

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

BATIK CLOTHS FROM JAMBI, SUMATRA

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by

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

#### A. The research

##### 1. The topic

I first became interested in the batik of Jambi during the period between March 1989 and January 1991 when I was working as a university lecturer in Jambi, the capital city of the province of the same name in central Sumatra. I had heard that batik was made in the area, and after some enquiries, I was able to join a batik training course run by the Pendidikan Kesejahteraan Keluarga (PKK)<sup>1</sup> in the government-sponsored training workshop in Telanaipura, the administrative area of the city. There I met Ibu Azmiah, who was the most experienced batikker there, and who lived across the river in the village of Olak Kemang. After a few weeks, she offered to teach me batik in her home, and thus I was introduced to her mother, Ibu Asmah, who had learnt batik many years before. These two women stimulated my interest in the craft and showed me many of the techniques as practised in present times. I visited their home on many occasions during 1989 and 1990. This also gave me a chance to experience life in the village at first hand, and to see the importance of textiles in Jambi social life.

It was not until shortly before the end of this first stay in Jambi that I came across pieces of Jambi batik dating from before the Japanese occupation, and realised that there was a long-standing tradition of batik-making there. In December 1990 I met Ellis Mensinga and Rens Heringa, who were collecting information in preparation for an exhibition of textiles from Palembang and Jambi in Museon, Den Haag, and accompanied them on a visit to Olak Kemang. Through them I learnt of the many areas of doubt surrounding the nature and origins of batik in Jambi. In particular, it had been suggested that of the many batiks recorded as having a Jambi origin and now held in Dutch collections, those containing a red colour were now regarded by many people as having been made elsewhere. Ellis Mensinga gave me copies of some articles written about Jambi batik in the late twenties by B.M. Goslings, a curator at the Tropical Museum in Amsterdam.

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<sup>1</sup> Family Welfare Programme.



With the encouragement of both these women, I set about exploring the history of Jambi batik with a view to establishing its nature, characteristics, methods of manufacture and function in its social context.

A central aim of the study was to establish an accurate description of batiks from Jambi which could serve as a guide to museum cataloguers. In particular I planned to clarify the position regarding the red batiks. During the course of my investigations, I came across a similar confusion surrounding a group of batiks containing Arabic calligraphy. A further purpose of the study was then to determine which, if any, of these calligraphy batiks were made in Jambi. For those which did, my intention was to discover how they fitted into the social and economic context in which they were produced.

## 2. Research Methodology

My interest in Jambi batik had a strong diachronic element to it in that I wanted not just to study contemporary practice but also to shed light on its origins. Just as present-day production is a "revival" based on textiles kept in the community and knowledge retained by local people, the textiles kept as heirlooms by villagers and made in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century must almost certainly have grown from existing practice or have been based on imported textiles. This would have been the case not just in relation to the manufacture, but also to the use of these textiles.

I knew little about the history of the area, but I wanted to have sufficient understanding of the social and political historical background in order to place my studies in context. Historical background would be useful in relation to such matters as changing patterns of trade, an understanding of social organisation during the period of the sultanate and the influence of the Dutch administration.<sup>2</sup> It might be important to ascertain trade patterns to determine what the available sources were for imported dyestuffs and textiles and what export markets there might have been for Jambi textiles. This might shed light, for example, on how far and when Jambi might have needed to produce its own textiles to replace previous foreign imports. I also wanted to try to ascertain what evidence there was of the scale of local textile production in Sumatra.

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<sup>2</sup> These issues are dealt with in the next chapter.

Unfortunately, library research revealed that Jambi is a relatively neglected area in terms of recorded history. Sources for regions of Indonesia which were under Dutch rule for a considerable time were much more prolific, and this meant that these areas had received more attention from western historians. Indonesian historical study has also tended to focus on Java, and local history does not form part of the curriculum in the Indonesian education system. Social history is almost completely unrecorded. In their studies of Sumatra, neither Marsden (1966/1811) nor Loeb (1989/1935) make more than a passing reference to Jambi. Nevertheless, I was able to find some useful material, though it is patchy and there are considerable gaps.

From the staff at Jambi Museum I obtained an unpublished manuscript on the history of Jambi by A.Mukty Nasruddin (1989). Although this is also patchy, and relies heavily on Dutch sources, it was useful from the point of view of its local interpretation of published Dutch material and from the fact that it covered the whole period from prehistory to 1989. Some information was available from archaeological records. Apart from stone inscriptions, there is no written evidence until brief Portuguese accounts from the sixteenth century. The arrival of the Dutch and the English East India Companies in the early seventeenth century meant that there is some information from that period. This is largely to do with pepper trading. Little work has been published on the manuscripts of English East India Company relating to the Jambi factories. The original documents are held in British Library, and I had to consult them at first hand. They focus for the most part on trade, and though there is some useful information on textile imports and on European dealings with the Sultan's court, there is no reference to local dress or cultural organisation. The Dutch records have received more attention from scholars, especially Barbara Andaya Watson, whose work deals with the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, though her chief focus is on Palembang (1993). Meilnck-Roelofs (1962) devotes a few pages to the Jambi pepper trade, based chiefly on the V.O.C. records.

For the period from 1830-1907, the only major published work on Jambi is Elsbeth Locher-Scholten's analysis of the relationship between the sultanate and the Dutch colonial administration (1993). This is also largely based on Dutch sources, and focusses on external political factors rather than social and cultural

matters. Locher-Scholten has also published an article dealing with some aspects of the way the Jambi aristocracy and the Dutch expressed their relations through ritual (1993).

For the period of Dutch administration from 1901 to 1942, Tideman's summary of reports of colonial officials provides a useful overview (1938). His brief section on the textile industry, covering little more than a page, gave references to a few original reports held in the Colonial Archives in The Hague. I visited these archives on two occasions to obtain some details from the original reports about cotton-growing and textile production, though this also proved to be sketchy.

I searched through the literature on Indonesian textiles for references to Jambi textiles. There were very few, and those that I found were extremely brief and often contradictory. The only serious attention which had been paid to Jambi textiles was the series of articles by B.M. Goslings published in *Nederlandsche Indie Oud en Nieuw* between 1929 and 1931. These were based largely on materials and reports sent to him as curator of the Ethnographic section of the Tropical Institute in Amsterdam. The most useful sections of these are a summary of an account of batik-making in Jambi written by Tassilo Adam, who saw batik production there himself, and a report by Van der Kam, who also visited a batik-making village and wrote a report on the situation in response to Gosling's enquiries.

An article on Jambi batik written by Johannes Philipsen and published in 1945 proved to be based largely on Goslings' articles, together with a consideration of a short account in a report written by Willem Steinbuch, then Dutch Resident in Jambi, in 1933. It appears, however, that Steinbuch did not visit the batik-making villages himself, and that his comments are also largely based on some of the articles by Goslings. Since then there has been no published field research apart from a one day visit to Jambi (part of a longer trip involving several days in Palembang) by Rens Heringa and Ellis Mensinga in 1990. Findings from this brief visit informed the content of Heringa's catalogue accompanying the exhibition "Een Schitterende Geschiedenis" in Museon, Den Haag in 1994.

Most published references to Jambi batik rely on the information and ideas in

Philipsen's article.

Because the main focus of the study is on textiles dating from before the Japanese occupation, it was necessary to find textiles which have good provenance in European museum collections. In my search for such cloths and for others with which to compare them, I consulted museum collections in several countries. In England, I visited the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Museum of Mankind, London; in Holland, Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam, Museon in Den Haag, Museum Nusantara in Delft, Rijksmuseum voor Land- en Volkenkunde in Leiden and Museum voor Volkenkunde in Rotterdam. In Indonesia I examined the collections in Jambi Museum, the Museum Nasional, Jakarta and the Textile Museum, Jakarta; in Singapore I was given access to the collection at the National Museum. Museum collections which I studied in Malaysia were those held at the Istana Jahar and the Islamic Museum in Kota Bahru, Kelantan and the Muzium Negeri, Terengganu. Finally, to gain some insight into Indian styles and processes, I visited the Calico Museum of Textiles in Ahmedabad, India.

There were limitations in access to and time available to study these collections in situ, especially in relation to dye analysis and microscopic examination, and in some cases, photography. Catalogue records in some museum collections were not available.

I also had the opportunity to see two private collections in Jakarta, those belonging to Josephine Bin and Mrs Eiko Kusuma. I also examined three batiks believed to be from Jambi in the private collection of Donald Harper. Some of the textiles in these private collections are of uncertain provenance, since most were purchased from dealers who bought the cloths from intermediaries rather than from the owners or makers. Where a collector is known to be wanting an example of a particular type of cloth, there may be a temptation for the vendor to describe a cloth in the terms required.

In order to establish the characteristics of those cloths described as "batik Jambi", I considered the dimensions, thread count and selvedge structures of the cloth. In relation to the dyeing, I considered what dyestuffs had been used, the possibility

of the mordant resist process having been used, the method of application of resist, especially whether this was by hand or with a metal or wooden stamp, and whether the resist was equal on both sides of the cloth. Finally, design structures and motifs were examined to see what general patterns emerged. Where possible, photographs were taken of relevant materials.

It was important to identify textiles with a firm Jambi provenance. These fell into two groups: contemporary textiles and textiles obtained by a small number of Dutch collectors in the 1920s.

I was initially unable to gain access to the collection at Rotterdam since I was told that the whole collection was being photographed, that this process would take five years, and that until it was complete nobody could use the collections. I eventually managed to see the collection briefly in June 1997. The collection in Leiden was in the process of being moved from one storage facility to another, so that I was only able to see one piece of cloth from Jambi, though I was given photocopies of catalogue entries. In Museon, the Steinbuch collection is stored on rollers, and although the staff were extremely helpful, they were understandably reluctant to unroll each one completely for me to examine, so that initially I was only able to see the ends of cloths. I was, however, given photographs of many of them and I was able to purchase photographs of others. Unfortunately, the photographs were all black and white. I was given a complete set of catalogue entries. In June 1997 the curator kindly allowed me to examine the cloths more closely. The staff at the Tropical Institute, Amsterdam were also extremely helpful, and I looked at the collection on three occasions. The first visit was at a very early stage of my study, and provided me with an overview of what was available. On the second visit I was looking for particular cloths and collections referred to in Goslings' articles. I was allowed to photograph these cloths, though this was accomplished by standing on a stool with the cloth laid flat on the ground. The angle between direction of camera and the plane of the cloth was not ideal. I was not able to see the catalogue until my third visit when I was able to inspect the catalogue entries myself, and to take further photographs of cloths in the collection.

I paid frequent visits to Jambi Museum, where I was able to photograph, measure

and examine the cloths in their collection with few restrictions. In addition I was able to refer to catalogue entries, though the system for keeping acquisition records had been changed so that I could not look them up myself but had to request each one I needed and get a curator to look it up for me.

The information recorded in museum catalogues was often unhelpful, consisting largely of descriptions of features which were evident on looking at the cloth (colour, size, motifs, for example). My own interest was more to do with precise details of the place and method of manufacture, who had made the cloth and what it was used for. Such details were probably often unknown in many cases and simply left unrecorded in others. A very large proportion of the cloths were acquired through dealers, who may or may not have been able to provide further information about where they had acquired the cloths, but the categories under which information is classified in the records did not invite such enquiries. Few of the catalogue entries detailed their sources of information, which left much of it in doubt. For example, many of the cloths catalogued as Jambi cloths in the Steinbuch collection in Museon, Den Haag have catalogue entries referring to their colours as "Lasem-red" or "Semarang-red", though it is not clear what authority there was for this comment, and whether the writer believed that the cloth had been made there. Many of the typewritten entries had "ex Java" handwritten on them, presumably added at a later date. Again, no authority is given for these additions.

### 3. Fieldwork

There were a number of reasons why fieldwork was important. In the first place, limitations in the possibilities of detailed analysis of textiles held in museums meant that it was necessary to acquire examples from the fieldwork site. These were collected with four criteria in mind. Firstly, I wanted to have some examples of what were locally regarded as batiks "typical" of Jambi. Secondly, I wanted to see whether there were batiks resembling those in Dutch collections in their method of manufacture, but having features not yet documented. In particular, I wanted to have examples of the "red" batiks, about which there are doubts among authors. Finally, I hoped to collect a few cloths in a condition which would provide opportunities for chemical analysis, that is, cloths which

were already in poor condition and in which the removal of small pieces for analysis would not spoil a piece which otherwise was in good condition.

A second aim of the fieldwork was to provide an opportunity for me to place the batiks, their manufacture and use in their social context, and thus to see whether design or motifs could be seen to reflect cultural values and practices in the area which produced them. This would be especially difficult, since a particularly disruptive time had passed since the manufacture of many of the cloths, and social behaviour, class systems and so on may well have changed in the meantime. Nonetheless, fieldwork provided the most likely opportunity for me to reach some kind of understanding of the world view of the people who had produced the cloths. In order to do this, I interviewed local people to acquire oral history data relating to textile production and use. Another objective of my fieldwork was to observe and record contemporary manufacturing practices and uses.

My chief period of fieldwork took place from April 1995 to October 1995 in the batik-making village of Olak Kemang. This village was chosen partly because it was one of the group of villages on the north side of the River Batanghari, opposite the city of Jambi, which had been visited by Tassilo Adam. It emerged during the course of my research that this area was not the only part of Jambi where batik had been produced. The family I stayed with had been making batik since shortly after Indonesian independence, and the household head, Ibu Asmah, now sadly deceased, had been largely responsible for keeping the craft alive from that time until official interest in the revival of batik-making in Jambi in the late 1970s.<sup>3</sup> Her daughter, Ibu Azmiah, had taught me how to make batik during my stay in Jambi from 1989-91. During my fieldwork stay I was able to observe and record both in writing and on video details of batik-making as currently practised by Azmiah and her family, and they showed me some processes rarely used nowadays, such as dyeing with indigo and with sappan wood. People from about 40 families involved in batik-making in Olak Kemang and five other of the surrounding villages were interviewed. Follow-up visits were made in June/July 1996 and November/December 1996.

In addition, I made a journey along the north coast of Java in July 1995, visiting

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<sup>3</sup> See article in Kompas 22.5.94, page15.

batik-making enterprises in Indramayu, Cirebon, Pekalongan, Lasem and Kerek. This gave me an opportunity to compare practices and products from north coast Java and Jambi. I had also visited Madura in December 1993 for a similar purpose. In March 1997 I went to Ahmedabad in Gujarat, India, to learn more about mordant printing, and to seek expert technical opinions from the National Institute of Design on how the printed batiks might have been produced.

#### 4. Laboratory analysis

In November 1995 I sought the aid of Hull University's School of Chemistry in order to try to establish what dyes had been used in the older textiles believed to have come from Jambi, hoping that this might shed some light on their origins. Professor Townshend suggested that the analysis might be suitable as a project for a final year student, and Gavin Long agreed to undertake it. Samples of dyestuffs and small pieces of textile were analysed. The tests were carried out, using UV detection, and a report was made in June 1996. However, the technique employed proved insufficiently sophisticated to provide a match between samples and dyestuffs.

In February 1997 Textile Research Associates in York analysed another set of textile samples from cloths obtained in Jambi to identify the natural dyes used. In addition, they examined the twist of the yarns used, the selvedge construction and the thread counts of eleven cloths. The results of these tests were more useful but still not entirely satisfactory (see Chapter Eight pages 157-160).

#### 5. Problems

The main problems in my research were to do with language. Much of the written data I needed to consider was written in Dutch, in particular the five Goslings articles on Jambi batik and the three on the question of Palembang batik. I also used Tideman's report on Jambi, based on the reports of Dutch officials during the period of Dutch occupation, and Veth's 1881 report on the Dutch geographical expedition to Central Sumatra of 1877/9. In addition, for historical background I needed to refer to the Dagh Register of the V.O.C. and to Elsbeth Locher-Scholten's 1993 monograph on the relations between Jambi and Batavia



between 1830 and 1907. It was necessary to consult the standard reference works on Javanese batik, written in Dutch by Rouffaer (1914) and Jasper and Pirngadie (1916). There was considerable difficulty in obtaining some of these texts. In particular, it proved impossible to obtain a copy of Heyne's "De nuttige planten van Nederlandsche-Indie" (1927), which would have provided valuable information on Indonesian dye plants. More generally, since I had no knowledge of Dutch when I started, reading texts in Dutch was both difficult and time-consuming, especially during the early stages.

I also needed to refer to a range of texts in the Indonesian language (Bahasa Indonesia). This presented less difficulty, since I had received six weeks' training in Bahasa Indonesia in February and March 1989 prior to starting work at Jambi University. Between 1989 and 1991 I had attempted to explore Jambi's history through the small number of books available in the regional library in Jambi, so I had some practice already at grappling with the written language.

Studying the motifs and designs of the calligraphy cloths presented another set of problems. I was unable to read Arabic script myself, and since the script in the cloths had frequently been formed into unusual arrangements, not even people familiar with Arabic could easily decipher the texts. I relied on the help of one of my former students, who translated some of the texts for me, sometimes with the help of his father. Even so, the nuances of meaning conveyed by the visual puns and suchlike contained in some of the designs which would be appreciated by a Muslim familiar with this type of use of Arabic script have almost certainly escaped me.

In connection with this difficulty was the more fundamental problem of reaching some degree of understanding of artistic and aesthetic perceptions in Jambi. These perceptions are shaped by a cultural conceptual framework which has developed from a way of life and a religious belief system about which I knew little before I arrived in Jambi.

The language spoken in Olak Kemang is referred to locally as Bahasa Jambi, or sometimes Bahasa Melayu. Although Bahasa Indonesia is based on Malay, the language spoken in Olak Kemang is a dialect, which differs to a considerable

degree in terms of vocabulary, accent and inflections. My training in Bahasa Indonesia was a help, but although I had lived in Jambi from March 1989 to January 1991 I had had little opportunity to develop skills in the local language. During the fieldwork periods I frequently had difficulty in understanding some of the older informants. In order to overcome this, for some of my research visits I was accompanied by Abdul Hamid and M. Nasir, two of my former students, who were able to help with interpreting and translation to some degree. However, even for them, some of the archaic language spoken during ceremonies, for example, presented considerable difficulties.

My age, gender and status as a foreigner must have affected my access to information and the range of attitudes to which I was exposed. In the main, being female was probably an advantage, since textile production and ritual preparations are part of the female domain. Nevertheless, my perceptions of Jambi society are likely to be coloured by the way I was absorbed into the female, rather than the male groups. Even so, as a guest I was protected from exposure to what my hosts regarded as unfavourable experiences, and it was impossible to participate fully in village life for this reason.

My access to information about the role of Islam in people's lives is another dimension which was also limited by the circumstances in which I lived. Expressions of interest in Islam were likely to be interpreted as opportunities for local people to try to convert me, so that I had to be careful about the questions I asked and the people I approached. In some ways more sensitive were questions about beliefs which were not part of the orthodox Islam preached at the mosque. Those who were aware of contradictions between the teachings of Islam and their own practices in relation to supernatural spirits were reluctant to discuss these matters with me. There were also a variety of different interpretations of traditional behaviour within the village. The family in whose house I stayed for the main period of my fieldwork were relatively highly educated and regarded themselves as very modern and rational in their outlook compared with most of their neighbours. Although they retained more traditional knowledge about batik-making than any other family, unlike most other village families they had discarded much other traditional behaviour in relation to such events as childbirth, name-giving ceremonies and so on. It was thus some time before I

became aware of many of the older social patterns and beliefs which later appeared to resonate with textile design and use.

## B. Batik

### 6. Batik as a Javanese art.

Batik is usually defined by Indonesian specialists as the art of decorating fabric by applying a dye-resistant material, usually wax, either by means of a stamp or a *canting*<sup>4</sup> to the surface of a cloth, then immersing the cloth in a dyebath. Those parts where the wax has penetrated are protected from the dye, leaving a pattern or design on the cloth. The process may be repeated several times using different colours before the wax is removed.<sup>5</sup>

Cloths produced using this type of resist technique have been found in many parts of the world, from Russian Turkestan to China, India and Japan (see Steinmann 1947b). However the place most commonly associated with batik, and where the art has probably reached its most sophisticated form, is Java, and batik is widely regarded as a “specifically Javanese” craft (Van der Kraan 1996:39). Although wax-resist patterning is still practised in other parts of Indonesia, and indeed in other countries and continents, studies of Javanese batik have dominated scholarly interest in textiles made using this technique (Jasper and Pirngadie 1916; Loeber 1926; Tirtaamidjaja 1966). Batik from other centres from less well-known centres has been largely ignored. Jambi, in Sumatra, is one such place.

One result of this focus on Java has been that many writers and scholars have found it hard to believe that batik was ever made in Jambi. Rouffaer and Juynboll during research for their definitive account of the art of batik as practised in Java in the early years of this century came across a reference in Yule and Burnell (1886:115/6) as follows: “In Java and Sumatra chintzes of a very peculiar kind of marbled pattern are still manufactured by women, under the name of batik”. However, they added a note in their own account to the effect that the writer must surely have meant Java alone (1914: 418). In more recent times, Inger McCabe Elliott has written that: “One type of Muslim-inspired batik is known as “Jambi” because it was exported from the north coast [of Java] to Palembang, the

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<sup>4</sup> A small pen-like instrument consisting of a bamboo handle attached to a metal bowl into which hot wax is scooped up. The wax is allowed to flow out through a small spout to produce lines on the cloth.

<sup>5</sup> The word ‘batik’ is used more loosely by the lay person in Indonesia, and any fabric with a colourful design applied to its surface may be referred to as a batik cloth.

capital of the Sumatran province of Jambi<sup>6</sup> " (1984:137). Similar confusion about Jambi's whereabouts is shown by Langewis (1964:16): "It is true that the tjanting batik method is also [i.e. in addition to Java and Madura] employed in Djambi, in South-west Sumatra, but this technique and many of the patterns used were imported from Java." Cataloguers at the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe have an entry for a batik headcloth from Sumatra, "Djambu" with the word "Java?" added afterwards, clearly unaware of the existence of batik in Jambi (Accession number 2326). Cataloguers of a group of textiles obtained in Palembang in the 1930s as Jambi cloths and donated to the Leiden Museum have their origin given as Jambi, but the cataloguer has referred in the notes to Goslings' articles and Philipsen's conclusion that Jambi batiks came from East Java.

This ignorance of the existence of batik has continued in recent decades, reflecting Jambi's position as something of a backwater in Indonesia, economically relatively unimportant compared with other provinces, and off the track beaten by tourists and other foreign visitors. In 1981 Warming and Gaworski reported erroneously that batik had not been produced in Jambi for many years (1981:146).<sup>7</sup> However, there is one earlier Dutch reference which reads: "The batik art here [in Jambi] has not disappeared, on the contrary the old art industry has had new life breathed into it in recent years and very fine batiks are made" (Van der Werff 1974:50). Indonesian studies have also tended to ignore Jambi batiks. Tirtaamidjaja makes no mention of Jambi in his text, although one cloth illustrated is captioned as "seledang Jambi" (sic) (1966: Plate 91). Susanto's extensive survey of the techniques and designs of Indonesian batik, which was published in 1980 by the BPBK (Balai Penelitian Batik dan Kerajinan), the body set up to improve and develop batik techniques in Indonesia, makes no mention of Jambi.

Java-centrist views have also reinforced early acceptance of two suggestions that Jambi batiks may be merely an offshoot of Javanese batik, despite the fact that both of the early accounts cast doubt on the authenticity of the story which gave

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<sup>6</sup> The city of Jambi is, in fact, the capital of the province of Jambi, and Palembang is the capital of South Sumatra.

<sup>7</sup> In fact, the practice of batik-making was still alive in Jambi, and shortly afterwards experienced a considerable revival.

rise to the theory (Goslings 1927/8; Philipsen 1945).<sup>8</sup> Joseph Fischer's catalogue to an exhibition of Indonesian textiles at the University Art Museum, Berkeley in 1979 illustrates on its cover a batik from Jambi, but states that "batiks from Sumatra are uncommon and are probably no longer made. They represent traditions transplanted from Java...." (Fischer 1979: frontispiece). An exhibition catalogue from the Indonesian Ethnographic Museum in Delft (Van der Werff 1974:50) has a reference to Jambi batiks probably based on Goslings: "The art of batik in Jambi was probably introduced from Java in the second half of the nineteenth century. The cloths are of two-sided batik, just as in Java, and contain motifs which are derived from Javanese batiks..." Gittinger also accepts without question that batik was brought to the east coast of Sumatra by Javanese immigrants (Gittinger 1979:110). Irwin and Murphy's catalogue of batiks held in the Victoria and Albert Museum is more precise, suggesting that it is the *canting* which was carried by Javanese immigrants to "some other islands of the Indonesian archipelago, including Sumatra"(1969:6). Interestingly, Holmgren and Spertus suggest that Jambi batik is derived not from Javanese practices, but from Indian chintzes (Holmgren & Spertus 1991:70). Only Heringa (1994a:26) suggests that the batik art discovered by the Dutch in the twenties may represent an older Indonesian tradition, not wholly derived from a Javanese model.

There is also a tendency to apply Javanese terms to the descriptions of Jambi batik, presumably because no-one had done fieldwork there. Thus Steinmann, (1947b:2104): " A geometrical design, the *tjeplokkan* (see illustration on page 2113), is the most favoured and most common patterning of the older Sumatra batiks." The term "tjeplokkan" is not used in Jambi. In Javanese batik it refers to a type of pattern with different characteristics from those in Jambi batiks.

## 7. The word "batik"

Examination of the etymology of the word "batik" has been called into service to support the idea of a Javanese origin for the technique. For example, Krevitsky writes: "The Malaysian word "batik" is the term most commonly applied to this resist process, since it is in Java that this art form was most extensively developed and has been continually practiced (sic) on a large scale" (1964:7).

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<sup>8</sup> See Holmgren & Spertus (1980), who likewise found in their study of Lampung textiles that Java-centrist assumptions have been made about influence.

There are two fundamental problems with this notion, however, one being that the earliest written use of the word does not occur until the seventeenth century, so that identification of the word as Javanese would not lend much weight to the theory of a Javanese origin for batik. The second problem is that although the verb *mbatik* is used in modern Javanese it is unlikely that the word has a Javanese root. As Larsen points out (1976:77): "Surprisingly, the word batik does not seem to belong to the Old Javanese language. Batik, and its various verb forms, *mbatik* in modern Javanese and *membatik* in Indonesian, are therefore probably of fairly recent origin."

Examining the form of the word in more detail, he writes: "The origin of the word 'batik' is not particularly clear. It probably relates to the word *titik*, which, in modern Javanese, Indonesian and Malay is a general word for point, dot or drop. The root *tik* also refers onomatopoeically to ticking or tapping sounds like those of a watch or typewriter. Several verb forms derived from the same root relate to marking with spots or dots, sprinkling, giving an identifying mark, and in a wider sense, to drawing, painting, and writing. Tik also occurs in words denoting cloths ornamented with dots (e.g. *tritik*) and in the names of batik patterns which imitate cloth weave (e.g. *nitik*, *klitik*)."

It may be that the word has a Malay derivation, as Abdullah bin Mohamaed suggests (1990:13). The seventeenth century reference to "batick" was in a Dutch bill of lading of 1641 "describing polychrome textiles shipped on a sailing vessel from Bataavia to Bengkulu on Sumatra's west coast" where Malay was and is still spoken (Gittinger 1979:16 quoting Loeber 1926:85). Cloths were usually referred to in bills of lading by the name under which they were known at the place of destination. If the root is "tik", then a Malay derivation makes sense. "Ba" is the Central Sumatran Malay prefix now rendered in modern Indonesian as "ber". Thus "batabur", which in standard Indonesian would be "bertabur" in Sumatran Malay means "scattered". Batik could thus derive from ba+tik meaning "spotted" or "dotted"; *membatik* would then mean "to dot" as a variant of a notional "membertik".

## 8. The origins of batik

It is unlikely that it will ever be established where batik originated, or whether in fact it sprang up independently in several different places. Adam (1934:3) says that batik was practised by the early Sumerians, Egyptians and later Peruvians. Steinmann (1947b:2102) discusses the origin and spread of batik, questioning whether it may have been brought to the Malay archipelago from the mainland of Asia or whether it was, in fact, indigenous.

In 1972, Alfred Bühler's important work on the subject of the origins of batik, ikat and pelangi was published. Following Bühler, Jack Larsen discussed early evidence from the Middle East, India, Central Asia, China and Japan. "The most important documents of batik in the Far East are preserved in Japan at Nara, in the Shoso-in Repository of Imperial Treasures. They prove that batik was known in Japan, even if imported from China or made by emigrant Chinese artists, in the Nara period (A.D. 710-794). At this time Japan was in close contact with and much influenced by the artistic life of the Tang Dynasty. These batiks rokechi, are all of silk, although in different weaves. Apparently the wax resist was sometimes freehand, sometimes applied with blocks or possibly stencils."(1976:84)

Larsen expresses the view that batik originated among the non-Chinese peoples in the south and south-west of China such as the Miao (Hmong). The Chinese may then have taken the technique over and refined it. "From China, silk batiks were exported to Japan, Central Asia, the Middle East and India. Together with the trade of fabrics went the diffusion of the technique. In India it was taken over for cotton cloths. The same may have happened in the Caucasus, certainly a very old secondary center, which may have given birth to the old batik centers of the Middle East." (1976:85) This theory seems to me the most plausible in explaining the dispersal of batik in Asia, and batik techniques may well have been introduced from China to coastal regions of Java and other parts of the Indonesian archipelago. However, the existence of batik-type resist techniques in Peru suggests that the technique may also have arisen independently in a number of different regions where appropriate materials were available.



## 9. Origins of batik in Indonesia

Early speculation about the origins of batik in Indonesia was probably not based on textual evidence, but on assumptions based on evidence of other types of cultural influence. Adam (1934:59/60) suggests: "The art of batik was developed through foreign influence, especially that of India. The first invasion of Java by Hindus took place in the third century A.D., and in the tenth century Java and many other islands of the Malay archipelago were under Hindu rulers. It is not strange, therefore, that Hinduism, at that time at its height, strongly influenced the native art of Java." Varadarajan (1982:37), writing from an Indian perspective, argues that the techniques, materials and tools used in Indonesian batik are so different from those used in Indian chintz that "it appears unlikely that the art could have been carried from India to Indonesia." Krevitsky (1964:8) states that "batiks have been made continuously in Java since the technique was introduced from either Persia or India, probably in the twelfth century", but gives no evidence to support this view. Tirtaamidjaja (1966:17) is strongly of the opinion that batik is "an extremely old native Indonesian art, scarcely affected at all by outside influences". Later writers cite various written references to support their contention that batik-making in Java existed in the twelfth century, when some cloths were referred to as "tulis". The word today is often used to refer to batik on which the wax has been hand-drawn rather than block-printed. In the twelfth century, however, it might equally well have applied to painted cloth, and Christie suggests that "tulis" might have referred to three separate techniques of applying colour to textiles after they were woven, one clearly referring to *prada*. She suggests that although there is no clear indication that either of the other two was a resist technique, the "tulis warnna" referred to in the twelfth and later centuries might have referred to a technique ancestral to modern batik (Christie 1993:192/3).

Christie's analysis of references to textile work in Javanese *misra* lists of the tenth century concludes that the process by which most Javanese households of the time produced patterning in their cloth was by means of tie-dyeing the yarn before weaving: nowadays referred to as *ikat*, but then as *apus*. However, fragments of Indian export cloth dating from the fifteenth century have been found in which drawn or painted resist-dyeing processes have been used, and if

this process was in use in earlier times then the term *tulis* might have been used in Java to refer to such cloths.<sup>9</sup> Christie argues that cloths depicted on Javanese statuary from this period probably represented locally made cloths inspired by Indian imports. Jambi was at that time also heavily influenced by India, and there is no reason to suppose that a similar influence could not have occurred there.

Christie notes that two of the most well-known dyes used in recent times in Javanese batik (*Peltophorum pterocarpum* for the characteristic soga-brown of Central Javanese batik and *Cudrania javanensis* for yellow) are not mentioned in the *misra* lists in the early tenth century, although a great many other natural dyestuffs used until recently are. Tirtaamidjaja mentions that both the dyestuff used to produce soga and the wax used to resist the dye on Java have been imported from outer islands, though he does not go on to consider that this might be evidence that the batik technique did not originate in Java (1966:17).

Other writers believe that batik is a much more recent introduction to Java. Justine Boow (1988:28) suggests that "batik textile finishing was developed as an (eventually highly successful) attempt to produce trade textiles to compete with India trade cloths after the trade in imported Indian textiles became the monopoly of the Dutch East India Company" (i.e. during the seventeenth century) although "Java was producing textiles for trade before the earliest European contacts". A description of Tuban from the Journal of the second Dutch Voyage to the Indies makes it clear that locally produced cloth formed part of the textile cargoes exported to other islands in the archipelago and exchanged for spices (Schrieke 1966 Vol 1:20).

Boow also refers to Javanese folk traditions about the arrival of batik: north coast legends associate the development of batik as a Javanese trade textile with the spread of Islam in the region. Sen observed that in the seventeenth century, textiles constituted the "principal medium of exchange" for the trade of South East Asia with the outside world (Sen 1962:92). Guy also highlights the "central role played by Indian textiles in lubricating the wheels of the Southeast Asian spice trade" at the beginning of the seventeenth century as revealed in the report of Jan Pieterzoon Coen to the V.O.C. in 1619 (Guy 1989:48). In 1656 Rijkloff van

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<sup>9</sup> See Gittinger 1982:37,38,42.

Goens (the elder), head of five V.O.C. diplomatic missions to Mataram (cited in Rouffaer 1904:16), described thousands of female workers (he called them slaves) employed in "painting on cloth" and other crafts within the kraton of Central Java.

Alfons van der Kraan says that batikting was almost exclusively practised in the households of chiefs until the early nineteenth century and the rising flood into Java of European cotton goods, when it made its way into the villages to become a truly popular craft. "In the early 1820s the British already decided that it was easiest simply to import bleached cambrics and let the Javanese batik them in the colours, designs and patterns they preferred" (1996:60).

Mijer (1919:24/5) refers to the first examples of Javanese batik brought to the Netherlands: "It [batik] was brought {to Holland} by Dutch traders from Java in the middle of the seventeenth century.<sup>10</sup> It was not, however, received very enthusiastically and the commercial failure that followed the importation of some 2000 pieces (which were finally sold at auction, as no market could be found for them through regular channels) did not encourage traders in their efforts to popularise batiks."

In addition to wax batik, dyeing using simpler resist materials occurs elsewhere in Indonesia. These other examples include the *sarita* of Sulawesi, ritual cloths in which rice paste resist techniques are used to decorate cloths used as ritual objects by the Torajans (see Nooy-Palm 1980). Another example is the *kain simbut* of Banten, West Java, where rice paste was employed to decorate cloths used for similar purposes (see Veldhuisen-Djajasoebata 1984:48-52). These instances are widely regarded as vestiges of a forerunner of modern batik, from which wax batik may have derived, and this theory seems plausible. It is possible that the *canting*, which made possible the finer batik work so strongly associated in the literature with Java, was not invented until the eighteenth century. The word is not found in Old or Middle Javanese (Christie 1993:192).

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<sup>10</sup> It may be that Mijer means to refer to the eighteenth century rather than the seventeenth, given the remarks which follow.

## 10. Existing studies of batik.

The first description of batik in Java to be published in Europe was contained in Raffles' two-volume *History of Java* (1817), which includes illustrations of batik as costume as well as an account of the batik process. Raffles also collected samples of cloth at various stages of the process and some completed cloths to send back to England. Unfortunately, his collection was lost at sea, and only two cloths believed to have been sent home by Raffles at a later date survive. These are now held in the Museum of Mankind, London (Accession nos. 1939.AS 4.119 and 1939.AS.4.120).

Subsequent studies of Javanese batik have tended to be unrepresentative of the work produced on the island for a number of reasons. One is the early preoccupation with court styles in works such as Rouffaer and Juynboll's *De Batikkunst in Nederlandsch-Indie en Haar Geschiedenis* (1914) and Jasper and Pirngadie's volume on batik in their five volume work *De Inlandsche Kunst-Nijverheid in Nederlandsch-Indie* (1916). The reference to art (*kunst*) in the titles of these two works gives an indication of their approach. Production by village people in the countryside for their own use is touched on relatively briefly, and it is generally presented as an inferior version of the court batik.

A new approach to the study of batik was introduced in 1970, when an attempt was made to explore meanings in some of the patterns of classical court batik in a Javanese context, linking them to the art of temple compounds and suggesting that the designs represent sanctuary scenes (Adams 1970). Adams rejected the idea that Javanese motifs were degenerated versions of Indian forms, suggesting instead that Indonesian preferences had transformed them into new designs. Adams' work on Javanese batik was followed by other studies building on the idea of relating the patterns found in court batiks to other Javanese cultural forms, such as the wayang, and to Hindu-Javanese concepts such as the mountain Meru (Solyom & Solyom and Veldhuisen-Djajsoebrata in Gittinger 1980). Danielle Geirnaert-Martin's structural analysis of textiles and classifications in Java suggests that batik depicts the travel of the soul through the cosmos, including reincarnation and matrimonial union between male and female (1983). The symbolic meaning of colour in batik has been explored in relation to

central Javanese textiles (Veldhuisen-Djajasoebata 1984); colour combinations in Javanese kemben (Djoemena 1990); and stages in the life cycle in an East Javanese village (Heringa 1989b). The use of batik designs to express status in Central Javanese courts, a subject raised in earlier works, was researched in depth by Justine Boow (1988).

Since the seventies, symbolic anthropology has come to dominate studies of South-East Asian textiles. There is a case, however, for saying that such approaches are becoming increasingly inappropriate as South-East Asian societies change and adapt. Globalisation and modernisation are encouraging the production and use of textiles which owe more to western technology and economic organisation than to indigenous culture. Tourism is also affecting the nature of much of the batik production in Indonesia. Textiles often play a central part in the industrialisation process in newly-industrializing countries, partly because of the huge guaranteed home market, and partly because technological improvements can speed up production enormously. In the latter half of this century, economists have made studies of this transition in South-East Asian countries. Ingrid Palmer's 1972 study of the development of the Indonesian textile industry focussed on woven textiles and their role in Indonesia's economy under the New Order. Hal Hill's more recent monograph also deals with the textile industry at a macro-economic level (1992). More recently, development analysts have started to look at development in the textile industry at grass roots level, both in economic terms, analysing the transition from subsistence to petty commodity production to factory-based production, and in terms of individual livelihoods. Rebecca Joseph's work on Diffused Batik Production in Central Java adopts such an approach, while retaining some anthropological perspectives (1987a). Her study for the Population Council examines the gender implications at a similar level (1987b).

Central Javanese batik has maintained its place as the most prestigious of Indonesian textiles, and Javanese dominance in the archipelago since independence has led to the adoption of a version of central Javanese costume in a modernised version as a form of Indonesian national dress.

## 11. Javanese predominance in museum collections

Collections of Indonesian textiles in European museums consist mainly of Javanese examples, and while this probably reflects accurately the comparatively large quantities of batik produced in Java, other factors are at work.

One reason for the preponderance of Javanese batiks in European museum collections probably has to do with notions of art and aesthetics. The products of the Central Javanese courts were considered to be far more refined than the textiles produced by other groups in the Indies, and they were therefore more sought after. The emphasis on batik was probably also to do with Dutch textile production. Many Dutch factories attempted to imitate batik because of the large potential market and because of its apparent suitability for factory manufacture as compared with the types of woven fabric worn by small populations on the other islands (see Heringa 1989a). Examples of the local product were brought back to Holland so that Dutch designers could copy the colours and motifs suitable for the market. One Dutch company, Vlisco, has a collection of over two thousand batiks in its private collection, brought back for this purpose.

In museums, textile collections often reflect colonial experience: most of the Indonesian textiles in Museum collections are in the Netherlands. Niessen (1991) describes three stages in the establishment of Dutch museums. The first, in the early nineteenth century, revolved around museums built by benefactors with intellectual interests in arts and sciences. This period saw a wave of museums spring up throughout Europe. Niessen gives several examples, of which the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences (1836) was the earliest. The museum brought together objects of scientific interest from the Dutch East Indies, and the type of objects collected reflected the prevailing interest in evolutionary theory as applied to the races of mankind. The origin and development of man was a theme to explore via the artefacts produced at different stages of the evolutionary process, and different peoples in the East Indies were thought to represent these different stages. The Javanese, with their elaborate courts and highly developed arts, were considered to be relatively high up the evolutionary scale compared with peoples whose cultures differed rather more from the European model. However, examples of artefacts were required from all stages of evolution, as

they were thought to be, and in any case, the Malays were generally regarded as being reasonably high up the evolutionary ladder. The dearth of material from Jambi has another explanation.

During the early nineteenth century Jambi was not under Dutch control, and there was considerable hostility towards Dutch presence.<sup>11</sup> An American traveller in the region, J. Walter Gibson, was told in Palembang in 1851 by a Dutch infantry captain that although the Dutch Government referred to the Jambi sultan as a vassal, "not one of our people dare set foot within the dominions of his Jambee Highness" (Gibson 1856:146). Thirty years later Van Hasselt reported that although the region was looked upon as a dependency of the Province administered by the Resident of Palembang, with a sultan who was a nominee of the Netherlands India Government, in fact Jambi was in 1877 "as much unknown to us as Central Africa was to our fathers" (Van Hasselt 1884:42). Thus, while Niessen (1991:133) records that 214 Batak textiles were acquired by European museums prior to 1890, I have so far found no record of any Jambi batiks dating from this period or before, and only two textiles at all from Jambi. These were probably collected on the Central Sumatra expedition of 1877-9 and are now in the collection of the Leiden Ethnographic Museum. The difficulties faced by the Central Sumatra expedition (1877-9) as described by van Hasselt, and Forbes' failure two years later to penetrate into Jambi do much to explain the absence of Jambi textiles from European collections.<sup>12</sup>

Another difficulty may be to do with the fact that Jambi was originally administered by the Dutch as part of the Palembang residency. Jambi cloths may therefore have been catalogued as coming from Palembang. Philipsen, mentioning in 1945 a piece of *songket* kept by the Educational Museum in Den Haag, and doubting the existence of *songket* in Jambi, suggests that it may have been wrongly catalogued (Philipsen 1945:119). This may have been so, but it is interesting that the piece can no longer be traced. It may well be that a curator has reassigned the cloth, not knowing that *songket* was indeed made in Jambi well

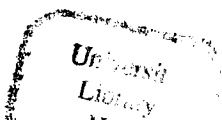
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<sup>11</sup> Relations between Jambi and the Dutch between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries are discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>12</sup> Forbes was advised "not to attempt to enter without the mandate of the Sultan, meaning not the Sultan recognised by the Dutch Government, but the previous deposed ruler, who had taken up his court in the interior of the country and whom all the Djambi people recognised. This was very disappointing, but I fared no worse than the Dutch Mid-Sumatra Expedition, which, two years before, had been advised to turn back at that same place" (Forbes 1885:253).

into the twentieth century. Records of the origins of cloths in museums are often misleading for a number of reasons. For example, where the system requires an entry under the heading "origin" (or "herkomst" in Dutch), the curator has often simply written a place name, with no explanation as to whether this was the place where the item was collected, or where it was made. In many cases, the place name given may represent the opinion of the curator as to the cloth's origin, and there may be little factual evidence to support this opinion. Thus, if a cloth resembles one with a designated provenance in an existing collection, the curator may assume that the more recent acquisition comes from the same place. It is useful to have such an opinion, but if records do not make clear that it is only an opinion, history can be distorted. Items from less well-known places may be assigned to larger, already documented centres of textile production, leaving the impression that only in these large centres were textiles made.

The doubts and uncertainties which have surrounded references to Jambi textiles relate both to Jambi's status as a relatively unknown and problematic part of the Dutch East Indies and to its trade relationship with other areas, which have led commentators to suspect that Jambi's textiles are all imported or at the very least copied from textiles from other areas. In order to remove or at least attempt to clarify some of these doubts, it is necessary first to examine the historical context in which textiles were used in Jambi.





## CHAPTER TWO

### Jambi History

River and sea transport have, since earliest times, played a key part in Jambi's role in terms of its trade and relations with other states, so that although in recent times it has been relatively isolated as a result of its underdeveloped road system and the deficiencies of its flimsy bridges, the area was once the centre of a thriving maritime trade. As with many other Malay states, the Jambi ruler's wealth was founded on control of upstream and downstream trade, and the shape and extent of his dominion was determined by the course of the Batanghari River and its tributaries (see Bronson 1977). Forest products, pepper and gold were brought down the river and traded to merchants from east and west. In exchange, metal goods, salt and rice were among the imports destined for the interior. A key item in this trade was textiles, highly valued as imports in Jambi, both for supplying the need of the ruler for luxury clothing, and for providing upstream subjects with less sumptuous but also highly desirable cloths. The patterns of trade and interaction with overseas states must have influenced taste in Jambi. To examine the types of influence at work it is necessary to consider international relations in the region from earliest times.

