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An Ethnographic Interpretation of the Smoke Rising and Smoke Descending Ceremonial Attire of the Sa'dan Malimbong Toraja

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The modern Toraja ceremonial attire worn for the smoke rising and the smoke descending rituals are woven in the Sa'dan Malimbong villages on back strap looms with a continuous warp using both continuous and discontinuous two-faced supplementary weft decorative elements (Christou, 1997; 2005). The smoke rising, or Rambu-Tuka', and smoke descending, or Rambu-Solo', ceremonies are a body of rituals associated with the traditional Toraja religion, or Aluk Todolo; therefore, they form the belief structure of pre-Islamic and Christian Tana Toraja (Mattulada, 1978, p. 135). The style and design elements associated with the traditional religion persist despite changes in materials and decorative techniques. The present day Toraja ceremonial attire from Sa'dan Malimbong, South Sulawesi in the Republic of Indonesia, has the same tailoring and decorative elements as the former traditional bark cloth and woven pina fibre variations. "The widths of woven cloth are important in the shaping of garments made from them. There are certain widths of looms belonging to different cultures and these influence the clothing of those cultures....It is important to historians and ethnologists because by taking note of a change in costume cut they can detect a change in population or at least the domination of that population" (Burnham, 1973, p. 34).

The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the Indonesian textile literature on Sa'dan Toraja weaving and its use in traditional ceremonies. I illustrate how cloth is important in establishing and maintaining social relationships as well as establishing cultural identity. The ceremonial attire is worn today at two life cycle events of weddings and funerals. By observing how these articles are made and worn we may have a better understanding of the Toraja culture and insight into their world view (Miller, 1985). The ceremonial attire is part of the material culture surrounding the smoke ascending and smoke descending rituals: "All these elements are appropriate to the building up of the auspicious context of the major rites" (Ibid, p. 140).

The data for this paper, as well as data for my Master's thesis (1997), was collected during ethnographic fieldwork I conducted in the four weaving villages of Sangkombong, Sangaropi, Matallo, and To'Barana' of Sa'dan Malimbong in the Regency of Tana Toraja from June 1993 to June 1994. I lived, wove and participated in the day-to-day activities of the To'Barana' village. By observing the weaving process and the use of the resulting textiles and clothing within the socio-cultural context, I discerned how the weaver's knowledge of the back strap loom, the techniques of patterning, and the final tailoring of the cloth offer insight into its use.

Both the former and the modern ceremonial attire have not been discussed in the Indonesian textile literature, nor have they been mentioned in the Toraja ethnography. However, Michael Hitchcock does mention supplementary weft weaving for blankets and tourist items, but not for ceremonial attire (1985, p. 48; 1991, p. 111). See also Maxwell (1990) and Hitchcock (1985 and 1991) for historical documentation of this technique. For an ethnographic description of the Sa'dan Toraja supplementary weft techniques see Christou (1997). I argue that the ceremonial attire functions as a visual reference of Toraja culture and religion because of its continued use and its decorative elements. The weaving and tailoring of the clothing, and the use of it during ceremonies reflects both symbolic religious and social cultural meaning for the Toraja today as it

may have done in former times. The decorative elements have symbolic meaning derived from the traditional religion and cosmology; and so the ceremonial attire endures because it is worn during the re-enactment of the cultures myths in the rituals and ceremonies (Barthes, 1957; Campbell, 2004).

As Joseph Campbell states: Ritual is the realization of myth. "Ritual is simply myth enacted; by participating in a rite, you are participating directly in the myth. (Campbell, 2004, p. six). "A culture's rites repeat the underlying myth of that culture" (Ibid, p. xix). The objects used during these rituals and ceremonies form the material culture of the Toraja, and so these objects represent the worldview of the users (Ames, 1986; Prown, 1982). The ceremonies and accompanying rituals are celebrated collectively by all the community members in accordance with adat, or customs of the traditional religion, or Aluk To'dolo'.

Abstract symbols of ancestry, flora and fauna have specific social and cultural meaning. These meanings are not spoken; instead they are woven into the cloth (Schneider and Weiner, 1989; Blum Schevill, 1991). Based on my observations and participation in the Sa'dan Malimbong religious ceremonies, I found continuous and discontinuous two-faced, supplementary weft patterns and motifs represent symbolic elements pertaining to the rites of passage called smoke descending and smoke ascending ceremonies. Thus, it is my assertion based on viewing women wearing this attire during these ritual occasions that this ceremonial attire connects the participants to the past and the present, where they relate to their ancestors as well as establish and maintain relationships amongst the living. Symbols of birth, life, death, and regeneration, growth and decay, the cycle of life is interpreted by the weaver and expressed using these two supplementary weft decorative techniques (Christou, 1997). The idea of regeneration, i.e., fertility is symbolically captured in the production of weaving textiles and clothing and in the design elements such colour and float weave motifs and patterns. Thus, the women use their weaving skills and knowledge to express their traditional religion. It is a means of connecting to their ancestors (Feeley-Harnik, 1989).

