valuable Indian textiles, the considerable age and fine condition of the wrap indicates that it was probably stored away as a pusaka, an heirloom, for many years.
(Image 246) At first glance, this *luka semba* appears to be dyed in two tones, morinda red and a near-black maroon. Closer inspection reveals the use of yellow for accents—most lavishly in the borders. Yellow dye, made using turmeric, is very rarely seen in Ende *semba*. In the Lesser Sundas (except Timor) it is reserved for the highest levels of society. The influence of Indian textiles on Ende weaving is seen in the *patola*-inspired array of floral lozenges on the main design and the triangle-shaped *tumpal* patterns in the borders.

(Image 259) Worn wrapped around the waist by both sexes, sarongs from Ende come in many designs. Those in which the whole cloth is divided into a multitude of small bands, such as this, are called *zawo mangga*. They are usually filled with geometric designs in indigo, but this unusual example includes two bands of red horses. It may be an amalgamation of *zawo mangga* and predominantly red sarongs with similar designs called *zawo jara* ('horse sarongs').
來自英德的圍裙有著豐富的設計，無論男女都將其圍在腰間。被稱為“紮沃芒噶”的一類，比如這一件，整片圍裙由許多小片組成。通常他們都充滿了靛藍色的幾何圖案，但這一件比較特別，它還包括了兩條飾有紅色馬兒的布料。它可能是來自“紮沃芒噶”跟更為流行的紅色圍裙的組合，這種紅色圍裙同此件設計類似，被稱為“紮沃加拉”，也就是“馬兒圍裙”的意思。