#### 1. The first Malay kingdom

The Jambi region was the site of the pre-Islamic kingdom of Melayu, of which the earliest clear written reference occurs in the Chinese annals of the Tang dynasty, in connection with an embassy which offered the products of the country to the Chinese court in A.D. 644 or the beginning of 645 (Ferrand 1922:157/8). A stone inscription at Karang Berahi on the Batanghari River curses anyone hostile to the Datu of Sriwijaya, suggesting that Sriwijaya and Melayu were linked at that time. The inscription is identical to one of A.D. 686 found at Kota Kapur in Bangka Island, except that the Bangka inscription bears an additional sentence stating that when the stone was inscribed the Sriwijayan army had just set off on an expedition to Bhumi Jawa (Java), which was not obedient to Sriwijaya (Suleiman 1976:3).

Around about the same time, Arab accounts from the time of the rule of Khalifah Muawiyah (661-681) mention a state called Zabag, or Zabaj, as being the largest pepper port in southern Sumatra (quoted in Nazir 1980/81:12). Tibbetts (1979:100) says that the name is "inextricably mixed up with the name of the ruler, the Maharaja and his empire, although the term Zabaj does not seem to be the exact equivalent of this empire." Scholars are divided over the exact location of Zabag, although many equate it with Sriwijaya. Abu Zaid (c. A.D. 916) calls Zabaj both a town and an island, and says that among the states ruled by the Maharaja of Zabaj was the isle of Sribuza (identified by some scholars as Sumatra) measuring 400 square parasangs<sup>1</sup>. M.Nazir suggests that Zabag may correspond with Muara Sabak, the port at the mouth of the Batanghari river in Tanjung Jabung (Nazir 1980/1:12). Whether or not Jambi was ever the seat of power of the Zabag empire, it was certainly a place of some importance from at least the 7th century A.D., with contacts stretching as far as China and the Arab world.

The writings of I-Tsing, a Buddhist priest who travelled from Canton to India in 671 suggest that in the seventh century Jambi had independent status. From Canton he sailed in a ship owned by a Persian merchant to Fo-che (Wijaya) where he spent six months before travelling on to Melayu. He stayed in Melayu for two months, then, in ships belonging to the king of Sriwijaya, he visited Kedah and continued on to the monastery at Nalanda in India where he stayed for ten years, copying and translating Buddhist Sanskrit texts into Chinese (Nilakanta Sastri 1949). That the Sriwijayan king owned ships which travelled to India at that time suggests strongly that the Jambi region was trading with India and it is possible that the Indian influence evident in the textiles may date back as far as the middle of the first millennium or even earlier. Buddhism, too, may have left its mark on Jambi textiles. The Buddhist Vinaya prescribes that monk's robes should be dyed in wood from the jackfruit tree (*Artocarpus heterophylla*). In Jambi a very closely related species, probably *Artocarpus dadah*, is used to dye cotton yellow before the pattern is waxed in.

## 2. The Melayu-Sriwijayan period

In 689, after a short voyage to Canton, from where he fetched four collaborators,

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<sup>1</sup> Coedes (1964) says in a note that one parasang = 6 and a quarter kilometres.

I-Tsing returned to Fo-che and wrote his two books on the Buddhist pilgrims and the Buddhist religion of his time. It is during this stay that he notes that Melayu "is now the country of Sriwijaya", an ambiguous statement which has been interpreted in various ways by historians. Nilakanta Sastri's analysis is that Sriwijaya had given up its original abode and migrated bodily to Melayu, changing its name to Sriwijaya. Moens, (quoted by Nilakanta Sastri), also concluded that the original state of Melayu comprised not only the region of Jambi in mid-Sumatra, but included that of Palembang in east Sumatra as well. It is not clear whether I-Tsing's description of the fortified city of Fo-che, where Buddhist monks numbered more than one thousand, applies to the period before its migration to Melayu or afterwards; Nilakanta Sastri thinks the latter is probable (1949:30). If so, Schnitger's suggestion that this was at one time the centre of the maritime empire of Sriwijaya, a suggestion based on his excavation of the extensive temple ruins at Muara Jambi in 1935 and 1936, may be correct (Schnitger 1939/1989:16).

Lt.S.C.Crooke briefly visited Muara Jambi, 26 km downstream from the modern capital, in September 1820 and discovered there what were probably Hindu-Buddhist remains: "time was wanting to search for and examine these remains of antiquity; and nothing was discovered but a mutilated diminutive figure of an elephant, and a full sized head in stone, having curly hair, in the style of a judge's wig and a perfectly Caffre cast of features. This latter is sent with this report"(Anderson 1971/1826:397). Schnitger himself discovered a number of other Buddhist remains including a life-size standing Buddha. Many other recent finds testify to the long-standing existence in Jambi of a Buddhist community with Chinese, Thai and Javanese links, from Tang sherds to a life-size Prajnaparamita image in East Javanese Singosari style, dating from the 13th century (Soekmono 1995:79,81). This figure is dressed in a sarung on which are floral arabesque patterns strongly reminiscent of Jambi batik designs (Fig 2.1).

Archaeological finds in the Seberang village of Olak Kemang, Seberang, confirm trade links with China dating back to the Sung Dynasty (Abu Ridho 1995:204). That there were undoubtedly also connections between Jambi and India in these early times is also clear from archaeological finds, such as a large standing Buddha in the post-Gupta style found at Solok Sipin in the west part of the

present town of Jambi. The Buddha is wearing a type of sarung in what appears to be a very fine, almost transparent material (Fig 2.2). Four large stone makaras were also found there; these would have belonged to the wings of flights of steps of a temple of sizable proportions. The human figures appear to be naked above the waist apart from a necklace and are wearing a kind of dhoti above the knee and anklets (see Fig 2.3). One of the makara bears a date corresponding to 1064 A.D. (Suleiman 1976:3). Further evidence of Indian influence is to be found in some of the customs described by Chau Ju-kua, a Chinese customs official who wrote an account of ports with which China had trading links in the thirteenth century (Hirth & Rockhill 1964). For example, he mentions the custom whereby if anyone in San-fo-tsi were dangerously ill he would distribute his weight in silver among the poor of the land as a means of delaying death. According to Hirth & Rockhill (1964:64 note 11) a similar custom has existed in various parts of India since ancient times.

Previously friendly relations with India were disrupted in 1025 A.D., when the ruler of Coromandel, Rajendracola I, attacked Sriwijaya and her colonies, which at this time included 'Malayur'. The victories were commemorated in an inscription in Tanjore of 1030, but there is no indication of any permanent Chola occupation of Sriwijaya as a whole or in part. Andaya suggests that the longstanding results were slight (1982:27). Around 1068, it seems that Sriwijaya asked the Chola king for help in an attack on Kadaram; Nilakanta Sastri says that friendly relations between Sriwijaya and the Chola empire seem to have been reestablished after this expedition, and that "we have clear evidence of the resumption of peaceful intercourse, commercial and religious, between the two empires" (1949:84). Whether this commercial intercourse included trade in textiles we cannot be sure, but it is likely to have done. Two centuries later, Marco Polo refers to Jambi as regarding itself as a vassal of the Chinese emperor, but with its own king. It seems that forest products were already being traded. Jambi produced sappan wood "in great abundance", as well as another dyestuff, which judging by its description may have been mengkudu (Rhys 1908:344).

Difficulties in tracing Jambi's early history have been exacerbated by the problems of distinguishing between Palembang and Jambi in Chinese references to Sriwijaya (San-fo-tsi). Hirth and Rockhill (1964:63) say that "all Chinese writers

have identified San-fo-tsi with Palembang” but later note that in the Sung-shi it is noted that the style of address to the king of San-fo-tsi was “Chan-pei” or “Jambi”. Jambi was certainly an important state in its own right in 852 and 871 A.D., when it sent missions to the Chinese court (Wang Gungwu 1958:121). Further embassies were sent in 1079 and 1082 (Hirth & Rockhill 1964:65). It would not be appropriate to attempt a resolution of these difficulties here; what is important is to recognise that some writers have tended to identify Sriwijaya almost exclusively with Palembang, and this has led others to overlook Jambi’s international role in trade in the region.

In Chau-Ju Kua’s thirteenth century account of San-fo-tsi he omitted Melayu from the list of its dependencies. The conclusion which Winstedt draws from this omission is “that not Palembang but Malayu or Jambi was now the head of the empire ”(1935:28). Wolters argues that the change of capital had taken place nearly two hundred years previously, between 1079 and 1082 (1970:90). If so, then we can take Chau-Ju Kua’s description as referring to Jambi. He describes San-fo-tsi as lying in the ocean and controlling the straits through which foreigners’ sea traffic must pass. He gives a long list of items traded, including native produce as well as products brought in by Arab traders. These include foreign cotton stuffs, and this reference is the first direct indication that Jambi may have been importing textiles at such an early date. In addition, Chau Ju-kua informs us that in exchange for the products they obtained there, the foreign traders gave gold, silver, porcelain-ware, silk brocades, skeins of silk, silk gauzes and so on. It is likely that the silk yarns and gold and silver threads were used in *songket* (gold thread brocade) and embroidery in the royal court then as they were in wealthier households until the early twentieth century (Hirth & Rockhill 1964:60-61).

Chau Ju-kua gives us little information as to what the ordinary people of San-fo-tsi wore at this time, but does give a brief description of the king: “When the king goes out he sits in a boat; his body has a ‘man-pu’ (sarung) wrapped around it. He is sheltered by a silk umbrella and guarded by men bearing golden lances.” (Hirth and Rockhill 1964:60). These details all accord with traditional custom in Jambi as well as in many other Malay states; until the end of the sultanate in 1904 three of the troops of the royal guard were the bearers of the royal umbrella (*pemayung*) and the bearers of the royal lances (*awin* and *penagan*). Bridegrooms processing

to the bride's house in present-day villages in Seberang, Jambi, royalty for a day, are sheltered under a similar parasol carried by members of their retinue.

### 3. Contacts with Java

In 1286 an image of Buddha Amoghapasalokesvara was sent by Kertanagara, the Singosari ruler, to Sumatra and erected on his orders at Dharmashraya (Nilakanta Sastri 1949:96). This has been taken by some (e.g. Suleiman) as commemoration of a victory against Melayu, but others (e.g. Berg, cited in Hall 1985) suggest it is "evidence of a friendly policy seeking to draw Melayu into an Indonesian confederacy headed by Singosari." Whatever the relations with Java, it seems that Melayu continued its relationship with the Chinese court as before. Yuan dynastic records report a tributary mission to China apparently led by two Muslims from Melayu/Jambi in 1281 (Hall 1985:212), and further embassies were sent in 1299 and 1301. In 1295 Kublai Khan is said to have warned Siam to stop engaging in hostilities against Melayu as they had been doing for many years by then.

After Kertanagara's death, his successor, Wijaya, married a princess from Jambi called Dara Petak (Nilakanta Sastri 1949:96). Her nephew, Adityawarman, probably the son of the Malay ruler, was brought up in what was now the Majapahit kingdom in Java, but around the year 1350 he returned to the Melayu region and (perhaps succeeding his father) took over the government in Dharmashraya, somewhere in the upper reaches of the Batanghari. He would probably have brought with him some customs and influences from the Javanese court, perhaps including dress, but it seems that his intention was to break from Majapahit. He extended his power as far as the Minangkabau lands in the west Sumatran highlands, and moved his base to Pagarruyung, near Padang (Nazir 1980/1). In 1347 Adityawarman erected a monument whose inscription makes no reference to dependence on Java. This huge stone statue, now in the National Museum, Jakarta, was probably erected after a Tantric ritual. It is a portrait of Adityawarman as a Bhairava, wearing a Buddhist hermit's headdress and a garment resembling a short sarung, and carrying a knife. The sarung is decorated with repeated patterns of skulls. The statue depicts Adityawarman standing on a corpse on a pedestal surrounded by skulls. Some years previously,

in 1343, he had erected a statue at the Jago compound in Java, with an inscription in which he is referred to as a descendant of the family of Rajapatni, the Majapahit queen (Suleiman 1976:4). It seems that Adityawarman's break with Majapahit was not recognised in Java: in 1365, Jambi and Palembang are listed among the dependencies of the Majapahit empire by the author of the *Nagarakertagama*, Prapanca, but he refers to them as the "principal ones" among the "numerous islands" obedient to the ruler of Majapahit (Wolters 1970:45).

Evidence of Adityawarman's desire for independence from Java is given in the Chinese annals. Missions had been sent almost annually to China, with tribute including pepper, cloves, cardamom and camphor (Wolters 1970:61). In 1377, although Java considered itself to be overlord of south-east Sumatra, the ruler of Melayu-Jambi asked to become China's vassal. The Chinese emperor agreed to this, not knowing of the Javanese position. Java then prevented the Chinese envoys from reaching Sriwijaya by 'enticing' them to Java, where they were killed. The anger of the Chinese emperor was directed at Sriwijaya for having deceived him and he refused to receive further tribute missions from Melayu-Jambi or Palembang (Andaya 1982:31).

In 1391 Palembang, whose ruler had apparently declared himself independent of Java and overlord of the Malays, was sacked by the Javanese. Ten years later the city was controlled by a Chinese pirate chief. These events marked the fall of Sriwijaya and the beginning of an era when Arab traders took over as the controllers of mercantile trade in the region. It is probably around this period that Islam began to grow as an influential force in east Sumatra.

#### 4. The founding of the Jambi kingdom

After Adityawarman, and until the arrival of European traders, the history of Jambi is only recorded in oral tradition; there are no inscriptions on statues and only the briefest of references in written texts. Stories collected by the Dutch tell of the arrival of a prince from overseas, some say Turkey, and his marriage to a local princess (Mennes 1932:27/8). One of their four children, Orang Kayo Hitam, is regarded as the founder of the Jambi kingdom. He is said to have married an upriver girl. According to legend, the couple were told by the bride's father to

follow a pair of geese downstream. Where the geese settled on the bank for two days and two nights, there the capital of the new kingdom must be built. The geese went ashore at Tanah Pilih, on the south bank of the present-day city of Jambi. Other stories tell of the return of an abandoned Jambi prince from the Thai court to his native Jambi, and of a heroic king who stole a kris from the Javanese Mataram court and brought it back to Jambi (Legenden 1846). These legends give weight and substance to Jambi's relationship with neighbouring kingdoms, and provide a noble and royal context for the arrival of Islam on Jambi's shores. Of textiles they tell us nothing except to suggest the importance accorded in more recent times to outside influences from Java, Thailand, Turkey and the country of Minangkabau.

During this period, the part played by textiles in social life is uncertain, but it seems likely that imports were already valued in upstream communities. Adat law describes the trade or tribute relations between the king and the people of the interior as one of reciprocal exchange. The king supplied his subjects with rice, metal tools, salt and cloth; in exchange they must send down forest products such as gums and resins, ivory, rhinoceros horn and dragon's blood (A. Mukty Nasruddin 1989:122). The indigenous forest-dwellers, the Kubu people, still operate a system whereby they barter goods, including imported textiles, from Malays whom they supply in return with forest products including rattan and *jerenang* (dragon's blood). They refer to their Malay contact as the 'jenang', the term formerly used under the Jambinese sultanate for the functionaries who dealt with the collection of upstream tribute of this kind. Trade textiles also retain a central importance in Kubu society, where there is no indigenous textile production, and where fines, measured in standard units of cloth, are imposed for a range of transgressions (Sandbukt 1988:126). The importance of these cloths is shown when someone of importance dies: members of the community are assigned to guard the deceased's hut in which valuables such as sarungs have been kept. The cloths are then purified with smoke to preserve them (Regional Government Report 1994).

## 5. Portuguese involvement

The first European account of Jambi comes from the Portuguese writer, Tome



Pires, who gives an account of Jambi in his *Suma Oriental*, written around 1515 (Pires 1944). He suggests that Jambi at this time came under the sway of Malacca: "This country (Jamby) has no king nor mandarin. It is a country which is obedient to Malacca as a tributary." He also relates, however, that the "Javanese Moors" took Jambi after they had conquered Palembang, and that the kings were replaced by "pates", as the Javanese termed them, with civil and criminal jurisdiction over all their subjects. Jambi was "under Pate Rodim, lord of Demak"(Pires 1944 Vol I:153).

Jambi was of interest to the Portuguese for its trade, and Pires mentions that it produced "apothecary's lignaloes" and gold, as well as similar merchandise to that of Tungkal and Indragiri, and "enough foodstuffs for itself and others". Jambi was trading with Malacca at this time, where a thriving trade in Indian cloth was being carried out with both Gujarat on the west coast (from where Pires says thirty kinds of cloth were being supplied) and Coromandel in the south east. From Pulicat also came thirty kinds of cloths, "rich cloths of great value" (ibid:268). It seems reasonable to suppose, then, that Jambi was importing such cloths.

It is likely also that home-produced cloths would be affected by Indian influence. Alfred Bühler (1959) points out that there are clear comparisons to be made between Gujarati patola designs and those found in the weft-ikat textile patterns on what he describes as silk "tjindes" from south-eastern Sumatra, including those from Jambi.<sup>2</sup> However, he also points out that the cotton wax-resist prints from Jambi do not show such influence (1959:15) and it may be that the techniques and patterns found in Coromandel cloths (especially *sembagi*) had more influence on the development of Jambi batiks. Javanese culture probably also had some impact. According to Pires, the people of Jambi were "already more like Palembangs and Javanese than Malays" (1944 Vol I:154).

Meilink-Roelofs (1962:146) reports that the Portuguese brought cloth to Jambi and were therefore popular merchants. No import duty had to be paid on cloth in Jambi, while an export duty of 10% was charged on pepper.

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<sup>2</sup> According to Bühler's glossary, 'chintes' is a word derived from Hindi "chint" and normally refers to painted or printed cottons (1959:25-30).

## 6. Trade with Holland and England

Since 1511, when the Portuguese had conquered the Malay kingdom of Malacca, neighbouring Malay sultanates had sought to trade with other European powers, less hostile to Islam. In the early seventeenth century, the Dutch and to a lesser extent the English began to challenge Portugal's commercial empire in Asia. The lucrative trade in cloth and spices attracted both the Dutch and the English to Jambi, where they had hopes of obtaining large quantities of pepper for the European market. Ships from both countries arrived in Jambi in 1615. Pangeran Kedak was on the throne, and Islam had recently been officially adopted (Tideman 1938:29). According to local history it was on Pangeran Kedak's coronation day that Jambi had been proclaimed a sultanate. He was given the title "Sultan Abdul Kahar". At the same time, traditional customs were integrated with Islamic law: adat was said to be based on Sjarak (Islamic canon law), Sjarak on Kitabullah (the Holy Book) (A. Mukty Nasruddin 1989:130). Following on from this, the government of the sultanate was restructured, and laws were later laid down during the reign of his son, known as Sultan Agung.

The Dutch obtained permission from Sultan Abdul Kahar to set up a trading office in Muara Kumpeh, from where they attempted to establish a monopoly in the purchase of forest products and pepper. Jambi was already trading with Chinese, Arabs and Javanese, importing rice, salt, silk, agricultural tools and textiles. The Portuguese were also clearly in evidence trading in Jambi when the first English ships arrived in Jambi from Bantam in the October of 1615. The account of the voyage records that during the difficult ascent of the river<sup>3</sup>, "a Portingall galliot passed by our pinnace, coming from Jambe bound for Mallaca, laden with pepper". The importance of textiles was recognised by the English who sent an advance party to the king with gifts of two white baftas<sup>4</sup>, two blue and two "serasses<sup>5</sup> fine".

The main purpose of the European trade was to obtain pepper. Thomas

<sup>3</sup> Navigation of the river continued to be a problem, and ocean-going ships always had to wait at the bar at the mouth of the river while smaller ones ferried the cargo to and from the factory, many days' journey upstream. In September 1633 a special ship was constructed for the Jambi river "to not draw above 11 foot of water" (EIC Court Books 1633 Vol XIV f78).

<sup>4</sup> Given as "a type of calico, made especially at Baroch" in the glossary of Foster 1896.

<sup>5</sup> According to Samuel Bradshaw, 1610, sarassa were a type of pintado, or multicoloured cloth. (Foster 1896:75).

Elkington reported in 1615 that a pinnace (the "Assistant") had been sent "to discover the east side of Sumatra, and principally to a place called Jambee, where we are informed is store of pepper and hope of gold"(Foster 1899:174).<sup>6</sup> The sale of Indian cloth was, however, an important secondary factor. John Jourdain, referring to the same expedition, indicated what was to be traded in exchange at the ship's destination: "where we have good hopes of vent for our Guzarat cloth"<sup>7</sup>, and this was confirmed in a letter to Sir Thomas Roe in Masulipatam describing the despatch of a ship (the "Attendant", which accompanied "Assistant") to "Jambyn, being there to establish a factory, a fit place for sale of cloth and getting quantity of pepper".<sup>8</sup>

Jambi was for a long time of primary importance to the English in obtaining pepper, and in 1626 the Company had even considered moving its East Indies base to "settle at Jambee, now the chief place for pepper."<sup>9</sup> Ships were regularly sent there on their way to Bantam, the main distribution point for the East India Company's trade in the archipelago. Large quantities of cloth were supplied. In 1659, Nieuhof was sent to Jambi by the Dutch company. He reported that "Jambi and Palimbang are the chiefest places for pepper, where the English have likewise their factories, and are much esteemed by that king. The foreigners import commonly pieces of eight, callicoes, Chinese gold, iron wire, steel, woollen- cloth, quilts of Suratte, silks, salt and suchlike commodities, which they exchange for those afore-mentioned."<sup>10</sup> (Nieuhof 1732/1988:191)

In 1657 when Bantam itself was again blockaded by the Dutch, the 'Persia Merchant' was despatched to the English Company's headquarters at Fort St George on the Coromandel coast, loaded with more than £7500 in 40 ingots of gold, all of which was to be invested in commodities (cloth) for Jambi except for £500 or £1000 which was to be taken to Jambi in reals. Advice from the Company as to what sort of cloth was in demand in Jambi gives some indication of local

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<sup>6</sup> Ralph Fitch, in referring to Jambi, had reported that "Jamba is an island among the Javas also from whence come diamants. And the king hath a masse of earth which is golde; it groweth in the middle of a river: and when the king doth lacke gold, they cut part of the earth and melt it, whereof cometh golde. This mass of earth doth appeare but once a yeare; which is when the water is low." (Hakluyt 1904: 499). This was probably the source of the rumours of gold in Jambi.

<sup>7</sup> Foster 1899:277.

<sup>8</sup> Foster 1900:32.

<sup>9</sup> EIC Court Books Vol IX f183-184.

<sup>10</sup> i.e. Pepper, gold, tin and "camphire" [presumably camphor].

taste:

“ We have recd advises since our former letters of what types are in most request there and commonly advance 70-80% profit, as follows: Long cloth white, Salampores White<sup>11</sup> , Betieles<sup>12</sup> white of 24 coveds, Betieles Red of 32 coveds, Holadoes fine, Morees red, Tapiserasses ordinary<sup>13</sup> , Flowered Tapies & Commritters red and black.” <sup>14</sup>

A later cargo, sent to Jambi on the “Lancaster” in 1678, contained: 2 bales of broad black Bafta ; 3 bales of Carrikeens<sup>15</sup> ; 5 of Chints<sup>16</sup> Culmhee; 2 of Patolas<sup>17</sup> ; 1 of Salloos<sup>18</sup> Jumah; 1 of Ardeas black; 4 of narrow black Baftas and 1 of narrow fine Baftas. Also included were 5 chests of treasure containing \$20,000, as well as presents to the young sultan “so as not to impede the lading of the ship, & is an ancient custom on arrival of a ship”. The total value of the sultan’s presents was Rs 113.30d; similar presents were given to the old sultan of Jambi at a cost of Rs 109.30d. <sup>19</sup>

Other descriptions of cargoes tend to refer to “paintings and other calicoes”; in 1667, the “Madras Merchant” was ordered to be laden with such a cargo for Jambi.<sup>20</sup> The “paintings”, otherwise known as “pintadoes” were chintz cloths, desirable in the eyes of the Jambi nobility because of their varied colours and decorative motifs, which probably contrasted with the narrow range of colour and style of local textiles.

The English trade in Jambi was dependent on a continuing supply and demand for both pepper and cloth. One problem faced by the Europeans was that the

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<sup>11</sup> Ordinary calico, usually white with a red stripe at each end, a speciality of Coromandel.(Andaya 1989: 46).

<sup>12</sup> Given as a type of muslin (Foster 1896:Glossary).

<sup>13</sup> *Tapih serasah*: multicoloured cotton skirt lengths, usually patterned with flowers (Andaya 1989)

<sup>14</sup> EIC Letter Book Vol II f71.

<sup>15</sup> Possibly “cannikees”, referred to by Mr Samuel Bradshaw in 1610 as a commodity available in Surat and saleable in Sumatra. (Foster 1896:74).

<sup>16</sup> “Tzinde” are silk cloths with red stripes from India, according to Hugh Frayne’s advice to Nicholas Downton concerning trade in the Moluccas, probably around 1610 (Foster 1896:72).

<sup>17</sup> “Patolas” are silk double-ikat cloths, still woven in Gujerat.

<sup>18</sup> “Sallallo” are described as blue and black Indian cloths (Foster 1896:72).

<sup>19</sup> EIC Java Records Vol VIA Section 123 f38.

<sup>20</sup> EIC Letter Book IV f55v.

demand for cloth in Jambi was erratic and inconsistent. In 1660/1 the Agent at Bantam advised the Company at Fort St George that pepper could not be exchanged for cloth, either in Bantam or in Jambi, unless it was accompanied by "Ryalls of 8t". The Company agreed to supply these, but urged the Agent to put "as much Cloath with our Ryalls as possibly you can at all times, both in your own, & subordinate factories."<sup>21</sup> By 1663, the Company was referring to "ye decay of ye Cloth Trade in Bantam and the other factories", and agreed to a trial of the markets of Siam, Cambodia, Tonkin and Macao, where Chinese commodities might prove favourable as imports into Europe where the pepper market was in decline.<sup>22</sup>

The Jambi king had alternative sources of supply for his Indian textiles, which had been traded in Jambi by Javanese, Chinese and other merchants in the past. In the late seventeenth century his sources included Bugis traders as well as Johorese, who purchased their textiles from Indian traders in Riau (Andaya 1993:133). Chinese traders from Jambi were sending out money for trade with China during this period (Van Leur 1955:198-9). This trade probably included cloth, since in 1636 the Dutch complained that Chinese junks going upriver to buy pepper were undermining sales of Dutch cloth with their own merchandise (Dagh-Register 1636:68).

## 7. Economic decline and internal struggles for power

A fall in pepper prices and problems with Johore marked the start of economic decline in Jambi. Struggles over the territory of Tungkal, claimed by both Johore and Jambi, grew more critical by the day, and finally in 1667 war broke out between the two (Andaya 1993:100). In 1673 Jambi sent a raiding party to Old Johore in Riau and destroyed it. Johore retaliated in 1679, inflicting a resounding defeat on Jambi. In the same year Sultan Agung died. He was succeeded by his son, Pangeran Ratu Raden Penulis who was entitled Sultan Abdul Mahyi Sri Ingologo (ibid:106). In 1680 Jambi came under attack again, this time from Palembang. Jambi had previously had an alliance with Daeng Mangika, a Makkassarese, but he had let him down in the fight with Johore. Now Palembang broke off its close friendship with Jambi and, supported by Daeng

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<sup>21</sup> EIC Letter Book Vol III f10.

<sup>22</sup> EIC Letter Book III f267.

Mangkika, it too attacked Jambi in 1680-81. Jambi had by then been forced into seeking help from Johore in return for a promise to accept Johore's overlordship, and the Palembang attack failed. Relations with the Dutch had not been improved, however. The Dutch did not support Jambi's claims against Palembang, and in their contract of 1681 required Jambi to pay recompense to Palembang (Andaya 1993:107). In 1682, the VOC was in dispute with Siam as to whether Jambi was a vassal state of Siam or the VOC (Vos 1993:49). Tension rose between the Dutch and the Jambi sultanate, and the sultan fled upriver. In 1690 in the murder of the head of the VOC office, Sybrand Swart. The Dutch arrested Sultan Sri Ingologo, whom they held responsible for preparing the ground for the murder. He was taken to Jakarta and from there exiled to Banda Island (Tideman 1938:29).

In 1687 the Dutch had chosen one of the Sultan's sons, Pangeran Depati Raden Cakranegara, known as Kyai Gede, to take over the throne (Andaya 1993:131). This was a violation of the accepted manner of succession in the Jambi kingdom, whereby the Sultan would stand to one side while the person he had appointed as Crown Prince took over the government. Kyai Gede did not receive popular support.

Another of the Sultan's sons, Pangeran Pringgabaya, acting as Crown Prince, took the insignia of the kingdom and moved upstream to Muara Tebo and set up a parallel government (Andaya 1993:133). He received the support of both the upland people and the king of the Minangkabau in Pagarruyung, who gave him the title of Sunan Sri Maharaja Batu. He carried on trade with the Bugis by overland routes and by rivers other than the Batanghari, and developed rice fields in these areas. Textiles were supplied by Johorese traders, who bought their supplies from Indian traders in Riau. The establishment of these trade routes would later help Jambi to circumvent Dutch attempts to monopolise textile imports in the region. For 20 years the parallel regime undermined the authority of the Dutch-supported Kyai Gede regime in Tanah Pilih.

In the early years of the eighteenth century, Kyai Gede's regime was so lacking in support that the Dutch entertained ideas of reintroducing Sri Maharaja Batu into the system. In 1708 a brotherly oath of friendship between Kyai Gede and Sri

Maharaja Batu was sworn, and the latter was installed as young king to his elder brother's senior king (Andaya 1993:142). The final clause of the compact was that the English should be allowed to return to Jambi (this in an attempt to recreate the conditions of the "Good Time" when Sultan Agung had ruled as senior king, with Sultan Ingologo as junior king and heir). However, Kyai Gede wanted to secure the succession for his descendants, and animosity between the brothers continued. When Sri Maharaja Batu did reappear in Tanah Pilih in 1710, the rift between the two had grown to such an extent that the Dutch judged that it was of no further use to try to reconcile the two. He was captured by the Dutch and exiled first to Batavia and then to Banda (ibid:150).

Upstream-downstream tensions continued, however. Relations with Johore remained sour and the economic situation did not improve. The king demanded more and more from the people. A movement grew up to depose him and replace him with Sri Maharaja Batu's son, Raden Astrawijaya. But Kyai Gede died before the rebel army reached the royal residence in 1719. Raden Astrawijaya was sent back from Batavia by the Dutch and installed as Sri Sultan Astra Ingologo (Andaya 1993:157).

Sultan Astra did not, however, receive popular support and there were continual complaints and demands that he be replaced first by Kyai Gede's son-in-law (who died, however, in 1721) and later Kyai Gede's son (Pangeran Surianegara) or grandson (Raden Demang), both of whom had earlier been imprisoned by Sultan Astra, and later went to Batavia. In 1725 the state kris and royal treasure were taken by a cabal headed by Raden Demang, and the king imprisoned (Andaya 1993:159). Then a force led by Astra's brother and consisting of upland people released Sultan Astra and placed him on the throne again. Raden Demang retaliated and the Dutch were forced to agree to the deposing of Astra. Pangeran Surianegara was returned to Jambi and installed as ruler with the title Sultan Muhammad Syah. The following year, however, the new Sultan died of smallpox. Sultan Astra was released and, with the support of the Minangkabau ruler, returned to power (ibid:160). According to A. Mukty Nasruddin, by this time Jambi's connections with the Mataram court, initiated in 1642, had been broken off, and Jambi had had to become self-sufficient in rice (1989:142). Andaya supports this theory, citing the need to plant rice as a contributory factor to the

decline in pepper growing during the 1730s (1993:161).

In 1742, Sultan Astra stepped aside in favour of Pangeran Sutawijaya, his youngest brother, who was given the title of Sultan Anum Seri Ingologo. The VOC contract was renewed in 1743, but from this time the relationship between the Dutch and the Jambi ruler deteriorated. In January 1754 a quarrel arose between the VOC resident and the court which resulted in the Resident firing on the palace and then fleeing with the entire Jambi garrison to Palembang (Andaya 1993:173). The Dutch reopened the post and a new treaty was signed, but the Jambi ruler refused to send envoys to Batavia. The Dutch Resident's threat to use force was met with the bitter response that the VOC should not imagine Jambi would be like Java, "where people can be compelled more easily" (ibid:174). When the Dutch decided to move their factory downstream from Tanah Pilih to Muara Kumpeh, this was interpreted as a withdrawal of support, and in 1768 the new factory was attacked (ibid:176). The VOC finally decided to close their post in Jambi and by 1770 all had departed.

It would be a mistake to read too much into Jambi's scathing remark about Java at this time, but it does suggest that by this time, Jambi may not have seen the Javanese court as something to emulate. Jambi sultans continued to take pride in their own independence, and the art and cultural practices which are more likely to have been emphasised in the Jambi court are those relating to the Malay Islamic world.

## 8. The rejection of Dutch trade

Trade in Indian textiles continued after the departure of the Dutch. In 1789, Coromandel cloths appeared for sale on the shores of Lake Singkarak, in West Sumatra. The Dutch opperhoofd of Padang commented ruefully on the strength of EIC trade competition: 'One can truthfully say that half of this island, from the tip of Atchien right down to Palembang, and as far inland as the centre, has been drawn into trade in Pulo Pinang, and that it supplies all nearby small trading places on this coast such as Jambij, Patapahan, Indragoerij, Siak, Benkalis, so that people are not only drawn away from here but also they return and import goods even on to the west coast.' (quoted in Dobbin 1983:93).



In the nineteenth century, the Dutch continued to attempt to monopolise cloth imports into their Indonesian territories. Steinmann wrote that the finest quality of cotton cloth on which batik (presumably in Java) was worked used to come from India, Madapolam and Calicut in particular (1947a:2091). The cloth used for batik-making in Jambi is still known as "mori", the Indian term for cambric. Since about 1815, however, according to Steinmann, "these Indian products have been supplanted by European fabrics" (ibid:2091). Joseph reports that after 1811, cheap manufactured textiles including batik imitations from Switzerland and Holland began arriving in Java and that at this time the textile mills at Tweente, Holland, were manufacturing large amounts of cambric (1987b:8). However, between 1811 and 1818, Dutch territories in the East Indies were under British rule, so that European imports were more likely initially to have been Manchester cottons. By 1821, the chief suppliers of the Java market were Manchester manufacturers (Kraan 1996:44). In addition, the Napoleonic wars would have disrupted European textile production, and Indian imports probably continued. In the case of Java and other parts of the archipelago where the Dutch had had a strong foothold it may have been the case that the Indian imports were quickly supplanted by European imports. But this may not have been true in Jambi, which had a long history of evading European attempts to monopolise cloth imports, and where the Dutch presence was much more tenuous. Marsden (1811/1986:176) reported imports to Sumatra of cotton goods such as long-cloth, blue and white, chintz and "coloured handkerchiefs" from the Coromandel coast. From Bengal came muslins, cossaes, baftaes, hummums, taffetas and some other silks; from the Malabar coast "various cotton goods, mostly of a coarse, raw fabrick". "Rough striped cotton cloth" from Celebes (and, says Marsden, from Java, Bali and Ceram) was also being imported. Only broad cloths, especially scarlet, were mentioned as coming from Europe.

Thomas Barnes' expedition of 1818, attempting to establish an overland route from Bengkulu to Jambi, found that production of cloth with locally grown cotton was still being continued in the mountainous area to the west of the sultanate. In Pangkalan Jambi, west of Bangko, imported blue cloths were obtained from the west coast, but silk and piece goods were being brought in from Jambi (Kathirithamby-Wells 1986:69). It seems likely that these cloths originated

either in India or in Britain, since by this time Jambi was trading not with the Dutch, but with the British. The Dutch expedition of 1819-1821 against Palembang, in which the Jambi sultan lent support to Palembang, must have confirmed the Jambi king in his opinion that dealing with the Dutch was not in his interests, and not long after the establishment of Singapore in 1819, almost the whole of the disposable produce of Jambi was exported there (Wong 1960:53). Exports from Singapore to Sumatra included Indian, Malay and European piece-goods, and although Singapore's trade with Sumatra was smaller than that of Penang, Singapore merchants "supplied the greater part of the piece goods bought in Penang by the traders engaged in the Sumatran trade. Most of these traders were Sumatrans from Batu Bahru<sup>23</sup> and were also the principal carriers of trade on the east coast of Sumatra" (Wong 1960:55). Anderson's 1823 mission to the east coast of Sumatra reported imports of cloth from the Coromandel coast, from Bengal and from Surat. The European imports he recorded were principally white cloths including Irish shirting. Further south in Palembang at about this time, some Java cloths were being imported, but also English chintzes and cottons as well as Bengal and Madras piece goods. Trade in Palembang was being carried on by Chinese, Arabs and native Malays with Malacca, Penang, Lingga, Riau, the east coast of Borneo, China and Siam as well as with Java (Court 1821: 105-6). It is likely that Jambi's trade links would be similarly extensive. If so, taste in textiles was as likely to be influenced by Indian imports and Malay cultural preferences as by Javanese models.

During this period there were intermittent disputes between the Dutch and the British about trade in the archipelago, particularly those parts of Sumatra which were not actually Dutch possessions. Jambi was one of these, its importance for the British being its role as the principal supplier within the archipelago of dragon's blood, a colouring substance used in the European varnishing industry (Crawford 1856/1971:123). The Governor of the Straits Settlements sent letters to the chiefs of Jambi, Siak and Kampar in 1828, assuring them of free trade with Singapore (Tarling 1957:137). However, in 1833 the Dutch returned to Jambi, and after a number of incidents on the border with Palembang, Sultan Facharudin of Jambi was forced to sign a provisional contract with the Dutch, made definite the next year (Locher-Scholten 1993:575). Sultan Facharudin was allowed to retain self-government, but was required to give up import and export duties.

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<sup>23</sup> This is probably a reference to Batu Bara, on the north east coast of Sumatra.

Sovereignty was to be ceded to the Dutch, who were permitted to levy customs duties and monopolise the salt supply. However, under the terms of the treaty between the Dutch and the British, the British still had the right to trade freely with native princes unless their territories had been acquired by the Dutch by conquest. In 1841, the British view was that Jambi could still be regarded as independent, and the following year they reasserted their position over Jambi (Tarling 1957:146). Given the British concern to keep trade with Jambi open, it is reasonable to suppose that the trade in Indian piece-goods continued. Jambi's dominance in the supply of dragon's blood must have meant, too, that the sultanate during this period was reasonably prosperous.

Further evidence of Jambi's position is revealed in details of the attempt by an American adventurer, J. Walter Gibson, to visit Jambi in the mid-nineteenth century. In 1852 he wrote a letter to the Jambi sultan in which, according to the Dutch, Gibson "proposed a scheme to destroy the Dutch", though Gibson himself denied this. Gibson said that the Panyorang in Palembang had told him that "anyone might go to see him [the Jambi sultan] who was not afraid of the Dutch at Moora Kumpeh". Another informant told him that the Jambi Sultan, Ratu Abdul Nasruddin "disliked Hollanders, and was friendly to the English of Singapore." Gibson was told that Jambi was rich in spices, gold and forest products which they wanted to trade, but that the Dutch, unable to trade with the Jambi sultan themselves, had installed guns at their trading post at Muara Kumpeh and were trying to stop any trade between Jambi and the English (Gibson 1856:182-183, 186). However, as in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Jambi was able to avoid Dutch attempts to keep out non-Dutch imports. Lieutenant Crooke, who visited Jambi in 1823, had mentioned a number of routes from Jambi besides the rivers which were used for "commercial intercourse", in particular to Padang, Bengkulu and other parts on the west coast. These routes had probably been in use since Sri Maharaja Batu had ruled the interior in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. From points upriver there were routes to Palembang, including a link between the Tembesi river and the Musi (Anderson 1826/1971:399). These routes would have allowed Jambi to frustrate Dutch attempts to monopolise textile imports.

In relation to the import of textiles (and in particular the finely woven cloth

manufactured in India and Europe which was used in the textiles under discussion later), several points are relevant here. Jambi had desirable products for trade; the Dutch had not succeeded in preventing trade between Jambi and other countries; and in particular, Dutch textiles had not monopolised the supply in Sumatra or even Java. According to Arensberg (1982:unpaginated), cotton cloth used in Java was imported from England. Manchester cottons were allowed into three major ports in Java after the Dutch resumed control there in 1818. Although the Dutch had imposed differential tariffs on goods imported into Dutch territories from elsewhere, the stringent measures undertaken in an attempt to limit such trade demonstrate that foreign cotton goods were very much of a threat. When restrictions were relaxed in 1858, differential tariffs on unbleached and white cotton goods were continued in Javanese ports (Tarling 1957:163). In Jambi, then, where the Dutch had only a foothold in Muara Kumpeh, it seems likely that the foreign goods against which the Dutch were defending their own trade were still getting through. In 1867 the British drafted an agreement under which British subjects and vessels were to be on the same footing as Netherlands subjects and vessels in the territory between the Jambi river and Cape Tiamang to the north (Tarling 1957:177).

#### 9. The period of the 'contract sultans'

In 1855 Sultan Taha came to the Jambi throne. Almost immediately he declared his refusal to be bound by treaties signed between the Dutch and his predecessors, and in 1858, after an ultimatum from the Dutch, he moved his headquarters to a secret location in the interior. The well-established connections there would allow him to continue contact, and in particular trade, with the outside world. The Dutch recognised Taha's uncle, Nazarudin, as the new sultan, but as Locher-Scholten points out, neither he nor the two sultans who followed him agreed to Dutch requests for them to reside in the capital, preferring to base themselves upstream. From there, they kept in close contact with Taha, who orchestrated a continuing but erratic resistance, which was one of avoidance rather than conflict (Locher-Scholten 1993:578).

Nevertheless, Upper Jambi remained loyal to Sultan Taha, and the Dutch were confined to the lower reaches of the river. The Aardrijkskundige Genootschap's

Central Sumatra expedition of 1877-78 had to be abandoned. The Dutch were tied up with the Aceh war (1873-1903) and so continued the old policy of reconciliation. Two more Dutch-sponsored "sultans" succeeded Nazarudin: Mohilidin (1882-1885) and Zainudin (1886-1899), the latter a half-brother of Taha. As Locher-Scholten points out, Taha's family links with the puppet administration left him in a position of considerable power. One of his sons-in-law, Wiro Kusumo (a member of the Arab Al Juffri clan) was responsible under all three sultans for contacts with the Dutch. His connections with the alternative sultanate were strengthened through a series of marriage alliances, and in 1886 his under-age son was accepted by the Dutch as heir to the throne. "Thus Taha was a puppeteer controlling the most important puppets on the political stage"(Locher-Scholten 1993:578).

Perhaps because of the fear of banishment, Taha maintained a largely defensive policy until 1885, all the time giving out signs to the Dutch that he was about to submit. Although in 1885 there were a number of attacks on Dutch posts his policy remained one of avoidance and his position strengthened throughout the 1880s. He fathered 18 children, which probably consolidated his standing, and through them he was able to make marriage alliances with local leaders of influence. The contract sultans and the Pangeran Ratu, contrary to frequent promises made to the Dutch, moved to the upper reaches of the Batanghari, thus lending tacit support to Taha.

Dutch interest in Jambi in the final decades of the nineteenth century was focussed on oil and coal reserves. In 1882 a contract was concluded which gave the Dutch the right to develop all minerals (Tideman 1938:36). The 'contract sultans' and the Pangeran Ratu time and again implied that Taha was about to give himself up, but nothing came of it. In 1899, after several attempts on the lives of Dutch officials, and refusals on the part of the Jambi contract Sultan, Zainudin, to return to the capital, the Dutch relieved him of his office, in exchange for a yearly allowance. Attempted negotiations to appoint a successor were frustrated by the refusal of nobles to attend and in 1901 the administration of the region was handed over by the Dutch Indies government to the Resident of Palembang.

In 1903 Jambi became part of the Palembang residency. The following year, Taha's hiding-place was betrayed to the Dutch, who killed him. He was 88 years old. Jambi itself was promoted to full residency status in 1906 (Locher-Scholten 1993:578).