As mentioned above, I lived with a family that celebrated, with rituals, the planting and the harvesting of rice, the birth and death of family members, the building and refurbishing of ancestor houses and the healing of the sick, or emotional distraught. All of these rites were celebrated according to adat, or customs and this included the use of traditional textiles and clothing. "Traditionally, the art of women almost universally rendered in textiles-has been concerned with the preservation and communication of spiritual and cultural values. (Allen, 1981, p. 3). Women have a connection with nature that is necessary for the survival of their community; their textiles are the physical manifestations of this reality (Barnes, 1989; Geirnaert; 1989; Heringa, 1989; Niessen, 1985; Weiner, 1976). There exists a male/female duality in the worldview, which in turn is reflected in the social structure, and I believe this is expressed in the ritual attire (Weiner, 1976).

Traditional Toraja ritual is dualistic in nature" (Wellenkamp, 1988, p. 312). I found two examples of smoke rising and smoke descending ceremonial attire that symbolizes this duality: These are the widows hood, or pote' and the male loincloth, uki' pio'. The loincloths are not used any longer as loincloths, but they do serve as sacred banners which are hung from the front rafters of the ancestor house during smoke descending and smoke ascending ceremonies. The widow's hood and loincloth are decorated using two-faced continuous and discontinuous supplementary weft patterns and motifs. Variations of these two cloths serve as male head cloths

and women's shoulder and head cloths; and, they form part of the ceremonial attire for wedding and funeral ceremonies. Simplified versions, or 'samples' of these cloths are also produced for sale to both domestic and foreign tourists visiting Tana Toraja; these material objects represent the ethnic identity of the Toraja highland people (Crystal, 1977; Christou, 1997; Wood, 1998). These objects should not be dismissed as 'tourist art' because they are significant to the people that produce them; after all, these objects represent of their ethnicity.

The resulting textiles therefore maintain and unite the female and the male principle as expressed by the function of the textiles in ceremonies celebrating the union of the two principles of nature, as well connecting the living to their ancestors, or to 'manurun. The Torajan relationship with nature is celebrated with ancestor veneration; and, today the veneration of the ancestors and of nature is either integrated with their Christian or Islamic belief systems, or celebrated on their own depending on the group's historical kinship ties (Thompson, 2000; Tsintjilonis, 2000; Waterson, 1995).

Once the weaving is completed the resulting cloth is then cut and tailored. The ceremonial attire comprises of a blouse, tube skirt, shoulder cloth and betel bag. A seamstress takes a person's measurements for each piece. They are made to order for members of the immediate family, extended family, and community members of each village, or outlying villages and are woven in four villages of the Sa'dan Malimbong region. The supplementary weft decorative elements appear on the ceremonial attire in the following areas: The neckline, cuffs, and hem of the blouse; the hem and side panel of the sarong; the shoulder cloth, and on the betel bag. All these clothing items are cut from one single length of cloth that was woven with the tailoring in mind; thus, each section of the cloth has the supplementary weft design elements woven in such a way as to permit cutting without disturbing the designs. The cloth is woven on a body-tension back strap loom with a continuous warp; thus, the decorative elements are woven in such a way as to be cut out later for the clothing pieces. The weaver knows the amount of yarn she will need, the time it will take to weave the attire, usually two months, as well as the layout of the supplementary weft patterns and motifs that will eventually form the decorative elements on the clothes. The tube skirt, or dodo, is worn in a way that best shows the decorative elements.

The blouse, and tube skirt is machine stitched on foot treadle Singer sewing machines by the women belonging to the Sa'dan Malimbong families. According to my home stay family; they were able to learn to sew as part of their introduction to western culture and etiquette by Christian missionaries. They were also given Singer sewing machines. "Idan van de Loosdrecht taught them a Victorian morality quite alien to Toraja custom, schooled them in the basics of nutrition, hygiene, and housekeeping, and instructed them on how to use the sewing machine" (Bigalke, 1984, p. 92). Despite the formal use of ceremonial attire, everyday dress is not significant because the Toraja sense is to appear humble; therefore formal attire is only worn on formal occasions such as funerals and weddings (Hollen and Wellenkamp, 1994, p. 93).