#### 10. Dutch administration.

By the early years of the twentieth century, members of the Jambi royal family were receiving 'compensation' for having handed over the rights to collect import and export duties. The subsequent growth in the rubber trade extended these payments to a wider section of the nobility, as landowners were compensated for the use of their land for plantations. The Dutch brought in Chinese and Javanese coolies as labour, while the upper echelons of the Malay population thrived on the allowances paid to them by the Dutch.

Resistance to Dutch control continued, however, especially in the upstream areas. In 1916 there were uprisings throughout the Jambi region which were finally put down through force of arms (Tideman 1938:42). Imports of cheap cloth from Holland, Java and Singapore filled everyday needs during this period, as the growing of cotton and weaving of plain cloths declined (Monod de Froideville 1921:82). The quantity of the imported cloths, however, fell from 117,000 kilograms in 1925 to 76,000 kilograms in 1929 (Wellan 1932:372). The need for luxury and ritual cloths continued to be met by local production of woven gold thread brocade (*songket*) and batik (Samson 1915:41-2).

## CHAPTER THREE

### Olak Kemang and the Seberang villages.

The present-day town of Jambi lies approximately 150 km upstream from the mouth of the Batanghari river on the east coast of Sumatra. The province of the same name covers the area of the Batanghari's tributaries, approximately 55,500 sq km, and is bounded by the provinces of West Sumatra to the west, Riau to the north, and South Sumatra to the south. To the east are the Malacca Straits. Jambi city is a river port sending out cargoes of plywood, rubber, copra and wood pulp extracted from its hinterland and processed in factories along the banks.

The chief batik-making villages today are situated in the area known as Seberang, on the north bank of the river immediately opposite the city centre, once the site of the old capital.<sup>1</sup> There are eleven villages in Seberang, strung out along the river bank and batik-making has now spread to most of them (see Map 3). However, before the Japanese occupation the villages now known as Kelurahan Tengah and Olak Kemang were the only ones where batik was made. At that time, they were one unit, known as Dusun Tengah. It was here that Dutch officials first came across the manufacture of batik (Goslings 1927/8).

#### 1. Village History

My fieldwork was based in the village of Olak Kemang, which has a population of 3,438.<sup>2</sup> Although most of the inhabitants regard themselves and their ancestors as having inhabited the area from time immemorial, the district of Seberang has not had as stable a population as most villages in the region. Seberang lies on the north bank of the Batanghari river, immediately opposite the original capital of the Jambi kingdom, Tanah Pilih. When the Dutch and the English arrived in Jambi in 1615, the sultan's palace was at the original site of the capital, in Tanah Pilih. It seems likely that the land on the north bank may have

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<sup>1</sup> Two upstream villages in the Bangko area, Perentak and Pulau Rengas, were also once centres of batik production, and there may well have been more. The existence of batik there in the past has great significance to the study of batik from the Jambi region, and I visited both the villages to discover what information I could. However, my fieldwork focussed on the only village where the tradition appears to have been continuous.

<sup>2</sup> Figures are from May 1996, from the Kantor Lurah.

been reserved for immigrants, since it was here, in Seberang, that the English and Dutch factories were set up. The Chinese settlement which grew up around them gave the district the name of "Petjinan", the Chinese quarter, a name which was retained until the 1930s even though most of the Chinese had left by 1700 (Andaya 1993:129).<sup>3</sup> The English had left in 1682, though both the Dutch and English factories on the north bank of the river are shown in a Dutch map of 1707 reproduced in an article by Wellan (1927).

Until the Dutch departed in 1770, the two sides of the river symbolised the relationship between the Europeans and the Sultan. When the Dutch lodge was reconstructed in the early eighteenth century, it was a time when the Sultan relied for support on the VOC, and stones brought across the river from the king's residence were used (Andaya 1993:170). Later, at a time of animosity between the Dutch and the Jambi ruler, Sultan Anum (1743-1770?) claimed that children born from a mother from the king's side of the river and a father from the VOC side were his subjects (Andaya 1993:172). After continuous disputes over control of each side of the river, in 1763 a new Dutch lodge was erected downstream at Kompeh Besar. However, in 1768 the new lodge was attacked, and the Dutch left Jambi; authority over the inhabitants of the district of Petjinan returned to the Sultan. In 1823, an English official, Lt Crooke, described the town as extending for three quarters of a mile along both banks, "the natives occupying the whole of the right [south] bank; and the few Arabs and other strangers who are settled there, a part of the left." The population of the town he said was "almost entirely Malayan; but there are a few Javans and persons of Arab descent. There were formerly some Chinese settlers, but none at present" (Anderson 1826/1971:394, 396).

The Dutch returned to Jambi in the nineteenth century, trying to gain control of what always proved to be difficult territory. The *kraton* (royal palace) was at this time still in Tanah Pilih, the area of high ground on the south bank where the central mosque now stands overlooking the Batang Hari river. In 1858 the Dutch East Indies Army captured the *kraton*, demolished it and built their fort there. The Sultan and his followers moved upstream, Sultan Taha to a hiding place, and the 'contract' sultan Nazarudin who had been appointed by the Dutch to a fortified upstream village known as Dusun Tengah. Seberang now became the

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<sup>3</sup> The modern name of this area is "Seberang", and the term "Petjinan" is no longer used.



site of mediation, where Arab nobles met and negotiated with the Dutch on behalf of the sultan, and where the Pangeran Ratu kept a residence. A Dutch map of 1878 shows in Olak Kemang the house of Pangeran Wiro Kusumo, an Arab leader who acted as an intermediary and close by it the house of Sultan Nazarudin.<sup>4</sup> The sultan's house was there at the request of the Dutch, however, and he did not occupy it (Locher-Scholten 1994:147). It was in Wiro Kusumo's house that the contract sultans sometimes met with the Dutch Residents and their agents. Resident van der Hoeven (1874-79) was not happy about this, and he demanded that the Sultan should build a house in Petjinan, across the river from the Dutch headquarters. This was done, but the house was not completed until 1882, and neither Mohildin nor Zainudin actually lived there. To some extent, then, Seberang became the site of Jambi's symbolic resistance, where meetings took place in which Jambi kept the Dutch at bay publicly in ritual terms and privately prepared limited armed resistance (See Locher-Scholten 1993; and 1994: 257-8).

During the Dutch administration, the south side of the river became subject to the modernising influence of the Dutch. The Chinese tradesmen also consolidated their position here, around the *pasar* (marketplace). Plantations on the southern outskirts of the town were worked by Chinese migrants. In time, the north, Seberang, side of the river, came to be seen as the true site of Jambi culture, where Islamic learning and tradition retained their strength and where Malay customs and the old way of life continued. The name of Tanah Pilih was forgotten as the south bank lost its Malay character.

The period of Japanese occupation after the ousting of the Dutch was one of great hardship, both in Seberang and in the Pasar area. The Japanese took half the rice crop and made the men work on road-building. All trade ceased, and only those with rice land had enough to eat. Others had to eat cassava, and the practice of making *rembio*, a foodstuff derived from sago, was introduced, particularly by Bugis inhabitants who knew how to prepare it. Present-day informants who were children at that time remember people wearing sacks, as textiles for clothing became scarce. Children were taught to speak Japanese at school, and were required to bow to the rising sun, a practice which struck to the roots of religious feeling in Seberang, and caused bitter resentment. But although the Japanese ran

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<sup>4</sup> See Locher-Scholten 1994:138.

a strict regime, they too kept to the south side of the river for the most part, and village headmen from Seberang were summoned to meetings there for their instructions.

After independence had been gained in 1945, the bluff on which the Dutch fort had been built on the ruins of the old kraton became the site of a new grand mosque. Seberang, occupied almost exclusively by Malays and Malay Arabs, continued its firm adherence to Islam and to tradition. Modern developments have arrived slowly. The raised road which now runs along the edge of the river was first built up by the Dutch by about a metre in 1930, raised again during the Japanese period, and reached its present height in the early years of independence. Electricity, and thus street lighting, was introduced in the mid-1950s, when the first rice mill was established. Before then, each family milled its own rice. Although Seberang has remained relatively undeveloped compared with the more cosmopolitan "pasar" area across the river, it is not looked down upon by other Malays as being backward, since it is seen as a devout and peaceful area which conforms with adat. The fact that the present provincial governor is from a Seberang kampung marks him as of genuine Jambi stock.

Until the introduction of boats powered by outboard motors (*ketek*), the only way to cross the river was by *sampan*, and in a strong current this could take as much as an hour. The bridge across the Batanghari at Aur Duri was finally completed in 1990, but this is some distance upstream, and most villagers still cross the river by *ketek*. There has, however, been a marked increase in motor traffic around the villages. Concrete pathways have been constructed between the houses which make cycling or motorcycling easier in the dry season, though they are under water for several months of the year.

## 2. Making a living

Archaeological finds reveal that there have probably been settlements in Seberang since the Sung Dynasty (Abu Ridho 1995:204). The choice of this particular area for settlement is not surprising. The site is about 155 km upstream from the mouth of the river, relatively safe from external threats, but near enough for successive Jambi rulers to have imposed and secured taxes from the

numerous ships passing along this busy trade route. The floods which submerge the land for up to six months of the year control weeds and provide both fertile deposits from the volcanic hinterland which enrich the soil for vegetable crops, and shallow water in the back swamps during the rice-growing season. As the river level falls, fish are trapped in the lakes and in the increasingly shallow pools which remain; as it rises, the fish surge upstream and can be scooped from the water in plentiful quantities. These factors would have made in the past and to some extent still make for an easy living for the inhabitants.

The rise and fall of the river's level still dominates the lives of most of the inhabitants, determining the cycle of rice planting, the method of fishing and the means of transport both around the village and to the administrative capital across the river on the south bank.<sup>5</sup> The sediment washed down from the volcanic hinterland enriches the soil for planting, and crops grown when the land is not covered by water are lush and plentiful. Almost all houses are still built of wood on wooden piles, strong enough to withstand the flood.

The majority of the Malay population of Olak Kemang and the surrounding villages own some rice land and grow rice for themselves or have their land worked for them by Javanese immigrants. About a third are described as farmers.<sup>6</sup> In the upstream Malay Arab villages of Kampung Arab Melayu, Tahtul Yaman and Tanjung Johor none of the land floods naturally to a suitable level for planting rice. Some is flooded too deeply during the rains so that it can only be cultivated for crops such as peanuts during the dry season. Immigrants living on the floating houses may rent such land for a three month cropping season. Other land, which does not flood at all, may provide grazing for buffalo or cattle.

In addition to rice land, villagers in Olak Kemang have plots of land around their houses on which most grow vegetables. Although only 30 villagers give their chief occupation as fishing, many villagers engage in some fishing. From the river, fish are caught by angling (*mukat*), throwing nets (*jalo*) or dragging

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<sup>5</sup> The government has introduced varieties of rice which will crop in four months, with the intention that three crops a year can be harvested. Local informants, however, point out that this system is not in keeping with the rhythm of the river's flood, which allows for only two crops. The rice-farmers also say that reliance on only a few varieties is dangerous because of the risk of disease. In the old days, up to fifty different types of rice were grown, each with its own flavour.

<sup>6</sup> Statistics from Kantor Lurah, May 1996.

nets upstream in the rainy season (*merawe*). In the swamps, fish traps are placed. Some are made from basketry, and these are used to catch larger fish for food. Others are made from bamboo tubes; in these small decorative fish are caught which can be sent to Jakarta and sold. In addition, small fish (*ikan seluang*) are scooped out of the water in nets (*tangkul*), during the height of the flood. On the small lake of Danau Teluk on the western side of Olak Kemang, floating cages (*keramba*) are used to farm fish of various varieties. Fish is the usual accompaniment for rice at mealtimes, except on special occasions, when chicken, goat or buffalo meat is used.

Building labourers, traders, craft workers, civil servants and pensioners make up about a third of the adult population of Olak Kemang, in roughly equal numbers. Most of the civil servants are employed on the other side of the river, and a few local men are employed as boatmen on the ferry boats which ply to and fro across the river to Jambi's main marketplace. There are many artisans in Seberang, working mostly in building and carpentry, and a large proportion of the families there now rely to some extent on income from batik-making and embroidery work. Some families are very poor, living just above subsistence level, while others are quite wealthy. Some of the latter own land across the river which they have let to shop owners. Of the traders, some trade locally on a small scale and some further afield, upriver to Bangko, overland to neighbouring Palembang, or sometimes to Java. Sons often seek work in Jakarta or elsewhere, returning home at *Lebaran* (the day of celebration at the end of *puasa*, the fasting month, when the feast of *Idul Fitri* is held) and contributing to the household income until they set up on their own.

### 3. Religious affairs

Seberang people have a strong sense of Jambi as a centre for Islamic learning, and I was often told that people come to Seberang from Malaysia and Brunei to study. While Aceh may be described as the gateway to Mecca, Jambi is described by its inhabitants as the *serambi*, the front room. Islam is the religion of all the inhabitants of Seberang, with the exception of one family of seven Christians recently arrived in Olak Kemang. There is one mosque in the village, believed to have been built by the Dutch at the request of Pangeran Wiro Kusumo, and three

*langgar*, smaller prayer houses not used for Friday prayer. There is also a *madrasah*, or Islamic school.

Time in Seberang village life is marked by religious events. There are five set times for prayer: *subuh* at 5am; *zuhur* at 12noon; *asyar* at 3.30pm; *maghrib* at 6pm; *isya* at 7pm. The vast majority of Seberang men conform with the requirement to pray at these times. The year is similarly marked by Islamic events, the chief of which is *Lebaran*. The Haj and the prophet's birthday are among the other events which shape the year.

In the affairs of the mosque, the men are dominant, while women are far more likely to pray at home. Women are not allowed in the mosque if they are menstruating. Friday mid-day prayer, which is different from *zuhur* prayers during the rest of the week, is for men only. There are three *imam*, all men, and they are chosen by the men attached to that particular mosque. This is a part-time unpaid post. There is also a *ketua pengurus mesjid*, who manages mosque affairs, also a man. The primary functions of the mosque organisation are to provide a place and leadership for prayer, to teach children to study the Qur'an, to arrange for guest speakers for special religious occasions, to maintain the building itself and to organise religious festivals. For these last three and similar functions, meetings of the men belonging to that mosque are held. The membership includes married men and single men of mature years (perhaps over 35 or so). The youth (*remaja*) section of the mosque has its own separate activities, and young women are actively involved in all aspects of this.

Marriage outside the faith has the same repercussions for men and for women. If a man marries a Christian woman, and she does not convert, he will be spurned by his family and be deemed to have left Islam. If a woman marries a Christian man, she will be regarded in the same light.

The dominance of men in mosque affairs is not taken to imply any superiority: it is merely part of the separate domain occupied by men. In addition to individual prayer, women perform other religious activities in the home. For example, older women may hold a *yasinan*. In this, containers of water are prepared and placed in the centre of the living room (*ruang tengah*). After a welcoming speech

in which the presiding woman describes the occasion to be celebrated, usually some piece of good fortune for which the community want to give thanks, the *Yasin*, a chapter from the Qur'an, is chanted. Some women have the Qur'an in front of them to read from, others know the words by heart. The water thus consecrated (*air yasin*) may be used for a variety of purposes over the coming weeks. A similar ceremony is performed once a year in the mosque, in the middle of the fasting month. Every family, sometimes every member of the family, will take a kettle of water to the mosque or (in Seberang) to the Muslim School, Pondok Santren. Participants sit in a circle, the lids of the kettles having been removed while the Yasin is read.

The holy water thus produced is used for a range of purposes. A person who drinks air yasin will be *terang hati*, that is, he or she will find it easy to gain knowledge. They will also be protected against sickness, and in the case of naughty children, against bad behaviour. Some people will use it straight away, others will keep it for use during the year. It is also drunk three weeks before *Puasa* (Ramadan), to greet the fasting month.

The influence of Islam is also evident in the songs which accompany the procession of a groom to his bride's house on the occasion of his wedding. A series of verses is sung in Arabic, one for each stage of the journey, which may take ten minutes or so. Similarly, the song of welcome or "*Marhaban*" chanted during a child's hair-cutting ceremony is in Arabic as is a similar chant after the *akad nikah*.

#### 4. Ethnic identity and kinship

The inhabitants of the villages describe themselves as "Melayu", that is, they speak the Malay language, adhere to Islam and generally follow Malay traditions and customs. A sub-group within this group, mainly confined to the village of Kampung Arab Melayu, are the Malay Arabs, of Arab descent, who belong to patrilineal clans. A Malay Arab man may take a wife from outside his clan. On marriage, women become members of the husband's clan. A Malay Arab woman may not marry outside her clan.

Male dominance in terms of descent does not apply elsewhere in the villages,

where kinship is cognatic and descent is established through both males and females. On marriage, men are deemed, according to *adat* (traditional custom), to have joined their wife's family, and go to live in the house of their wife's parents, where they may remain for some years before the couple leaves to set up a house of their own, usually adjacent to the parental home. This new house is generally regarded as belonging to both of them, and marriage is very much seen as a partnership, with man and woman having different, but equally important roles. However, it is a daughter who will become the head of the house when her mother dies. Marriage in Seberang does not just draw the man into his wife's family, it also establishes a kinship link between the parents-in-law, who become *besan*, uniting the two sides to become a *keluarga besar*. Kinship can also be established through adoption, both of children and of adults, and so neither blood relationship nor marriage is necessary to establish kinship ties. Kinship terminology was used in the past to describe relationships between rulers and chiefs, who saw themselves either as father and son or older sibling (*kakak*) and younger sibling (*adik*). These terms connote relationships of allegiance, duty and obligation. Whilst a son or a younger sibling must defer to his father or older sibling, he may also look to him for support and protection. The same principle operates for women too. The image of a mother hen looking after her chicks is often used in Jambi *pantun* (verse used in ceremony) to represent the core family and its progeny.

##### 5. Men's and women's domains

As a result of the custom of building new houses next to the mother's home, houses are often clustered in groups of related females, and female networks are thus very strong in the villages. The house is very much the woman's domain. Men spend most of their time outside the home. The site of their daily work may be in the rice fields outside the villages, across the river in the main part of the city, or on the river. If they have no work they may spend the day outside talking with other men. This does not mean that women are confined to the house, and many are employed across the river in the city. Women who stay in the villages are often very active in cultivating the plots of land outside the houses, and spend a great deal of time in houses other than their own.

The division of labour reflects women's closer link with the home. Women are largely responsible for cleaning the home, obtaining food and cooking for the household. This does not apply, however, on festive occasions such as weddings and birth thanksgivings, when the food, earlier prepared by the women, is cooked by the men in huge pots outside the house while the women meet, chat and witness the ceremony indoors. The men on these occasions also wash the dishes, and as there may be two or three hundred guests, the dishes are often first cleaned in a boat filled with sawdust, and then rinsed in a boat filled with water. Laundry is usually women's work, though a few men are to be seen washing clothes at the river's edge. Local people said that these men were probably standing in for a sick female relative. There seems to be no embarrassment at performing what might otherwise be regarded as "women's work", and I came across one man who had taken up batik tulis work. The making of fishing nets is another task which may be performed by male or female workers.

Childcare is largely the responsibility of the women, but men usually play an active role here too, especially if the woman has other things to do. In the household where I stayed there were three adult women and one man, but the father was almost invariably the one responsible for the one-year old child in the evening, carrying her outside to take the air, and settling her to sleep in the parent's bedroom. Teenage boys who have left school as well as girls are often given charge of the younger children if the mother is busy. As there are usually large numbers of relatives living very close by, child care is rarely a problem for those involved in batik-making, though some workers reported a small reduction in the number of hours they worked after they had children.

Men do most of the fish-catching, and especially the fish-farming, but both men and women of all ages enjoy setting and emptying fish traps or scooping the fish out of the water with a tangkul during the flood, and women are as adept as men at angling and at handling a sampan. Small girls aged as little as five or six often use a sampan in the rainy season. Both rice-cultivation in the *sawah* (wet rice field) and the growing of vegetables are undertaken by both men and women, though there are slightly more men than women engaged in rice cultivation, and slightly more women than men engaged in the growing of vegetables in the plots outside the houses. Woodwork, such as boat and house building is



invariably the work of men.

Symbolic expressions of the equality of wife and husband and of their two families are frequent. In very large weddings, the bride and groom sit on a huge pair of scales which is a symbol of the equality of both sides:

Bekati samo berat  
membagi samo banyak  
mengukur samo panjang  
bagantang samo penuh.

(Weighing the same  
Sharing the same amount  
Measuring the same in length  
Filling the same space)

Another adat pantun recited at the wedding ceremony, expresses the sense of equality with which roles in marriage are viewed: "...may they be together like fingers on a fist, as threads spun into twine; may they winnow the rice together, and together repair the rotten fish traps with cane; as with the steep riverbank and the bamboo on the shore, the bank is protected by the bamboo and the bamboo is protected by the bank....yes, don't we see it all like that?" (to which the guests all answer "Yeeeees!").<sup>7</sup>

Control of the household finances is nearly always entrusted to a woman rather than a man, and many informants of both sexes told me that money was safer in women's hands. Most waged men hand over the bulk of their earnings to their wife or mother, keeping back a small amount for tobacco or other personal purchases. There is a strong tradition of saving, as one priority in most households will be to send the senior members of the household on the pilgrimage to Mecca, the Haj. This again applies to men and women equally, and a married couple normally make the pilgrimage together. Because money needs to be saved, it may be placed in the hands of the family member with easiest access to a bank. In one case this was the second daughter of the family, aged 20, who was attending a sewing course across the river. This included the income from the rent of six shops which the family owned, also across the river, at

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<sup>7</sup> Taken from a transcript of verses recited at the wedding of Susi Dianty Alamsyah and Ir Azwardi Azhar in May 1991.

Rp100,000 per month each, so she had considerable responsibility.

## 6. Inheritance

Inheritance normally follows the rules of adat, under which women inherit fixed wealth and men portable wealth, unless there is a dispute. In this case, the Islamic rules may be followed. According to Islamic law (*Syarak*) as practised in Jambi, after a death, the family has to discuss how to divide the property. Sometimes they will call in a religious expert (*ulama*) who knows about Islamic rules of inheritance (*faraid*). The deceased may have decided beforehand how the property was to be divided, in which case she or he would have written a will which would be signed by the village head (*penghulu*). If the family is not happy with the advice of the ulama, they may decide instead to follow adat practice which usually ensures that property is divided fairly between remaining members of the household according to perceived need. I was told that this was why houses were generally passed on to females, since men usually would have moved away to their mother-in-law's house, or have built a new house of their own, whereas single women may have nowhere else to live. Male claimants would receive money instead.

Textiles are usually passed from mother to daughter, and those which are highly valued are stored carefully and brought out only for ceremonial use. These cloths may be batik, songket, cloths from Mecca, or from elsewhere. Cloths are sometimes sold if the family needs money; many songket cloths made in Jambi have been sold to Palembang dealers who strip the cloths of their metal threads for re-use. Recently, dealers have begun to search the villages for old examples of batik. There are some pieces of cloth which the owners will not sell. These are regarded as *tujuh turunan*, (lit. "seven generations"). This does not mean that the cloth must be kept for seven generations, but that it is an item which is closely connected with the owner and the seven generations with which she has a relationship: her own, the three above and the three below. The cloths I came across in this category were all cloths which had been made by family members.

## 7. The revival of batik-making in Seberang

In the years following independence in 1945<sup>8</sup>, one woman, Zainab, kept the tradition of batik-making in Jambi alive. According to villagers in Olak Kemang, during the 1960s she taught a small group of girls, including Yuliawati and Asmah, how to apply wax and dye the cloth. Of these girls, Asmah was the oldest. She remembered more of what the girls were taught, and she alone continued to make batik in the years which followed. She taught her daughter, Azmiah, what she had learned. When government agencies became involved in reviving the craft of batik-making, the knowledge of these two women was drawn on to provide the basis for the revival.<sup>9</sup>

Most informants agreed that the initial impetus in reviving and modernising Jambi's batik industry came from the Provincial Governor's wife from 1979-1982, Prof Dr Ny Sri Soedewi Masychun Sofwan SH. She was at that time head of the Jambi branch of the PKK (*Pendidikan Kesejahteraan Keluarga*), Family Welfare Programme), as is customary for the wives of governors.<sup>10</sup> After her death, the governor remarried, and his second wife, Dra Ny Juniwati Masychun Sofwan continued as PKK head and patron of Jambi batik until 1989. In 1989 a new governor was appointed whose birthplace was in Mudung Laut village, Seberang. His wife, Ny. Ibu Lily Abdurrachman Sayoeti, originally from Minangkabau, took over as head of the PKK and promoter of the local product. The patronage of these prestigious women, who belong to perhaps the modern equivalent of the royal household of the past, was in keeping with traditional practice.<sup>11</sup> According to Van der Kam, who visited the area in the 1920s and whose report was published in a subsequent article by B. M. Goslings, batik production in Jambi in the nineteenth century and possibly earlier was primarily designed to meet the demands of the royal court (Goslings 1929-30a:145). Following the lead established by President Suharto, who designated the wearing of batik shirts made in classical Javanese batik as appropriate wear for men at semi-formal state occasions, Jambi's governors and their wives have helped to promote sales by

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<sup>8</sup> Indonesia declared independence in 1945, although this was not granted until 1947.

<sup>9</sup> See article in *Kompas* 22.5.94, page 15.

<sup>10</sup> Wives of Bupati or district heads also act as PKK heads at district level.

<sup>11</sup> According to oral tradition, female leaders in the royal household had responsibility for women's affairs in the kingdom from earliest times. The sister of Orang Kayo Hitam, reputed to have been the first king of Jambi, was said to have performed this role.

wearing local batik themselves at public ceremonies. Jambi batik is now worn by both men and women at most government and civil service ceremonies and celebrations.

The initial intervention of Prof Dr Ny Sri Soedewi Masychun Sofwan was to enlist the involvement of the PKK and the Department of Industry in planning a development programme. One of the programmes of the PKK, an organisation which primarily works through women to improve health and welfare generally, is to establish and develop home industries for women. The intention of the governors' wives in reviving the craft of batik-making, as understood by my informants, was specifically to provide a means of generating livelihoods for women living in the villages where batik-making was practised before the Japanese occupation of 1942-5. PKK programmes work through women because specific assumptions are made about women's role in Indonesian family and social life. Women are seen as being responsible for health, nutrition and the home. Women very often have control of the household finances. They are therefore regarded as the best route for channelling initiatives at community and household level. The establishment of home industries for women is seen as useful because such work will not interfere with women's household and child care responsibilities nor with seasonal agricultural activities.

From the start, the development programme targeted women. Training in the use of chemical dyestuffs was the first priority, and in September 1980 a teacher from BPBK in Yogyakarta was sent to Kampung Tengah to train 30 pupils in batik production. All were women. In subsequent years, between 1981 and 1988, a series of five similar courses was set up, all in the neighbouring village of Ulu Gedung, and exclusively aimed at women. In 1992 twelve trainees were sent to Yogyakarta to train. Of these, eleven were from Seberang villages. In 1993/4 two more courses were organised in Seberang, one in Tanjung Pasir and one in Tanjung Raden. Other courses were held in the upstream area of Kerinci and the coastal district of Tanjung Jabung, and another programme has been set up for Javanese transmigrants in the Bangko region. In the main, however, training has focussed on Seberang villages.

Although existing motifs and colours were retained by the trainers from Java, the

introduction of new methods and materials has meant that the nature of Jambi batik has changed in recent years. Trainees are not instructed in the use of traditional natural dyestuffs. Although trainers from the BPBK catalogued existing local patterns, some designs have been distorted, through simplification, changes in scale, or by adaptation to the rectangular shapes required for the repeated cap process. Most of present-day production can therefore provide little in the way of elucidation of questions about the textiles produced in Jambi in the past.

#### 8. The role of batik-making

In the years since the PKK development initiative began, batik production has emerged as an important supplementary source of income for many Seberang families. For some, it may be the chief source. In Olak Kemang there are five centres of batik-making, each run by a female entrepreneur. An entrepreneur provides outwork for between 15 and 30 other members of their community, who carry out the *tulis*, *tembok* and *colet* work. All of the *tulis* and *tembok* workers are female. The cloths are collected from the entrepreneur's house, where instruction is given concerning the type of work to be done, and then they are taken home. When the work is complete, the cloths are returned to the entrepreneur's house where it is checked and the fee is paid. *Cap* work and the dyeing stage of the process are carried out at the home of the entrepreneur, as is the boiling out of the wax when all the dyeing is complete. The cap work and the boiling out are normally undertaken by men. Dyeing is sometimes done by a man, sometimes a woman.

An analysis of one batik enterprise in Olak Kemang showed that of 23 workers, nine were members of the family, two were described as adopted family members, nine were close neighbours, and three were from beyond the immediate area, having other links with the family. However, in the Malay culture of Seberang, villagers are nearly all related to one another by marriage if not by blood, and no clear distinction is made between friends and family. The relationship between entrepreneur and outworker in Jambi is perceived as a type of family relationship, which in many cases it is in fact as well as in perception.

The groups of *anak buah*, or followers, who call at an entrepreneur's house for outwork often correspond or overlap with groups who engage in co-operative activities (*gotong royong*) in the village. These groups perform a range of tasks together particularly in preparation for celebrations of various kinds, and will usually carry out the task in the house where the celebration is to take place. In the past, the planting and harvesting of rice were probably the most important tasks to be performed under the *gotong royong* system. Tasks involved today include the preparation and cooking of food for feasts, the making of artificial flowers for carrying in processions and the decoration of the festive site, the preparation of henna for applying to a bride's fingers and feet before a wedding and the making of paper baskets as gifts for guests at a name-giving ceremony. *Gotong royong* also applies to such modern developments as the connection of the water supply to houses in a district. Batik-making is in some ways a similar type of task to many of these simple handicrafts, and batik-workers will also work in each other's houses, sharing a wax stove and the child care between two or three women.

A batik outworker may obtain work from more than one entrepreneur, she may set up on her own, or she may move from one entrepreneur to another. This flexibility appears to contrast with the situation described by Rebecca Joseph in Central Java, where in the past, debt bondage was widespread in urban batik enterprises and even now, outworkers may become indebted to employers (1987b: 18-20). Boow's analysis of the historical development in organisation of the batik industry shows the origins of this patron-client relationship in the Javanese *prembé* system, where women from the *priyayi* (bureaucratic groups) or the aristocracy put out tulis work to client workers (1988:35). Another contrast is that in Seberang, the batikkers do not work fixed hours away from home in a workshop situation under supervision. Although this is not the only pattern of the industry in Java, it was the case in many enterprises of a similar scale to those in Jambi which I visited in Indramayu, Pekalongan and Lasem on the north coast of Java. It is also the case in the PKK project employing Javanese transmigrants in upriver Jambi. It does not fit in with the Malay approach, where workers choose their own pace and work is carried out in a context of socialisation.

## 9. Trading in cloth

Most of the batik produced in Seberang is in the form of women's sarung and selendang sets (*stel*), though the sale of lengths of cloth for making up into tailored clothing now makes up almost as much of the trade. Selendang are often made in the narrow Javanese size, since Jambi batik is usually sold for use in festive occasions, when selendang are worn folded across the shoulder. Larger selendang, known as *kerudung*, are worn by women of mature years as headcloths, which hang loosely over their shoulders, but can be pulled across the lower part of the face for propriety if strangers are present. In the past, batik was also made up into *baju kurung* (women's tunics). In recent years, batik has begun to be used for making into men's shirts, which are worn for semi-formal occasions such as weddings and name-giving ceremonies. Batik was worn by men in the past as headcloths and made up into trousers. Most items are commissioned directly from the purchasers, who call in at the entrepreneur's house to choose a design and colour scheme. However, in 1989 the establishment of the PKK *sanggar* (workshop/showroom) in the administrative district of the city, Telanaipura, offered opportunities of further sales. Initially established as a training centre by the Departemen Perindustrian, the *sanggar* soon took on the functions of showroom, sales outlet and centre of supply for equipment and materials. More recently, a new PKK showroom has been built in the Seberang village of Mudung Laut. This too provides an outlet for the products of Seberang batik-makers.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Textiles in Use

#### 1. Approaches

In his inaugural lecture in 1935, Prof J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong argued that the Malay archipelago could be regarded as one field for anthropological study, a suggestion which has resulted in a number of useful comparative studies (Josselin de Jong, J.P.B. de, 1977). Niessen, in support of de Jong's view, proposed a number of ways in which textiles in Indonesia relate to the "core elements" identified by Josselin de Jong. The first core element she describes relates to the practice in matrilineal cross-cousin marriage whereby "wife-givers" present "female" goods to wife-takers, who reciprocate with "male" goods. Niessen points out that in weddings, the bride's side are often regarded as life-givers, superior to the wife-takers, to whom they give textiles. This phenomenon has been remarked on in relation to the Batak (Niessen 1984:67), where male goods are known as *piso* (knife) and female goods as *ulos* (cloth), in Lamalera (Barnes 1989:880) where tusks are the gift from the man's side, in Sumba (Adams, 1969:55), among the Sa'dan Toraja of South Sulawesi (Nooy-Palm 1993) and in West Timor, where the groom gives buffalo, cattle, money and silver (Yeager and Jacobson 1996:44). Where practice departs from this model, as in the Bird's Head region of Irian Jaya, the explanation has been that no weaving was practised in the area, and that the imported textiles given by both 'bride-takers' and 'bride-givers', but mainly the former, were regarded as male goods (Gittinger 1979:25). Though very applicable to the traditional asymmetric alliance systems of some Indonesian societies such as the Batak, this idea of Niessen's is rather sweeping when applied to Indonesian marriage systems as a whole. Matrilineal cross-cousin marriage and lineal systems have of course a limited distribution in Indonesia, and the majority of people belong to cognatic societies with no prescriptive or preferential rules for the choice of marriage partners. The Jambi Malays belong to this latter category of cognatic kinship groups, and they do not associate the gifts passed between the sides at marriage with a clan system. While they have terms for the man's group and the woman's group at marriage they are referring to groups of cognatic kin who are seen as equal, and who will form a



new kinship category as a consequence of the marriage. Niessen finds evidence of the second of Josselin de Jong's core elements, that of double unilineal descent in her study of Toba Bataks in that the inheritance of cloth passes down the female line despite the predominance of patrilineal descent in Toba. In Jambi I found no evidence of lineal descent, let alone double unilineal descent.

The third of Josselin de Jong's core elements is socio-cosmic dualism, which "forms the nucleus of an all-embracing classificatory system" and this is explored by Niessen in relation to textiles. While there are elements of such a dichotomy at work in Jambi in the opposition of man and woman, heaven and earth, day and night and so on, both in textile production and use and in a wider context, these ideas occur in societies all over the world and seem to be universals. The "fundamental dichotomy of human society into two descent groups" which Josselin de Jong identifies as part of this dualism is theoretically contentious and anyway is not in evidence in Jambi. It would thus be a mistake to make assumptions based on Josselin de Jong's theory in approaching the textiles of a cognatic society such as Jambi.

In discussing his final core element, Josselin de Jong pointed to the resilience of Indonesian cultures with respect to foreign cultural influences and its ability to incorporate them and give them an indigenous interpretation. In itself, it is a very broad comment such as could probably be made about any society with external trading relationships, and it is not clear that where it is true it lends weight to the theory that Indonesia should be regarded as one field of ethnographic study. However it is certainly true that Jambi is syncretic in its adoption and adaptation of materials, designs and cultural practices from overseas, and these factors add a useful dimension to a study of Jambi textiles.

Other writers have sought additional common features in Indonesian textiles from their own observations. Gittinger remarked on the frequent depiction of social transition as ritual voyage, and the proliferation of ship and tree symbols (Gittinger 1974:3). Fischer (1979:11) remarked on the concept of unity which he saw expressed in the "sacred mountain" batiks of Java, in the "soul ship" cloths of South Sumatra and in the multi-figured warp ikats of Sumba. Kahlenberg, although recognising distinctive local styles and symbolism, says in general of

Indonesia that: "the widespread ancestor cult is reflected in extravagant funeral and death rites. Special garments that contain symbols to guide the spirit to the next life are buried with the corpse"(1977:8). A number of exhibitions and publications have brought together for consideration textiles from throughout the Indonesian archipelago, finding common elements in their techniques, motifs and uses (Kahlenberg 1977; Gittinger 1979; Fischer 1979; Hitchcock 1991). In addition, two important conferences brought together the work of scholars studying Indonesian textiles (Gittinger 1989; Volger & Welck 1990).

This comparative approach is useful, but may tend to lead commentators to misinterpret what are assumed to be common factors, and to pay too little attention to differences. Textile use in Jambi does not fit easily into all these patterns. For example, the only cloth buried with a corpse is the *setengah kayu* (about 15 metres) of the *kain kafat*, the plain white cloth wound around it, and there are certainly no symbols on it designed to guide ancestor spirits. I neither saw nor heard any evidence that ritual gifts exchanged at weddings in Jambi corresponded with the male/female dichotomy reported elsewhere in Indonesia. Gifts in Jambi marriage pass almost entirely from groom's family to bride's family. Nor is there any sense in Jambi of what Heringa suggests: that local textiles depicting the fruit of the earth are the bride's contribution and imported textiles are the man's, nor that songket is contributed as male goods (including as it does, metal) and batik as female goods (cloth) (1994a:33). The man's side (*pihak laki-laki*) gives both songket and batik in Jambi. No metal goods or ivory tusks are involved, and all emphasis is on the equality of the two sides, with no sense of the superiority of the woman's side. Mary Hunt Kahlenberg (1977:26) notes that in Palembang the usual pattern of the bride's family giving textiles to the groom's side is reversed, with the groom's side supplying the bride's side with at least three types of cloth. She interprets this as the use of textiles to indicate wealth. In Jambi, where the *pihak laki-laki* provides cloth for the bride, the usual exchange item from the bride's side (*pihak perempuan*) is cakes. For example, the sign that a suitor's proposal has been accepted is a gift of three cakes from the *pihak perempuan*. Later, the *pihak laki-laki* return the plates on which the cakes were presented, along with one length of cloth for making a dress or shirt (*bahan baju*), which is given to the woman. At the *antar belanjo*, twelve cakes are given to the *pihak laki-laki* in exchange for their gifts of textiles. Two weeks later, the

plates on which these cakes have been carried away are returned by the pihak laki-laki along with more cloth, two kilos of *tepung gandum* (flour), 50 eggs, six tins of milk, four kilos of sugar, one or two kilos of margarine, and six coconuts.<sup>1</sup> These ingredients will be used to prepare for the wedding feast, or *pesta penganten*. Whilst it is clearly desirable for the wedding gifts to be as many and as luxurious as possible, they are for the most part all functional, whether in providing supplies for the marriage feast or clothing, furniture and household goods for later use. The textiles should be regarded in this context, not merely as a display of wealth.

In exploring textiles from particular parts of Indonesia, some writers have looked outside the archipelago for parallels, and this may be a useful approach in examining textile use in Jambi. That there is a relationship between Indian bandhani and Sumatran *pelangi* cloths<sup>2</sup> is immediately obvious, and the influence of the silk patola cloth from Gujarat on textiles produced in the Indonesian archipelago has been widely explored (Bühler 1959; Guy 1989; Barnes 1989). The resemblances between the bandhani of Rajasthan and Gujarat and the *maa* and *sarita* cloths of Toraja have been less thoroughly examined (see Bühler et al 1980 plate 76a and 76b). Gittinger's comparison of South Sumatran and Thai textiles has raised several interesting parallels in design and function which she relates to a common Buddhist heritage (1989). Other writers have started to adopt a perspective which takes more account of external influences including Islam, which has in the past been neglected (e.g. Vuldy 1987; Maxwell 1990). In Jambi, it may be as helpful to look at the textiles in relation to their Malay cultural context, as to look for similarities with practices found elsewhere in Indonesia. Comparison with Chinese and Indian models, as well as with those of the Middle East, may also shed some light. In particular, Jambi's history suggests that it might be a mistake to look for parallel practices in batik use in Java simply because there is also a tradition of batik-making there.

## 2. Cloths as currency

In most parts of Indonesia, cloths used in a ritual context are produced locally.

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<sup>1</sup> One informant presented these quantities as the norm; they may vary according to circumstances.

<sup>2</sup> *Pelangi* literally means 'rainbow', but in Sumatran textiles the term is used to refer to multi-coloured silk cloths decorated using tying and sewing to resist the dye.

There may be a special relationship between the structure, design or motifs of the cloth which relate to the ritual context in which it is used. In Jambi, although cloths are used in ritual, for the most part these are not of local origin, but are purchased. The special properties required for ritual cloth are likely to arise from its place of origin, the number of cloths used, the positioning of the cloth, the way it is used or the way in which it is folded rather than the actual nature of the cloth itself. Of less importance but at times significant are the colours, motifs or design of the cloth itself. This fact probably relates to Jambi's long history as a trading centre and the value accorded to luxury overseas cloths presented as gifts.

Most Malay kingdoms were centred on a point on a river from which the king could control trade. Royal power depended on the ability to control the supply of products from the upstream regions to external traders and the supply of goods from external traders to his upstream subjects. This was the case in Jambi. Highly desirable forest products, such as wax, resin, ivory and incense, were gathered by people in the interior and collected by agents for the king. In return, upstream people were supplied with metal goods, cloth, salt and rice. Later, when spices were in high demand, pepper plantations were established and these increased the wealth of the Jambi sultan. From very early times, fine cloth was an integral part of the reciprocal arrangement between the Jambi sultan and his people. It was an item of exchange with intrinsic value. As late as 1905, the Dutch assistant resident Helfrich recorded that textiles formed part of the fine which was due if anyone transgressed the rules of the village in upstream areas (Helfrich 1904:995). The practice still persists among the forest-dwelling Kubu people of Upper Jambi, where cloths are also used as stores of wealth and as a medium of internal exchange (Sandbukt 1991:110). Cloth acts as a kind of ritual currency in other contexts. In upriver society, cloth forms part of the fee which is given to the *dukun beranak* (midwife) after the birth of a child.

Textiles from overseas are still imported, from Java, the Middle East and Japan especially. However it is only cloth from Mecca which is of high status merely because of its place of origin. Songket is bought from Palembang, and this expensive gold brocade cloth is prestigious for wearing at weddings and adat ceremonies. It is still produced in Jambi, though it is more expensive there. Such imports are no longer channelled through the regional power, and no longer

function as part of the upstream/downstream relationship except in the case of the Kubu, who continue to collect rattan and other forest products to trade with Malays for items such as cloth.

One of the items which Chau Ju-Kua mentioned as being imported into Jambi by foreign traders in the thirteenth century was silk gauze (Hirth and Rockhill 1964:61). Gauze is still used for certain ceremonial occasions, and may be laid between the body of a deceased person and the *tudung jenazah*, the cloth used as the topmost covering over a corpse when it is being carried to the graveside. A length of gauze often surrounds the edge of the baby's mattress at the name-giving ceremony, and it is used on the same occasion for draping as a curtain on the child's crib (see Fig 4.1) Gauze is also pinned across the carpet hung on the wall behind the bridal couple at the *akad nikah* ceremony, when a marriage is formalised in the presence of an Islamic official. These curtains are known as *kelambu seleyer*. (Fig 4.2). In all cases the cloths of gauze seem to represent an opening to the next world, perhaps corresponding to some degree with the *pelangi* cloth which in Palembang ceremonies, according to Heringa, corresponds with the rainbow at the end of which the ancestors dwell (1994a:35). In any event, gauze cloths could not be woven in Jambi, requiring such fine threads as they do, and have probably always been obtained through trading.

Any cloths which are obtained from Mecca are of intrinsic value in Jambi. Tufted carpets and tapestry kilims are frequently brought back from the Haj. Shawls from Mecca are used as *kerudung* or headcloths (Fig 4.4). Smaller cloths may serve as coverings for gifts in wedding processions, and larger ones for laying over the bodies of the dead. One elderly woman showed me a complete set of women's clothing including a *yashmak*, white and covered with embroidery, which had been brought back from the Haj by her grandmother, and which was still treasured by her family.

### 3. Costume

There have been considerable changes in everyday wear since independence. Younger Jambi men have adopted western dress for daily attire, although the old-style *sarung* is still worn in the evenings, for the mid-day Friday prayer

meeting at the mosque and for adat occasions. Some younger women, too, wear skirts, and even jeans are now acceptable wear for teenage girls on occasion. Despite this, the traditional sarung is still widely worn around the Seberang villages and older women always wear a sarung on the lower part of their body, and often another over their head. On one particular occasion, village girls and older women will deliberately dress in the style of their grandparents. This is on the night of the *pesta penganten*, when they come to the bride's mother's house for the *pesta malam*, to see the bride and groom sitting in state. Nowadays the couple will often wear western bridal costumes for this part of the ceremony. The visitors, however, act out an archaic scene, covering their heads, shoulders and faces with *kerudung* or sarungs so that only their eyes are visible, and hover in the doorway, peering in and sometimes giggling as if there is something illicit about their presence. These are girls who walk about in T-shirts and sarungs during the day with their heads uncovered. They say they are re-enacting how it was *zaman dulu*, in the old days.

Besides the use of the *kerudung*, the extra-large headcloth which older women sometimes still use to cover their heads and faces, customary dress in Jambi differs in many other respects from that worn in Java. The *kain panjang* is rarely worn in Jambi by women, and never by men. The *kemben*, or breastcloth, of Java does not occur at all in Jambi, and was probably not used after the introduction of Islam, if at all.<sup>3</sup> There is frequent reference to the "sewn shirt" in Jambi adat pantun, suggesting that tailored clothing is a long-standing feature of dress in this culture. The *baju kurung*, or woman's tunic, is not now made from batik, though it was in the past (Fig 4.3). Again, this is a Malay garment, which Sheppard says dates back at least 500 years (1972:116). The *kebaya*, probably modelled on a style worn by the Portuguese in Malacca in the 16th century, is less common, and not part of adat costume in Jambi.

On special occasions there are specific items of costume, and these differ for men and women. For the akad nikah, the groom wears a checked *sarung kain Bugis*, and over his shoulders a black and white checked cloth "from Mecca" (Fig 4.5). Festive dress for women consists usually of a *kebaya* or *baju kurung* and *sarung*,

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<sup>3</sup> Sheppard reports that before the founding of Malacca, women in Patani and Kelantan "wore an unsewn sarung wound horizontally round their busts just below the armpits", and that this style survives in some remote areas of Kelantan (1972:113).

and a decorative shawl over the head (Fig 4.6). At one syukuran I attended, the baby's mother wore a green baju kurung and selendang in *kain jumputan* (tie-dyed cloth) embroidered with gold thread and a large *sanggul* (artificial hairpiece in the shape of a bun) with a row of *melati* (jasmine) flowers made of cloth above it. Heringa implies that the baby's mother always wears green, the colour of the Prophet, on such occasions (1994a:33), though this is not always the case in my experience.<sup>4</sup> Men nowadays often wear shirts made from Jambi batik for semi-formal occasions such as this, and a black *kopiah* (rimless cap) (Fig 4.7).

Correct or appropriate attire is very important as an expression of status and respect, and reference is made in adat pantun to certain aspects of dress. Elders should wear "their sarungs smoothly wrapped, with their headcloths coiled round their hats". Their headcoverings should be "in tiers" and their shawls "wide".<sup>5</sup> This reference probably refers respectively to men, who wear a headcloth wound around the head, and women, who wear a cloth draped over their head and shoulders.<sup>6</sup> The width of the Jambi shawl (usually between 90 cm and a metre) differentiates it from the Javanese selendang, usually about 60 cm wide. In Jambi, the selendang is not used for carrying, as it is in Java.

For pesta penganten<sup>7</sup>, name-giving ceremonies and circumcisions, adat costume is worn. Whether or not it was in the past, the features of this are now relatively fixed. For a bridegroom, a red velvet jacket and trousers (*cingge*), a songket *selempang*<sup>8</sup> and a short sarung are worn, with a type of hat known as a *lacak* on the head. Like the jacket and trousers, this is made of red velvet embroidered with gold thread. It has one large peak worn on the right and two smaller peaks worn on the left side of the head, referred to by some as *tanduk kambing* (goat's horns) (Fig 4.8). It is sometimes said that there should be only two peaks which must be of different heights, with the taller peak worn at the front and the shorter behind, but this was not the practice in Olak Kemang (Depdikbud

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<sup>4</sup> If green clothing is worn on such occasions, Jambi people normally regard it as symbolising youth and freshness rather than relating it to Islam.

<sup>5</sup> These phrases are taken from a transcript of verses recited at the wedding of Susi Dianty Alamsyah and Ir Azwardi Azhar in May 1991.

<sup>6</sup> There is similar attention to dress in the traditions of the Malay peninsula. Sriwa Raja in the *Sejarah Melayu* takes enormous care over the tying of his sarung and his headcloth (Brown 1952:127), and Tun Hasan had 20 or 30 headcloths ready tied on blocks to match his suit (ibid:135).

<sup>7</sup> The *pesta penganten* is the marriage feast which takes place some time after the akad nikah and at which guests are entertained.

<sup>8</sup> Similar to a selendang and worn diagonally across the chest.

1988/89:92). The costume in upriver regions may have differed to some extent. According to an account of custom in the Tebo area, the headdress there must be from cloth woven in Jambi, and the jacket must be embroidered with *puncak rebung*<sup>9</sup> at the end of each sleeve. The trousers are described as Celano gunting Cino (i.e. Chinese short trousers) with a red songket woven *amben*, which was probably a sash worn across the shoulder; the kris should be placed in a waistband of *kain tenunan asli* (locally woven cloth) with *jambul-jambul* (metal tassels) (Ibrahim 1982:34). Brides also wear songket; a red sarung and selendang. The baju kurung is normally of red velvet embroidered with gold thread. A silk *pelangi* sash hangs from the belt on either side of the buckle (Fig 4.9). Sometimes there is a multi-coloured garland of woollen pompoms also hanging from the belt. In Tebo the bride wears a *selendang rawo*, with its ends decorated with gold tassels (Ibrahim 1982:34). Similar costume is worn by the small girls who perform the "sekapur sirih" dance which accompanies the presentation of a box of sirih to highly honoured guests. The dance is sometimes performed outside the bride's house as the groom and his procession arrive for the pesta penganten.

At some prestigious weddings, *pencak silat*<sup>10</sup> performers lead the groom's procession. Their presence is required to drive away malicious influences, their dance (*tari Melayu*) simulating the motions of sword cuts. Sometimes swords are used. Silat dancers generally wear a black *baju* and trousers. Black is associated with silat and with magic power. For ceremonies, the silat dancers wear a batik *samping* (short waist-cloth) and *ikat kepala* (Fig 4.10). The procession always includes a group of boy singers/dancers followed by a group of men also singing and beating drums (*kompongan*). These last two groups are hired for the occasion. The men's singing and drumming is followed by the boys' singing and dancing (accompanied by the drumming) alternately, after which they process forwards for a minute or so, then stop and perform again. The boy dancers and male drummers wear matching baju and trousers, usually of satin and of some colour other than black. Batik *samping* and headcloths similar to those worn by the *pencak silat* performers complete their costumes.

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<sup>9</sup> *Puncak rebung* (lit: tips of bamboo shoots) are triangular designs which appear as decorative motifs in a range of textiles, wood carvings and other items in Jambi and elsewhere in South-East Asia.

<sup>10</sup> *Pencak silat* is a type of self-defence art in which the stylised movements of sword-play are performed as if in a dance.



For the syukuran ceremony in Seberang villages, a male baby is usually dressed in a lacak, though without the tanduk kambing, and a red velvet jacket embroidered at the cuffs and trimmed elsewhere, corresponding with the groom's attire at a wedding, i.e. in the style of royal clothing (Fig 4.11). At a boy's circumcision, a similar mode of dress is employed. For the pesta, the boy is dressed in royal (red velvet with gold embroidery) costume, complete with lacak (Fig 4.12) In this photograph, the boy is wearing a *teratai dada* (lit. water lily/lotus) around his neck. This velvet collar resembles the cloud collar once worn at the Chinese court and it is a common feature of adat costume worn by bride and groom at the pesta penganten. This style, with a *baju kurung tanggung* underneath it, is more common than the open jacket worn by the groom in Fig 4.8, a style which is thought to have been introduced by Sultan Taha.<sup>11</sup> The flower of the water lily itself is also known as *bunga seroja*<sup>12</sup>, or *bunga tunjung*.<sup>13</sup>

Even after death, different cloths are used for men and for women. If the deceased is a woman, a *telkung* is put on her head before burial; if a man, a *serban* (turban). Both of these are white.

Especially in upriver regions there are additional ceremonies, such as the investiture of a new chief, where adat costume is worn. These adat ceremonies have now been adopted under the new administrative system, so that the appointment of a new *kabupaten* head is accompanied by quasi-adat ceremonies and costume, as is the appointment of a new provincial governor.<sup>14</sup> Men in high status positions in these areas wear a headcloth, or *destar*, and a sarung woven in a checked design of many colours, with a kepala and lower border of gold supplementary weft. Usually there are small gold songket motifs in the centres of the squares (Fig 4.13).

Costume appropriate for some groups in Jambi province has now been officially

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<sup>11</sup> See Maxwell 1990:412 note 27.

<sup>12</sup> Marsden (1811/1986:107) gives it as *nymphaea nelumbo*.

<sup>13</sup> The water lily flower itself may have had some special significance in the past. In front of the wedding throne (pelaminan) there are usually two constructions known as *dian seroja*. I was told that these were once made entirely of wax, but nowadays of paper and wire, with a candle inserted at the top. The lighting of the candle was said to symbolise the start of a new life.

<sup>14</sup> Each Indonesian province is divided into a number of administrative districts known as kabupaten. In Jambi Province there are six.

recorded as part of the Proyek Inventarisasi dan Dokumentasi Kebudayaan Daerah.<sup>15</sup> While the costumes depicted in the report correspond to some degree with what is customarily worn, there are problems with the interpretation of the data. The first part of the report of the project presents details of costumes worn traditionally by clan groupings (*suku*) in the Kerinci district. Other descriptions, however, relate not to clans but to present-day administrative districts, for example the two kabupaten of Sarolangun-Bangko (Sarko) and Bungo Tebo. Inhabitants of the areas close to the lower reaches of the Batanghari river are referred to as "Suku Melayu", and their costume is dealt with as a separate item. Suku indicated as inhabiting other areas of the province in the map accompanying the report are not dealt with. The documentation is therefore incomplete and inconsistent, and it is not clear whether traditional costume differences were uniformly associated with districts, clans or allegiance to the sultan. Although the boundaries of present-day kabupaten are coterminous with areas with which local people might now identify, they are artificial divisions based on administrative districts delineated by the Dutch. Villages belonging to each of the twelve traditional groupings under the sultanate (*bangsa*) were not divided into clearly distinguishable districts but were interspersed along the river banks in an irregular pattern (see map in Mennes 1932). There is no evidence that these bangsa differentiated themselves consciously or otherwise in terms of their adat costume.

While the results of the project were based on field research, both the research and the presentation of the findings were likely to have been influenced by the need to follow current protocol and seek the co-operation and approval of the administrative leader of the various kabupaten at each stage. It may be that the costumes described for Sarolangun-Bangko and Bungo-Tebo are an amalgam of data found in those districts and although the overlap between them is evident, the implication that traditionally costume acted as a marker of regional origin is almost certainly false.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Project for the Inventory and Documentation of Regional Culture.

<sup>16</sup> In recent times the colour yellow, previously reserved for royalty has come to be deemed appropriate for the kabupaten of Tanjung Jabung. This clearly modern invention of a tradition has come about through the need for each kabupaten to be represented in processions, dance performances and similar occasions.

#### 4. Folding

How cloths are folded has clearly been an important part of textile use in Jambi in the past, and although few villagers nowadays claim to know the significance of the ways of folding, the practice is continued for a number of ritual occasions, with at least one older woman in each village usually skilled in the process.

Most important of these occasions is the "*antar belanjo*" (lit. bringing of the shopping)<sup>17</sup> or "*nampan duabelas*" (lit. twelve trays) which takes place between a fortnight and a month before the pesta penganten, when a wedding is formally finalised. The central element of the antar belanjo is the procession in which the groom's party takes food and household equipment to the bride's house (Fig 4.14). The gifts normally include a mattress, sofa, bed, cloths for clothing, make-up, soap, cooking utensils, rice and meat, as well as money to help to pay for the wedding party. The gifts carried in the procession are accompanied by presents of fruit, snacks and spices which also have a decorative function. Traditionally, a container of sirih ingredients (*cerano*) is the first item in the procession (Fig 4.15), followed by a box of money. The box of money is wrapped in a carefully folded cloth, which may be one brought back from Mecca, and sometimes a special cloth is borrowed from a neighbour. One informant showed me how she would fold a square cloth for this purpose. The four corners are folded into the centre, thus creating a smaller square. The cloth is then turned over, and the four new corners folded into the centre. If the cloth is large enough, the process is repeated a third time. There are other methods of folding such a cover, according to the whim of the woman preparing the cloth.

The twelve trays originally would have contained fruit, flowers and spices. Nowadays there are usually more than twelve trays, and though some will be for the traditional items, no-one keeps count of the number. In addition to the twelve trays referred to in the name of the ceremony, other items are brought. Among the most important is a number of cloths.<sup>18</sup> These gift cloths are also

<sup>17</sup> In Peninsular Malaysia this ceremony is known as Menghantar Belanja (Sheppard 1972:100).

<sup>18</sup> It is interesting to note that cloths also form the major item of exchange in marriage negotiations among the Kubu people, the forest dwellers of the upriver regions. If a suitor seeks to marry a girl, he often runs away with one of her belongings. To settle the ensuing dispute 30 pieces of cloth must be handed over. A properly arranged marriage would only involve a brideprice of ten sheets of cloth, but it is to the advantage of the bride's family to refuse such an arranged marriage, and force the imposition of the fine. (Sandbukt 1991:114-5).

folded into a variety of shapes. One is normally formed into the shape of a goose (*angso*) with either one or two heads; if the latter, this symbolises the unity of the couple (Fig 4.16). Sheppard illustrates a bird folded in a similar way into the shape of a bird, but given to the bridegroom in peninsular Malaysia (1972:100). Other shapes are a fan, a boat, a bird (sometimes with a nest), flowers, a mangosteen with its calyx and a cabbage. Some suggest there are twelve shapes, though in practice there are not usually as many as this in any one procession. The term for folding cloths into a concertina shape is *lipatan silo* (Fig 4.17). The cloths include batik sarungs and selendangs, songket and towels. It may take as long as ten minutes for one cloth to be folded, a process which closely resembles origami. Sometimes the cloth is supported by paper and some of the shapes may be pinned or stitched when the folding is complete to keep their shape. However, no cloth is ever cut.

The folding of headcloths for officials in the sultanates of the Malay peninsula has been discussed by Sheppard, who suggests that the shapes are specific to particular ranks and particular places (1972:110-113). In Jambi, headcloths (*destar*) for upriver chiefs are also folded, and the lacak worn by a groom for the pesta penganten echoes the shape of such headcloths. In Olak Kemang and the Seberang villages I could find no-one who knew the significance of the folds of the headcloths and it is likely that if such knowledge survives, it is in the upriver regions where the culture was less affected by external forces such as the Dutch. However, I did meet one man, Pak Anwar Saidi, who still kept the headcloth passed down to him from his wife's grandfather who came from a Seberang village and had been a *hulubalang*, a village chief. The four corners of the cloth had all been used, two forming the peak at the front, one a smaller peak to the right hand side and one formed a tail hanging on the left side towards the rear of the head (Fig 4.18). Such headcloths were thought to be worn by all *hulubalang* at one time. Similar headcloths can be seen in Fig 4.13. Later, at a prestigious wedding in Telanaipura, an area of Jambi city to the south of the river, I saw several elderly men who were wearing such headcloths as part of adat costume (Figs 4.19 and 4.20). In the collection of Jambi Museum there is a headcloth folded into a much flatter shape with no peaks (Fig 4.21). This is closer to the shape of the Minangkabau *saluak*, and may have belonged to an upriver chief.

In general in daily life, women are quite particular about how cloths should be folded: when I folded up cloths myself on other occasions, the women often undid them and folded them again. The preferred method of folding a sarung or selendang for everyday storage seems to correspond with the method described in Gittinger and Lefferts (1992:98) for folding a Buddhist monk's robe in Thailand, with no exposed edges. Folding of cloths for ceremonial prestation differs, of course, but a similar principle may underlie it.

## 5. Number

Special numbers crop up time and again in Jambi customs. In addition to the twelve trays just described, the antar belanjo ceremony involves twelve cakes which are the reciprocal gift given to the groom's party. This is all that they receive. The nine gold chains (*rantai sembilan*) worn round the neck by a bride are said to represent the nine rivers which shaped the Jambi kingdom ("sepucuk Jambi sembilan lurah"). Three is another number which is of significance. When negotiations for a wedding have been concluded, the bride's family (*pihak perempuan*) signal their acceptance of the offer by handing over three kinds of cakes: *kue baulu*, *kue lapis regit* and *kue masuba*. When a bride takes her *batangas* (steam bath) the night before the pesta penganten, incense would in the past have been carried around the rolled up mat three times. When a body is prepared for burial, each part of the body must be washed three times with each of three preparations: soap and water, the juice extracted from fresh bedaro leaves, and finally a solution of crushed camphor (*kapur barus*). After the burial, there are three more ceremonies when men and women gather to read the Qur'an together as a group. These ceremonies take place three days, seven days and forty days after the burial, each of these numbers carrying some significance, now forgotten.

The most common number associated with ritual is the number seven. According to legend, metal from seven sources was used to create Kris Si Ginjei, the kris which Orang Kayo Hitam brought back from Mataram and which as part of the royal regalia ensured the independence and invulnerability of the Jambi ruler. In the past, a baby's head would be shaved at seven days old, and the name-

giving ceremony performed at forty days old.<sup>19</sup> For the name-giving ceremony, each of seven honoured guests will take a bunch of *daun setawar* leaves from a tray, dip it in a bowl of *tepung tawar* and dab the baby's head with it.<sup>20</sup> Next he will take a pair of scissors, cut off a lock of the baby's hair and push it through a hole in the top of a young coconut (*kelapa muda*, or *dogan*).<sup>21</sup> The coconut, scissors and other items are carried on a tray from guest to guest while the father carries the baby. The coconut is adorned with an embroidered skirt-like cloth around its middle, and above that a frill made of cloth (Fig 4.23).<sup>22</sup> In addition the coconut is decorated with seven flowers, of which one will be presented to each of the seven special guests.

The number of cloths used on certain occasions is also of significance. The body of a dead person is carried first to the mosque and then to the graveside on a *ringgo-ringgo*, a frame which used to be made of bamboo, though metal ones are used nowadays. On the *ringgo-ringgo* is a *kasur* (mattress) and on this, seven *kain panjang* are laid. They must be of different types, and can be plain or batik, but must not depict birds, which would steal the soul of the departed when it arrived in the next world. On top of these seven cloths the body is placed in its white body wrap, which will have been tied round five times if the deceased is an adult (i.e. once at each end and then three times along the length) or three times if a child.

On top of the frame three *kain panjang* are placed, then two white cloths (the *kain panjang* I was shown were Yogya or Solo *soga* designs; the white cloths had embroidered borders). A green or black velvet cloth embroidered with holy writing is laid on the top (Fig 4.22). Then a scarf is tied on the end to indicate whether the deceased was a man or a woman. This is a *sal* (shawl). The man's scarf is from Mecca, the standard Arab checked design but in any colour. The

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<sup>19</sup> These two ceremonies are part of Malay tradition and are referred to in the *Sejarah Melayu* (Brown 1952:171.).

<sup>20</sup> These guests are all respected men, either from within the family or family friends, an Islamic teacher for example. At one such *syukuran*, which took place in the home, the ceremony was repeated by a group of women in the *ruang tengah* after the male guests had left.

<sup>21</sup> I was told that there were two reasons for using the coconut: firstly, every part of a coconut is useful, and thus the coconut symbolises the usefulness which the baby will have in the community when it grows up; secondly, coconut juice is cool, and thus symbolises that the baby must have a cool head (i.e. not be quick to anger) when it grows up.

<sup>22</sup> In name-giving ceremonies in Bali, a changeling coconut takes the place of the child in some festivals, and is wrapped in *wangsul/gedogan* cloths (Hauser-Schlaubin et al 1991:67).

woman's scarf is white and may just be a plain square or may have a coloured border.

Layers of cloths are also significant at a baby's *syukuran*, the name-giving ceremony at which the child is welcomed into the community. The term "*syukuran*" means "thanksgiving"; the term "*cukuran*" means "shaving"; and there is confusion over which is the correct word for the ceremony. In Jambi the child's head is not shaved, but locks of hair are cut. Not all families will arrange a *syukuran* for their child. It can be an expensive occasion, and one family told me that was why they hadn't had one for their daughter. Across the river in the less traditional part of the city, *syukuran* ceremonies are usually held in the home, with just close family as guests. For a full ceremony in Olak Kemang, a crib is constructed, inside which is usually a pile of folded sarungs.<sup>23</sup> I was told that for a girl there should be 14 and for a boy seven: *tujuh lapis langit, tujuh lapis bumi* (lit. seven layers sky, seven layers earth). Informants were unsure of the significance of this phrase, but clearly the cloths represent the seven layers of earth and the seven layers of the sky which were once believed to be constituent parts of the cosmos. Indeed there were seven layers in the crib at a ceremony I went to where a boy was being named, and at a *syukuran* for a girl baby, there were 15 layers in her crib (Fig 4.24). The extra layer may represent the world of humans, with seven above and seven below.

Until the *syukuran*, babies are laid on the floor on a special pile of five batiks, often with a piece of songket above these layers. When guests arrive, a special covering is used consisting of two parts: one for the body (*tudung badan*), and one for the head (*tudung kepala*). These are most often made of pink satin nowadays, though there are less expensive types made of embroidered cotton (Fig 4.25) The body covering is shaped like the front part of a dress, with a yoke at the top stitched to a slightly gathered apron below it. The example in the photograph is made of one piece, with smocking replacing the yoke. The head covering does not, in fact, rest on the forehead, but lies behind the baby's head on the pillow. It consists of a long rectangular piece of fabric with a drawstring inside one long edge. This is pulled up, making a semi-circle which surrounds the baby's head. When the special satin coverings are not being used, two batik sarungs may be used, arranged in a similar shape (Fig 4.26).

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<sup>23</sup> It seems that the baby does not actually lie in the crib at all.

How significant the layers are, and where the significance originated are difficult questions to answer. One of the traditional cakes presented by the pihak perempuan to the pihak laki-laki, both on acceptance of the marriage proposal (*melamar*) and in reciprocating the antar belanjo, is the *kue lapis regit*, the layer cake. It may simply be that a layer cake is relatively simple to make in a society where cooking is generally done on a wood fire. But layers occur in so many contexts, that it is hard to avoid the conclusion that at the root of these customs once lay an intention to represent the layers of which the universe is still thought to consist. It may be that the "tiers" already mentioned as required in Jambi adat for an elder's headdress are another manifestation of this concept.

At the akad nikah a place is constructed of layers of folded cloth on which the bride and groom will sit. The cloths are normally batiks, which may be folded into triangles to form an eight-pointed star, known as the "*bunga matahari*", or sunflower (Fig 4.27). I was told that in the past, the star would be seven layers thick, thus containing 56 cloths, with the "petals" arranged in a circle, so that all the tips of the cloths would be revealed. In the wedding of a poorer couple which I witnessed, two cloths were folded into squares and laid at an angle of 45 degrees on top of one another, thus making an eight-pointed star. Two such stars were formed, one for the bride and one for the groom. In the centre of one present-day bunga matahari which I saw was a songket sarung, with its corners folded in to the centre, turned over and the corners folded in again twice. The groom sat on this while pantun were exchanged between elders of each family and mediating village elders. The bride remained in her room until she was called out to sign the marriage documents. In the past, this would have been done by her father, and she would not be present for the akad nikah at all. A photograph by Tassilo Adam taken in the Jambi region in the early 1920s shows a bride and groom sitting on two tall piles of woven mats.<sup>24</sup>

The different levels of the steps of the *pelaminan*, on which the bridal couple sit at the pesta penganten, must derive from the levels in the Malay throne room which reflected the status of those who were allowed to sit on them (Fig 4.28). In the same way, ordinary folk in Jambi have a *pelaminan* with three steps, whereas in the past the nobility would have five. Only the sultan is thought to have been

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<sup>24</sup> It is likely that this photograph was taken in the Kerinci district, where smaller mats of a similar type are still woven but are now used mainly as items to hang on the wall.



allowed seven steps to his wedding throne. It is likely that these levels which relate to rank once also related to closeness to the upper realm, though this concept is not current in Jambi today as far as I could see.

## 6. Protection

During pregnancy, many women wear a *cecokotan*, a waist band made of black cloth containing protective items. One of my informants had two. One, made by her husband's mother, was sewn into seven small and two long compartments containing an aromatic mixture called *kuku sine*. This consisted of a variety of strong-smelling spices known locally as *bang le*; *kencur*; *jeringo*; *bawang putih* and *bawang merah*. The second one was made by her great-grandmother and was thought to contain holy sentences from Al Qur'an. After the birth, the belt is put under the baby's pillow until it is about four months old. The cloth will then be kept for the next baby.

Embroidery with protective properties is hung over doorways at life crisis ceremonies, including the akad nikah, pesta penganten and syukuran. The embroideries are usually on red or yellow velvet, and the designs echo the designs of carved wooden panels found over the doorways of more elaborate nineteenth century houses. The motifs are largely floral or foliate, though occasionally a bird appears, and calligraphic designs in fretwork feature in a few houses. One family kept a pair of panels embroidered with the *shahada*, the Islamic profession of faith, which were hung over bedroom doorways on such occasions.

Cloths are often placed above the person to be protected. When a child is being taken to the mosque for the hair-cutting ceremony, and during the ceremony itself, the father has a piece of songket draped over his right shoulder shielding the baby's head (Fig 4.29). After a boy has been circumcised, a kain panjang, usually a Central Javanese court design, is used for a tent-like construction as he lies in bed. (Fig 4.30). In the upriver *asyeik* ceremony, a cloth is used in a similar way. The ceremony is an offering ceremony to ancestor spirits performed when someone wishes to be cured of sickness, or if they wish to conceive a child, find a marriage partner, increase the yield of their rice field or to give thanks if any of

the above have been achieved. The ceremony takes place after dark and is illuminated by torches. An offering is made to the ancestors consisting of white rice, yellow rice, black rice, eggs, boiled duck eggs, *lemang* (rice cooked in bamboo), *lepat* (sticky rice wrapped in banana leaves), banana, roast chicken and other ingredients, as well as a chew of betel and a cigarette.<sup>25</sup>

People taking part in the ceremony are first purified of evil spirits which may have led them to wrongdoing. Through songs and dancing, the spirits of the ancestors are invited to attend. If someone becomes possessed by a spirit it is a sign that the person's soul and body are not yet pure. Traditionally the participants in the ceremony consist of women aged about 40. They prepare the ingredients for the offering, and dance, beginning with slow movements, to the accompaniment of drums and tambourine. As the music quickens or slows down, so does the dance. The dancers form a circle. The patient is lain down in the middle of the circle, covered with a kain panjang and fumigated with incense called "Batangeh".<sup>26</sup> Then the dukun arrives and dances, uttering a magic formula. The dukun will then ask the spirit what mistake the person concerned has made. If the ancestor's spirit is a man, a man's voice will be heard; if a woman, a woman's voice will be heard. Directions as to the treatment required to cure the sickness or other problem will be given by the spirits/gods. The closing ceremony is called the "*Hulubalang Makan*" when ingredients are placed as a gift at a certain place determined by the dukun.

The cloth on which babies lie may also be for protection, possibly from *setan tanah*, or earth demons. The mattress used in a syukuran, as well as having an embroidered panel around its border, usually has a piece of songket on top of it, and perhaps a piece of old batik on top of that. The baby's hands and feet are covered with little white cotton coverings which enclose them, to stop the child from scratching itself but perhaps also to act as a barrier between it and the outside world. A bundle of handkerchiefs usually lies at the baby's side.

Items of great importance may also be wrapped in a special cloth for protection.

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<sup>25</sup> I did not witness this myself: this account draws closely on a description and photographs of the ceremony in: "Jambi: Alam Seni dan Budaya" produced by Biro Humas (Pub Pemda Tingkat I Jambi) 1990.

<sup>26</sup> Note the similarity to the word "batangas" which refers to the purifying steam bath which a bride undergoes before the pesta penganten.

An informant whose family is from Dusun Tuo on the upper reaches of the Tabir river to the west of Bangko told me that once a year, at *Leberan*, the kris belonging to the village is taken in a great ceremony attended by the whole village from the place where it is stored. It is unwrapped from a piece of very old cloth (he gave me a photograph of this cloth, which looks very much like an Indian *sembagi*<sup>27</sup>) and inspected. If it is rusty, the rice harvest will be bad; if clean, it is a good sign. The kris is then cleaned and purified with incense, then wrapped again and put away for another year. The ceremony is accompanied by the sacrifice of a buffalo.

## 7. Defining ritual spaces

Textiles are used in Jambi to define and decorate the space in which a ritual is to be performed. The bedroom in which a boy lies before and after his circumcision is normally decorated with silks and satins as well as flowers, though this is often because a *pesta penganten* is taking place at the same time. At the *akad nikah* ceremony, the wall behind the groom is normally hung with a carpet, and this may be decorated with flowers, nowadays usually artificial. On the floor, another carpet is laid, on top of which the star-shaped seat consisting of folded cloths is laid.

The *pelaminan* set up for the *pesta penganten* is nowadays constructed by semi-professionals, who prepare the bedroom, dress and make-up for the bride as well as setting up the *pelaminan*. This is raised on a number of steps, and is covered by a canopy. An embroidered pelmet (*ombak-ombak*) runs around the top from which hang models of pieces of fruit made in velvet embroidered with gold thread. One of these is a *belimbing* and another a *buah butun*, which was described to me as a fruit which grows in the Garden of Paradise. According to one of my oldest informants, at the back of the *pelaminan* there should be a *pagar tengalung*, 60 pieces of cloth woven into a fence with paper flowers attached where they intersect. Twelve pieces are hung straight at the back (*'langse duo anggo'*), while the others are diagonally stretched across the sides. If the family owns appropriate textiles, these will be incorporated, but prefabricated pillars covered with embroidered velvet are now often provided as part of the

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<sup>27</sup> *Sembagi* were long multi-coloured cotton cloths, decorated with the chintz technique. See Veldhuisen 1993 pp19-20.

service. The cloths of the pagar tengalung and the langse duo anggo define the throne space, occupied by the "royal" couple alone.<sup>28</sup>

In some ways, the crib prepared for a baby's name-giving ceremony corresponds with the pelaminan. The crib is surrounded by curtains, held back with embroidered curtain ties, and with flashing fairy lights hung around it, both of which are also common features of the pelaminan. Inside the crib is sometimes a piece of Arabic calligraphy in a frame, bearing the baby's name. There are four rectangular cushions, one on each side and two at the back, two *guling* (bolster-shaped cushions) with old *sulaman benang mas* (gold-thread embroidery) on the end panels, and ties to keep the curtains in place (See Fig 4.24). The pelaminan and sometimes the marriage bed were also in the past decorated with similar cushions, with gold-embroidered panels (*kampekan*) at the ends.

When a body is being prepared for burial, a *kain panjang* is held above the body by four people, one at each corner, while the body is washed for the last time, in water containing crushed and dissolved camphor, square mothballs made specially for this purpose.<sup>29</sup>

## 8. Colour

The colour of textiles in Jambi is of less importance than it used to be, since prohibitions by the sultan no longer apply, and on the whole people are vague about the symbolism of colour. Red is now normally associated with courage and green with vitality. The tudung jenazah used to cover a corpse is green, the colour of Islam, or black, as are the two umbrellas used in the procession to the grave. Like the cloth, they are usually embroidered with holy writing. One is carried to the right of the head and the other to the left of the feet of the deceased.

Black and white are still associated with magic power, and black costumes are used for silat practice while a white cloth is set out on which to lay the ritual objects before a silat practice ground is consecrated. Red, white and black threads

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<sup>28</sup> The pelaminan is sometimes referred to as Putri (Princess) Retno, though the significance of this name has been lost.

<sup>29</sup> Maxwell (1990:110) states that "Throughout the archipelago...the finest painted cloths were used as canopies for nobility and particularly as a ceiling (*lelangit*) over the bodies of prominent individuals in mortuary ceremonies." She does not quote a source.

or cloth used to be hung in the rafters of a house during building. For the building of nearly all houses, the ritual of hanging objects there still continues. One item is a container of *air yasin* (holy water); an offering to the *penunggu tanah* (lit. earth dwellers) whose dwelling-place has been taken. Other items include sweet bananas, sugar cane, honey, *gula merah* (palm sugar), and Indonesian flag and a *kundur* (a type of gourd). The first four items are given because spirits like sweet things, and the dukun told me that if you come across a fruit which has lost its sweetness this is because a dewa has sucked the sweetness from it. *Kundur* are kept by most women to ensure fertility and are kept under their beds. It was not clear why the *penunggu tanah* would appreciate them, and it may be that their power is being harnessed for the female household members rather than for the *penunggu*. The red and white Indonesian flag has now replaced the earlier cloth or yarn of three colours. One old woman told me that this was an old Hindu practice, but that it was what was done when she was young.

## 9. Conclusions

While there are some echoes of practice elsewhere in Indonesia in the use of textiles in Jambi, there is also evidence of the articulation of local social patterns. These relate in particular to the use of imported textiles, to the influence of Islam and to Malay community organisation and aesthetic preferences. Examination of the patterns and designs of Jambi batik needs to take this into account.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### The Blue batiks

#### 1. Early evidence

That batik was produced in Jambi was a fact thought to be unrecorded in Europe until 1927, when a Dutch ethnographic researcher and photographer, Tassilo Adam, presented a Jambi batik cloth to the Ethnographic Department of the Colonial Institute in Amsterdam.<sup>1</sup> The Ethnographic Curator, B.M. Goslings, was very impressed by the cloth but surprised to discover the existence of a highly refined craft practice about which previously nothing had been known. He researched the cloth's background and possible connections with other textiles, and in October 1927 he published an article in *Nederlandsch Indie Oud en Nieuw* (N.I.O.N.) to bring the cloth to public notice, and to appeal for further information.

Having searched for references to batik in Jambi, Goslings reported that all he could find were comments about batik in Palembang.<sup>2</sup> Reports were contradictory, and questions seemed to centre on the place of origin of batik, and whether Sumatran batiks could have been made by local women or were produced by immigrant Javanese. The batik of Central Java was well known, and since there had never been any written account concerning the batik of Jambi, it is not surprising that Goslings should start looking for comparisons with the Javanese product, his implicit assumption being that batik-making was probably a Javanese import. He turned his attention first to methods of manufacture.

Tassilo Adam had compiled some written data concerning the batik, including notes about the method and place of manufacture. He had acquired the cloth in the Pasemah highlands in what was regarded as the Palembang interior in 1921, but had been surprised the following year to come across a workshop in Dusun Tengah, part of the area then called Petjinan on the north bank of the Batanghari opposite Jambi city, where cloths of exactly the same type were being

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<sup>1</sup> Now kept in the Tropical Museum, Amsterdam and catalogued as no.347/2.

<sup>2</sup> There is a fleeting reference in the report of the expedition to Central Sumatra of 1877-79, where the bark of the *marilang* tree is reported as having been used to dye batik in Jambi (Van Hasselt 1884 Vol 4 part 2).

manufactured. There were about 25 women working there, half of whom were very expert whereas the others were not, which suggested to him that batik-making was a long-standing but still flourishing practice. Adam's notes did not explicitly state that the women were local and not Javanese, but Goslings contacted Adam to seek his opinion on the matter and was assured that this was so (Goslings 1927/8:280). In addition Adam told him that his enquiries had taken place under the guidance of the village headman, and that his account of the process was reliant on the information supplied to him by this man. This is unfortunate, since batik was clearly an art practised by women, and the headman was not likely to have been an expert in the methods of manufacture. However, Adam's account should be given some weight. He had lived in Sumatra since 1899 and was a government ethnologist (Howard 1994:46). Most of what he described corresponds with the evidence of the cloths themselves, and with current practice, so his testimony can be regarded as valuable.

Adam reported that head cloths and selendangs were made there, the selendangs all practically identical in design, with a great lozenge in the centre, and the pattern distributed evenly. Adam had not seen these batiks worn either in the Jambi capital or in the Petjinaan villages. The headman told him that they were destined for export to the Jambi interior, and Adam himself had in fact seen such head cloths and selendangs worn in Muara Bungo and villages along the Tebo river<sup>3</sup> during his stay in that part of the interior.

## 2. The production process

Adam described the production process as follows. An infusion was made by soaking finely-chopped wood from the *lembato*<sup>4</sup> tree in boiling water with the addition of a little alum (see Fig 5.1).<sup>5</sup> Next, the cotton cloth was washed and dried and then immersed in the warm infusion until the required yellow colour<sup>6</sup> had been obtained (see Fig 5.2). The cloth was then starched and dried and beaten with a wooden mallet. The main outlines of the design, that is the

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<sup>3</sup> The River Tebo flows from the hills to the west of Muara Bungo, joining the River Batanghari at Muara Tebo (see Map 2).

<sup>4</sup> Questions relating to the identification of dyestuffs used in Jambi are dealt with on page 98.

<sup>5</sup> It seems that Adam did not specify the form in which the alum came, which suggests that it was in mineral form rather than as an alum-rich plant. Goslings refers to it as "aluin".

<sup>6</sup> In fact, Goslings refers to a pale brown. It may be that the colour in Adam's cloth had faded so that the yellow produced by the *lembato* dyebath was no longer evident.

border lines and the outline of the central lozenge, were then drawn on in charcoal or pencil, using a *baliro* (the sword of a loom) as a ruler. After this, the complete waxing process followed, using a freehand canting on both sides of the cloth (see Fig 5.3). When the waxing was completed, the cloth was dyed in an indigo blue vat. After this, the wax layer was "bruised", or cracked, at night when it was cooler, and later immersed in an infusion of the wood of the *marelang* tree (see Fig 5.4). This colour or dyestuff was called *soga*. Where the wax was cracked, the cloth absorbed the dye and was thus dyed a darker brown in these places. Finally, the wax was soaked off in hot water so that the golden colour produced by the dark brown marbling on the lighter lembato colour could emerge on its deep blue background.

Apart from the use of artificial dyes, the process of batik-making in the Seberang villages is very similar today, though perhaps to save time the cloth is not washed and dried before infusion in the lembato bath, nor is it beaten with a wooden mallet before waxing.<sup>7</sup> Changes in the qualities of the cloth used for batik making have presumably also affected the process, and though these changes are limited, they do show that textile production is not a static art and that one should not be surprised to see differences over time in cloths produced in a particular region. Similarly, there have been changes in design, and though the central lozenge still features in some *selendang*, or *kerudung* as they are often called, these constitute a very small proportion of present-day production, and are worn mainly by local women in the older age group as a covering for head and shoulders.

Adam gave no details of the indigo dyeing process and Goslings makes no comment on this part of the process. Possibly both Adam and Goslings assumed that process and ingredients would be the same in Jambi as in Java. However, Ibu Azmiah showed me how she had been taught by her mother, Asmah, and some details are of interest. In Jambi, the day before the dye vat is prepared, rice is sprinkled with yeast and fermented overnight to make *tape*.<sup>8</sup> Next day, the soaked fermented rice, now much reduced in volume, is squashed and squeezed

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<sup>7</sup> I was told in the batik-making village of Perentak in Upper Jambi that lembato wood was used there for the same purpose, and had been for several generations. Here it is now known as *kayu sekunyit*, which suggests that turmeric may have been used for a similar purpose.

<sup>8</sup> *Tape* is a paste made from fermented rice, cassava or similar materials.



by hand and then water added, followed by more squeezing. The resultant paste is then sieved into a bowl. Hot water is added to the indigo grains, *nilo*, (processed indigo imported from Java has been used since the Japanese occupation) and to the *tunjung* (iron sulphate), and cold water to the *kapur* (betel chalk, or lime). Each ingredient is stirred until dissolved in a separate bowl. For this demonstration Azmiah used 200g of nilo, 400g of kapur and 300g of tunjung. The tunjung is then poured into a large bowl, and the indigo added. It must be stirred clockwise. If it is green on first mixing it will make a good blue. The *kapur* is then added, followed by the tape. Next, honey is added and stirred in. This honey must be wild honey, from the forest. The mixture is covered and left for half an hour, then stirred again. It may be necessary to add further measures of nilo, tunjung and kapur if the colour is not good, but not tape nor honey. I was told that the cloth should be dipped and hung to dry thirty-six times to obtain a good strong colour. Azmiah did not include a mengkudu fruit in the vat, but it was mentioned that this was also used in the past.

The only reference to the use of rice tape in Jasper's descriptions of indigo-dyeing in Java is in a description of ingredients used in Indramayu. In several parts of Java he reports the use of cane sugar syrup and molasses in the indigo vat, but no honey. The use of mengkudu fruit is mentioned in the list of ingredients used in Pacitan (1916:36).<sup>9</sup> The use of forest honey in Jambi rather than sugar suggests that indigo dyeing in Jambi has a tradition which is, in some ways at least, distinct from that of Java. The use of rice tape suggests links with western, rather than central Java in this respect. Indigo is not used in the dyeing of silk for songket, but may have been used in dyeing yarn for the weaving of *kain gebeng* or *kain tajung*.<sup>10</sup>

Indigo is not normally used in Jambi any more, and it is not surrounded by the degree of ritual associated with indigo dyeing in places such as Kodi, where it is conducted "as a cult of female secrets" (Hoskins 1989:141). Although there clearly were taboos - I was told that an indigo vat should not be prepared if there had been a death in the village, or if the dyer was menstruating, as this would spoil the results - these taboos are widespread in the Indonesian islands. Indigo was

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<sup>9</sup> The roots of the *mengkudu* tree (*morinda citrifolia*) are used in many parts of Indonesia to produce a red dye.

<sup>10</sup> These names refer to types of locally-made cloth woven with coloured stripes in a checkered pattern.

grown in the Jambi area, and the name of the river known as Sungai Nilo in the west of the province suggests it has a long history there.<sup>11</sup> However, on its own evidence relating to indigo and its use cannot contribute a great deal to the debate concerning the independence or otherwise of Jambi's batik-making traditions.

Goslings went on to make a number of comparisons of the technique described by Adam with Central Javanese batik processes as described in Rouffaer & Juynboll (1914) and Jasper and Pirngadie (1916). First he looked for parallels with the initial lembato bath employed in Jambi. Jasper (1916:12) had reported that in Yogyakarta the cotton cloth was sometimes provided with a light brown-yellow ground colour before the waxing was done. However, in Yogyakarta this was produced from *tegerang* wood.<sup>12</sup> Jasper's account had also mentioned that in some parts of Java a cream yellow background colour was sometimes produced using lye and oil. This base colour formed a background against which the pattern was marked out, and Goslings referred to an illustration in Jasper (Plate 2 facing page 16) of a Javanese cloth where the pattern was formed in this way, with unprotected parts of the cloth coloured with *mengkudu* (a tree whose root bark gives the red dye colourant morindone). In Jambi, the main colour was produced by means of an indigo dyebath, with the yellow from the lembato forming the lines of the pattern. Another practice referred to in Jasper's account was the scraping off of the wax from the cloth with a blunt knife before the blue dye bath, a practice unknown in Jambi.

Goslings' final point of comparison was the brown veining which in Jambi was produced by means of a mareleng dyebath. In some areas of Java Jasper had recorded that sometimes the wax layer on the batik was cracked and the cloth immersed in a final sogas bath to produce brown veining (Jasper 1916:61). Goslings points out that in Jambi the brown colour was also known as sogas and concludes that the dyestuff must be the same. In fact, substances used to make the sogas dyebath in Java include a number of different materials (see Jasper 1916:39), but not mareleng, while in Jambi the dyes in all cases apart from the indigo were made from different plants from those mentioned in Jasper and Rouffaer as being used in Java.

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<sup>11</sup> Marsden found a variety of indigo in use in Sumatra which was unknown to English botanists in 1780 (1811/1986:94).

<sup>12</sup> *Cudrania Javanensis*.

### 3. Design elements

Next Goslings turned his attention to the design. The floral pattern on its large rectangular centre field with flowered borders on all sides brought to mind, he said, the design of a silk weft ikat tjinde from Palembang or Bangka<sup>13</sup>, while the "Palembang" palm-motif (the Kashmiri *butta* cone motif which appears in the corners of the Adam cloth) according to Goslings shows "the indirect influence of British India".<sup>14</sup> The large lozenge in the flowery centre field, he says, brings to mind the plain-coloured lozenge in a Javanese "kain kembangan". The rows of large double-motifs in the lozenge he describes as resembling the double "lar" motif from the Javanese "sawat" pattern, and the striped "pengada" edge on both short sides of the selendang is, he says "a completely Javanese characteristic". In Jambi this striped edge is known as *sisir* (lit. comb).