In Sa'dan Toraja the kinship system is bilateral, descent is from the mother and the father, so individuals can belong to two ancestor houses and be obligated to participate in ceremonies associated with each of these houses (Nooy-Palm, 1975; Wellenkamp, 1988; Volkman, 1985). Residence is matrifocal (Christou, 1997; Thompson, 2000). The four villages of To'Barana', Matallo, Sangkombong and Sangkaropi', all have sacred houses called tongkonan. The houses symbolize the unity of the family as well as maintain the relationship of the family members by being the focal and ceremonial area in each village (Waterson, 1990). All the sacred ritual

objects for example, textiles, clothing, jewelry, swords, and beadwork that accessorize the ceremonial attire do not belong to one individual, instead they belong to the highest-ranking family associated with a tongkonan (Zerner, 1981, p. 102). These objects were kept in a basket in the Northeast corner of the tongkonan, and could only be viewed and handled for ritual and ceremonial purposes. Special prayers have to be recited upon opening and closing the basket, or container.

The Toraja traditional religion is called Aluk To Dolo, or the way of the people before (Volkman, 1979). It is based on the veneration of the ancestors, spirits of nature and founding ancestors whom eventually became gods and spirits (Nooy-Palm, 1986). The traditional religion is dualistic in nature; thus, there are two spheres, the left sphere and the right sphere (Nooy-Palm, 1975). All rites of the dead are in the left and western sphere, and are called the rites of the setting sun, or aluk rampe matampu, and smoke descending, or Aluk Rambu Solo' (Tsintjilonis, 2000; Volkman, 1979; Waterson, 1995). The rites of fertility, agriculture and household are in the right and eastern sphere, and are called the rites of the rising sun, or aluk rampe matallo, and smoke ascending, or Aluk Rambu Tuka' (Volkman, 1979, p. 30).

There are specific rituals and rules, or pemali associated with both the eastern and western spheres (Waterson, 1995), which also pertain to the weaving and wearing of traditional clothing and textiles (Christou, 1997). These strict rules of religious conduct are meant to keep separate the smoke ascending rituals from the smoke descending rituals. "Smoke ascending sphere is oriented toward the daeta and includes rituals to promote health, fertility and prosperity to give thanks and to atone for transgressions" (Hollen and Wellenkamp 1994. p.12). The ceremonial attire smoke ascending rituals, such as house building, possession trance ma'maro, ma'bugi, and "fertility and prosperity ma'bugi" are woven in bright colours. In contrast, the "smoke descending sphere" is oriented toward the ancestors nene' and the souls of the recent dead bombo and centres around death rituals (*Ibid*, p.12). Funeral and mortuary attire is woven using black as the ground woven structure. The rituals and prohibitions are practiced as part of the core of traditional religion; rituals connect people to their gods and ancestors. By venerating the to'manurun, they will provide people with children and abundance of crops and animals (Volkman, 1979). Thus, the supplementary weft decorative elements on the ceremonial attire are a symbolic, visual manifestation of the Sa'dan Toraja smoke ascending and smoke descending rites. They represent a silent and continuous social message woven and worn by the people taking part in the ceremonies (Blum Schevill, 1991).

For example, during a funeral ceremony there are several rites and rituals accompanying each stage preparing the person for their afterlife as well as rituals participating in the ceremonies (Tsintjilonis, 2000). It is during the arrival of the guests in procession that the women of the families related to the deceased, or the saroan, wear the supplementary weft funeral attire. The women of an extended family, saroan enter the ceremonies in a ritual procession one after the other bearing food and gifts for the deceased's family. Displaying the ceremonial attire at this time is one way one can express their status, and the status of their family. Therefore, the clothing not only connects the living to their ancestors but also establishes and maintains their relationships within the community and between families of the bua. "Self-worth," reflected a Toraja man, "is only there if other people see it. Through rituals it is made visible" (Volkman, 1979, p. 9).