Goslings has moved from suggesting that elements of the Jambi batik "bring to mind" elements of cloths from other places to stating quite categorically that they belong to those other places: "A pattern has thus been made here which is influenced by Palembang as well as by Java." Though he goes on to say that at the same time the batik pattern produced by these Jambi makers is "entirely their own, both in the motifs and the colouring", he does not consider the possibility that Javanese, Palembang and Jambi artists may each have borrowed design elements from a third source, such as Indian trade cloths, nor that some of the techniques or motifs used in Javanese cloths may themselves have been derived in Sriwijayan times from central or southern Sumatra.

However, Goslings was aware of the limitations of his data, and suggested that further data should be commissioned, both to deepen knowledge about Jambi batik, and to discover whether Palembang too had ever had a batik art of its own.

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<sup>13</sup> Goslings was evidently unaware at this point of the existence in Jambi of songket (silk and gold thread brocade), which contains a similar arrangement of motifs.

<sup>14</sup> In Indian cloths these cones are often referred to as *konia*. Numerous nineteenth-century saris from centres such as Varanasi contained two such *konia* in the corner angles of their centrefields in precisely the same arrangement as in the Adam cloth, facing each other in a point repeat with respect to one another. A shawl from Kashmir with such elements is illustrated on page 18 of the gallery notes for 'Textile Trade of India with the outside world 15th - 19th century' of the Calico Museum of Textiles. In some such cloths there was also a large central medallion, corresponding in size and position with the Jambi lozenge, though slightly different in shape. The underlying pattern repeat in the main field of these saris was normally, as in the Adam cloth, in straight arrangement (Jain 1994:71-2). It thus seems highly likely that the Jambi design derives from Indian imported textiles, rather than from a Javanese model.

Goslings' interest in Palembang was probably prompted not just by the references he had discovered in the textile literature available to him, but also by the fact that at the time Palembang was a longer-standing, more important and more fashionable residency than Jambi in the Dutch East Indies. There was very little documentation about Jambi in comparison with the quantities available for Palembang and Java because the Dutch had held sway there for such a short time. The interpretation and manner of assimilation of Jambi textiles into Dutch collections and writings continued to suffer from its subordinate role both to Palembang and to Java in the years to come.

#### 4. The report of Heer van der Kam

The following year, Goslings produced a second article on Jambi batik (1929/30a). Goslings' appeal for more data had resulted in a report from the Jambi Controleur, Van der Kam, on the current situation regarding batik manufacture, together with a collection of cloths consisting of two selendangs, two sarungs, two head cloths, a kain panjang and two pieces of rectangular cloth said to be for making up into a pair of trousers.<sup>15</sup> Goslings comments, erroneously, that the design on the trouser cloths has been printed in wax, a technique which he suggested was also probably introduced from Java; in fact the wax on these pieces was applied by hand. He added that they have a design of parallel diagonal patterns as is common in Java, though the colours are typical of Jambi.

Goslings goes on to quote verbatim the report of Van der Kam concerning the practice of batik-making in Jambi. Van der Kam recounted the story he had been told of how batik-making came to Jambi. A Hadji named Mahebat was reputed to have come to the village fifty years previously from central Java with his wife Hadji Siti Hadidjah and their three children, a son named Haroen, and two daughters, Siti Patemah and Hadji Siti Soerja.<sup>16</sup> The women of the family soon took up their old practice of batik-making, having brought the necessary implements with them from Java, though they obtained wood dyes locally. They sold their products in Jambi, where there was already a demand for Javanese

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<sup>15</sup> These cloths are in the Tropical Institute, Amsterdam, catalogued as nos. 483/1 to 483/8. No. 483/6 appears, however, to be missing.

<sup>16</sup> The usual term of address for a woman who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca is "Hajah". The informant who recorded these names was presumably unaware of this. I have left the titles given in Goslings' articles unchanged, and also followed his spelling.

batik. Van der Kam adds that Siti Patemah married a Jambi man and had three children; of these, Siti Alepah went to Johore and Hadjah Siti Hawida married locally, but neither she nor her daughters made batik any more.

According to the story, local women were eager to learn to batik for themselves, but the newcomers steadfastly refused to teach them, giving deliberately misleading information. Even when the daughter of Pangeran Kusumo<sup>17</sup>, a relative of the Sultan, offered them a considerable sum of money, they refused. However, they could not prevent the local women from copying them. A certain Mah-ni<sup>18</sup> did her utmost to discover their secret. She stole a canting from the Javanese women and had it copied by a goldsmith and, still undiscovered, slipped it back. After diligent experimenting, finally the local people were able to master the craft. Mah-ni and one of her most faithful fellow-workers, Hadji Siti Rasimah, spread the art of batikking further within the village (Dusun Tengah), but outside it there was scarcely a woman who could do it.

In his reappraisal of what was known about Jambi batik in 1945, Philipsen cast doubt on the authenticity of the story of the Mahebat family, suggesting that the inclusion of people's names may be there to make the story or more credible and may "testify to the fertile imagination of the native informant" (1945:119). It was therefore important for me to seek local opinion on the matter. When I told the story to local women, they were doubtful about one aspect of the story. All said that all the names in the story are Jambi names, and that it was impossible for example that Hadidjah could have been Javanese. However, that there is a strong connection with the true events is clear from what contemporary informants say. The name Mahebat is still associated with the coming of batik to Jambi. The most famous maker in Jambi, "Batik Mahebat" is still remembered, and the house in Olak Kemang in which the Mahebat family had lived was identified to me.

Many people living in Seberang today claim descent from this family, but their stories differ somewhat. One man said that he was descended from Hadji Mahebat, and that Mahebat came from Demak on the north Javanese coast. A

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<sup>17</sup> A prominent Arab leader appointed by the Dutch who acted as a mediator between the royal family and the Dutch.

<sup>18</sup> Probably "Mak Ning".

woman, Rukiah, told me that her grandmother, Halimah, was the first to do batik in Jambi. Halimah's husband was Hadji Kasim Mahebat, who brought an *anak angkat* (adopted child) from Java who knew the skills of batik. Halimah taught a younger girl, Zainab, how to do batik, and Zainab taught the present generation.

Rukiah's father, Haji Sjukur, now aged 83, added another generation to the story. His grandmother, he said, went to Mecca and then returned to Jambi with her family, including her husband, a Malaysian. Her name was Hadjah Zuriyah. She came from Banyumas in south-west Java. She had two brothers, named Hadji Hassan Mahebat and Hadji Haroen.<sup>19</sup> Hadah Zuriyah's daughter, Halimah, was his mother. Halimah gave work to her friends and also taught people in Kampung Tengah. Haji Sykur's father was Hadji Kasim. Halimah used to make batik: headcloths and kain, which were popular in Padang. Hadji Kasim used to take them to Bangko to sell; Padang people would come to Bangko to buy them. In 1923 Hadji Kasim stopped trading because he wanted to *membersihkan diri* <sup>20</sup> by stopping his involvement in trade. Halimah stopped then too.

Haji Sjukur's story raises a number of questions. He was unable to explain why Zuriyah and her Malaysian husband came to Jambi after visiting Mecca, nor why she had such a very unJavanese name. It is not clear either whether her two brothers came to Jambi with her. One suspects that the unnamed Malaysian may not have been present with her in Jambi, and that perhaps some family misfortune has been conveniently forgotten. It is quite clear that the details of the story have been distorted over the years in people's memories, and it may be that Rukiah's much more plausible version involving a Javanese *anak angkat* is the correct one.

Other informants gave me the names of people they associated with batik-making in former times. Fatmah, aged 58 (known locally as Ning) learned how to batik from her mother (Zainab) when she was about ten years old around 1950. Asmah learnt from Zainab at the same time, but was a fair bit older and learnt more, including how to make red with marelang. Zainab's mother was

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<sup>19</sup> The name Haroen occurs also in the story related to Van der Kam, but as the son of Hadji Siti Hadidjah.

<sup>20</sup> i.e. purify his soul in his old age.

Haliyah, a woman from Kampung Tengah. Haliyah used to make batik during the Dutch period. Ning had two kain panjang, both cap, which were made by Haliyah's mother, whose name she did not know. Haliyah's sister, Halimah, made *sulaman* (gold thread embroidery).

A woman called Salamah, from Ulu Gedong village, showed me two pieces of cloth made in Jambi. One was dark blue, almost black, batik tulis with motifs of birds on it. This was made by Khodidjah, who she thought might have been the grandmother of her grandmother, whose name was Haliyah. The other piece was a sarung in batik tulis, with a red border and a merak ngeram motif. This was also made in Jambi and handed down. Another woman, Mbok Ma, refers to an heirloom batik in her possession as "Batik Khodidjah".

Gede Leha, who is nearly 70 years old, says that before the Japanese came there were three women whose families she remembered as making batik: Zainab, from Kampung Tengah; Hadjah Hawidah from Olak Kemang and Hadjah Esa Hadji Burhan from Kampung Tengah.<sup>21</sup> The two Hadjahs also made songket. Batik was referred to by the name of the woman at the centre of the enterprise producing it: "Batik Hadjah Hawidah" means batik made by her and her anak buah.

Supik Hassan's mother, Esa (not the hadjah) learned the art of batik-making from her mother Fatimah, from Kampung Tengah. She doesn't know the name of Fatimah's mother. Supik gave me an old canting head which had belonged to her mother.

In summary, there are three names which seem to be associated with the period of Mahebat: Hadidjah and Zuriyah, whose names are both directly linked with Mahebat, one as a wife and the other as a sister, and Khodidjah, who as Zainab's great-grandmother would have been working at about the same period (see Fig 5.5). In the next generation there are Fatimah, given as Hadidjah's daughter by Van der Kam, Halimah, the daughter of Zuriyah, and Haliyah, possibly the granddaughter of Khodidjah.<sup>22</sup> She finished batikting in 1923. It is possible that

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<sup>21</sup> Hadjah Esa was thus the daughter of Hadji Burhan; he was the *kepala kampung*, (village head).

<sup>22</sup> Patemah and Fatimah are variant spellings of the same name. I will use "Fatimah" for the woman referred to by Van der Kam and for contemporary references.

this Fatimah is the same one who was Supik Hassan's grandmother. Those who were active in batik-making during the period before the Japanese occupation were Esa (Supik's mother); Zainab (Fatmah's mother) and possibly Hawidah (remembered by Gede Leha). Van der Kam's Fatimah had a daughter called Hawida, who could well be the same person. Finally there is Hadjah Esa, also remembered by Gede Leha, but so far not mentioned by anyone else.

Although there are some inconsistencies in these stories, the names in them clearly refer to real people who lived and worked in the area. Unfortunately, we have no information about the names of the people running the enterprises visited by either Van der Kam or Tassilo Adam. The likelihood is that they visited only one of them. According to Adam's report, production was carried out by about twenty-five Jambinese women in Dusun Tengah, about the number of people who would work for one enterprise today. A group larger than that becomes too unwieldy for the entrepreneur to manage.

## 5. Uses of batik

Van der Kam reported that in the past the cloth was nearly all bought by the royal family, and later by wealthy local people. It was not sold in the market, but some was sold in shops, while some was taken upstream by dealers. Production was limited to kains, sarungs, selendangs, head cloths, cloths and *baju* (jackets) (these last as a rule very simple in design and dark in colour). Jambinese men did not wear head cloths, but a white cap, with a turban wound around it. The profitable rubber trade meant that many local men were *hadjis*.<sup>23</sup> Others went bareheaded or wore the Batavian "*pitji*" (a black rimless cap, usually made of velvet). The head cloths were widely known as "*sapu tangan*" (handkerchiefs).<sup>24</sup> Tideman later remarked that Jambi head cloths were made for export to West Sumatra. The cloths were also known by the elders as "*setangan kepala*" or "*setangan*" which Goslings concluded were abbreviations of "*sapu tangan*". The term is not used nowadays.

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<sup>23</sup> i.e. They had made the pilgrimage to Mecca.

<sup>24</sup> An illustration of a similar head cloth worn in Sahu, Maluku is shown in Visser (1989:87 Fig 9). The cloth was imported before the 1940s, starched in a similar way to the West Sumatran style, and folded "in its particular way". Visser has assumed a Javanese origin for the cloth, but it may well have a Jambi origin.



## 6. Materials, processes and motifs

The batik-making process described by Van der Kam corresponds closely to that described by Adam. Goslings wondered whether *lembato* wood was the same as *kayu tegerang* from Java. Although it was clear that the trees were different species, he remarked that it was used for a similar purpose.<sup>25</sup> He had also enquired as to whether *kayu marelang*, which produced the dark brown veining, was the same as the wood used for *soga* in Java. He was told that *kayu marelang* was *Peltophorum ferrugineum*, the source of the *soga* dye in Java. It is not clear who supplied him with this information, although a sample was sent for identification. The information was, however, erroneous.<sup>26</sup>

Accompanying the report was a sketch showing some of the Jambi motifs (See Fig 5.6). In almost all cases, the names supplied to Van der Kam do not correspond with the names given to the same motifs today<sup>27</sup>. In one case the sketch is a reasonably accurate representation of a Jambi motif currently known as *bungo antelas*, but it has been labelled with the name of a different motif (*kupu-kupu*). In another, the current name of a Jambi motif (given as *merah engram* : probably *merak ngeram*) has been given to a shape which does not resemble any Jambi motif; the motif currently known in Jambi as *biji ketimun* is labelled as *kacang*, which is not a name currently used. A cloth divided into two halves with a different pattern on each is described as *sore-pagi*, rather than *pagi-sore*, the normal Malay phrase. There are a number of possible reasons for these discrepancies. Motif names may have changed over time; the person who was asked may not have known the names (this would be likely if the informant was the village headman: men are not generally aware of motif names nowadays); and there may have been problems or misunderstandings in clearly indicating which motif or design element was being identified. The pattern of a cloth is now normally named after only one of the many motifs on the cloth. The Dutch investigator might well not have understood this, and requested names for

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<sup>25</sup> A sample from the *lembato* tree has been identified as *Artocarpus cf dadah* by the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. It may be the same as *Artocarpus Limpato* Miq. (Moraceae) referred to in Uphof 1968 as being native to Sumatra.

<sup>26</sup> It is not possible to identify a species from a piece of wood or bark alone. A sample consisting of a leafy twig from a *marelang* tree has been identified by the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, as *Pterospermum cf acerifolium* (Sterculiaceae). *Pterospermum acerifolium* is recorded by Schweppe as a source of red dye in Malaya but not in Indonesia (1992:107).

<sup>27</sup> The names and meanings given to motifs is discussed in the next chapter.

insignificant parts of the pattern which in fact have no name. Out of politeness, informants may have applied a label which seemed appropriate, rather than trying to explain that what may appear to western eyes as a motif which would have a name, would in Jambi be merely regarded as a background shape.<sup>28</sup> The mistakes where *merak ngeram* (peacock with brood) is given as *merah ngeram* (meaningless) and the common phrase *pagi-sore* is reversed suggest that the investigator's command of the language was less than solid. In all probability, all four of these factors were at work.

Goslings went on to clarify a point of confusion in the Adam report about the different descriptions of cloth as being either "dark blue" or "black", and how these colours were obtained. It had become clear that in Jambi, dark blue, sometimes described by local people as "black", might be obtained by repeated indigo dye baths over a period of several days. A different type of "black" or a "dark purple" might also be obtained by over dyeing a cloth already dyed in indigo in a sogu tub. The confusion arose from the fact that it had appeared that most of the surface of the cloth was covered with wax before the sogu bath, so that the sogu was thought to be intended to produce only the brown veining in small areas. It was now clear that this widespread wax covering did not always take place. Goslings again looked to descriptions of the process in Java for comparison, and discovered only one passage in Jasper in relation to the manufacture of the multi-coloured batiks in Pekalongan, where purple was produced by over dyeing blue with a sogu mixture.<sup>29</sup> In his summing up of the Jambi method, Goslings again compared it with Javanese batik, having found an instance of a yellow background colour being produced from turmeric recorded in Rouffaer (1914:190). The pale-grounded border panels of Jambi head cloths were also presented as a borrowing from Javanese ways.

Goslings repeated his comment that the Javanese process of scraping the wax off with a blunt knife did not occur in Jambi, however, but this was seen merely as an omission of part of the Javanese method. He accepted the story of the

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<sup>28</sup> A similar case where Indonesian naming of motifs differs from the western norm occurs in Madura, where cloth designs are generally named after the filling patterns between the motifs. A western observer might be confused by the naming of the design after what might be regarded as the background.

<sup>29</sup> Heringa reports the production of a dark blue-black by over dyeing indigo with the root bark of mangrove extract, *kayu tingi*, in Kerek, East Java (1989b:115).

introduction of batik-making to Jambi by the Mahebat family, and thus saw the Jambi process as a "simplified" one, derived from Javanese ways of working, but adapted to local conditions. What did not apparently strike him was that the story about the Mahebat family centres on the introduction of the *canting*, not on the introduction of dyed cotton textiles.<sup>30</sup> The word "batik" is used quite loosely in Jambi as in Java, and the story in no way undermines the possibility of a different surface patterning technique, possibly mordant printing, having existed in Jambi before the *canting* came into regular use there. Nor does the story exclude the possibility that, as Heringa suggests (1994a:11), a wax resist process might have been used in Jambi in earlier times. If such a craft had existed, a cruder tool or one similar to the Indian *kalam*<sup>31</sup> might have been employed to apply the wax. Steinmann (1947a) refers to a range of instruments having been used in Priangan, in Java, to make the design, from a palm-leaf bag to a bamboo quill.

Perhaps as a result of reading Gosling's articles, or perhaps at the instigation of a third party who knew about the recent discoveries of Jambi batik, Professor van Eerde obtained a number of Jambi batiks in yellow and blue for the Colonial Institute during the late 1920s. These batiks, which were referred to by Goslings in a later article, were collected in Indonesia and are now kept in the Tropical Museum.<sup>32</sup> They provide further evidence of the range of motifs in use during this period.

## 7. Conclusions

Although Goslings found many similarities in technique and materials between the Jambi batik he had seen at this stage and Javanese batiks, he also found differences. In addition there were differences of which he was unaware, most notably the dyestuffs used, which strongly suggest that there was some kind of

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<sup>30</sup> Rens Heringa reports that each region of Java had its own model of *canting*, sold by itinerant makers along the north coast (1996:226). The *canting* head used in Jambi in the thirties and given to me by Supik Hassan differs markedly in shape from the central Javanese model, which is the only one now used in Indonesia. Whether it was made in Jambi or imported is uncertain. The shape is at any rate not the rounded bowl of the Central Javanese court types, and differs markedly from those described and illustrated in Jasper (1916:23-27). See Fig 5.7.

<sup>31</sup> The *kalam* consists of a metal spike with a bulb at one end around which twine is wound. This acts as a reservoir for the hot wax before it runs down onto the cloth.

<sup>32</sup> The cloths are catalogued as 556-5 to 556-18.

batik tradition in Jambi pre-dating the introduction of the canting recounted in the Mahebat story.<sup>33</sup> This story, though, evidently has a strong factual basis, and suggests that the family, wherever they originated, made a great impact on batik production in the Seberang villages. The references to Mecca and to Java are rather tenuous and inconsistent, though it is clear that the canting was introduced to Seberang as a result of encounters which took place overseas, possibly during a pilgrimage, and it is likely that a Javanese girl or woman was involved.

Tassilo Adam's discovery, Van der Kam's examples and report and Professor van Eerde's cloths provide a valuable reference collection. From these it is possible to catalogue with confidence the motifs used and the designs in which they featured in the early twentieth century in the batik-making villages of Seberang. By relating these designs to textile use and cultural values in Jambi today it is possible to attempt an understanding of the meaning they had for the society which produced them.

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<sup>33</sup> The materials required for the production of batik were in fact more readily available in Sumatra than in Java. Jambi had been exporting wax, for example, since the Sriwijayan period (Wolters 1967) and it is still readily obtainable from the Kubu. Java, on the other hand imports wax from Sumbawa, Sumatra and elsewhere .

## CHAPTER SIX

### Characteristics of the blue cloths

Of Jambi cloths with an undisputed origin and dating from before the Japanese occupation the vast majority contain no red. Of such undisputed cloths there are the following examples:

The Adam cloth

The samples sent back by Van der Kam

The cloths collected by Professor van Eerde

The blue cloths collected by Willem Steinbuch

These cloths have very definite characteristics in common, and it is reasonable to suppose that all cloths showing these characteristics originated in Jambi. There are also a number of similar cloths in private and other collections. I bought five myself; Mrs Eiko Kusuma owns several, collected from dealers, but clearly of the same type. A number are in the possession of villagers in Seberang. The family of Guru Yusuf in Olak Kemang has one sarung and one headcloth. I was able to examine one collected in the Bangko area by Ny. Ida Rachman Syukur, at one time Ibu Bupati in the Bangko Kabupaten and one belonging to Ibu Zuraida in Bangko. Jambi Museum has a few examples. One interesting headcloth in the Rotterdam museum was collected in "Bajoo Koemboeh", probably Payakumbuh in the Minangkabau Highlands, in 1929. The work is fairly crude, but it has strong similarities with this group of textiles.

#### 1. Dyestuffs/process/colour

All seem to have been dyed first in lembato wood and then, after the design has been waxed in by hand, in indigo blue. Thus the majority of the ground is blue for all the cloths. The blue areas of some have subsequently been dyed in mareleng, making the ground area very dark blue or black; others seem to have had the major part of the ground covered in a layer of wax before the mareleng bath. In the border areas of these the wax layer, probably of a different mix of

ingredients, making the wax more brittle, has then undergone the *remukan* (cracking) process. Immersion in the marelang infusion has then resulted in brown veining where the dye has penetrated the cracks. The appearance of all the cloths is thus predominantly blue or blue-black, with motifs in cream or gold, depending on how well the cloth has been protected from fading. None of the patterns has been produced by means of a stamp.

## 2. Design structure of selendang

Selendang or kerudung<sup>1</sup> can be divided into two categories: with or without a central lozenge.<sup>2</sup> The majority do contain a central lozenge and are known as selendang bersidang.<sup>3</sup> Van der Kam's diagram shows another type with a small rectangular panel in the centre with the label "sidang pesegi" (See Fig 5.6), but I have never come across a selendang with such a design, nor were there any in the collection he sent back to the Netherlands. It may be that he drew the diagram and his informant told him what such a design would be called were it to occur.

### Selendang bersidang

The selendang bersidang is normally between 152 cm x 73 cm and 200 cm x 93 cm. The smaller sizes may have been for younger girls. Three cloths with central lozenges in the Museon collection are 216-234 cm long, but are unusual in their design and are close to the dimensions of kain panjang. Museon's 6909 has tumpals at the ends, 6912 has an extra panel at each end containing *pauh* motifs.

Selendang bersidang have, at each short edge, a border of thin stripes, known in Jambi as *sisir*, divided from the rest of the cloth by a narrow white band which also runs along the extreme edge of the selvedge (See Fig 6.1). There are normally three borders inside this striped edge: an **outer guard stripe**, which is about 1.5 cm wide, the **central border**, about 3.5 - 4 cm wide, and the **inner guard stripe**, about

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<sup>1</sup> In relation to pre-independence textiles, these terms are used interchangeably. The term *kerudung*, however, is not used to refer to the recently-introduced narrow Javanese-style selendang, which is not worn as a headcovering but over the shoulder for formal occasions.

<sup>2</sup> See Geirnaert-Martin (1983) concerning the significance of lozenges in Javanese batik.

<sup>3</sup> The word "sidang" in Indonesian means "group" or "assembly", and it may be that these cloths were once associated with adat meetings. However, this sense is not current, and it was suggested to me that the word refers to the meeting of the four points of the lozenge.

1.5 cm wide. The two narrower borders are referred to in Jambi by present-day batik-makers as “*tapak kecil*” and the central one as “*tapak sedang*”.<sup>4</sup> The inner guard stripe often contains the same pattern as the outer guard stripe. In many cloths, however, this inner guard stripe is missing (see Fig 6.2). As well as running along the short edges at right angles to the selvages, the same border and guard stripes run along the long edges, parallel to the selvages. Where the borders intersect at the centre border, there is sometimes a floral or leaf motif. Along the edge of the inner border runs an **inner fringe pattern** which protrudes into the main field. This is normally described as *candi* (Buddhist temple), a word which refers to a range of motifs found in this position. Other of these patterns are dominated by large wavy lines; these might be referred to as *ombak-ombak* (waves).

The central lozenge is also contained within a straight-edged **lozenge border** surrounded by an **outer lozenge fringe pattern** protruding into the centrefield. This may or may not be the same pattern as was used around the outside borders of the cloth. The lozenge border may be the same pattern as the one used in the outer or central borders, and is 2-3 cm wide. It is usually contained within a double line, but sometimes a single one. The lozenge border pattern often ends in a swollen spike (see Fig 6.3).

A central lozenge appears in four other types of Indonesian cloth: the *kain simbut* from Banten, West Java (see illustration in Jasper & Pirngadie 1916:230 and Veldhuisen-Djajasoebata 1984:49 &51)); some silk *pelangi* cloths, usually catalogued as coming from Palembang, though they are believed locally to have been made in Jambi at one time; the Javanese *dodot* (see illustration in Jessup 1990:143) and the *kemben*, common in Java but often also found in Bali (see illustration in Jasper & Pirngadie 1916 plate 24). In the *kain simbut* of West Java, a rice paste was used to form the resist before dyeing. The dimensions and arrangement of the cloth are quite close to those of Jambi *selendang bersidang*, and the central lozenge is surrounded in the same way by a protruding pattern, not enclosed within a boundary line. There is a similar pattern protruding into the inside of the lozenge.<sup>5</sup> In the Javanese *dodot*, the size of the cloth is much

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<sup>4</sup> *Tapak*, according to the Echols/Schadily dictionary, means the palm of the hand, sole of the foot, footprint or site. It is also a rough lineal measure, about a hand's width.

<sup>5</sup> These *kain simbut* were used as protection during life-crisis rituals, but by 1910 only one woman was still making them. The practice appears now to have died out. See Veldhuisen-Djajasoebata 1984:48)

larger, though the proportions are similar. In Jessup's example, the cloth is 210 x 379 cm. In the *kemben*, the cloths are very different in size and shape, being narrower and longer. Most are 250 x 50 cm. Some of these cloths are of batik tulis, but in some the design has been created using the *tritik* technique, which suggests a clear link with the pelangi cloths. They may derive from a different tradition from Javanese batik tulis cloths. In these *kain kemben*, there is sometimes a protruding pattern around the lozenge, but unlike the case in Jambi, this is always along the inside of the lozenge, protruding into the lozenge field, rather than into the main centrefield. I have come across only one pelangi cloth containing a central lozenge. I obtained this cloth myself in Jambi Seberang. (Fig 6.4)

The patterns in the lozenge always differ from the patterns in the centrefield of the cloth. The latter are normally regular symmetrical arrangements of small motifs running parallel to the edges of the cloth. In some cloths they are linked with smaller motifs leaving the impression of a diagonal design (see Fig 6.5). The patterns within the lozenge are usually less regular and more free-flowing, with larger motifs linked together by an intricate network of tendrils. However, there are a few cloths where the lozenge also contains regular rows of motifs (See Fig 6.6).

#### **Selendang without a central lozenge.**

These selendang tend to be a little longer than the selendang bersidang, up to 240 cm long. Apart from the absence of a central lozenge, the design structure is the same as for the selendang bersidang. Generally, they have the same sisir at each end, white strip and three borders, the inner and outer guard stripes about half the width of the central border. A protruding pattern likewise runs along the inside edge of the borders. (Fig 6.7) .

One example in Museon (Catalogue number 6912) is unusual in that it has a panel at each narrow end containing *buah pauh* motifs. This panel is adjacent to the three border panels, which do not have a protruding pattern alongside. On the inner edge of the panel the inner and central borders are repeated; the protruding pattern then runs along the inner edge of this border between it and



the main centrefield. The end panels with pauh motifs echo the design of pelangi cloths (though the motif direction is reversed). They are also reminiscent of panels found commonly in Indian shawls, and the design may well have been derived from textiles imported from Gujarat or the Coromandel coast.

### 3. Design structure of the sarung

Sarung are normally between 188 and 196 cm long around the waist, and between 107 and 111 cm in height. One example obtained in Jambi is made of two pieces sewn together along the selvages, perhaps for a particularly tall woman.

The batik sarung is divided in exactly the same way as a songket sarung, into three main structural areas (see Fig 6.8): the badan, the kepala, and the borders at top and bottom of the sarung. In Jambi the kepala is never at the end of the unsewn cloth, nor is it normally in the centre. Harmen Veldhuisen's diagrams of sarungs from the Javanese Pasisir (north coast) show the kepala in both these positions (Heringa and Veldhuisen 1996:216-221).

1. Badan: the badan is usually decorated with floral geometric designs, arranged in parallel rows as in the centrefield of the selendang. Some designs, however, do not consist of symmetrical rows of small motifs, but larger motifs sometimes extending from top to bottom of the sarung, and with the background filled in with small motifs scattered across the ground.

2. Kepala: About 56 cm wide. The kepala is made up of three parts. The most striking is the part made up of two rows of narrow triangles, points directed towards each other, in the middle of the kepala. These triangles are known as *puncak rebung* (bamboo tips), or *tumpal*.<sup>6</sup> The second area is the lozenge shapes formed between the points of the *puncak rebung*. These are normally filled with small geometric or regular floral motifs. The third part comprises the two panels on either side of the *puncak rebung*. These are referred to as *tapak besar*. They are normally surrounded by the inner guard stripe of the main border.

3. Borders: The borders along the selvages of the sarung are similar to those in

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<sup>6</sup> In many parts of Indonesia, these triangular motifs are known not as *puncak rebung* but as *pucuk rebung*, or bamboo shoots.

the selendang, consisting normally of three borders, a narrow outer guard stripe, a wider central border, and a narrow inner guard stripe. Sometimes the inner guard stripe is missing. On the extreme edge, adjacent to the selvedge, is a narrow band of sisir, or sometimes triangular shapes like teeth. Along the edge of the inner guard stripe there is sometimes a centrefield border pattern, protruding into the centrefield (see Fig 6.9). This, together with the central border, is continued right around the badan, including the vertical edge of the tapak besar. Above and below the puncak rebung, the central border usually has a different motif from that contained in the rest of the border, often reminiscent of those which occur at the ends of South Indian sembagi cloths and at the extreme ends of kain panjang borders.

#### 4. Design structure of the iket kepala (head cloth)

Head cloths normally measure between 110 x 107 cm and 99 x 96 cm. There is usually a sisir at the extreme outside, then a frame, again consisting of a narrow outer guard stripe, a wider central border, and a narrow inner guard stripe (see Fig 6.10). The corner areas where the sisir end contain a foliate motif which often resembles the *celuki* (Chinese carnation motif). At the intersections of the central border there is normally another similar foliate motif. The centrefield may contain motifs resembling those of centrefields of sarungs and selendangs.

A headcloth divided into two across the diagonal axis was collected by Steinbuch (Fig 6.11). The patterns on either side of the diagonal stripe contrast in the same way as the two patterns in the selendang bersidang, one being a regular arrangement of symmetrical abstract floral patterns, the other containing larger motifs surrounded by an interconnecting network of tendrils, buds and leaves. Unfortunately the pattern in the diagonal stripe is not clear in this photograph. Van der Kam's collection contains a similar headcloth, also divided diagonally from one corner to another by a stripe. The two triangles formed on either side of it are in two different shades of blue. He noted that a cloth with this arrangement is described as a pagi-sore cloth.<sup>7</sup> Goslings makes no comment on the two different shades, which must have been achieved by covering one half of the cloth with wax half way through the series of indigo immersions. Other cloths

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<sup>7</sup> It is actually recorded in his notes as sore-pagi, but this is clearly an error.

which may come from Jambi also contain areas in two shades of blue.<sup>8</sup>

## 5. Significance of design arrangements

Of all the blue cloths coming from Jambi, the selendang bersidang is the most striking. These selendang were and still are used as headcloths for women. Present-day informants see no significance in the design. However, it may be that the lozenge, placed as it is on the woman's head, between her head and the heavens, was originally a representation of the world, or of the door in the sky, as Cammann suggests was the case with oriental carpets, which have a similar arrangement of motifs (1972a:14). Rugs were and still are frequently brought back to Jambi from Mecca. These rugs are often hung on the wall behind the groom, and later the couple, during the akad nikah ceremony. Malay cosmology refers to the seven layers of the sky, and above that the heavens. Ancient beliefs referred to a gate in the sky, through which admittance could be gained to the realm of the gods.<sup>9</sup> Thus it may be that the pathway to the heavens is represented by the gauze curtains, hung over the carpet representing the entrance to the upper realm.

In Cammann's analysis of the symbolic meaning of oriental rug designs he suggests that the frame around the rug represents the Gate in the Sky (1972a:14).<sup>10</sup> According to his analysis the patterns in the centrefield of the rug represent either the world of humans as seen from above or more usually, a glimpse of heaven as seen from below. In particular, he points out how the frame seems to cut across the patterns in the centrefield, leaving the impression that what is being framed is an endless pattern which continues beyond the frame, suggesting the infinite. He suggests that this notion of infinity translated into a pattern which to western ideas often seems to be cut off in the middle is a particularly

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<sup>8</sup> In Java, there are kain panjang known as pagi-sore. These usually have contrasting patterns at either end, divided from one another by a diagonal line running from selvedge to selvedge near the centre of the cloth. In Jambi, the term pagi-sore, when used in reference to a kain panjang, refers to a cloth where the tumpal area and the tapak besar at each end differ in colour. The central border running around the tapak besar also differs, and continues along one selvedge. Thus the top border is a different colour from the bottom one. This device only occurs in cloths containing red, which are dealt with in the next chapter.

<sup>9</sup> The gateway or doorway to the sky is referred to in several Jambi folktales. These stories usually refer to a keeper of the gate, and also to inhabitants of the sky, who occasionally intermarry with earthly people. See *Cerita Sayang Tabuang* and *Cerita Puti Senang* in H.Idris Djakfar 1994.

<sup>10</sup> This would correspond with the Sky Door which the Kubu believe provides entry to the God world (Sandbukt 1984:91).

Islamic one, and that to Islamic eyes there is no sense of asymmetry or imbalance resulting from such an arrangement, but a sense of the never-ending. This concept is central to Islamic thought. Allah has "Limitless Transcendence, Boundless Power, Infinite Mercy and Compassion, and His spiritual world above was believed to share in that Divine Infinite" (ibid:8).

Patterns are indeed cut off in this way in Jambi batiks, so that centrefield motifs close to the border are often incomplete and seem to disappear beyond the border. The half-motifs at the edge of the sarung shown in Fig 6.12, suggest a continuation of the pattern behind the frame.<sup>11</sup> The sense of a pattern of which we see only a part is more clearly visible in Fig 6.13, where both the centrefield and the lozenge pattern disappear behind the lozenge border. The patterns in Jambi batiks could be another manifestation of these Islamic concepts of the infinite, at one time held by the Jambi people, or they may simply be copied from designs found in carpets and other textiles introduced to Jambi from elsewhere in the Islamic world. The patterns, however, would be copied only if they resonated with Jambi's own preferences in textile patterning. But if the motifs were derived from imported sources, the local names given to them show that, like children adopted into the Malay world, they were transformed into and regarded as an integral part of Jambi culture.

While the never-ending pattern may be an Islamic element in Jambi design, the borders which frame it may relate to older beliefs. If the design structure of these cloths is derived from ancient patterns used in rural communities as has been suggested is the case with the patterns on kain simbut in West Java, then there may be a connection with the Kubu conception of the structure of the world (Veldhuisen-Djajsoebrata 1984). According to Sandbukt, their world is delimited by an edge joining at four corners. At these four corners, the world of man and the world of the Gods are held together by a mechanical device similar to an animal snare. At each corner there is a guardian deity whose job it is to ensure that the fasteners stay secure (Sandbukt 1984:89). The four sides of the lozenge might then be regarded as representing the four edges of sky and earth.

The number of different flowers in a design may traditionally have been one measure of the quality of a cloth. In the *Sejarah Melayu*, Hang Nadim goes to

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<sup>11</sup> This cloth was made by Zainab.

Kalinga (South India) to buy cloth for Sultan Mahmud Shah. The ruler requires forty varieties of cloth and four lengths of each variety, and each length had to have forty varieties of floral motif (Brown 1952:140). While the large numbers are clearly meant to express the great wealth of the sultan, in keeping with the epic style of the work, the number of motifs is shown as a measure of a cloth's quality in Malay eyes. Most Jambi batiks contain combinations of several floral motifs.

Annegret Haake's analysis of Javanese batik designs contains a section on symmetry in which she documents the patterns from a geometric, mathematical perspective (Haake 1984:113-120). Considering the arrangement of motifs on Jambi batik from this type of perspective, a number of differences emerge between the batik of Jambi and that of Java. As was mentioned before, the arrangement of motifs can be divided into two categories: those where a number fairly large motifs are interconnected by an intricate network of tendril motifs, and those where rows of discrete motifs arranged symmetrically, parallel to the edges of the cloth. I will deal with this second category first. The isolation of these repeated motifs from each other and from the background contrasts sharply with the vast majority of Javanese batik motifs, where if there are repeated elements they are usually contiguous. As Haake points out, in Javanese batik the patterns are often formed by the repetition of motifs which are symmetrical about a point or a line at various angles. In Jambi, the symmetry is much simpler, though the patterns are made up of arrangements of motifs which vary in number and complexity.

In Jambi I have found no examples of a cloth with a centrefield consisting of a single repeated motif; each repeat is always made up of at least two distinct elements. In Java each individual motif may be much more complex, and it could be said that the large repeat motifs in Javanese batik motif types such as nitik and ceplok are also made up of smaller elements. However, these smaller elements are not separated from one another as they are in Jambi, and they form an integral part of one repeated motif. The occurrence of batik patterns consisting of only two repeated motifs is extremely rare in Jambi, though I have found one example (Fig 6.14). This particular example has the motifs arranged in vertical and horizontal rows, but with the two motifs alternating in both directions,

creating a strong sense of the diagonal. The larger motifs in alternate horizontal rows are turned at an angle of 45 degrees. The combination of two motifs in half-drops is relatively common in Javanese textiles, especially the "teruntum" design (see Haake 1984:90).

The most common design in Jambi batiks is one containing three motifs (see figs 6.15-6.16). These patterns consist of one small motif in half-drop repeats alternating with two different large motifs in consecutive rows. This type of arrangement is common in Sumatran selendang of the *pelangi* type (see fig 6.4) and in songket from Jambi and elsewhere (see fig 6.17). However, it does not occur in Javanese batik.

Some centrefield patterns in Jambi batik cloths contain four motifs. In these cases, two larger motifs alternate in half drops with two smaller motifs (Fig 6.18). The four-motif cloth illustrated in Figure 6.19 is crudely waxed, probably by an inexperienced worker. The quality of the cloth is coarse, and the selvedge is not reinforced at all. This suggests that it may have been a practice piece.

The best quality batiks with patterns of motifs arranged in regular rows contain five or more motifs. All the waxing on such cloths has been carried out by skilled workers. The two illustrated in Figs 6.20 and 6.21 are heirloom cloths, carefully preserved and highly valued by the families which own them. These facts suggest that the number of motifs incorporated into a design was a measure of its quality. Another heirloom cloth (Fig 6.22) has so many motifs that they have become uncountable. This piece was made by Haliyah.

One similarity between the arrangements of motifs in Jambi batik and in songket patterns has been noted. Another common feature which has been remarked on in songket designs is what are known as *teluk* (lit: bays) and *rantai* (lit: chains) (Selvanayagam 1990:71). In these designs, a repeated motif, usually circular and flower-like, is surrounded by a series of smaller motifs oriented towards one other so as to appear linked, and which form a pattern of square or rhomboid shaped bays. Sometimes these motifs are picked out in gold thread against a

background formed of *kain limar*.<sup>12</sup> This type of pattern is also very common in Jambi batik, and those patterns made up of five or more repeated elements normally have them arranged in this way (see Fig 6.21). In the simplest versions, the links making up the borders have been reduced to a single line directed between the smaller motifs at the four corners surrounding the key motif (see Fig 6.23).

The regularity of these repeated designs in Jambi batik would be less surprising if they were printed using *cap*, the copper stamps first used in Java in the mid-nineteenth century to print wax onto the cloth. The cloths being considered in this chapter, however, were all waxed by hand, so this is not a consideration, but there must be a possibility that the designs derive from cloths which did use a technique where regular parallel rows of designs were either a necessary or a particularly easy outcome. This would be the case if they were based on designs found in woven or printed cloths.

Apart from those patterns made up of rows of discrete elements, there are also asymmetric designs where the patterns are interconnected with an intricate network of tendrils and foliate shapes. These background shapes are characterised by hooks and curls, often with bell-shaped flowers resembling those in the border patterns. Small floating crosses, dots and circles fill up any spaces in the background not covered by the tendrils and leaves. Some of the larger motifs which appear within these foliate networks do not appear in the designs made up of regular rows (see Figs 6.2, 6.5 and 6.11). These designs could never have been produced using blocks, so that if they were derived from textiles made with a different technique, this must have involved the creation of pattern with a free hand, by means such as the painting on of dye with a brush, or carpet knotting.

## 6. Significance of motifs

In his analysis of the philosophy underlying the motifs of batik in Malay culture, Abdullah bin Mohamaed sees the natural forms of flowers and birds as manifestations of the essence of Allah, oneness. The various shapes and colours

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<sup>12</sup> *Kain limar* is the term used in East Sumatra and Malaysia for the fine silk weft ikat produced there, which is usually embellished with smaller motifs in supplementary gold thread. Although it is no longer woven in Jambi, there is a reference to its manufacture in Upper Jambi in the report of the Dutch Geographical Society's expedition to Central Sumatra (Van Hasselt 1882).

of flowers, in particular, emanate from Allah. Human experience of the natural world cannot be separated from that world, since both are manifestations of the oneness of Allah (1990:14). In Jambi batik, the majority of the motifs appear to be abstract representations of flowers, and most of the names given to them are the names of flowers.

The majority of the motifs found in Jambi batik are floral, and the word for motif, *bunga*, also means "flower". This use of the same word to signify what in English is given two entirely different labels raises the problem of naming and the relation of meaning to sign. Is the relationship of the word *bunga* with the concept of a motif one of denotation or connotation? Is there a sense in which all motifs are regarded as floral, or does it suggest that all flowers are in a sense decoration? It is not only western commentators who are confused. One motif type is referred to as "bunga tagapo". I spent a great deal of time trying to find a tagapo flower, and most informants thought that there was such a flower, although they had never seen one. Eventually I discovered from an older woman that "tagapo" was the name of a *kue*, a type of biscuit. What complicated the matter was that the cake was cut into a shape resembling that of a flower.

The appearance of so many flower motifs in Jambi batik is not surprising. Flowers are generally, perhaps universally, regarded as pleasant and decorative. They introduce variety of colour into a natural world which is predominantly green. Many give off attractive perfume. From flowers spring the fruits which provide food. In the belief system of the Kubu, fruits and the flowers from which they spring express the fertility which is one dimension of the fundamental essence of life. Malays see fruits and flowers as similarly important, though in their view the fruits and flowers are a manifestation of Allah, the essence of life. Informants in Seberang told me that flowers have a connection, through their perfume and their colours, with the upper realm, which is inhabited by the souls of the dead as well as the mystical beings known as *dewa* or *orang halus*, whose spirits sometimes appear in the human world.

The evanescent scent given off by fragrant flowers can be sensed but not seen, like the supernatural spirits. If a Jambi person becomes aware of a sweet scent but cannot see the flower from which it is given off, she says "*malaikat lewat*"



(there's an angel passing). Spirits are attracted by aromatic perfumes such as that given off by incense (*kemenyan*) and the scent of flowers. When the presence of these spirits is desired, such as at a wedding when they are necessary witnesses of the occasion, a preparation of *bacam*, a mixture of fragrant pandanus leaves and flowers, is set out to draw them in. *Bacam* is sprinkled on the marriage bed and is also one of the items carried on trays at the *antar belanjo* ceremony, when gifts are carried by the groom's party to the house of his bride-to-be. *Bacam* is also placed in the baskets, each containing an egg, which are given to guests at a *sjukuran* ceremony.

Flowers have a function in purification ceremonies which relates to their use as an attractor of friendly spirits. The night before a bride is married, a group of her close female friends massage a paste (*luluran*) into her skin. Preparing the *luluran* may take up to a month, although on the occasion that I saw the process it took only a few days. First, uncooked rice is soaked overnight in a bowl of water. The next evening, the rice is taken out and ground together with five types of fragrant flowers, pandanus leaves and some turmeric (*kunyit*). The paste thus produced is massaged into the bride's skin by a group of her peers, often supervised by an older sister or her mother. This may take more than half an hour. After this, a paste made of *inai* leaves (henna) is applied to the bride's fingers and toes, and to the soles of her feet. The leaves have been crushed and pounded into paste, and charcoal and betel lime (*kapur*) are added to help the red colour to develop. The paste is left on overnight, and in the morning the bride's fingertips and toes are a deep red. The process of applying the *luluran* and the *inai* will ensure that the bride is protected from evil influences.<sup>13</sup>

Early on the morning of the *pesta penganten*, which is invariably a Sunday, the final stages of purification begin. First is the *batangas*, for which an infusion of spices and flowers is prepared. The steaming infusion is placed on the floor next to a stool on which the bride-to-be sits. A *tikar*, a large woven floor-mat, is then curled around her, and the top covered with sarungs. According to older informants in the village, in the past, burning incense would have been carried three times around the mat at this stage. The bride sits inside the *tikar* for about 20 minutes before emerging, all the impurities in her body having been expelled.

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<sup>13</sup> Sheppard suggests that this custom probably originated in ancient Egypt, arriving in Malaya from India many centuries ago (1972:103).

One more purification ritual, the *mandi kembang*, follows. For this, the bride, dressed only in a sarung, has a cold infusion of flowers and lime juice sprinkled over her, while a dukun mutters incantations (*mantra*) inaudibly (Fig. 24). After this, the bride is ready to be dressed for the next stage of the wedding ceremony.

Similar ceremonies which involve flowers are the *selamatan* which ensure safety. Examples of an occasions when a *selamatan* might be performed are when a new boat is to be launched or when a new motorbike has been bought. *Selamatan* on occasions such as this would involve two main elements: the sprinkling of the blood of a slaughtered chicken, goat or buffalo over the engine, and the scattering of flowers and *tepung tawar* over the boat or motorbike. If a person has an accident, the vehicle must be purified with the flowers and *tepung tawar* again, and the individual concerned (the driver, not the victim) will also have a *mandi kembang*. No textiles are used, but the scattered flowers seem to relate to the motifs of scattered flowers which appear on songket, sulaman and batik in Jambi. The consecration of the field and the performers before silat practice also includes the sprinkling of flower water, and boys have a *mandi kembang* before their circumcision. Flowers ensure and express purity and protection.

For all these uses of flowers, a mixture is used, said to be of seven kinds, or seven colours (*tujuh warna*). The word "warna" in this context does not specifically refer to colour, and several of the flowers may be white. Similarly, the use of the word "tujuh" does not always refer exactly to seven, and although the market trader who supplies flower blossoms for ritual purposes will take seven handfuls of flowers, one of each of seven different types, mixtures made at home may include a smaller or larger number. In the past, it is known that the water used in such ceremonies should be from "*tujuh sumur*", literally seven sources, but again this is no longer regarded as essential. In the case of the flowers, what is now important is that there should be several, and that they should be fragrant. The flowers normally used correspond to a certain extent with the flowers found as batik motifs. *Melati* (jasmine), *kaca piring* (gardenia) and *kembang tanjung* appear in batik and in most *bacam* preparations. But there are flowers such as *kenanga* and *cempaka* which nearly always appear in *bacam* but do not appear in batik. Perhaps it is significant that *kenanga* are asymmetrical in appearance and

thus difficult to represent in weaving. Motifs in songket, from where many batik patterns were probably derived, are invariably symmetrical.

There are many other uses of flowers in Jambi. Before a wedding, strips are made of pandanus leaves with several varieties of flowers inserted in them in slits. These strips are known as *bunga rampai*. Some of the trays carried in the antar belanjo usually include such strips, and one or two trays of *bacam* and *bunga rampai* may be given to the groom's party after they have delivered the antar belanjo. Later, more *bunga rampai* may be hung from the back of the bride's head for part of the wedding ceremony, usually the *bersanding*, when the couple sit in state on a dais while the assembled guests feast.

In funerals on the south side of the river, *bunga rampai* similar to the ones used in wedding headdresses but longer, sometimes as long as one and a half metres, are usually placed on top of the ringgo-ringgo as the body is taken to the grave. In addition, flower water is sprinkled on the grave, often by female relatives, in the days succeeding the burial. But flowers are used at an earlier stage too. When someone dies, *gaham* is placed in all four corners of the house, and sometimes in the middle too. The *gaham*, which is a mixture of fragrant flowers, is placed in a cup containing rice. It must be used so that the *malaikat* will come, who may be the angel of death, and the sweet smell also replaces the nasty odour of the corpse. After it has been cleansed and before it is wrapped for burial in the white cloth (*kain kafan*) in which it will be interred, a dead body is sprinkled with rosewater. Then a mixture is made of rose petals, sandalwood (best from Mecca, although it may be obtained from the market), *selasih* leaves, *kapur barus* (camphor) and *kenango Cino* petals. These must be fresh and there should be about ten *tangkai* (stems) of each. These are put over the body. The flowers will make the already dead friends of the deceased come to meet them; they are *oleh-oleh* (gifts from afar) for their dead friends and relatives. Malaikat are thought to watch as the procession goes to the graveside, and are attracted by the smell of flowers. Flowers also give forgiveness to the person who has died.

Paper flowers also feature in many aspects of Jambi culture, especially at weddings. They are made in a variety of shapes and colours and are likely to accompany the twelve cakes given to the pihak laki-laki in exchange for the

wedding gifts of the antar belanjo. In the procession of the groom's party to the pesta penganten, a bearer carries a yellow parasol above the groom's head. Other attendants carry vases of paper flowers and containers of flags made of cut paper, which often have sweets or money attached to them. The flags and flowers will later be distributed to guests, especially children. The groom himself has a friend on each side, grasping him by the arm to support him, as the bride waits in her room, which will also be decorated with paper flowers. Paper flowers often decorate the wall behind the bride and groom at the akad nikah, and they are also distributed to guests at sjukuran ceremonies. In Fig 6.25, a friend of the family tidies the pots of paper flowers and baskets of sappan-dyed eggs which have been set out in a bedroom before a sjukuran ceremony.

Flowers then are very significant in Jambi culture, and it is not surprising that they should be deemed appropriate as motifs in textiles. In addition to floral motifs, there are motifs with the names of fruits, insects, cakes and birds. These, as well as the flower motifs, are catalogued in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Motifs in the blue cloths

#### 1. Motif names

The naming of motifs in Jambi batik is not entirely straightforward. Because the practice of batik-making very nearly died out and was kept alive for almost two generations by only two individuals, it is not surprising that some of the motifs found on batiks in museum collections are unknown to present-day workers. Thus there are many motifs which, if they ever had names, have lost them. For those motifs which do have names, these are not always consistent from one batikker to another. Reports produced under recent government-sponsored initiatives have often contained catalogues of illustrations of some of the motifs. None is comprehensive, the names differ from one report to another, and some of the designs included may have been taken from cloths not originating from Jambi (Batik Tradisional 1990; Marhamah 1993; Fauzi et al 1995). Present-day batikkers who learn the names of motifs from these modern sources are learning a new repertoire and a new nomenclature which may muddy the water for a researcher attempting to document batiks from an earlier period.<sup>1</sup>

Another complicating factor is that the design on a cloth is normally named after only one of the elements in the pattern, though other elements included in the pattern may themselves have names. With a very few exceptions, the only motifs which do have names are those appearing in the centrefields of the cloths. Some of these motifs appear also in the *tapak besar* of sarungs. I found no examples of named patterns or designs elsewhere in the *kepala*, and only one example of an element in a border motif which is commonly referred to by name. For the purposes of this chapter, I have followed the naming system used by Ibu Azmiah, who learnt the names of motifs from her mother, Ibu Asmah, who in turn had learnt the names from Zainab.

Even following the names passed down in this way, there are still gaps and

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<sup>1</sup> Although early trainers from BPBK were at pains to draw on existing tradition in relation to designs and motifs, the development of new designs is now regarded as part of the remit of the development agencies working in Jambi.

inconsistencies. While some of the simpler patterns have a standard form and are easily identified, there may be many variants of others, and most batikkers, including Ibu Azmiah, feel free to embellish or alter a motif as they wish. It is not easy to pin down precisely what aspect of a design aligns it with one group rather than another, and many tulis workers have a laissez-faire attitude to the naming of motifs.

Neither is the nature and purpose of naming a simple matter. If a motif has the same name as an object this does not necessarily imply that the motif is intended to represent in visual terms the object denoted in the name. Where the object referred to in the name and the shape of the motif in a work of art do not correspond, scholars have sometimes explained this by suggesting that the motif is a corruption or degeneration of, or at least an abstraction from, an earlier version which did resemble the object in the name (see Haddon 1895:312-314). However, others have pointed out that the name given to a pattern may sometimes refer not to an object depicted, but to its status (Gavin 1996:29). In Jambi, however, the names generally refer to an object which resembles the motif in shape. Where a motif was borrowed from another source, the name may have been simply a label or aide-memoire for the batikker, who needed to distinguish one motif from another, and named the already existing motif after an object which it resembled. It may be that the motif was borrowed from another source in the first place because of its resemblance to a local object of significance. However, in several cases the object referred to in the name has fallen out of use and batikkers do not know the meaning of the name. Present-day informants rarely ascribe any significance to motif names.

The motifs of the batiks of Central Java have been classified in a number of ways. Tirtaamidjaja (1966) distinguished between two main groupings: geometric and non-geometric designs, with the first divided into five sub-categories and the second into three. The first grouping includes the sub-categories of *bandji*, or swastika designs and *tjeplokkan*, which refers to interlocking geometric patterns, usually of squares, circles or diamonds.<sup>2</sup> Another sub-category is *kawung*, a motif type consisting of touching or interlocking circles, which could itself be regarded as a sub-group of *tjeplokkan*. Patterns imitating the texture of weaving make up his fourth sub-category. These are mostly referred to as *nitik* patterns. Finally,

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<sup>2</sup> I am following Tirtaamidjaja's spellings here.

there are *garis miring* designs, made up of motifs arranged in diagonal lines from selvedge to selvedge.

In the second of Tirtaamidjaja's main groupings, there are three types of *semen* designs, which are irregular, all-over patterns of tendrils, leaf and flower motifs. The first type consists only of leaves or buds, the second includes animals against the leafy background, and the third combines animals and leaves with *lar* shapes, which represent the wings of the mythical Garuda eagle.

None of these classifications is used in Jambi, and Jambi designs do not fit easily into any of the sub-categories. Amongst the Javanese *tjeplokkan* designs, only the pattern known as *teruntum* resembles the discrete symmetrically arranged rows of very simple Jambi designs. There are none of the contiguous or interlocking geometric patterns so characteristic of Central Java, nor do *banji* or *nitik* designs appear in Jambi. Diagonal motifs are extremely rare: the trouser lengths brought back by Van der Kam constitute the only authenticated example in Jambi batik. The closest correspondence between Javanese batik and Jambi batik is in the category of *semen* patterns, where some of the lozenge centrefields are made up of large motifs against a background of tendrils and foliage.

The patterns of the Pasisir, or north coast batik, have not been classified in the same way as the batik patterns of Central Java. Most commentators have explored the influence of Chinese and European settlers on the batik of the coast, and many have explained the variety to be found in its designs as a result of the absence (with the exception of Cirebon) of court prohibitions outside the principalities of Yogyakarta and Solo. Designs from the Pasisir are normally considered according to the characteristics associated with the town of origin. Pekalongan batiks are famous for their "bouquet" designs and bright colours; Lasem is known for the rich red colour of its batiks; only Cirebon has its own special motifs, the most famous of these being the *megamandung*, or cloud design, and those derived from the shape of the Sultans' chariot, such as the *Peksi Naga Liman* (see Djoemena 1986: Fig 90). Classification of the various styles of Pasisir batik has not yet been systematically carried out. To classify Jambi batiks, a new approach is required.

The most useful way of classifying the motifs on Jambi centrefields is into two main types: those containing symmetrically arranged rows of discrete motifs, and those containing larger motifs, more or less symmetrically arranged against an irregular background of leaf, flower and tendril shapes.

The catalogue which follows includes most of the motifs which both appear in the cloths referred to at the beginning of the previous chapter, and have contemporary names. Some other unnamed elements from the early cloths are also included. However, the catalogue is not fully comprehensive. Some motifs in Jambi batik have so far been found in only single instances, which suggests that there may well be more motifs as yet not encountered in Jambi cloths in museum collections. Thus, if a cloth is found containing a motif which does not appear in this list, this in itself does not preclude the possibility that it is a Jambi cloth.



## A. Discrete centrefield motifs

The same centrefield motifs may appear in sarung, selendang or headcloths in classic blue Jambi batiks. Not all of them are familiar to present-day workers and so not all of them currently have names. Where there is a name, it may include a group of several variants.

### Ancak

This is a small discrete motif occurring in repeated patterns (Fig 7.1). There are many variants. I have never come across this motif in Javanese batiks, though Djoemena equates it with the Javanese *lengseng*, (meaning a speech or lecture). There is no motif by this name in Hamzuri's catalogue of over two hundred Javanese motifs (1981).<sup>3</sup> A printed cloth found in the burial grounds of Achmim (Panapolis) in Upper Egypt bears this pattern in its centre ground. This cloth is illustrated in Robinson (1969), where it is said to be 4th century, though Barnes (1993:25) says it is possibly of an early mediaeval date. The pattern is on a dark ground, as in Jambi cloths.

The word "ancak" in the Seberang villages refers to a bamboo container commonly used for drying *kerupuk* (fish crackers) or for washing fish. Trays used for this purpose are now normally circular, and are known as "tapis". A true 'ancak' is four-sided, with the edges concave, the same shape as the motif. In the Bangko area of Jambi, these trays are called 'niru', and are still made in the old shape.

Although I have not come across any link with the containers used for making offerings to spirits, "ancak" was the word used in peninsular Malaysia for such containers. It is possible that the appearance of this motif on Jambi batiks has its origins in such a use. Abraham Hale describes 'ancha' used by Malay miners in Kinta, Perak as square frames used as an altar for making offerings (1885). Skeat describes the use of similar but larger trays known as "anchak" in January 1897

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<sup>3</sup> But see Geirnaert-Martin (1983) where she compares the *mlindjon* motif which separates rows of *parang* in the Central Javanese *parang rusak* design with the diamond-shaped *tengahan* of Javanese *kembangan*, according these a cosmological symbolic significance.

in a sacrificial ceremony for propitiating evil spirits at Ayer Hitam in Kuala Langat, Selangor (Skeat 1900:310).

### **Antelas**

This is a small motif occurring in repeated patterns (Fig 7.2). It is often referred to as *bunga antelas*. The word *bunga* means "flower", and the motif certainly looks like a flower, but no-one in the villages knows of a flower with this name, and it may be that the word *bunga* in this context is being used to suggest patterning, rather than an actual flower. *Kain antelas*, according to the dictionary, is a type of satin cloth.<sup>4</sup> Possibly the motif was encountered on imported satin cloth and was appropriated from there. A very similar design occurs on Turkish ceramic tiles (see Porter 1995).

### **Biji ketimun**

*Biji ketimun* = cucumber seeds. This small motif appears in simple regularly repeated patterns (Fig 7.3). It may also be used as part of the "bungo jatuh" design (see p 134). It was identified as *kacang* in the report of Van der Kam (Goslings 1929/30a:144), though this word is not used nowadays. It is never the dominant motif of a piece of batik, but usually forms one of the sides of the surrounding squares. If it was or is intended to convey meaning in symbolic terms, it is likely to represent the concept of fertility. In Jambi, another multi-seeded fruit, the *kundur* (gourd) is placed under her bed by a woman wanting to conceive, and *kundur* are also kept near new-born babies.

### **Birds**

Some bird motifs, such as merak ngeram (q.v.), have their own names, but many bird motifs found in older Jambi batik are no longer used and these, if they ever had names, have now lost them (e.g see bird motifs in Fig 6.9). Some motifs

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<sup>4</sup> Anderson refers to the import of kain antilas (sic) or kincobs into the Bulu China area on the north east coast of Sumatra in 1832 (1826/1971:262).

show birds which appear to be carrying something in their beaks. Maxwell (1990: 113) says that "on the embroideries destined for the walls and surrounds of the Malay wedding bed, the bird [often] takes a characteristically Islamic form with a chain or key in its beak. This bird form appears in traditional art across the South-East Asian region, particularly in the material culture of Islamic coastal societies." Maxwell does not explain the chain and key elements or why they are thought to be characteristically Islamic. There is no mention of a story of a bird with a key or chain in the Qur'an. However, there is a fifteenth century western Indian miniature painting which shows a male peacock with a sprig of something in its beak.<sup>5</sup>

Birds, whether swans, phoenixes, magpies or cranes, are also very frequent in Chinese art, and their iconographic significance is well-known. T'ang marriage mirrors often depict a pair of magpies carrying symbolic cords in their beaks (see Wright 1953 Plate VII), and it may be that the significance of the birds in Jambi textiles derives from such Chinese models. In the black velvet embroidered wedding curtains used in the Bangko district there is often a bird which appears to have something in its beak (Fig 7.4). In one Jambi sarung, two of the birds in the *tapak besar* are linked by a cord in their beaks (see Kerlogue 1996:35). The other birds, however, are not linked and strongly resemble the *burung hong* motif found in North Javanese *lok can* designs.<sup>6</sup> In one *selendang bersidang*, birds in the centrefield carry what appears to be a sprig of leaves in their beaks (Fig 7.5). Some of these birds appear to have a cockscomb, as does the one depicted in the *badan* of a sarung (Fig 7.6).

Birds also appear in the lozenge motifs of *selendang bersidang*, set against a non-geometric background (Fig 7.7).

## Cengkeh

This is a small motif, used to fill in spaces and as part of a regular symmetrical

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<sup>5</sup> This is illustrated in Gittinger (1982:30) where its reference is given as Royal Asiatic Society, London, Tod.Ms. 34 fol. 17a.

<sup>6</sup> *Lok can* refers to designs which were usually produced on Chinese silk and which contained symbolic Chinese motifs. Another characteristic of this style is the combination of two shades of the same colour.

pattern (Fig 7.8). It is never the dominant motif on a piece of batik. As well as appearing in centrefield patterns, it often appears in the kepala of a sarung, in the lozenge shape formed between the triangular puncak rebung.

“Cengkeh” is the name by which the clove is referred to in Jambi. Crawfurd identifies this as *Carophyllus aromaticus* (1856/1971:101). He quotes Rumphius as saying that Europeans transferred cloves from the Moluccas to Sumatra. According to Crawfurd, “cangkek” is said to be a corruption of the Chinese name “tkeng-hia” which literally means “odoriferous nails”.

“A celebrated law of the digest of the reign of Aurelian first names cloves among the Indian commodities imported into Alexandria. This law refers to the time between 176 and 180, so that there can be no doubt but that cloves were known both in Europe and in India towards the close of the second century. Thus we have a connexion existing between Continental India and the Malay Archipelago of seventeen centuries duration”(ibid).

Some think that Pliny referred to them a century earlier, but Crawfurd doubts this.

Clove trees grow in the Seberang villages alongside the road, which is not flooded in the rainy season. Children are sometimes given necklaces to wear made of cloves alternating with white beads resembling pearls. The combination of black and white is widely believed to have protective properties, and the fragrance of the cloves would be additionally desirable in attracting good spirits.

Cengkeh is referred to as a motif in Palembang crochet-work (Jasper & Pirngadie 1912:308.)

### **Durian pecah (or duren pecah)**

This is a very common motif in Jambi batik. As well as appearing as a discrete motif in the centrefields of sarung badan, it may appear against a background of irregular tendril, leaf and flower shapes in the central lozenge of a selendang

bersidang (Figs 7.9 and 7.10) or in the *tapak besar* of a sarung.

*Durian*<sup>7</sup> is a type of semi-wild fruit tree native to Jambi, and *pecah* means split. The durian tree frequently grows to a height of 80 or 90 feet before the first branches are reached. It is planted in groves in the forest. Skeat reports that there had been a ceremony in the past near the village where he lived in Jugra, Selangor, called *menyemah durian*. The whole village would assemble and the most barren of the durian trees would be selected. One of the local pawangs would then take a hatchet and deliver several blows upon the trunk of the tree, saying

Will you now bear fruit or not?  
If you do not I shall fell you

To which the tree (or rather a man stationed nearby) would answer

Yes I will now bear fruit  
I beg you not to fell me (Skeat 1900:197-8)

Durian is the main ingredient of “tempoyak”, a traditional Jambi delicacy made from the fermented fruit and stored in floral Chinese jars. It is said that if you eat tempoyak in Jambi, you will never leave. At syukuran ceremonies, boiled eggs, dyed red, are presented to guests in paper baskets representing either durian fruit, or little goose-shaped boats (see fig 6.25).

The *durian pecah* motif bears some resemblance to the Javanese *sawat* motif, said to represent the wings of the Garuda, Vishnu’s vehicle in Hindu mythology. It may have been borrowed from Javanese imported cloth and renamed locally, it may have sprung up independently in Jambi, both Javanese and Jambi designs may be derived from a common third source or the Javanese may have borrowed the design from Jambi. A similar motif occurs in a cloth from Central Asia illustrated in Baker (1995:83) in which the ‘wings’ are separated, as is usually the case with the Jambi motif, by a linking central shape which could represent a large seed or stone inside a fruit. A flower motif from South East India has a similar shape (Victoria and Albert Museum IS286). The motif appears in

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<sup>7</sup> *Durio zibethinus*.

Sumatran songket, and Van der Hoop illustrates such an instancee, labelling it as the Javanese “lar”(1949:186), although he himself comments that it looks like a flower between two leaves. Assumptions that the Sumatran motif is derived from the Javanese source may not be well-founded, however.

Irwin and Murphy (1969:8) suggests that the style and idiom of Javanese batik “have a firm ancestry in Hindu-Javanese decorative art as it flourished under the East Java kings between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries.” Of course, immediately before this period, it was Sriwijaya which was the ruling power in the region, itself heavily influenced by Hindu art. But, says Irwin, “the bird-wing motif called *lar*, usually said to be a symbol of Garuda, the Heavenly eagle, carrier of the Hindu god Vishnu,... bears no recognisable relation to the well-established iconography of Garuda in both Hindu and Hindu-Javanese tradition.” If we follow his argument about how meanings of motifs arise, the case becomes stronger: “The temptation to attach meanings and even religious symbolism to motifs of decorative art is strong in the East and especially in Java, but the fact that such interpretations are often contradictory or inconsistent encourages the assumption that invention of the forms sometimes preceded the meanings.” If the split fruit motif came first, with its connection with fertility and perhaps pre-Hindu beliefs, then its naming as *lar* in Java but *durian pecah* in Jambi would suggest that the motif existed first in Jambi.

### **Kaco piring**

This motif is relatively large, and often gives its name to a design (Fig 7.11). The key determining factor in categorising a motif as kaco piring seems to be the scalloped petal edges.

Kaco piring = gardenia. Marsden refers to this flower as pachah-piring (he reports it as *gardenia florida*, described by Rumphius under the name of *catsjopiri*) (1811/1986:104). Kaco piring flowers are large white double flowers which are fragrant and are used in mandi kembang and in bacam. Gardenia flowers are listed among the products of San-fo-tsi (Jambi) by Chau Ju Kua (Hirth & Rockhill 1964:61)

## Melati

The motif name is given to a number of small simple floral shapes, the most common of which consists of a central circle surrounded by five or six petals (See Fig 7.12).

Melati = jasmine<sup>8</sup>. This flower is grown outside many people's front doors, and is fragrant. The blossoms are used in *mandi kembang* and *bacam* at weddings, circumcisions and so on. Marsden, in his *History of Sumatra* writes:

It bears a pretty, white flower, diffusing a more exquisite fragrance, in the opinion of most persons, than any other of which the country boasts. It is much worn by the females; sometimes in wreaths, and various combinations, along with the *bunga tanjung*, and frequently the unblown buds are strung in imitation of rows of pearls (1811/1986:105).

The motif is considered particularly suitable for clothing worn at wedding ceremonies, and is also found on *songket*. Brides and sometimes grooms have artificial melati flowers made of cloth hanging from their headdress at the *pesta penganten*. In Jambi, white jasmine is supposed to symbolise purity (Depdikbud 1988/9:133)

## Paku (also referred to as *daun pakis*)

Paku = fern; *daun pakis* = fern leaf.

This is a small motif which rarely figures prominently in a pattern (see Fig 7.13). As well as appearing in centrefields, it may sometimes be found in the lozenge area of the *kepala* of a *sarung*.

This motif is sometimes labelled "*tabur bengkok*" in official documents (e.g. *Batik Tradisional 1990*; Fauzi 1995). However, *paku* or *daun pakis* were the names which were normally used by Ibu Asmah. Heringa agrees with Van der Hoop (1949) in interpreting this motif as a sunwheel and notes its resemblance to

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<sup>8</sup> The *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* gives it as *jasminum sambac* (Rubiaceace) (Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa 1988). Marsden identifies it as *nyctanthes sambac* (1811/1986:105).

sunwheels in the kain simbut of Banten (1994a:26). However, in Jambi the paku motif invariably has five 'legs', which distinguish it from the Banten motifs which are closer to a swastika shape with normally only four legs. The fern is associated with fertility in Jambi culture, and the resemblance to a sunwheel may be coincidental. A species of fern (*paku sabba*) was used in parts of Sumatra in the indigo dyebath (Marsden 1811/1986:94).

Pakis is referred to as a motif in Palembang crochet-work (Jasper & Pirngadie 1912:308).

### **Pauh**

This motif sometimes appears in the tapak besar, the side panels of the kepala of a sarung. It also appears in the four corners of the centrefield of the selendang bersidang collected by Tassilo Adam (See Fig 7.14) and a similar cloth in the Jambi museum (Fig 7.15) This second cloth has different motifs in its centrefield.

*Pauh* is a kind of mango. There is also a town named Pauh in the south of Jambi province. The motif of this name appears to be the Jambi version of the Kashmiri *butta* cone design on Paisley shawls, commonly found on silk *pelangi* selendang. In tapak panels of Jambi sarung, it is normally turned through 90 degrees, and has now become symmetrical.

### **Riang-riang**

*Riang-riang* = cicada.

This motif often appears within the bunga jatuh design, surrounded by vine, tendrils and flower shapes. It also sometimes appears in the tapak besar of the kepala in a sarung, as in Fig 7.16.



## Tagapo

This is a centrefield motif, which comes in a variety of shapes based around a small circle (Fig 7.17).

The *tagapo* motif resembles a flower, but there is in fact no flower of that name in the Jambi Seberang district. Eventually I was told by some of the older women that *tagapo* is the name of a type of cake which used to be made in the old days. The cake is formed into the shape of a flower. Flower shapes are also used for *kerupuk*, crackers made in Seberang from dried fish and cassava flour. Cakes have given their names to motifs used in Malaysian songket, perhaps reflecting the important role of cakes in Malay culture (see Selvanayagam 1990:84-5). The fact that cakes are a central part of the ritual gift exchange at weddings and are also mentioned as part of the offerings made to spirits may help to explain their presence as motifs on batiks. (See references to cake offerings under "ancak" above).

## Tampuk manggis

This motif appears in the centrefield of sarungs and head cloths, and is often confused with the tagapo motif. It is distinguished by the projecting triangles which surround it (Fig 7.18).

Tampuk = calyx; manggis = mangosteen (*garcinia mangostana*).

An excellent engraving in Marsden (1811/1986 Plate III) shows both ends of the mangosteen quite clearly, the outer end with its eight "petals", and the calyx with its four. The Orang Kubu who live in the forests of Jambi find the calyx a particularly significant part of the plant, since this is where the fruit springs from the flower.<sup>9</sup>

The tampuk manggis motif also occurs in woodcarvings throughout the East Sumatran region and in peninsular Malaysia. The name is referred to in Jasper & Pirngadie as referring to a motif in embroidery from the Padang highlands

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<sup>9</sup> Personal communication from Oyvind Sandbukt.

(1912:311). A similar motif occurs in Malaysian songket. One of the folded shapes in the antar belanjo gift collection is the tampuk manggis, with the four corners of the cloth representing the four "petals" of the calyx.

## Tanjung

The tanjung motif is a small one which appears in centrefields as well as in the kepala of sarungs (Fig 7.19).

The tanjung flower is a small white flower with eight points in the shape of a star and which gives off a scent after it has fallen from the tree.<sup>10</sup> Tanjung flowers grow locally and are used in *mandi kembang* and in *bacam* at weddings. Marsden refers to the tanjung flower as being worn in wreaths by Sumatran women (1811/1986:104).

Jasper & Pirngadie refer to a motif of this name in Palembang crochet-work (1912:309). The tanjung motif resembles some of the sun motifs in the kain simbut of Banten (see Velhuisen-Djajasoebata 1984:49).

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<sup>10</sup> Identified as *Mimusops elengi* (Sapotaceae) by the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh.

## Other motifs

In addition to the motifs described above, there are a number of motifs which were not named by my chief informant, but for which other batikkers have names. These names may have been passed down from another source, or they may have been invented recently. Motifs in this category include *kembang duren* (durian flower) and *bunga bintang* (star flower).

## B. Overall centrefield patterns

An all over centrefield pattern may include elements which occur as discrete motifs in other centrefields. There is a distinction between background and foreground in some of these design types, and the name is usually determined by the larger elements in the design. Often these larger elements are repeated in a symmetrical way, while the background is an asymmetric melange of flowers and foliage.

### **Batanghari**

The Batanghari motif does not occur in any of the selendang bersidang in the Dutch collections, and it may never have been used in them. It is, however, found in sarungs (Fig 7.20).

*Batanghari* is the name of the river which runs from the Minangkabau highlands through Jambi and out to the Berhala Strait at Tanjung Jabung. The etymology of the river's name is not clear, but the word "batang" means branch or tributary, and often precedes the names of rivers in Jambi; "hari" in Malay means "day". However, in India "Hari" is a name which usually designates Vishnu. The name "Hari-Dwara" ("the gate of Hari") refers to the place where the holy river Ganges emerges from the mountains into the plains of Hindustan. This is a great place of pilgrimage, and it is possible, given Jambi's history, that there is a connection between the name of Jambi's river and its Hindu past.

The river basin of the Batanghari corresponds with the territory under the jurisdiction of the Jambi sultanate. It is not clear whether the name of the motif refers to the region from where the design originates, or whether it is intended to depict a river in aerial view (the latter seems unlikely).

The motif strongly resembles the tree-of-life motifs on Indian cloths such as palempores. In these, as in the Jambi version illustrated, the tree often springs from a vase, in this case a very small one. The trunk is patterned in a similar manner to cloths from the Coromandel coast made in the seventeenth and

eighteenth century for the European market in the Victoria & Albert Museum (see IS78-1952; IS121-1950). A major difference, however, is that the Jambi cloths have their backgrounds filled with small detached petal, seed and leaf motifs; the Coromandel cloths generally have a clear cream ground.

### **Bungo jatuh**

Bungo jatuh = fallen flowers. This motif depicts a melange of petals scattered over the cloth in a disordered fashion (Fig 7.21). Flowers are scattered over brides in a flower shower on the morning of their wedding, and also over pencak silat performers at the start of their initiation ceremony.

### **Keladi**

*Keladi* = taro. The keladi motif shows the leaves of the keladi plant, which occurs in a number of varieties in the Jambi region (Fig 7.22). One variety is edible; one has variegated leaves in pink and green; one, with a black stem, is planted outside the doors of houses as a *tangkal* to deter *setan tanah*. Skeat reports that the *lenjuang merah* (*Cordyline terminalis*) is occasionally planted at the four corners of the house to drive away ghosts and demons (1900:79). It seems possible that cloths carrying this design might once have been considered to have similar protective properties. Sandbukt refers to the keladi as being a plant used for food by the Kubu people (1988:142).

### **Merak ngeram**

*Merak* = peacock; *ngeram* = broody. The shape of the bird is hard to make out, and there may never have been an intention to depict it figuratively (Fig 7.23). This motif also appears in batiks from North Java, especially Cirebon, but there it is referred to there as *semen gurdo* (Djoemena 1986:7) One Malay hairstyle is known as *ayam ngeram* = broody hen. (Sheppard 1972: 117). Early versions of this motif show the bird with a nest containing three eggs. In later versions the three

eggs appear to have been replaced by flowers, and in contemporary versions they do not appear at all.

Eggs are important in Malay ceremonial offerings to the spirits (see reference under "ancak" above) and at syukuran, eggs dyed red with sappan wood are distributed to guests. Here they are probably a symbol of fertility, since I was told that they are given in particular to unmarried girls on such occasions.<sup>11</sup> This also used to be the practice at weddings, when eggs were attached to a "tree" placed in front of the bridal throne and later distributed to (especially female) guests.

Crawfurd (1856/1971:330) writes that "the bird known by this name (merak) is the *Pavo muticus* of ornithologists and a distinct species from the Indian one which is that of our poultry-yards. It appears to be confined to Java, Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula, and has never been domesticated by the natives of the Archipelago".

### **Pot of flowers**

This motif no longer appears in Jambi cloths, and has no current name. It does appear, however, in a selendang bersidang in Mrs Kusuma's collection (Fig 7.24) and also one at the Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam. In both cases, the design is in the central lozenge.

Pots of paper flowers are carried in Jambi in ceremonial processions on festive occasions such as the pesta penganten. They are also given to the groom's family along with the twelve cakes they receive in return for the nampan duabelas.

### **Other motifs**

In addition to the motifs described above, there are several named motifs used by present-day batikkers which are regarded as traditional but which do not, as far as

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<sup>11</sup> Eggs are distributed to guests at weddings in peninsular Malaysia too; Sheppard refers to them as a symbol of fertility (1972:106).

I have been able to ascertain, appear in museum collections. Among these are *kuaw berhias* (ornamented argus pheasant); *wayang gengseng* (a type of insect); *taritang* (a type of creeping plant); and *kangkung* (a type of water spinach).

## C. Kepala patterns

Except where they correspond with motifs in the badan, no individual names are given to the motifs which appear in the kepala (Fig 7.25). A range of designs are used, however.

### 1. Puncak rebung

The designs within the triangular puncak rebung usually consist of three circular floral designs encircled by a tendril which coils around the flowers and links them together (Fig 7.26). The line of the tendril usually emerges from behind a half-flower which similarly seems to emerge from behind the border surrounding the tapak besar. At the tip of the triangle the tendril terminates in a pointed leaf or bud shape. A row of puncak rebung makes up a *tumpal* border. Van der Hoop found examples of this type of decoration in a range of artefacts from all over Indonesia, including wood carving on a Minangkabau house (1949:25). Sanday and Kartiwa report that in Minangkabau society, bamboo shoots are used as a ceremonial food. They suggest that the significance of the motif in Minangkabau songket relates to the uses of bamboo and the many meanings drawn from it in Minangkabau proverbs, where the uses or qualities of natural objects are related to appropriate behaviour (1984:19). There are many parallels between Jambi adat and that of Minangkabau society, and it may be that a similar significance was once understood in Jambi.

### 2. Central lozenge

The lozenge shapes formed between the puncak rebung are filled with symmetrical star or rosette-shaped motifs, with a row of the largest of these motifs running down between the points where the tips of the puncak rebung nearly meet (Fig 7.27). Some of these motifs may also occur in centrefield patterns, and are named. Others do not. The largest of the motifs set against a plain background in Fig 7.26 occurs frequently in Jambi batik in this position, but is not named.



### 3. Tapak besar

The tapak besar usually contains a row of larger designs surrounded and linked by tendril and leaf designs (figs 7.28 and 7.29). Motifs commonly used are *duren pecah*, *pauh*, and *riang-riang*. One unusual heirloom sarung made by Haliyah has a *teluk/rantai* pattern running diagonally across the panels (Fig 7.30).

## D. Borders

### Peripheral borders

The peripheral border patterns used in sarungs and selendangs closely resemble the border designs of headcloths. One of the most characteristic elements of Jambi batiks is the *sisir*, the striped border found at the extreme edges of all four sides of headcloths and at the short edges of selendangs. These are relatively uncommon in Java, although they do appear in batik from Indramayu, Rembang and Tuban. Usually the *sisir* consists of simple parallel lines like a fringe, with a loop or similar device perhaps representing a knot at the top (Fig 7.31). Occasionally, however, the stripes are separated by a row of dotted lines (Fig 7.32).

Unlike the borders of selendangs and sarungs, headcloth borders from Jambi may contain cartouches in the main border between the two guard stripes (Fig 7.31). Van der Hoop refers to these cartouches as mirror panels, and comments on its frequent appearance in Chinese art (1949:514). It is also a common feature in Middle Eastern Islamic art. In Jambi batik, both the guard stripes and the central border are most often structured around a meandering line from which leaf or flower motifs spring alternately to fill the gap between the meander and the border's edge (Fig 7.32). Van der Hoop refers to this as a recalcitrant spiral, and identifies it as a Hindu-Javanese motif representing the tendril of the lotus plant (1949:272). In the central border of the frame surrounding Jambi batik cloths, the space is wider and the curves are gentler than in the guard stripes, with a longer interval between each offshoot.

Not all guard stripe patterns are built around a meander, however. The patterns in Figs 7.32 and 7.33 are examples of different types of border pattern quite common in the guard stripes in Jambi batik.

The only Jambi border motif which is named is the *tabur bengkal* (Fig 7.34). The *pohon bengkal* is a kind of tree bearing fragrant fluffy globe flowers.<sup>12</sup> It is seasonal, and although they are fragrant, the flowers are not included in those used in preparations for *mandi kembang* or *bacam*. I have not found this motif in places other than borders.

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<sup>12</sup> Identified as *Neonauclea* species (Rubiaceae)

## Fringe patterns

Fringe patterns may run along the inner edge of the frame surrounding the cloth, projecting into the centrefield, or they may run along the outer edge of the lozenge. They may be referred to as *candi* or *ombak-ombak*. Those referred to as *candi* usually have a scalloped edge, resembling a simplified version of a stupa (Fig 7.35). Although there are stupa at the temple site at Muara Jambi, 25 kilometres downstream from Jambi city, few Seberang villagers have ever visited the site, and Buddhism has played no part in the lives of the Muslim inhabitants for several centuries. It may be that the label “*candi*” has been passed down from a bygone age when Buddhism was a central part of Jambi culture. The *candi* fringe features in songket as well as in batik (Fig 7.36), and if batik is a relatively new art in Jambi, it may have been transferred from one type of textile to the other.

*Ombak-ombak* (lit. waves) consist of a smooth flowing line undulating along the edge of the cloth (Fig 7.37). The space between the line and the border is filled with detail, either foliate shapes or other fillers such as the *tanjung* motif (Fig 7.38). Along the outer edge of the undulating line, between it and the centrefield, there may be a variety of embellishments, either simple tooth-like projections (as in Figs 7.35 and 7.37) or frequently a series of pointed shapes between two small circles (Figs 7.38 and 7.39). The pelmet running along the top of a wedding *pelaminan* is also known as *ombak-ombak*.

Other fringe patterns may be more refined, such as the *antelas* shape alternating with ornate spikes shown in Fig 7.40, or more simple, as in the row of triangles in the headcloth shown in Fig 7.41. The batikker who decorated the *pagi-sore* headcloth shown in Fig 7.42 has embellished the diagonal dividing stripe with a fringe pattern which does not occur elsewhere in cloths in museum collections, which seems to confirm the impression that batikkers felt free to improvise the detail of the cloths on which they worked.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### The Red Batiks

#### 1. The problem

In addition to the blue cloths collected by Adam and Van der Kam, Goslings wrote about a number of red cloths, reported by some as having been produced in Jambi (1929/30b; 1929/30c; 1930/31). Batiks and other cloths containing red and referred to as "Jambi" cloths appear in a number of museum collections in Indonesia as well as in Europe. However, there is much confusion about these cloths, a confusion which centres on the colour. Some opinions are that Jambi batiks are characterised by a distinctive red colour, as reported in Steinmann (1947b:2103-4): "Their main difference [from Javanese batiks] lies in the colour combinations, where (besides light blue and black) Turkey-red is prominent, which unlike the Mengkudu of the Javanese batiks has a purplish hue with a tinge of violet." A later Dutch description also identifies the red: "The red colour in Jambi batiks (obtained from an infusion of the mengkudu flower), is striking and as a rule stronger than the Javanese red" (Van der Werff 1974:50). The batiks in the National Museum of Singapore collection thought to have a Jambi origin all contain red (see Lee 1991), as do the few batiks held in London at the Victoria and Albert Museum and at the Museum of Mankind.

Another view is that, until the recent introduction of aniline dyes to Jambi in the late 1970s, batiks containing red were never produced there. The Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde in Leiden has two cloths given to the museum by Mrs Nooy-Palm and collected by her in Palembang in the nineteen-thirties.<sup>1</sup> Although Mrs Nooy-Palm had been told that they were from Jambi, the catalogue entry records an opinion that all Jambi cloths containing red were imported from Java.<sup>2</sup> Museon, the educational museum in The Hague, contains one of the best collections of Jambi cloths held by a museum, being the contents of a collection made by Willem Steinbuch when he was Resident in Jambi from 1932 to 1934. Catalogue entries for the red cloths now give their origin as Java, although on

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<sup>1</sup>Catalogue nos. 4113/11 and 4113/12.

<sup>2</sup>The reference is to Philipsen's 1945 article.

the original card entries this was not the case for all of them. The catalogue of an exhibition there in 1994 divides Jambi batiks into two types: the blue "traditional" types, and the red ones, known as "*kain lama*" (old cloths), but which the author says "were imported in former times from the north coast of Java" (Heringa 1994a:27).

This difference of opinion over the dyeing of red in Jambi batik seems to originate from differing readings of remarks made in the earlier of Goslings' articles on Jambi batik (1929/30b;1929/30c). It has perhaps been compounded by a reluctance on the part of western observers to accept the possibility that the nature of Jambi's textiles may have changed over time, with the red ones representing an older tradition. This sits uneasily with early approaches to the study of textiles in South-East Asia (e.g Adams 1973; Gittinger 1976), which tended to describe the textiles in relation to a relatively fixed context, focussing on structures and symbolism with little discussion, if any, of changes in design. In the batik-producing villages of Seberang Kota, Jambi, however, change and the assimilation of outside influences has been a way of life since records began, and if the red batiks were made in Jambi in an earlier time, it is not entirely surprising that the patterns, designs and colours of Jambi textiles should have changed since they were made.

In the third of his articles about Jambi cloths, Goslings had turned his attention to the question of whether Jambi had ever produced red batiks (1929/30b). Tassilo Adam had reported in his account that Jambi cloths had formerly been part blue, part red, and that local people no longer made red, though it had been done formerly. Van der Kam, on the other hand, had said that since batik had been introduced to Jambi by a family from Central Java, the lack of a red dye in the batiks produced in Dusun Tengah at the time of his visit was explained by the fact that the Javanese newcomers had not known how to make a red in Jambi. Their descendants, he reported, still didn't use red. However, the chief ingredients used for red in Java, alum and mengkudu, were both available in Jambi. Van der Kam's theory only holds up if neither they, nor Jambi people, knew how to make a red dye for cotton.

## 2. The Metzger cloths

After the publication of Goslings' first two articles, Mrs van Beresteyn-Tromp published in May 1928 an article about four batiks belonging to a Mr. Metzger, which had been exhibited in The Hague. In the article, summarised by Goslings in his next article (1929/30c), Mrs Beresteyn reported that Metzger had received these cloths from his sister-in-law, who had lived in Jambi for some time, and who had been presented with them by the Sultan of that time, who told her they were "old Jambinese". One of them was almost identical to the Adam selendang with a central lozenge which Goslings had described in his first article, and did not contain red in it. The other three cloths, a sarung and two selendangs, all contained red.<sup>3</sup> Mrs Beresteyn supplied Goslings with photographs of all four cloths.

The two blue and red selendangs both had a large red centre field, which in both cases was covered with rosette or flower patterns, regularly and densely arranged. Goslings commented on the similarity in this respect between the two cloths and the yellow and brown-veined blue cloths previously acquired. He also remarked that this is a clear difference from cloths decorated in Java. He concluded then that they must be genuine Jambi batiks unless they came from Palembang.