The supplementary weft designs found on the textiles woven in Sa'dan are based on an art style that is prevalent throughout the highland regions of Southeast Asian Archipelago (Christou, 1997; 2005). These designs are discussed by Jaeger Gerlings (1952). Gerling's hypothesis (1952) is that the hook and key motifs are geometrical representations of the human body (Christou, 1997; 2004). He suggests that there is a correlation between these images and ancestor worship. I found that the Sa'dan Toraja use the same motifs Gerlings (1952) describes in their weaving (*Ibid*, 1997). The Sa'dan Toraja religion was based on nature and ancestor worship. Textiles, woodcarvings, and incising (now incised in concrete), metalwork (Zerner, 1981; 1983), and beadwork are used in their life and death ceremonies honoring their ancestors. Gerling's hypothesis (1952) is significant because in the weaving of the Sa'dan Toraja, the sekong motifs are variations of the hook and key motifs (Christou, 1997; 2005). These are done in the continuous supplementary weft technique using four additional pattern heddles in To'Barana' (*Ibid*, 1997; 2005). Thus, the weavers use supplementary weft weaving (a relatively recent technique, i.e. ca. 5th century Ad, or later) (Gittinger, 1979; Maxwell, 1990), in order to weave ancient symbols. Here we see that a new decorative technique is creating ancient patterns and motifs (Christou, 1997; 2005).

The day-to-day patterns of behaviour indicated that most of the female population in the village took part in the weaving process. By observing and participating in the weaving process I was able to discern the social organization of the community; and the use of the resulting woven textiles. The weavers of Sa'dan Malimbong make cloth for the ceremonial attire worn by most of the women participating in smoke ascending and descending rituals in the Regency of Tana Toraja. There are many ritual occasions when the ceremonial attire is worn; and this is why it is important to document its weaving, tailoring, and use.

In Sa'dan weaving is a gender specific activity; women do all the weaving and dyeing. Every female child can weave regardless of status. Weaving knowledge is shared and brings the generations together forming relationships and creating strong bonds between the women of all ages (Christou, 1997). It is a social activity enjoyed, respected and celebrated as a female virtue. As female knowledge, it passed from mother to child about the age of six; therefore, the passing of this knowledge is intergenerational. The loom, and the weaving, and the textiles belong to women and are associated with fertility and womanhood (*ibid.*, 1997). Weaving well gives a woman more status, and she is admired for her skill and innovation. Thus, the making and the wearing of the these textiles maintains the social relationships in the village and community. During the ceremonies the wearing of the supplementary weft patterned attire connects the participants to their ancestors; therefore, the ceremonial attire has a dual social and cultural meaning.

The weaving is done out of doors, during the day, never after sunset, nor during an epidemic. Women do not weave or dye if they are pregnant, or if they are in mourning. The weaving is done outside during the day because the spirits of the ancestors may be disturbed by the noise of the weaving process. Alternately, by weaving out of doors the weaver in her loom becomes the locus for gathering and conversing with community members. The children play around the weavers, other men and women gamble nearby and join in the stories, gossip, and activity of winding bobbins; thus, social relationships are strengthened and formed in such a scene because it becomes a social activity.

I witnessed, and wove, while an influx of minivans, full of domestic and foreign tourists, arrived daily during the dry season. The patterns of culture in the villages did change when the tourists were there because the Toraja and their handicrafts were on display, but once the tourists left village life resumed. Despite tourism in the To'Barana' village, the women in this village and the surrounding villages weave traditional textiles using their mother's looms to weave textiles and clothing for both their families and communities ceremonial and everyday use, as well as for the domestic and foreign tourist market (*Ibid.*, 1997). I argue that the ritual use of textiles maintains the skills of the weavers because each weaver is after all identified with the quality and beauty of her work. If, for example, there is to be a special wedding, then the most skilled weaver is called upon to make the ceremonial attire.

In conclusion, based on my field work accounts, participation, and observations of the Sa'dan Malimbong region's smoke rising and smoke descending ceremonies, the weaving and the use of ceremonial attire establishes, maintains and builds social relationships in the four villages of Sangkombong, Sangkaropi', Ma'tallo and To'Barana'. Despite the incursion of tourists and modern factors such as education, relocation, and advanced technology, the weaving and the use of this attire maintains relationships between the women and their community. Also, the sale of Sa'dan Toraja textiles to tourists, maintains the knowledge of weaving amongst the women; nonetheless, the refinement of style and design qualities of the textiles are changed (Christou, 1997). Nonetheless, by wearing hand woven supplementary weft patterned traditional clothing in present day religious ceremonies the Sa'dan Toraja make a connection to their ancestors. "The technical process itself thus became crucial to the formation of the symbol" (Gittinger, 1975, p. 26). This cross-cultural documentation of the social and cultural significance of patterned textiles adds to the textile literature of Indonesia (Niessen, 1993).

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