Goslings mentioned that when he first read Mrs Beresteyn's account of the irregularities in the cloths' patterns and the imperfections in the colouring of the batiks, he was reminded of the cloths frequently imported into Sumatra in the past from India. However, the possibility that the cloths came from India was rejected on the grounds that Metzger's cloths were batikked on both sides of the cloth, whereas cloths from India were only worked on one side.

## 3. Block printing

Another possibility which engaged Goslings' attention was whether the two red and blue Metzger selendangs might have been block-printed. Mrs Van Beresteyn's description seemed to indicate that this might be the case, though she had not considered this possibility. Goslings at this point states that copper wax stamps were only made in Java, and that though they might have been brought to Jambi

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<sup>3</sup> These cloths are 581-1 to 581-3 in the Tropenmuseum.

from Java, they could not have been in use there for many years. It is unclear what grounds he had for this assertion. Copper wax stamps had been in use in Java since the mid-nineteenth century<sup>4</sup>, but Goslings could have had no way of knowing whether they had been in use in Jambi (Adam 1934:72). He does not consider the possibility that wood blocks had been used in Jambi for resist or for mordant printing, as was widespread in India.

The block printing of textiles is an ancient craft. The earliest example of seemingly block-printed fabric was found in Arles in France and dates from the sixth century A.D. (Robinson 1970:73). Cloth printing was widespread in Europe in the Middle Ages, particularly in Venice, but in Asia it appears to have a much longer history. Forbes (1956:137) says that printed textiles were imported into China as long ago as 140 B.C.. In Fustat, Egypt, block-printed textiles from India and dated to the late medieval period have been found (Gittinger 1982). Knowledge of an Indian technique of resist printing was brought to Holland in the early sixteenth century, and the process had probably been in existence in India for a long time before that (Robinson 1969:47).

It is not clear how long textile printing has been practised in Indonesia. It could in theory have been introduced long before the introduction of copper stamps, and there is some evidence that there were centres of textile printing in Sumatra at one time. An I.C.I. map reprinted in Robinson (1969:11) has both Jambi and Palembang clearly marked as centres of textile printing, and this appears to refer to a date prior to the eighteenth century. Alfred Bühler seems in no doubt that wax printing existed in Jambi (1959:15). Sylvia Fraser-Lu says that Jambi batiks were "originally printed with wax using wooden blocks rather than canting or cap" (Fraser-Lu 1986:73). Dealers in Jakarta often mention that old Jambi cloths were block-printed using wooden blocks, an idea which is repeated in Gillow's work (1992:48). I came across old wooden blocks there myself. Steinmann (1947b:2104) refers to wax[-ing] blocks found in 1879 in the interior of Aceh in North Sumatra by a military detachment. He adds that in isolated parts of West Sumatra such blocks may still be found occasionally, concluding that batik was formerly an art practised in various regions of Sumatra. Praetorius (1843:397)

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<sup>4</sup> Copper printing blocks have been said to have been first used in Java in 1840 (Rouffaer 1914:218), though Lewis puts the date a little later, at 1860 (Lewis 1924:1). Robinson (1969:47) reports that they were introduced to Indonesia from India.

mentions the block-printing of chintzes in Palembang in 1832, though what the process consisted of is not entirely clear. Blue and black dyes appear to have been applied to white cotton by means of wooden blocks, and then finer lines drawn in "with a Chinese pencil."

Wood blocks may well have been introduced to Sumatra from India. Raffles (1817/1965:171) referred to the use of wood blocks in Java where the cloths are "stamped as in India" in imitation of Indian cloths, employed as substitutes for the Indian palempore. According to Rouffaer, brown dyeing was introduced into Java by Chinese and North Indian men (Boow 1988:31). It must be at least a possibility that the technique of block printing could have been imported to Sumatra from India in a similar way at some time in the past. Immigrants from India are mentioned frequently in Anderson's account of his mission to the east coast of Sumatra (1826:192,209,305). Block printing of wax or other resists is, of course, a different process from block printing of mordants or block-printing of dye.<sup>5</sup>

#### 4. Mordant printing

The first detailed account of mordant-painting as practised in India was written by Father Courdeoux in 1742 (see Irwin & Schwarz 1966). Prior to that, European writers had frequently made references to painted cloths from India, but the function of mordants had not been noted (see Baker 1916). However, the use of mordants is likely to have been in existence for many centuries, and the process observed by the elder Pliny in Egypt in the first century A.D. was almost certainly

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<sup>5</sup> A description of the block printing of palempores made in Masulipatam, where the cloths were waxed before the application of the blue, is given by Havell in the *Journal of Indian Art* 1888 and quoted in Thurston 1897:29, though it is not clear whether the wax itself was applied by means of blocks. Havell comments that "the blocks themselves are generally beautifully cut and finished with great minuteness and care."



mordant painting.<sup>6</sup> It is particularly suitable for designs where red is one of the main colours, since alum used as a mordant will combine with morindone or alizarine to produce red. Morindone and alizarine can be obtained from mengkudu, found throughout Indonesia and commonly used in the past in Gujarat and Rajasthan (see Mohanty 1987:10-17). Alizarine is also obtained from other plant substances such as *chaya*, which was used in parts of India.<sup>7</sup> The alum can be painted on, or it can easily be applied by printing after mixing with gum. A more liquid consistency for the alum mixture can be used to penetrate right through the cloth, producing a pattern on both sides. A very liquid solution can be used if the whole cloth is to be red. I observed this process in Ahmedabad, where synthetic alizarine has now replaced the natural dyestuff, but the process is exactly the same. After the alum has been applied the cloth is dried in the sun. It is immersed in a hot solution of alizarin.<sup>8</sup> Where the alum has been printed on the cloth, it turns red. Where there is no alum, the cloth remains white. Although there is some seepage, this can be removed by bleaching, and the resulting lines are as clearly defined as in batik cap. However, in this type of printing, the lines produced may vary in width more than in batik cap, where the printing block is composed of strips of copper all of a uniform width. Although it is possible to use cap stamps to produce blocks of wax as well as lines, it is much more difficult to be precise about their definition, since to fill areas rather than producing lines, the craftsman must rely on the spreading quality of hot wax. Flat areas of copper would not pick up or lay the wax evenly and do not occur in metal printing blocks. In Java, broader areas of wax were applied with a brush (Lewis 1924: Plate XXIV). In mordant printing, the wood block can be carved to coincide exactly with the line and shape desired for the coloured and white areas.

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<sup>6</sup> "In Egypt they employ a very remarkable process for the colouring of tissues. After pressing the material, which is white at first, they saturate it, not with colours, but with mordants that are calculated to absorb colour. This done, the tissues, still unchanged in appearance, are plunged into a cauldron of boiling dye, and are removed the next morning fully coloured. It is a singular fact, too, that although the dye in the pan is of a uniform colour, the material when taken out of it is of various colours, according to the nature of the mordants that have been respectively applied to it; these colours, too, will never wash out." (*Historia Naturalis* Book XXXV, Ch 42 :110: Quoted in Birdwood 1880/1971:243). The production of several different colours would result from the application of more than one mordant before the dyebath. With madder, an alum mordant produces red while an iron mordant produces black.

<sup>7</sup> Chaya, also known as Indian madder, is *Oldenlandia umbellata* L.

<sup>8</sup> Accounts of the use of mengkudu in Indonesia tend to refer to a cold mengkudu dyebath as opposed to the hot Indian *chaya* bath (see Bühler 1941:1425).

It seems that the mordant-printing process was not observed in Java, since there is no reference to it in the index of Jasper & Pirngadie's 1916 volume on batik nor in the one for Rouffaer's text (1914). It seems then far more likely that if mordant printing was practised in the East Indies, it was in those parts which the Dutch had not explored to the same extent as Java. Given that the Dutch did not know of Jambi's batik until 1921, and that this now seems to have been in existence there for some considerable time, it may well be that Jambi was the source of mordant-printed textiles. However, Goslings' viewpoint is that since the Dutch did not know of copper blocks in Jambi, block-printed textiles could not have been produced there.

## 5. Origins of cloths

Goslings considers a range of possibilities about the methods of manufacture of the cloths; he seems at least convinced that they did not come from Java, and is at this point inclined to conclude that they were made at some centre of batik-making on the Coromandel coast. He refers as evidence to two Coromandel cloths in the Tropical Institute collection, and to the description in Rouffaer and Juynboll of methods of manufacture there. The parts to be dyed red are firstly waxed in, and then the cloth is dyed in an indigo dye bath. The wax is then removed and the parts to be red have a mixture of sappan and alum painted on. This is followed by immersion in a boiling bath of "chaya" root, which Goslings points out is a member of the "rubiaceae" family, like the mengkudu (1929/30b:181).<sup>9</sup> In fact, most of the "kain lama" from Jambi have had the red applied first and the indigo last, but Goslings may not have realised this at this time.

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<sup>9</sup> This combination of mordant and resist block printing was still in use in Sind in Pakistan in the production of *ajraks* in 1973. The process is described in Yacopino (1987:84) as follows: "The mordants are combined in a gum base and printed on cotton cloth which is first washed, softened and conditioned with local 'sakun' seeds, oils, soap and soda ash. Three patterns are then printed: first a resist composed of a solution of chalk and gum; secondly a resist containing the iron sulphate mordant; thirdly a resist containing the alum mordant. The cloth is then covered with powdered cow dung or rice bran to fix the three mixtures. It is then dipped into a cold bath of indigo to pick up the blue colour in the exposed areas. Afterwards the cloth is dyed in a simmering madder bath. The first resist becomes white, the black colour is created by the iron sulphate and printed alum becomes the red tone. The resists are reprinted on the same areas and the process is repeated for depth of colour which is characteristic of the finest *ajraks*. The process is completed by a final washing in soda ash and soap and then beating to soften the cloth. Other methods, confined to specific localities, are sometimes employed. The dyeing stages are reversed or the number of processes or colours reduced but all *ajrak* printers remain faithful to the basic concept."

Goslings notes a correspondence between the shade of red in the Jambi cloths and that of the Coromandel cloths. He adds that there are discernible similarities between the motifs of the Metzger cloths and those in the Coromandel examples, and also remarks that in both cases there are irregularities in the application of the design which could be seen as faults. He comments that these do not appear in North Javanese cloths. He is clear that similar features do not appear in the cloths from Java described by Rouffaer or Loeber. Although he had earlier suggested that Indian cloths were worked on one side only, and that the Jambi cloths were two-sided, now he quotes Rouffaer as mentioning that there are two-sided South Dekhanese batik cloths manufactured for export to the Dutch East Indies. He refers to Rouffaer's statement that in Masulipatam too the batiks were sometimes worked on both sides and that wooden hand block stamps were used, as well as a hand-drawing instrument (*kalam*). Goslings' article concludes that Metzger's cloths came from India.

However, in his next article on the subject of Jambi batiks (1930/31) Goslings continued by registering his surprise at a letter from Mrs Van Beresteyn in which she stated that she had received corroboration from Metzger's sister-in-law, Mrs Bekker, who had recently returned from the Indies, that Metzger's batiks were undoubtedly manufactured in Jambi. She added that ex-Resident Petri, who had run the administration in Jambi between 1918 and 1923, was also in possession of red-coloured Jambi batiks, bought at the same time as Mrs Bekker had bought hers.

Mrs Van Beresteyn had inspected Heer Petri's five batiks, along with a silk ikat cloth also from Jambi. She arranged a meeting between Goslings and Heer Metzger, to which he brought his three batiks, and at which he explained that Mrs Bekker had not been given the three cloths by the Sultan of Jambi in 1920, as had been stated in Mrs Beresteyn's original article, and repeated by Goslings in his.<sup>10</sup> In fact, according to Metzger, Mrs Bekker had bought the cloths herself in Dusun Tengah, across the Batanghari river from the Dutch administrative headquarters.

Goslings' immediate impression, on seeing the cloths, was that they were indeed exceptional, and their appearance seemed to support his earlier theory that they

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<sup>10</sup> Goslings points out that this would have been impossible anyway, since the sultan had been killed in 1904 and the sultanate abolished in 1906, when the Dutch imposed direct rule.

might well have come from India. Mrs Van Beresteyn had also brought two more red batiks said to have come from Jambi and belonging to a Heer Joling. One of these Goslings judged to be of the same type as Metzer's cloths; the other he identified as being a Javanese type, similar to one he had seen illustrated in Colour Plate V of Loeber's work "Das Batiken" (1926).<sup>11</sup>

A visit was then made to the Petri house, where Mrs Petri showed Goslings the cloths in question. One was a selendang similar to the original Adam cloth, but without the leaf motifs in the corners; the other five were also selendangs, bought in one of the kampungs across the river, in black or dark blue and red. Unfortunately it was not possible to illustrate these in the article. Again, Goslings was very firmly of the opinion that these cloths did not in any way resemble Javanese cloths. His judgment was that they must have been made in the Jambi kampungs at some earlier time. Goslings then asserted a complete correspondence between these cloths and one of the Metzer batiks, Fig 8 in the previous article, which he takes as being a characteristic specimen of this type of Jambi cloth.

Mrs Petri said that in Jambi batiks there are no tumpal kepalas. While this is true of her cloths (all of which were selendangs), Goslings points out that this, however, is incorrect. One of Mrs Bekker's cloths has a tumpal kepala. Mrs Bekker acquired all her batiks at intervals between 1920 and 1921 from people in the kampungs across the Jambi river, where they were regarded as valuable possessions, but where the people had been forced by circumstance to sell their valuables, including the cloths. The first one she bought, she did not remember which, she bought on a visit to the kampungs which she made with Resident Petri.

Professor van Eerde, who had brought back a number of blue and yellow Jambi cloths for the Colonial Institute had also bought a very fine cloth containing red sewn into a sarung from a Jambinese in Batavia.<sup>12</sup> This cloth had been batikked by hand and had a tumpal kepala in red, while the rest of the cloth was in light brown-veined white on a black background. The papan and the tumpals were decorated with a wavy black flower-tendrilled ornament. Goslings judged this

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<sup>11</sup> This cloth is from Rouffaer's collection and is given by Loeber as being from Surabaya.

<sup>12</sup> No 556/19 in the Tropenmuseum collection, Amsterdam.

cloth to be a genuine specimen of a Jambi batik from former times.<sup>13</sup>

The question then was where the red batiks had been manufactured. Mrs Bekker said that she had heard the people in the kampungs mention that during the life of a "great grandfather"<sup>14</sup>, the "*akal*" (or knowledge of the method of using) for the red dye still existed, but that it had since been lost. Mrs Petri also said that she had heard the skill of making the red dye had been taken to the grave, both thus corroborating what Tassilo Adam had said he had been told at the time when Petri ran the administration in Jambi in 1918-23. There now seemed no good reason to suppose that Jambi people were lying about the cloths' origin. The only area of doubt was whether such knowledge could really die out in such a way.

## 6. Red batiks and blue batiks

In 1945 Johannes Philipsen published a reappraisal of Goslings' work, in which he divided the cloths into two categories: the "red" batiks and the "blue" batiks. Philipsen in his summary chose to reject Goslings' eventual conclusion that the cloths containing red had probably been made in Jambi. His chief reasons for doing so seem to be that he had read the report of Willem Steinbuch (1933) on the matter and seen Steinbuch's collection of batiks, and these led him to the conclusion that what he called the blue and red batiks were entirely distinct from one another. He placed considerable weight on Steinbuch's view that the cloths containing red probably came originally from East Java. However, Steinbuch did not visit the batik-producing villages himself, but bought cloths from local people who brought them to his residence. His brief description of batik-making in his memorandum of transfer written in 1933 suggests that he had based his ideas on the earlier of Goslings' articles (1927/8;1929/30a;1929/30b;1929/30c), before Goslings had had a chance to consider the assiduous investigations of Mrs Beresteyn Tromp, since he reports that Goslings had come to the conclusion that the possibility that the red batiks had originated in Dusun Tengah could be ruled out. In fact, he refers only to a series of three articles by Goslings. Although Steinbuch's conclusions are that the "red" cloths all came from Java, one of his statements seems to lend support to the theory of a Jambi origin for the cloths.

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<sup>13</sup> I obtained an almost exactly similar cloth in Jambi in 1996. The red border had been produced by mordanting the edge only of the cloth with alum and then dyeing with *mengkudu*.

<sup>14</sup> The words used were probably *nenek moyang*, which means an ancestor of either sex; there is no gender-specific term for a great grandfather in the language of Jambi.

He says that the cloths containing red were being sold as "kain Jambi" in Jambi itself (1933:209).

Steinbuch's own investigations seem to be very limited. He gives no details as to who his informants were. He was informed that red batiks were imported from East Java, and it is certainly the case that large quantities of Javanese batik were sold in Jambi at that time.<sup>15</sup> Whether all of the *kain lama* were part of this trade, however, is another matter. Steinbuch also, completely erroneously, stated categorically that there was no weaving in Jambi, when there is extensive evidence to the contrary.<sup>16</sup> Steinbuch must be regarded then as an unreliable source, and Philipsen's conclusions about red batik, relying heavily as they do on Steinbuch's report and with little evidence of any additional research should thus not be given too much weight. The division of the cloths into two groups, the blue and the red cloths, was based on the idea that one group were made in Jambi while the others were not. The picture may in fact be more complicated than this.

Steinbuch's cloths do at first sight seem to fall rather neatly into two types, with many of the cloths containing red stamped in an all over pattern of rows of rosettes, whereas the "blue" batiks (i.e. those containing no red) are tulis work, many of them containing a central lozenge, and with different types of motif, usually but not always floral. In fact, however, there is considerable overlap. Some of the cloths which contain red have a central lozenge; some of the stamped cloths also contain tulis work; and some of the cloths worked by hand contain red. When one looks also at the cloths in the Tropical Museum in Amsterdam the situation is further complicated, with the *merak ngeram* motif, which appears frequently in stamped form, also appearing in tulis work.

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<sup>15</sup> Figures reported by Wellan (1932:372) show that the numbers of cloths imported into Jambi and recorded by the customs officer more than halved between 1925 and 1928, however. This may suggest that unofficial trading was going on at the same time.

<sup>16</sup> I found several parts of looms in the Seberang villages, now in Jambi Museum, as well as many older people who could remember their grandparents weaving until the Japanese occupation, when looms were destroyed. Many of the cloths are still kept as heirlooms. The report of the Central Sumatra expedition of 1877-79 contains many references to weaving, and weavings collected in the Jambi region during the expedition are held in the Ethnographic Museum in Leiden.

## 7. Red dyes

Goslings was perhaps unaware that the preparation of red dyestuffs has often been a jealously guarded secret both in Indonesia and elsewhere in Indonesia<sup>17</sup>, and that villagers were likely to have been reluctant to reveal their sources to each other, let alone the Dutch. Raffles noted that in several of the coastal districts of Java the Malays knew of a dye called *embalu* which gave "a beautiful crimson colour to silk," but the Javanese were unacquainted with this (1817/1965:170).<sup>18</sup> The recipes for the use of annatto and sappan wood for dyeing a natural red in the Seberang villages of Jambi are still secrets which one family told me they alone held; the women who knew the secrets would not even tell their menfolk. However, the ingredients they mentioned correspond closely with those mentioned by Van Hasselt (1882:396/7) in his report of the expedition to Central Sumatra of 1877-1879 by the *Aardrijkskundig Genootschap*, which it seems that Goslings did not consult. In the report, Van Hasselt notes the use of sappan wood in Jambi to produce a red dye for dyeing cotton and silk. Sappan is mentioned by Van Hasselt as having been in use in the Jambi area to produce "een schoone roode"<sup>19</sup> in 1877 (Van Hasselt 1881:236), and is recorded as the red dye used in the production of a woven cloth collected by the expedition. Red is the background colour for silk songket cloths woven in Jambi, and the expedition recorded that the undyed silk was imported from Singapore and dyed in Jambi. I discovered a hank of undyed and unplied cultivated silk in a house in Olak Kemang. If sappan was used for dyeing silk, the possibility that it may also have been used for cotton in Jambi should be explored.

Sappan has certainly been used for red since very early times. Brunello (1973:68) believes that sappan wood must have been used to produce red by "the ancients" (here he is referring to civilisations such as ancient Harappa and Mesopotamia). At the end of the thirteenth century Marco Polo refers to sappan as a product of Sumatra (Rhys 1908:344). It was also used in peninsular Malaya (Skeat 1902:127) and in north west Borneo, where the bark was used in combination with betel lime to produce red on cotton (Alman 1960:604). In Europe, sappan wood was used at least as early as the fourteenth century, and it was frequently mentioned from

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<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Rouffaer 1914:277; Maxwell, 1981; Hamilton 1994:63.

<sup>18</sup> This must be the same *ambalu* which Marsden identifies as gum-lac and which he records as being produced in both Bengkulu and Padang (1811/1966:175).

<sup>19</sup> "a beautiful red".

1400 onwards, though it would have been used as a wool dye at that time. According to Leix it was imported at that time from Sumatra, Ceylon and India, via Venice (1937:21). Sappan contains a glucoside which produces brasilein on decomposition. This can be oxidised by exposure to the air, and becomes a red dyestuff easily soluble in water. It was imported into Europe in blocks and used for dyeing wool, cotton and silk, but the colour was not fast when the sappan was used substantively (i.e. without a mordant). Adrosko (1971:26) reports that sappan gives pink and claret hues and "was often used in calico printing and as a finishing dye in combination with other more stable but less brilliant hues". Although she may have been referring to American practice here, it is clear that sappan could be used in printing to produce bright reds. Although sappan has the reputation of being fugitive, in combination with other dyestuffs it can produce a relatively fast colour. When cotton is previously treated by mordanting with tannin or alum the colour produced by sappan is more persistent (Brunello 1973:337/8). In the seventeenth century its use was recorded in England, where it could make pink or carnation, purple or the colour of claret wine depending on the mordant (Petty 1667).

In Jambi, one family showed me how to dye cotton red with a wood which they told me was *kayu sepang*. They first immersed the cloth in an infusion of lembato wood, then dyed it two or three times in the warm sappan infusion, adding *tunjung* to the dyebath.<sup>20</sup> After the dyebath, they added *kapur*, lime paste, one of the ingredients used in betel chew which is made of ground shells and found in every household in the village.<sup>21</sup> Though the result was not a strong red, they told me that the process needed only to be repeated many times to achieve a good colour. They added that other dyestuffs were used in combination with the sappan in the past, but were reluctant to give details.

Van Hasselt's report also records the use of *kasoembo-keling* (*Bixa orellana* L) for an orange dye for silk in Jambi. Sagimun M.D. (1985) may be referring to annatto when describing ceremonial wear in the Jambi region which may be "merah kesumba". Annatto is not native to Indonesia, and was probably introduced from India. Its name in Jambi, *samo keling*, implies a south Indian origin, *keling* being

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<sup>20</sup> Tunjung is iron sulphate, used as a mordant.

<sup>21</sup> Calcium in the form of crushed shells is reported as having been used to brighten madder-type dyes in India (Irwin & Hall 1971:15).



the Malay word for that region. Anderson reports that "Kasumba kling" was imported into east Sumatra from the Malabar and Coromandel coasts in the early nineteenth century (1826/1971:205). According to Brunello (1973:335) the plant is indigenous to the Americas, and was introduced to Madras, although Leggett (1944:60/1) says that it was originally imported into the Near East and Europe from India. Annatto is extremely fugitive to light but was certainly used in Kelantan and Patani to make orange (Skeat 1902:124). It grows in Jambi and may have been one ingredient in the dye concoction used in the Jambi cloths. However, it could not alone have produced the bright brick red evident in many of them.

*Kesumbo keling* is the local name for annatto, but *kesumba* can also refer to the safflower, another source of red dye.<sup>22</sup> Local people told me that a flower had been used in dyeing in the past, but they did not know, or would not tell me, which flower this was. Hill refers to the use of *kesumba* for red in Terengganu (Hill 1949:76).

Although *jerenang* was frequently mentioned to me as a material which could be used in combination with other dyestuffs to produce red for batiks, again no-one was willing to tell me how it was used, and only one family claimed that they knew the process. There is an added problem with this substance, in that the word *jerenang* is used to refer to two different materials. One is a gum or latex valued for its malleability when immersed in hot water. This type of *jerenang* had a similar function to that of gutta percha (*getah pecah*=split gum) before the invention of plastics. The other substance is a type of resin obtained from the seeds of the fruit of a rattan plant. The English name for this type of *jerenang* is dragon's blood, though this term too can refer to a number of different substances. Brunello (1973:349) describes dragon's blood as being the resinous product of the *Calamus draco* Willd. and of other species of similar climbing plants. The term "dragon's blood" was also used to refer to resin from the "liliaceous dragon tree" (*Dracaena draco* L.), which according to Brunello (1973:53) was used by the Phoenician dyers of Tyre "to give a particular and inimitable brilliance to their material." Burkill (1966:759) reports Rumphius' first

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<sup>22</sup> Praetorius, in his description of the industries of Palembang in 1832, says that dyeing was carried out there with *Kesumba kemalo*. It is not clear what dyestuff this refers to. He refers at another point to the use of *Kemalo*, imported from Siam, as a red dye for cotton (Praetorius 1843:395).

account of the dye in the seventeenth century when he wrote that it was obtained in Palembang and Jambi from a certain rattan plant. Its chief use in Europe was for colouring varnishes, though in the East rattans and bamboos were dyed with it. Here he is referring to species of *Daemonorops*.<sup>23</sup> He describes the processing of the fruits:

In order to prepare dragon's blood the fruits are collected and when quite dry are put into a basket with cockle shells and shaken. The friction thus caused detaches the resin, which falls through the basket into a cloth placed below, as a gritty powder. This powder, after being pounded into dust, is softened by means of hot water, and then moulded into cakes, sticks &c. Inferior grades may contain as much as 40% of fragments of the fruit wall, and other debris." (1966:760).

Crawfurd (1856/1971:123) reports that the Kubu people collected the gum and used it to trade with Malays. In the nineteenth century it was exported in large quantities to Europe and Crawfurd gives Jambi as the principal place of production in the Indonesian archipelago.<sup>24</sup> Both the fruits and the gum are still gathered by forest dwellers and traded; *jerenang* is included in a list of non-timber forest products in the reports of surveys of Muaro Sekalo village and Pelayungan village carried out between 20 July 1994 and 4 August 1994 as part of the RI/ODA Forest Project in Jambi Province. Here, and in Sandbukt's study of Kubu hunter-gatherers in Jambi (1988:145), it is specifically referred to as a dyestuff, and local people certainly do believe that that is one of its chief uses.

However, the molecular structure of *jerenang* suggests that a very complicated process must have been used for it to function as a dyestuff, if indeed it ever did. *Jerenang*, was mentioned by Van Hasselt (1882:396) as the source of a red dye for dyeing wood, but it may be that what is being described is a stain, rather than a dye.<sup>25</sup> *Jerenang* is still used in this way for dyeing basketry in the upriver regions around Bangko. It may be that the use of *jerenang* as a kind of varnish to make baskets a reddish-brown, and its use as an ingredient in *pilis*, the red substance painted onto a woman's forehead during pregnancy have led local people to assume that *jerenang* was the source of the red dye in old cloths when it was not. It seems likely that *jerenang* was never actually used as a dye for cloth, but that

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<sup>23</sup> *Jerenang* is given as the Malay name for *Daemonorops Draco* L. in Ridley 1902.

<sup>24</sup> He estimates the quantity produced in Jambi at a thousand hundredweight.

<sup>25</sup> Praetorius (1843:397) refers to the use of *Djernang* in Palembang for dyeing *bengkoeang* leaves from which food covers were made.

local people thought that it was. Until chemical analysis proves otherwise, though, the possibility remains that jerenang could have been used as a red dye, and that the process has merely been left unrecorded.

The fourth material suggested as a red dye source in Jambi is marelang, identified by the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh from samples I sent them as *Pterospermum cf acerifolium* (Steruliaceae), a plant which Gerini, cited in Burkill, reported as a source for an orange red dye in Siam. Although Burkill refers also to a dye plant of Jambi whose bark is used to give a yellow colour, which he suggests may be *Pterospermum diversifolium*, sometimes known as "merelang", he is clearly confusing marelang with lembato, which does give a yellow dye (1966:1867). Van Hasselt reported the use of the bark of "marilang" in Jambi in the late nineteenth century for the dyeing of batik, but identified it as *Pterospermum (?) parvifolium* Miq. (Van Hasselt 1884:18) Marelang is used to give a final "soga" reddish-brown in batik in Jambi today, and it is possible that in combination with other substances it could have been used to produce other reds in the disputed cloths, but it seems unlikely that the hue would match if it was used on its own.

Until the introduction of aniline dyes to Java in the late nineteenth century, the most widely used dyestuff for the preparation of red was the root of the *mengkudu* tree (species of *morinda*) (see Heringa 1989b:116-119).<sup>26</sup> The use of *mengkudu* was also known in Sumatra, where its use was reported in the early nineteenth century (Marsden 1811:95).<sup>27</sup> It is likely to be the dyestuff which Marco Polo referred to in addition to sappan in his description of Jambi in the thirteenth century (Rhys 1908:344). The *mengkudu* tree is common in the batik-making villages of Jambi, and its fruit was used in the indigo vat for dyeing blue. Although it was never reported to me as a source of red dye, it is quite possible that *mengkudu* roots were used, but that the process of using it was a very well-kept secret. One incident during my fieldwork suggests that there was knowledge of it in Jambi. In 1996 I decided to acquire a piece of the root for analysis, so I went to the house of neighbours to ask if I could take a piece from their tree. The neighbours agreed, and after a few minutes watching me they mentioned that

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<sup>26</sup> Raffles also refers to the use of *kasomba kling* to produce a light red or rose colour, however (1817/1965:170).

<sup>27</sup> Marsden gives this as *Morinda umbellata*.

another neighbour who dyes batik had previously taken some for use in batikking. They said it had been chopped up and soaked. We went to this neighbour's house and asked her what she wanted the root for. She denied ever having asked for the root, but added that Ibu Azmiah may have done so. Although I had not mentioned dyeing, she added that the only natural dye she used was lembato for yellow. She said that you couldn't make red from mengkudu root. Since no mention had been made of the colour red up to this point, I concluded that she knew of its potential as a source for red. She went on to say that she had tried to make red from *samo keling* (annatto) and had managed to produce something resembling Jambi red.

The process of using an alizarine-bearing dyestuff such as madder in combination with alum, oil and alkali to produce a fast red dye was known in Europe as Turkey red dyeing. Bühler (1941:1424) believes that the Turkey red dyeing process was introduced to South-East Asia along with Islam, and that the madder came to be largely replaced by mengkudu. He points out that Turkey-red dyeing is generally found among "those Malayan peoples who were not only subjected to the influence of Hindu, but particularly to that of Islamic civilization." Since the method was not mentioned by the Dutch botanist Rumphius at the end of the seventeenth century, Bühler concludes that the Turkey red process was transplanted at a later date from the Near East, probably alongside the spread of Islam. If so, Jambi people would be very likely to have learned of it, since Islam has been central to Jambi culture for many centuries. However, the use of mengkudu and alum is more likely to have been indigenous to the region; it was widely used in the eastern islands, and its prevalence in what Bühler regarded as areas more penetrated by Islam may have been to do with the fact that the mengkudu tree grows best near the coast. The other key ingredient in Turkey red dyeing, alum, has been exported from Egypt since the time of the Roman Empire, and thus would have been available in its mineral form to countries which had trading connections with Egypt (Brunello 1973). Alum occurs in mineral form in many places but is particularly associated with volcanic areas. In Indonesia it is obtained for dyeing from alum-rich plants, such as *jirek* (*Symplocos fasciculata*) or from mineral sources (Kajitani 1980:318). Coastal people could have obtained alum either through trade or from such plants. Marsden mentions the use in Sumatra of ashes from the fruit-stalks and

leaf-ribs of the coconut for fixing the colour from mengkudu, but alum was also obtainable as he mentions its use as a mordant (1811/1986:95).

In order to try to discover what dyes had been used for red in the few textiles I was able to obtain for myself, I sent a set of six samples for analysis.<sup>28</sup> All the samples from the old Jambi textiles contained morindone, the colouring principle contained in mengkudu. It was not clear whether any other additional dyestuff had been used. The analysts made no mention of jerenang in their report, although I had supplied them with a sample. Since they were using Schweppe's standards to identify dyes and Schweppe does not give a reference for dragon's blood, the fact that it was not identified does not mean that it was not there. The findings do not shed much light on the origins of the cloths, since mengkudu could have been used in Java or Sumatra, though the apparent absence of any other dyestuff might suggest that a Javanese source is more likely, as Jambi people mention other dye sources. However, it may be that the other sources were used chiefly for the dyeing of silk, with mengkudu reserved for cotton dyeing. The small set of samples allows for only tentative conclusions.

In addition to old textiles, I had supplied the analysts with a sample from a piece of cloth dyed in *kayu lembato* and *kayu sepang* for comparison. I had been present when this cloth had been dyed, and watched the colour being extracted from the wood chippings. According to the report, this piece of cloth was not dyed in sappan wood nor any other brasilein-containing wood. The analysts were unable to identify the colouring principle involved, which is presumably one not yet recorded in Schweppe (1993) or the York laboratory's own references.

## 8. Cloth quality

One factor which Goslings did not consider is whether it is possible to draw any conclusions from differences in quality of cloth between those from Java and those from Jambi, a suggestion raised by Heringa (1994a:28). Many of the red

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<sup>28</sup> The analysts were Textile Research Associates, of York. I supplied copies of two reports of tests carried out on other textiles for them to use as models (Technical notes by Rosenberg et al in Barnes 1993 and a report by Julia Swetzoff in Lefferts & Gittinger 1992 on Dyes in Historic Tai Textiles). The chemical identification of dyes was carried out using absorption spectrometry and thin-layer chromatography following an approach and techniques developed from those of Dr Helmut Schweppe, and outlined in Walton & Taylor 1991.

cloths do appear at first sight to be of finer quality than those containing no red, which might suggest either that they were made at a time when supplies of cloth were coming from a different source or that the batik itself was made elsewhere.

The first question, however, was whether the batiks said to come from Jambi were made on the same quality cloth as those indisputably from Java, and second, whether it is in some way possible to date them by the quality of the cloth used. The answer to the latter question can be supplied in part by examining the two cloths brought back from Java by Raffles and now in the Museum of Mankind. The two cloths were acquired at the same time (around 1816), but the quality of the cloth in each case differs enormously. One (1939.AS 4.119) has a thread count of 45 per cm in the weft and about 30 per cm in the warp, whereas the other (1939.AS 4.120) has a thread count of 22 per cm in the weft and about 25 per cm in the warp.<sup>29</sup>

In order to ascertain whether there is a significant difference between the fabric of the "red" Jambi batiks and the "blue" Jambi batiks, tests were carried out on a sample group of eleven cloths. Of these, six contained red and five did not. Criteria for comparison were: thread count, direction of spin, selvedge width and arrangement of warp threads, and loomwidth.

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<sup>29</sup> The finer of the two Raffles cloths has in fact been cut up and reassembled so that the motifs run at right angles to their original direction. This was probably done in England to increase the skirt length for a European wearer. Although the catalogue entry gives the width (i.e. the distance from waist to hem) of the cloth as 112cm, the woven width of the cloth at its widest point is 103cm, which was probably the loom width. A thin strip cut from another cloth has been added along the lower edge of the resulting skirt, increasing the length further. This piece is from a third source, and includes a sisir striped portion as well as a floral border.

The results were as follows:

**Cloths containing red:**

Weave	per cm wa,we	Wa x we	Selvedge: width, arrangement of warp thread from outside in	Loom width
1. tabby	44x40	ZxZ	4.0mm wide, 10 pairs Z	c.91cm
2. tabby	44x44	ZxS	(i)3.5mm wide, 11 pairs Z (ii)5.00mm wide, 15 pairs Z	c.87cm
3. tabby	32x32	ZxS	2.5mm wide, 1 pair S, 8 single S	c.82cm
4. tabby	39x38	ZxS	(i)3.5mm wide,12S,1Z,1S,1 pair Z (ii)3.5mm wide, 3 prs S,8S,1Z,2 prs Z	c.89cm
5. tabby	46x46	ZxZ	(i)3.5mm wide, 14 pairs Z (ii)3.5mm wide,15 prs Z	c.82cm
6. tabby	35x38	ZxZ	2mm wide, 6 S-ply	c.80cm

**Blue cloths**

7. tabby	40x40	ZxS	5.0mm wide, 20 S (single and paired)	c.89cm
8. tabby	44x44	ZxZ	(i)4.0mm wide, 12 pairs Z (ii)4.5mm wide, 1 single Z, 15 pairs Z	c.106cm
9. tabby	32x30	ZxS	(i)2.5mm wide, 8 pairs Z (ii)3.5mm wide, 10 pairs Z	c.81cm
10. tabby	40x40	ZxS	(i)3mm wide, 3 pairs S, 6S,1Z,2S (ii)3mm wide, 1 pair S, 8S,1Z,2S	No complete loomwidth
11. tabby	40x40	ZxS	No reinforcement of selvedge	c.87cm

Six of the cloths had selvedges of two different, though related, structures. The six S-ply warp threads of no 6. are yarns made of two Z-spun threads plied together with an S twist.

The results show that no two pieces of cloth were constructed in the same way,

which suggests that each was probably made in a different workshop. The textile analysts from the York laboratory told me that in their experience, workshops usually construct their selvages in one standard way, and it is normally possible to identify a workshop from the selvedge composition in a piece of cloth. Thus the eleven sample cloths in this small study probably came from eleven different workshops or makers.

There is no clear distinction in quality between those cloths which contain red and those cloths which do not. Although the sample examined is necessarily small, it would be reasonable to conclude that there is insufficient evidence from a study of cloth quality alone to support the assertion that Jambi did not produce textiles containing red. If all eleven cloths were made in Jambi, it would suggest that the fabrics used were obtained from a range of different sources. This would be in keeping with the trading situation as far as we know it in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The thread counts of the cloths do not place them neatly in the categories of *primissima*, *prima* and *biru* as defined in Susanto's account of the cloth used in Java for batik work (1980:54-56). Of the eleven cloths, only four fit one of the four categories he describes: cloths 1, 2 and 5 could be classed as *primissima*, as could cloth 8. However, when loom widths are taken into account, only cloth no 8 is of a width which corresponds with the category "*primissima*".

## 9. Discharge printing

Accounts of batik production in Indonesia tend to describe batik techniques as falling into two categories: batik tulis, where the wax is applied to the cloth by means of a canting, and batik cap, where the resist pattern is created by the printing on of wax by means of a copper stamp. This, however, is an oversimplification. The patterns on some printed cloths may have been produced by the painting or printing on of mordants, which bind the dye to the cloth. Areas where a mordant has been printed will take the dye whereas other parts will remain white. In addition, different mordants can produce different colours with the same dyestuff (e.g. an iron mordant will produce black with madder, whereas an alum mordant will produce red). Subsequent waxing and immersion in a



dye bath may make it appear that the cloth has been decorated using only the batik process, and such cloths are likely to be described in Indonesia as batik. The combination of mordant printing and wax resist is well-known in India, and may have been the process referred to by Raffles when he remarked on the production of imitation Indian chintz on the north coast of Java (1817/1965:171)

Several of the cloths described as "Jambi batik" seem to have been printed by means other than the application of wax by canting or copper stamp and subsequent immersion in a dye bath. The edge of the white line produced by the mordant resist process is less sharp than that produced by wax, and some of the cloths have lines which are finer but at the same time less sharp than the lines normally produced in batik cap. It is significant that these narrower white lines appear always in the red part of the cloth, while frequently the same cloth will have an area of blue where the white lines are wider and sharper, as is generally found in batik cap. White lines in a red ground can be produced by the mordant resist process. White lines in blue cannot. It seems highly likely that the difference in quality between the lines in the blue area and the lines in the red area result from the use of two different types of stamp, one metal, for applying wax, and one wooden, for applying the mordant. Cloths with these characteristics have probably been produced in this way, by mordant printing followed by a batik process.<sup>30</sup>

However, staff at the National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad suggested another possibility to me, involving the discharge method, where a previously-dyed cloth has some of its colour removed to form a pattern by application of a chemical substance. There appear to be three versions of the process which may have been used in cloths I obtained in Jambi, but in all three cases, this substance is printed onto the cloth.

#### Cloth A (Fig 8.1)

In this example, the indigo dye bath was the last stage of the process. This is clear

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<sup>30</sup> Veldhuisen (1993:20) describes how Indian chintz was produced by applying mordants to one side of the cloth and then immersing the cloth in a mordant dye. Those parts which are not to be dyed blue are then protected with a covering of wax, and the cloth immersed in a cold indigo bath. This is precisely the method which seems to have been employed in these 'Jambi' cloths, except that, according to Veldhuisen, in the Indian process the reverse of the cloth is waxed completely, leaving one side of the cloth pale and poorly defined.

from places where the blue has penetrated through cracks in the protective wax layer covering parts of the red and white patterned centrefield. The red has been produced by combining alum and alizarine but at no point has the alizarine penetrated the white parts of the border. This suggests that it may have been produced first, so that the alum could be painted or printed accurately within the border. The border pattern appears to have been printed on with wax, probably using metal blocks. The overlaps of the blocks at the weft end of the cloth show that the block was 12cm wide. The striped sisir border block was 12 cm long. Blocks have clearly been used to produce the centrefield too, approximately 13 cm x 13.5cm in size, but the quality of line is strikingly different from the lines in the border, being very fine but not so distinct. This suggests that the central area was painted with an alum mordant before the cloth was immersed in a hot alizarine bath. The pattern in the centrefield has apparently then been produced by printing an alum discharge onto the cloth using a finely-carved wood block. Some cruder details seem to have then been discharged to produce white highlights.<sup>31</sup> Those parts intended to retain the original pattern, including these discharged motifs, have then been waxed in by hand and the whole cloth immersed in an indigo bath.

#### Cloth B (Fig 8.2)

In this example, the border pattern again appears to have been printed on in wax using a metal block. The regular width of line, as in the previous example, suggests a metal strip, and the pattern is similar, though not precisely the same. The block length for the sisir is in this case 15.5 cm. The triple border panel is produced with a block about 14 cm long. Again, the penetration of the indigo into the cloth through cracks in the areas covered with wax shows that the indigo bath was the last stage of the process. Widespread penetration of the red dye into the parts of the border intended to remain white shows that the application of the mordant was carried out before the wax printing of the border. In this case,

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<sup>31</sup> The possibility must be considered that the pattern was produced by wax printing the centrefield, then adding the crude patches in wax. The cloth could then be immersed in a mengkudu bath. Following this, the border would have been wax printed and the parts of the red/white pattern to be protected waxed over before the final indigo dyebath. However, the wax would need to have been printed on both sides of the cloth. There is no evidence of this process, which is usually revealed by a blurred or double line resulting from slight inaccuracies in registration. If the cloth had been waxed only on one side, the pattern produced would have been more clearly defined on one side than on the other. Either alum or discharge printing thus seems more likely to have been the process used.

the resist protecting the red and white areas has been printed onto the cloth rather than drawn on by hand. Since these are wide areas rather than thin lines, it suggests a wood block rather than one made of metal strips. In many parts of the background the blue and red have combined to make black. The centrefield pattern has a small repeat, and the indigo dyebath conceals any overlaps, so that it is hard to be certain of the size of the block used to create it. However, it appears that the block was probably 12 cm x 11.2 cm.<sup>32</sup>

### Cloth C (Fig 8.3)

Once again, the borders have been produced with a metal printing block with a similar design to that of the previous two cloths, though not exactly the same. The sisir block was about 12 cm long. The border blocks were 12.5 cm long. Blocks for the centrefield were 13.6 x 13.2 cm. In this cloth, the edge of the area painted with alum is clearly shown along the inner edge of the border. Again, the indigo was the last stage of the process, and the alum and alizarine was applied before the border wax print. This cloth has two peculiarities: one is that some cross-hatching applied by hand appears in some of the central figures. The other is the appearance of dark patches around the motifs where the indigo has combined with the alizarine red. This alizarine red has spread irregularly to parts of the cloth beyond the white lines defining the pattern. This, as well as the broad swathe of red which departs from the pattern and makes what appears to be an unintentional frame around the centrefield, shows that the alum has not been printed on, but painted on, either broadly over the centrefield of the design with the white lines then being discharged, or over previously wax-printed motifs. Those parts to remain red/white have then been waxed over, the border wax-printed and the cloth immersed in indigo.<sup>33</sup>

Discharge printing in European countries is a relatively modern process: the technique of bleaching out a previously dyed area to leave a pattern, either in white or in another colour impervious to the bleaching agent, was, as far as is

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<sup>32</sup> A print from a metal block containing a serrated square of a similar size to the one in this pattern appears in Lewis (1924:Plate XVII) and it is possible that a fine metal block was used to create the centrefield pattern.

<sup>33</sup> It was suggested to me by dye experts at the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad, that this pattern was produced by using a discharge which would remove alum but not indigo.

known, not widely used until early in the nineteenth century.<sup>34</sup> Daniel Koechlin-Schouch in Alsace discovered a way of bleaching out Turkey red with a variety of substances to leave white, blue or black in its place (Robinson 1969:46). In France in 1805 a discharge process was discovered which could be used to produce *indiennes* known as *rongeriers* (Clouzot 1927:23). Whether the similar processes which appear in the "Jambi" cloths could have been transferred to Indonesia from Europe or could have sprung up independently there is the next question to answer.

According to Robinson, discharge methods were used at least from the first decade of the nineteenth century, and by the second half were used in England both as a normal method of printing and also for the production of the fabrics known as Africa prints and Manchester batiks.<sup>35</sup> The process he describes for these corresponds precisely with what appears in the three "Jambi" batiks which I am discussing, including the use of wax resists, though the element of handwork in some of them suggests that this was a craft version of the industrial process. Irwin and Hall suggest a possible answer: "During the nineteenth century, European techniques were introduced into the larger cotton-printing centres in India, and.....some of these methods began to penetrate to the native craftsmen, who used them with varying efficiency" (1971:5). If materials were available, the craft worker could have replicated the process. The question now arises as to what substance could have been used which would discharge the morinda red but leave indigo, albeit a weakened shade.

Substances which can be used for discharge printing were used on the Coromandel coast where cloths were produced for export to Indonesia (Mohanty et al 1987:115). The cloths concerned were sarees with designs in black and white on a red ground. The cloth was given *myrobalan* treatment (tannin) and dried. It was then dipped in alum solution, dried and washed. The design was then printed on with *iripupu* (oxalic acid) and gum paste. The cloth was then dried and left for some time. It was then dyed in an alizarin bath and dried, treated again in myrobalan solution and dried again. The design in black was then printed on in black colour and gum paste, the cloth dried and then washed.

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<sup>34</sup> There is, however, at least one example of discharge printing in a pre-industrial context. The Bambara tribe in Sudan employ a type of discharge method in combination with natural dye processes (Robinson 1970:107).

<sup>35</sup> See Robinson 1969 Plate 38.

Finally it was dyed again in the alizarin bath. Those parts printed with oxalic acid would not take the dye and would therefore remain white.

The existence of a local name for oxalic acid in this part of India suggests that it was a known substance prior to its introduction in an industrial form. How widely it was used is not known, but in any case, the particular discharge processes which would have been used in the three cloths under discussion would have necessitated more sophisticated treatments than the one described.

The process described by Mohanty is not a true discharge but a resist process. However, there is a report from the turn of the century, quoted in Rouffaer (1914:272/3) of a true discharge process using oxalic acid being practised in Kumbakonam, Tanjore. Here the oxalic acid was printed onto the already treated cloth, thus producing white flowers on a dark ground. The description is not completely clear, but it seems that the red was produced subsequently, which would have been the normal procedure if alum and an alizarine or morindone-bearing dyestuff had been used. The cloth was then waxed with blocks and dyed in indigo. This is precisely the process which would have been used in the production of the pattern in the centrefield of Cloth B.

Mordant dyes can be discharged by using a substance which removes the mordant, rather than the colouring element. Mordants and particularly alum can be dissolved by acids or alkalis. Mineral acids, however, cannot be used as they would attack the fibres. Strong alkalis such as caustic soda can be used as they do not harm the cotton fibre at normal temperature and can still cause the aluminium to form into a compound which can then be washed out. To produce a blue colour discharge on a cloth dyed red with alum and morinda (i.e. to remove parts of the red and replace them with blue), a paste can be printed onto the cloth formed of a mixture of gum, caustic soda, indigo powder and water. This appears to be what has been done with Cloth A.

Discharging indigo is a fairly simple process. According to Kale, discharging by oxidation is the oldest method, one which has been in use for "a long, long time" (1976:297). It is a popular method because it produces very pure whites, and the cloth can then be dyed with the morindone-bearing dye, giving a red colour

on a blue ground. This appears to be the process used in Cloth B.

The dyers of these three cloths have produced strong, fast results on good quality cloth, and were apparently highly skilled at their craft. It seems much more likely that they were working close to an industrial manufacturing centre than in rural Jambi. Thus, India would on the face of it seem a more likely place of manufacture for these cloths than Jambi. According to Varadarajan (1982:27), there was a large export trade in *saudagiri* (trade) cloths to Thailand which continued from around 1850 until 1950. These were glazed cotton textiles made to the demands of the Thai market, offshoots of the earlier chintz tradition. Families in the village of Pethapur, near Ahmedbad, still keep pattern-books showing these designs (Archambault 1989). A similar trade may well have continued with parts of Sumatra resisting Dutch rule in the late nineteenth century. However, during my brief visit to Gujarat I showed the three cloths described above to hand block printers to see if they could shed light on the origin of the cloths. All were of the opinion that the cloths were not from India, and one suggested that they were probably either from Java or Sumatra. His father and grandfather had supplied cloths to these markets in imitation of locally produced textiles. He affirmed that Sumatran producers had made their own cloths, of which he believed the ones I showed him might well be examples.

#### 10. Sumatran textile production

That there were textile production centres in Sumatra producing textiles of various types which have subsequently been forgotten, and of which little evidence remains, is certain. Aceh is one example. Aceh was producing several kinds of textiles in large quantities in the first half of the nineteenth century. One type of cloth with a blue and white chequered pattern was produced from home-grown cotton, while another luxury silk cloth was produced there in place of the Bengal taffetas which had earlier been imported in large quantities prior to the increase in the import of British-made cloth (Anderson 1840/1971:24). The scale of production must have been extensive, since between 1835 and 1838, Penang imported 167,525 bales of Acheen piece-goods (ibid:166). Whether Jambi produced textiles on a similar scale we do not know, since Anderson never reached Jambi, and no other visitor wrote more than a very superficial account of the area. It

may be, though, that the kain lama of Jambi are remnants of production from another old commercial textile centre in Sumatra of which no written records remain.

Although it is unlikely that the question can ever be finally settled, the weight of evidence seems to suggest that many of the old red batiks found in Jambi today were manufactured locally. Villagers there are convinced that there were red cloths made in Jambi, and some are kept as heirlooms, with great grandparents as named makers. Knowledge of how to dye using natural red dyestuffs did not die out entirely, though the practice which involves mengkudu seems to have done in the Seberang villages. This could easily be explained by the departure of the sultan's court to an upriver hiding-place in the mid-nineteenth century. A similar period of disruption during the period of Japanese occupation resulted in only one woman, Ibu Asmah, retaining the knowledge of how to produce batik, knowledge which could very easily have been entirely lost. Knowledge of how to use mengkudu has now also died out in many parts of Java. It may well be that the practice and knowledge of mordant printing or even discharge printing were lost in a similar way.

However, cloths were certainly imported into Jambi from Java, as is shown by a range of examples from the early twentieth century collected in Jambi in recent years (Kerlogue 1996). Almost certainly some of the red cloths obtained by Steinbuch in Jambi were made in Java, as his informants told him. The strong likelihood that there were other sources for some red cloths and that many were made in Jambi itself, as other informants told other Dutch visitors, also remains.

## CHAPTER NINE

### The red cloths: use, designs and motifs.

#### 1. Use

Wherever the “red” cloths found in Jambi were made, they were clearly an important part of Jambi culture, and are regarded as “*punya Jambi*” (belonging to Jambi). It is also clear that production of the red cloths known as “*kain lama*” in Jambi ceased well before the visit of Tassilo Adam to the Seberang villages. It is therefore difficult to construct an accurate picture of who wore these blue and red cloths when they were new and what significance they had. There are, however, several references to red batiks in local surveys and records of adat, and local informants can provide some insights.

Some of the red cloths were clearly used widely in the upriver regions. One informant told me that during the sultanate they were worn as headcloths by *hulubalang*, or upstream chiefs, not by members of the court. In Fig. 4.13 showing a modern ceremony in which adat and modern administrative roles have merged, the man on the left is wearing a red batik headcloth as part of his costume, probably as a legacy from former times. Red batik selendang continue to form part of women’s adat costume for the Kenduri Sko ceremony in the Gunung Raya district of Kerinci. The motifs on these selendang are described as *kotak* (squares) or *belah keputat*, and are in two colours, white and tile-red.<sup>1</sup> At both ends there are tassels. In addition, a headdress, or *kuluk*, is worn, made of red Jambi batik, with flower motifs and a dark background. This cloth has a white fringe at each end (Depdkibud 1988/9:58). In the Sarolangun-Bangko region, a folded red batik headcloth and a batik selendang are worn as adat costume by the young men in the Mandiangin district on the Tembesi river to the south of the place where it joins the Batanghari (ibid:62). The style of the folded headcloth is known as *kepak ayam patah* or *sayap ayam patah*, broken chicken’s wing, a reference to the part hanging down at the back.<sup>2</sup> The batik in this case is known as Batik Anak Misai, which may be a reference to the supplier or, more probably,

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<sup>1</sup> The word for the lozenge shape, *keputat*, is also the name of a square or lozenge-shaped rice cake, used in adat ceremonies and festive occasions. *Belah* means “halved”.

<sup>2</sup> The ‘ayam patah kepak’ style was worn by the Sultan of Perak in modern times, and is mentioned in Malay literature (Sheppard 1972:110-1).



to a style or design associated with a person of that name.<sup>3</sup> The “selendang” is in fact worn as a hipcloth, and features a wide border containing *daun pakis* motifs.<sup>4</sup> In the centrefield the motifs are of small flowers, spread sparingly across the cloth. Adat costume for young women in this district also includes a selendang of Anak Misai batik worn over the shoulder and diagonally across the chest. The two ends of this cloth have fringes of gold tassels which hang down at the front and back (ibid:66).

I came across one red batik selendang with a central lozenge which was kept as an heirloom in Rantau Panjang. The owner demonstrated how it was worn, over one shoulder and across the body (Fig 9.1). Several such cloths were owned by Zuraida, a PKK organiser who comes originally from Pulau Rengas, near Bangko. I photographed three of her cloths, the motifs of which she referred to as *kembang jatuh*, *kangkung merambat*, and *kait-kait manau* (Figs 9.2, 9.3 and 9.4).<sup>5</sup> In Pulau Rengas itself I was shown another very similar to the third of these. I was told that this type of cloth was worn at adat ceremonies as a selendang, and that almost every household in Pulau Rengas had one. In Perentak, a village in the foothills to the west of Bangko, I was told that the design of this cloth, with a blue and white centrefield and a red border was “sebayo tuo”, i.e. it was for an old person to wear. Cloths with a blue border and a red centrefield were “sebayo mudo”, i.e. for a younger person.<sup>6</sup> My informant called the motif “bungo jatuh”. Ibu Ida Rachman Syukur, formerly the Ibu Bupati for Bangko, showed me a collection of several such cloths obtained during her time in the kabupaten. In general, people in the upriver districts seemed far more familiar with these cloths than people in the Seberang villages. I asked informants in Perentak and Pulau Rengas about the row of metal tassels attached to the short borders. In some cases there was only one such row; if the cloth was worn across the body, this would hang at the front, but if the cloths were used as headcloths, the tassels would hang above the face.

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<sup>3</sup> *Misai* means moustache. Anak Misai probably refers to a person, either a young man with a moustache or a follower of someone known as Misai. Present-day informants could not enlighten me.

<sup>4</sup> This is clearly not the same motif as the one referred to by Seberang people as *daun pakis*.

<sup>5</sup> *Kembang jatuh* = fallen flowers; *kangkung merambat* = creeping kangkung (a kind of water spinach); *kait-kait manau* = rattan barbs.

<sup>6</sup> Heringa (1989b) has written about the relationship between colour of cloth and a woman's life cycle in an East Javanese village. It seems that a similar phenomenon existed in this part of Sumatra at one time, but that only vestiges remain.

In the Seberang villages and elsewhere in the area around the Jambi capital, batik is not included in adat costume. Songket is always the preferred material, and woven textiles form the major part of adat costume in most parts of the province. The existence of batik elements in upriver adat costume may reflect a trading relationship which dates from the division of the sultanate into two, and the original cloths used may well have been Indian sembagi cloths, which are occasionally still to be found. It is not clear whether imported cloths were superseded by locally-produced substitutes, whether the red batiks were always imported or whether batik was made in the region from very early times. The techniques, designs and quality of the cloth of the red batiks now found in the area differ markedly from those of sembagi cloths, and it seems unlikely that these batiks were produced in India.

## 2. The cloths

It is far more difficult to define the red cloths of Jambi than the blue cloths. Many cloths now found in Jambi were made in Java, probably in imitation of Jambi's own production, and since we do not know what techniques and materials were available to Jambi makers, it would be impossible to draw firm conclusions merely from an examination of cloths obtained in Jambi. Red cloths to which the label 'Jambi batik' has been given do not form such a homogenous group as the blue cloths described in Chapter Six. The blue cloths collected by Van der Kam, van Eerde and Steinbuch were all made by the tulis method, and as we have seen, they have characteristics which distinguish them from the batiks of Java. It seems that these blue cloths were not copied in Java for export to Jambi. While some of the red batiks share some of the characteristics of the blue cloths, most also contain features which set them apart from the blue cloths. Some of these features are technical, some to do with design, and some with motifs, and this makes it difficult to decide which cloths should be included in a discussion of red Jambi batiks. Neither do they fall into clear groups with features in common which distinguish them from members of other groups. What the cloths known as *kain lama* do have in common is a design structure in which two main colour areas feature: blue and red. In some, there is a red border with a blue or blue and red centrefield, in others the division is reversed and the border is blue with the centrefield in red or blue and red. This design structure presents particular

technical problems for the dyer, and it is probably most useful therefore to approach the cloths from a technical standpoint, taking first the cloths which have been waxed by hand.

### 3. Tulis cloths

This group includes only batiks produced using the pure batik tulis technique (i.e. the canting and no block-printing). These could certainly have been produced in Jambi if one accepts the existence of a red dye, probably *mengkudu*, and the appropriate mordants and the knowledge of how to use them. There are examples of sarungs, selendang bersidang, plain selendang and headcloths made in this way. Most of these cloths have some characteristics in common with the blue cloths.

#### a. Sarung

A number of sarungs, with a red border and kepala, have been found in Jambi. All contain the merak ngeram motif, which also occurs in blue Jambi batik, in blue and white in the centrefield. One of these sarungs is the red cloth collected by Van Eerde (Fig 9.5)<sup>7</sup>, which Goslings considered to be a genuine example of old Jambi batik (1930/31:338). I obtained a similar one myself from a family in Ulu Gedung (Fig 9.6). In all of them, the border has been dyed red using the mordant resist process after the wax pattern was applied but before the cloth was immersed in the indigo vat. Along the edge of the border the blue of the centrefield is darker than in the main body, almost certainly as a result of the inaccurate application or seepage of the alum. It is possible that *mengkudu* and bark from the alum-bearing *jirek* tree were mixed together and rubbed into the cloth as described by Heringa in East Java (1989b:119). This could also have produced the dark edge in the central panel where the indigo overlapped the areas where the red had been applied. Similar darker areas next to the red borders are evident in all the cloths with borders in this section.

#### b. Selendang bersidang

Figs 9.7 and 9.8. These two cloths are of a shape and size similar to the blue

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<sup>7</sup> Tropenmuseum: Catalogue number 556/19.

selendang bersidang. The cloth in Fig 9.7 is an heirloom cloth owned by a villager from Kampung Tengah. In this, the lozenge has a border with two guard stripes, the inner one blue, the outer, together with the central border, red. There is a sisir at each of the shorter ends. The peripheral border, however, has no guard stripes. The cloth in Fig 9.8 was collected by Steinbuch. It is described in the museum records as a printed batik, which is clearly an error, as the handworking is evident. The borders are similar to those in the heirloom cloth.

The size and shape of the cloths, containing as they do a central lozenge, link them immediately with known Jambi cloths. The pattern inside the lozenge of both cloths is merak ngeram, a pattern which we also find in classic Jambi blue cloths. The centrefields are similar to one another, but the pattern of the heirloom cloth includes birds whereas the Steinbuch cloth does not. Both cloths are very finely worked. The likely process is as follows. After the initial waxing of the motifs, the centrefield and borders would have been painted with an alum mixture and the cloth dyed with mengkudu. The centrefield would then have been waxed over, leaving uncovered those parts which eventually appear black in the finished cloth. The cloth would then be immersed in the indigo vat. The brownish areas of the lozenge pattern may have been produced by applying a dyestuff by brush at a later stage, after the removal of the wax from the cloth, since white areas still remain.

### c. Headcloths

The heirloom cloth from Olak Kemang illustrated in Fig 9.9 follows precisely the layout for classic Jambi blue headcloths, with the typical arrangement of sisir, central border and two guard stripes, with foliate motifs in the squares in the corners. Where this cloth differs from most of the classic blue cloths, apart from the presence of red, is in the quality of the work, which, as is the case in the previous two cloths discussed, is very fine. If these cloths were made in Jambi it seems that the workshop where the knowledge of red dyeing resided was also the workshop with the most skilled batikker. This cloth is predominantly red and cream, but there are tiny areas where parts of the motif have been picked out in a darker colour. There is no evidence of a final indigo dyebath, and the most likely technique to have produced this effect would have been the application by brush

of tunjung as a mordant. The arrangement of motifs is in teluk surrounded by rantai, with a symmetrical floral-type motif in the centre of each. At each point of this square central motif is a five-petalled melati flower linking it to the next. This pattern has some correspondence with the style of classic Jambi batik in its rows of regular motifs made up of what appear to be stylised floral elements. However, each square in this headcloth pattern is contiguous with the next, which is a departure from what was found in the cloths of the late 1920s. One possible explanation is that this headcloth represents an earlier style and quality. The pattern in the later blue cloths could have derived from this type, and if they were made by less skilled workers under more pressure to produce at speed, the result might well have been the wider spacing between the teluk which we see in the blue cloths.

Another headcloth in very similar style in a private collection (Fig 9.10) also contains the triple border, sisir and corner motifs. It seems also to have the same dark details picked out as in the previous headcloth, but in addition the cloth has been immersed in a final indigo dyebath, so that there are four colours: red, blue, black and cream.

An heirloom headcloth from Rantau Panjang, near Bangko (Fig 9.11), has the typical sisir and frame made up of a central border and two guard stripes containing meanders. The borders have been produced first and then, it seems, protected with a resist in all but a very few patchy areas of the central border, so that in the final indigo dyebath, some parts have been picked out in blue. It is not clear why the maker has not attempted to control this blue patterning any more than she has done, since there is evidence that a skilled tulis worker was on hand. Either it was not considered necessary for this element of the design to be neat, or the indigo process was carried out by dyers at a location far removed from the site of the tulis work. The blue patches in the border occur in very many of the red-containing cloths found in Jambi. The motif in the centrefield is again merak ngeram.

#### d. Plain selendang

The pattern on the selendang collected by Steinbuch and illustrated in Figs 9.12

and 9.13 resembles very closely the pattern in the headcloths in Figs 9.9 and 9.10. The same triple border and sisir appear in this cloth, but here the square central motifs have been isolated from the background by a final indigo dyebath so that the effect is one of discrete motifs floating against a background as in the classic blue Jambi batiks. The teluk/rantai arrangement is still very much in evidence here, but the motifs themselves do not correspond with individual motifs found in the blue cloths. Only the simple, six-petalled flowers resemble the Jambi melati, though this would normally have five petals. The indigo blue patches in the central border are here delineated much more clearly than in the headcloth in Fig 9.11. Hairline seepage in the border indicates that the indigo was the last dye to be applied. The work on this cloth is again of very high quality, so much so that the cataloguer at Museon has mistakenly recorded it is a stamped piece, perhaps misled by the regularly repeated pattern.

One of the selendang donated by the Metzgers to the Tropical Institute is hand-worked (see Fig 9.14). It has the sisir and triple border typical of Jambi, though the central border is rather wider than is usual in a Jambi cloth. The regularly arranged centrefield rows make the cloth appear as if it has been printed, but closer examination shows that it has been produced with a canting. The small groups of six white dots resemble the motifs made by multi-spouted canting, but close inspection reveals that there is at least one example containing only five dots. Each individual dot has been applied separately.

The cloth shown in Fig 9.15 is in a pattern very commonly found in kain lama<sup>8</sup>, but extremely unusual in having been waxed by hand. The dyeing process was quite complex, so that the end result is five colours: blue, black, red, white and brown. This could not have been done with a straightforward batik process, since if the red was put on first the light blue areas would have had to be protected with wax and this could not then have been removed for a blue bath without also removing the wax from the red and white areas. If the blue had been produced before the red, the red parts would have had to be protected during the dyebath, the wax then removed and the blue parts protected during the alum application. The most likely process seems to be as follows: the main parts of the design were waxed in, and the central area was then mordanted with alum using a brush with the artist carefully going round those parts which were to be dyed

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, the cloth illustrated in Fig 8.2.

blue. The cloth was then dyed in *mengkudu*. Those areas which had been waxed and those areas which had not received an alum mordanting remained white. The parts to remain red and white were protected with a resist, and then the cloth was immersed in a blue dyebath. Some parts would thus receive both red and blue dyes, and these areas appear black. The border had not received alum, so has no red. Before the final *soga* bath, the whole of the centre of the cloth and those parts of the border to remain blue must have been covered in wax. There is evidence of cracking in the border areas, which suggests that the *remukkan* process has been used.

Two *selendang* in Jambi Museum have the same motif (*merak ngeram*) and colour arrangements as the headcloth in Fig 9.10, but while one (Fig 9.16) has large motifs set against a simple background made largely of one small repeated shape, the other (fig 9.17) approaches the quality of the headcloth. A similar cloth is kept as an heirloom in Ulu Gedung village.

In Olak Kemang a *selendang* was given to me which provides stronger evidence that there were red cloths made in Jambi (Fig 9.18). This cloth is relatively crudely worked, and not of the quality which one would expect to find in a cloth imported to Jambi for sale. Cheaper imported cloths would generally be block printed; if imported cloths were hand worked they were fine quality batiks and valued as such. This example is worked by hand, but the outlines are inaccurate and the motifs in the centrefield very poorly defined. Nonetheless, the characteristic Jambi inner fringe border is there. It seems very unlikely that such a cloth would be purchased, and it may well have been made by a family member in Olak Kemang learning her craft. The mother of the present owner of this cloth used to do batik work herself in the period before the Japanese occupation. A *canting* head which she used is illustrated in Fig 5.3.

#### 4. Cloths containing printed elements

Cloths in this category are those in which the patterns in the red areas have been printed, apparently by the printing on of an alum mordant. Some also contain areas which have been printed in wax by the *cap* method.

A family in Rantau Panjang, near Bangko, showed me two cloths, one of them with a central lozenge (Fig 9.19). The designs in the centrefield and within the lozenge fit the arrangement found in blue tulis cloths: the centrefield is filled with regular rows of flower-shaped motifs surrounded by a square lattice forming bays; within the lozenge the pattern is formed from larger regularly spaced motifs connected by tendrils and foliate shapes. In this cloth both patterns have been printed, so the tendrils are to some degree regularly arranged, but the general effect is of a tangle of meanders and arabesques. Other typical Jambi features are the fringe border around the central lozenge and the wide, three-panelled border with a sisir at the extreme ends. The border is trimmed with a fringe of metal tassels along one of the short ends. The second cloth (Fig 9.20) has the colour arrangement reversed, with a red border surrounding a central field in blue. Again, a fringe of metal tassels hang from one of the short ends.

A cloth in the Museum Nusantara, Delft has unusual features (Fig 9.21). In this headcloth, shown to me by the curator at Delft as a Jambi cloth, the background to the central printed field has been left white. The borders of the cloth have the same motifs and design structure as are found in the authenticated blue Jambi cloths, and the quality of the lines in the red printed areas is similar to that in other red and blue Jambi cloths. In most of these, however, after the red dyebath only the red motifs have been waxed over before the cloth has been put into the indigo vat, thus dissolving the edges between the blocks and producing a blue background. In this cloth, the whole of the centrefield has been protected from the blue colouring.

In one cloth collected by Steinbuch (Fig 9.22) the same initial working appears to have taken place in the centrefield as in the previous cloth, but the red motifs have been waxed over fairly skilfully before the blue dyebath. The borders of this cloth were included in the first, red colouring, rather than in the second, blue one. There is a small amount of tulis work in the patterning, evident in the small white dots and lines between the red motifs in the central border. Thus, where the cloth in Fig 9.16 was produced by printing followed by the application of a resist to the whole centrefield, which could have been applied by brush, this cloth required the use of a much finer tool, possibly a canting, or possibly something similar to the Indian kalam, as well as printing blocks. It is interesting



to note how the three stamen shapes have been emphasised by the use of resist in a number of the flowers. In the centrefield motif in the bottom left of the illustration, the worker has covered in the whole motif with resist in error, protecting it from the subsequent dyebath so that the three stamens are not outlined in blue.

A very fine cloth collected by Steinbuch and with a central lozenge has a similar small element of tulis work in the border (Fig 9.23 Den Haag 6894). This cloth also contains inner fringe borders, produced both in the red print (along the inner edge of the peripheral borders) and in the gold leaf prada embellishment along the outside of the central lozenge and on the peripheral border. The prada motifs in the centrefield have also been applied using stamps. A note in a catalogue entry for a headcloth attributed to Palembang in Tropenmuseum (Cat no 1698-349) refers to the application of gold leaf to cloths in Palembang by local women and the same type of embellishment was probably undertaken in Jambi. The process is described in the same note: the gold leaf was applied by means of a glue obtained from young bananas. An unusual feature of this cloth is the very dark colour of the centrefield; the photograph makes it appear almost black, though its real colour is a dark purple. This is probably the result of a subsequent indigo dye over a mengkudu ground, but the addition of tunjung to the alum mordant applied in this area could also have produced this effect. In Seberang, a plain field with no batik pattern is known as 'motif jaya', and is associated with cloths of high status.<sup>9</sup>

In some of the red Jambi cloths the centrefield is blue and white and the border red. Another of Steinbuch's cloths, 6893, a square headcloth, has the centrefield printed in wax with the tampuk manggis motif (Fig 9.24). The rantai/teluk arrangement is very much in evidence here. The triple border design, though printed, very closely resembles the tulis border in the cloth in Fig 9.15. It is significant that the prada border in a Sumatran headcloth illustrated in Heringa and Veldhuisen 1996 :192 has been printed on in precisely this design. According to the authors this was done in Sumatra itself. The design appears in wax or mordant resist in the majority of the red headcloths in Sumatra. If blocks of this

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<sup>9</sup> Van der Kam notes that cloths of this type were worn by elders and referred to by the name "Kromodjojo" (Goslings 1929-30:144). "Joyo" is probably a Javanese version of "jaya". The term "Kromojoyo" is not used now in Seberang.

design were used in Sumatra for adding prada, they could certainly have been used for printing wax or mordants too, further evidence that some of the cloths could well have been made not in Java but in Sumatra.

The motifs at the corner of each rantai in this cloth could be seen as an eight-petalled flower with extensions in four directions, or they could be seen as ancak shapes with curls at each corner. Similarly, if a tulis worker had later copied a design from a cloth such as this, it is easy to see how the small lozenge shapes forming one of the link elements in the chain could come to be represented by the biji ketimun motif. This cloth has had gold braiding sewn along the border, with small gold tassels, many of which are now missing, but which would once have formed a fringe along the edge of the cloth. It was probably used in adat ceremonies somewhere in upper Jambi.

Many elements of the kain lama of Jambi are reminiscent of elements in the sembagi cloths imported from the Coromandel coast of India. Two such cloths are illustrated in Veldhuisen (1993:20/1); he notes that the Javanese took over many of the patterns from these cloths, which were known as *serasah*, for their own batiks. Djoemena comments on the influence of South Indian cloths on Jambi designs (1986:85). The Indian cloths themselves were often used in Jambi as *tudung jenazah*, cloths for covering corpses. I obtained two such cloths in Olak Kemang, both of the soft cotton fabric which characterises sembagi cloths (Fig 9.25 and 9.26). The design on the cloth in fig 9.25 has been printed on, whereas that on the cloth in fig 9.26 also contains painted elements. There is a strong relationship between both these patterns and some of the patterns on kain lama, though whether the Indian cloths were produced in imitation of indigenous Indonesian designs or whether the kain lama were modelled on designs originating in India is not clear. In both sembagi cloths the colour has been applied on one side of the cloth only. Both have red tumpal panels at each end, which mark them out as kain panjang. At 111 x 260 cm and 115 x 254 cm they are both wider and longer than Jambi selendang. The pattern in the cloth in Fig 9.27 (collected by Tillman, probably in 1947) bears a strong resemblance to the cloth in fig 9.25, though it has been worked by hand with a canting on both sides. It is catalogued as a Jambi sarung although it is unsewn and has the tumpal at each end. In Jambi this would be regarded as a kain panjang. This arrangement is typical of a sembagi

cloth, and both the layout and the motifs were almost certainly copied from a *sembagi* cloth.

One family in Ulu Gedung showed me two heirloom cloths. One was not made by a member of the family, but was thought to have been made in Jambi (Fig 9.28). The cloth has a central lozenge in purple, probably resulting from the combination of an alum and iron mordant before the red dyebath, but possibly produced by overdyeing *mengkudu* with indigo. This plain lozenge centrefield is what is referred to an example of "motif jaya". Features which link this cloth to Jambi styles are the triple border, the *candi*-type inner fringe border and the fringe around the central lozenge. The printed centrefield pattern is almost identical to that of the cloth in Fig 9.21. An interesting feature is the use of the *complongan*, an instrument consisting of a piece of wood with many sharp metal pins projecting from it. The *complongan* is used to make pinprick holes in the wax layer covering background areas, often in borders and at either end of a *kain panjang*. This results in little dots in the areas treated, where the dye has penetrated to the cloth. The *complongan* is nowadays associated primarily with Indramayu (see Djoemena 1986:43), though it was also commonly used in Cirebon. If this cloth was made in Jambi, then not only did Jambi batik workers have a red dye and printing blocks, but they were also familiar with use of the *complongan*. It does not appear in any of the blue cloths, however, though this might just be a result of changing tastes.

The family who owned the cloth just described assured me that their second cloth had been made by a great-grandmother (Fig 9.29 and 30). This cloth was described as a *pagi-sore* cloth, a term which refers to a cloth in which the *tumpal* panel and *tapak* at each end differ in colour.<sup>10</sup> This colour difference extends to each of the two central borders along the selvages, one following the colour of the *tumpal* at one end, and the other the colour at the other end. The arrangement of the *tumpal* at either end of the cloth marks it as a *kain panjang*, not a *selendang*, which never contain *tumpal*. The design is thus very similar to that of a *sembagi* cloth. The centrefield of this cloth appears to have been printed with a *cap*, a metal stamp for applying wax, a process which has been long forgotten in Jambi if it ever existed there. It would be a mistake, however, to

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<sup>10</sup> Steinmann illustrates a cloth of this type from his own collection, giving its origin as Palembang (Steinmann 1947c:2113).

dismiss the testimony of families like these who have no motive for misleading the researcher. These heirloom cloths were not for sale.

The design which is regarded in Jambi as the one most genuinely belonging to the area, most "khas", is known as "kapal sanggat" (ship aground). It is one of the most popular designs in modern production, though by 1995 no modern cap version had yet been produced. An old example is illustrated in Figs. 9.31 and 9.32. Although the design is nowadays always made as batik tulis, it seems that until the post-independence revival of batik in Jambi this design occurred only in batik cap. It is possible that it was produced in Java, but cloths made for export were nearly always made as copies of an existing design used in the area where the cloth was to be sold. While there are motifs from the north Javanese coast with similar names ("kapal kandas" is the usual name for these), these designs are quite different in that they rarely show the ship, and if they do it is very small and of a different shape, often a steamship (see Hitchcock 1991:26; Djoemena 1986:48). Ships which had sunk or run aground sometimes provided local people with an unexpected source of treasure, and were remembered for years to come. The story of such an occurrence was recounted to me in Indramayu on the North Javanese coast. The cargo in this case was said to have contained a large store of Chinese porcelain. In Jambi the shallowness of the river during the dry season might well have led to many such events, and in 1633 the English East India Company had found it necessary to construct a special ship with a shallow draught for the Jambi river. The ship in the Jambi motif is clearly a sailing ship and bears some resemblance to a Portuguese galleon.<sup>11</sup>

There may be a more symbolic significance for the ship in Jambi culture. One of the cloths carried in an antar belanjo is folded into the shape of a ship, and there is a large boat with a goose's head which is used in ceremonial floating processions, representing the royal barge. This ceremonial boat is said locally to symbolise the one in which Orang Kayo Hitam and his upstream bride floated down to Tanah Pilih. The phrase "bahtera hidup" (= the ship of life) is often referred to in wedding speeches; the idea of life as a journey by boat is thus encoded in the language.<sup>12</sup> Heringa suggests that this motif is appropriate for

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<sup>11</sup> There is a cloth in this design in the Steinbuch collection in Den Haag, which is described in an exhibition catalogue as a steamship, though the sails are clearly visible (Heringa 1994a:45).

<sup>12</sup> The ship cloths of South Sumatra are well-documented, and Larsen (1976) gives illustrations of weft ikat cloths from Cambodia depicting sailing ships.

widows, but I never heard this myself (1994a:28).

If all the cloths described in this chapter were made in Jambi, then there must have been a flourishing industry with a range of techniques and materials in use. Taken together with the three cloths in Chapter 8 which appear to be examples of the discharge process, they represent most of the styles and processes which occur in the dozens of batiks which are loosely described as "Jambi batiks" in museum collections. There are, however, a great many other old cloths kept by Jambi families which were almost certainly not made in Jambi (see Kerlogue 1996). Some represent styles associated with Pekalongan, some with Lasem and some, such as the parang rusak cloth illustrated in Fig 4.30, with the Central Javanese court. It may be that some of the cloths illustrated in this chapter were also imported. Unfortunately there is not enough evidence to establish with certainty the origin of cloths after so much time has elapsed, and without detailed records from collectors in the field. However, the characteristic elements which link these cloths, if not as a group then certainly serially, and which differ from the well-catalogued styles of Central and North Javanese batik, suggest that they may well be examples from a once thriving tradition of Sumatran textile manufacture.

## CHAPTER TEN

### The calligraphy batik of Jambi

In addition to the blue batiks firmly ascribed to Jambi, and the controversial red batiks, there is another group of batik cloths associated with Jambi. References to and illustrations of batiks containing Arabic script often appear in publications about Indonesian textiles. Private and museum collections also contain such cloths. Some of these are attributed a Jambi origin, some are described as being either from Jambi or Cirebon, and some from Cirebon.<sup>1</sup> One, in the Textile Museum, Jakarta, is described as coming from Demak, and another, in the collection of the Association pour l'Etude et la Documentation des Textiles d'Asie in Paris is said to have been made in Indramayu (Geirnaert and Heringa 1988:46). Steinmann (1947c:2117) refers to "blue and white head kerchiefs ornamented with giant Arabic letters or arabesques", for which "Islamic and Arabio-Mahomedan ideas are responsible", but he gives no indication of which part of Indonesia he believes them to have come from. In my study of Jambi batik it was clearly necessary to examine these cloths to see what similarities there were between them and the two other groups of Jambi batik, and whether there was any method by which their origin might be determined. My first task was to examine the literature.

#### 1. References in publications

Inger McCabe Elliott's book (1984) reproduces photographs of six batik cloths containing Arabic calligraphy. Tentative ascriptions are to Palembang and Cirebon. McCabe Elliott's view is that batik known as "batik Jambi" is given that name because it was exported from the north coast of Java to Palembang, which she states, erroneously, was the capital of the province of Jambi. It is likely that her batiks and information about them were acquired through dealers, and since her geographical information is so inaccurate, it would be unwise to rely heavily on the rest.<sup>2</sup> Djoemena illustrates her chapter on Jambi with five calligraphic cloths: two headcloths and three "shawls". This Arab calligraphy and the "Middle

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<sup>1</sup> The only well-documented case of a batik cloth containing calligraphy motifs is one apparently produced in a Chinese workshop in Palmerah, Jakarta (De Kat Angelino 1930:13).

<sup>2</sup> Calligraphy batiks sold in Palembang now are usually described by dealers as having been made in Sumatra, either in Jambi or in Bengkulu.

Eastern geometric motifs" on the cloths, she says, are "peculiar to the batik of Jambi" (1986:85). Gillow (1992:47) says that "*kalligrafi* prayer shawls and headcloths" were made by Arab manufacturers in Gresik, Demak, Kudus and Cirebon, and that much of this production was exported to Jambi and Palembang. In addition, he says that "headcloths and prayer shawls featuring Arabic calligraphy and Islamic motifs were drawn out in *tulis* work in Jambi, though this has now died out."<sup>3</sup> He adds that *kalligrafi* cloths are now made in Bengkulu (ibid:48). Gillow's information is also largely derived from dealers; he did not collect textiles in Jambi itself. In Lee's catalogue from a 1991 exhibition at the National Museum of Singapore, six calligraphy cloths are depicted. Three of these are attributed to Pekalongan, one, found in Lampung, to Jambi, one to Jambi or Cirebon, and one to "probably Cirebon." All these cloths were acquired through dealers, as was the information regarding the cloths' origins. Van Roojen's book (1994) contains an illustration of a batik square bearing Islamic texts "made in Cirebon for export to Sumatra". He suggests that the cloth was probably meant to cover the Qur'an. Later, he writes that "batiks featuring Qur'anic verses in Arabic calligraphy were specially commissioned for sale in northern Sumatra, where Islam was - and is - particularly strong (ibid:161). Maxwell (1990:338) tentatively (i.e. with a question mark) ascribes a "*kain batik tulisan Arab*" (batik cloth with Arab writing) collected in Aceh to Jambi. However, there is no other reference in Maxwell's text to calligraphic batik from Jambi. Heringa and Veldhuisen (1996:199) suggest that calligraphy batiks described as "batik Palembang" were not made there, implying that all calligraphy batik was produced in Cirebon, some being exported to Sumatra. The insistence by some writers that these cloths known as Jambi or Palembang cloths come not from Jambi but from Java may be another instance of the distortion of history through Java-centrist approaches to the study of Indonesian batik.

## 2. Connections with the Middle East

The use of Arabic calligraphy in textiles has a long history in Egypt and the Middle East, dating back at least a thousand years. Some of the early inscriptions in the *tiraz*, as these early embroidered cloths were known, were greetings to wazir and princes, but nearly all contain blessings and holy invocations (Day 1937). It is likely that the practice of including such inscriptions on clothing

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<sup>3</sup> Since 1996, batik-makers in Jambi have been producing calligraphy cloths to meet a growing market.

developed in Indonesia as a result of interaction with other Islamic cultures. Arab texts referring to Sribuza, generally equated by scholars with Sriwijaya, date back as far as the tenth century A.D., and the Arabs seem to have had a fairly good knowledge of the east Sumatran coast by this time (Tibbetts 1957:33). Precisely how early they were directly engaged in trade with Jambi is uncertain, but contact with traders from the Arab world certainly dates back at least to the thirteenth century A.D. (Hirth & Rockhill 1964:61). Minangkabau legends from the Caniago clan tell of a Malay princess who sailed to Rum<sup>4</sup> with her husband in an Arab trading vessel (A. Mukty Nasruddin 1989:8). Pilgrims returning to Indonesia from Mecca still bring back textiles, from heavy kilims to fine gauze headscarves embellished with silver strips. The textiles and other items brought back from the Haj originate from a number of different countries, and each of these may have influenced textile design in Islamic parts of the archipelago in some way.

Barbara Leigh (1982) has outlined the strong relationship between Aceh and Turkey and the likely influence on design motifs in Aceh. Possibly the calligraphic cloths are a manifestation of a similar influence at work. In the Ottoman army, talismanic shirts covered with Qur'anic verses were worn for protection both by members of the royal household and by less prominent members of the military (Baker 1995:101). According to local legend, the founder of the Jambi royal dynasty was a fifteenth century Turkish prince, Achmad Salim, a descendant of Sultan Zainal Abidin of Turkey. Although we have no firm evidence of continued links between Jambi and Turkey, attempts were certainly made to strengthen them in the nineteenth century. Turkish aid was enlisted by Sultan Taha shortly after he ascended the Jambi throne. In 1858, after rejecting all previous treaties made with the Dutch, he sent a delegation to Turkey in order to have Jambi recognised as an Islamic kingdom. The Turkish leader awarded him a decoration, and, according to A. Mukty Nasruddin, took on a number of Jambi men to train in warfare with the Turkish army; they were later to return and train others in Jambi (1989:161). In 1904 there was further contact with Turkey when Hirsch, a native Hungarian from the Turkish army arrived in Jambi and held talks with the Pangeran Ratu, Marta Ningrat. On hearing of this, the Dutch

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<sup>4</sup> Rum was the name of a Seljuk sultanate, whose capital was in Konya, and which was destroyed by the Mongols in the 13th century. However, the word 'Rum' was also used more loosely to refer to the eastern part of what had been the Roman Empire, and later to the Ottoman Empire based at Constantinople (Yule and Burnell 1886/1985:767-8).



arrested and exiled Marta Ningrat and Hirsch himself was expelled (Locher-Scholten 1994:258).

While direct contact with Turkey may have played a part in the development of the use of calligraphy in cloths in Jambi, there may also have been influences from elsewhere. The inclusion of Qur'anic phrases and other elements in Arabic script in textile designs was widespread throughout the Islamic world. Calligraphy motifs also appear in Indian cloths. For example, there is an illustration of an Indian Palembang cloth in Rouffaer's collection which has a cartouche on either side of a 'tree of life' (Rouffaer 1914:unpaginated), containing an inscription in Arabic script. Cloths and carpets from numerous Islamic countries would have been available in Mecca, any of which may have suggested ideas for textile motifs and uses to those returning to Jambi from the Haj.

### 3. Literacy and Islam in Jambi

Another consideration in determining the origin of cloths relates to whether the particular skills needed to produce them were available locally. In this case, the question must be whether local batik workers, who in the case of Jambi were likely to be women, were able to produce cloths containing Arabic script. A second possibility is that the Arabic characters might have been drawn in by men, perhaps in pencil, and traced over in wax by women. Finally, the cloths may have originated in a place where men could use the canting.

In Jambi there was a long tradition of literacy.<sup>5</sup> The sultan in power in Jambi from 1665-1690, Abdul Mahyi Sri Ingologo was known as Raden Penulis, a name which clearly indicates that he was able to write (A. Mukty Nasruddin 1989:141). It also implies that previous sultans could not. According to A. Mukty Nasruddin, it was Raden Penulis who, as Crown Prince, had signed a treaty on behalf of Jambi with the V.O.C. during the reign of his father, Sultan Agung. In 1649 the Jambi pangeran had asked Batavia for two or three "clean and unbound books with gold margins on which to write his new laws and daily sermons" (Andaya 1993:67). An eighteenth century Jambi ruler, Sultan Anum, was

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<sup>5</sup> Chau-Ju Kua records that as long ago as the thirteenth century, officials at the court of San-fo-tsi, now thought to have been the Sriwijayan court based at that time in Jambi, could write using a script other than Chinese, although they also used Chinese characters in sending documents to the Chinese court (Hirth & Rockhill 1964:60).

apparently unable to read and write, and this was seen as a problem by the Dutch Resident (Andaya 1993:172), but his interpretation of this as a reason for Dutch-Jambinese difficulties also suggests that in Jambi it was by then exceptional for a ruler to have been unable to read and write. Locher-Scholten (1993:576) comments on the fact that Sultan Taha (1858-1904) could read and write, 'in contrast with other Malay sultans'. In fact he had received a broad education, having been sent overseas as a kind of ambassador to Siam, Malaya and Singapore (A. Mukty Nasruddin 1989:157). The first aim of the Pangeran Ratu's programme at that time was that all members of the population should be able both to read the Qur'an and to write using Arabic letters.

If men were the only writers of Arabic script in Jambi, they may have written the phrases onto the cloths in charcoal or pencil, and this could have been traced over in wax by the women batik makers. In one large rectangular cloth in the collection held in the National Museum of Singapore, the pencilled design which the batikker traced is still evident, but this is not so in other cloths.

Abdurachman (1982:137) writes that in the Cirebon area, the pictorial arts, including "painting" on cloth, were the prerogative of men. It has been suggested that this thirteenth century guild prohibition meant that the men, rather than the women, were the batik tulis artisans in Cirebon and that this resulted in the batik from Cirebon being different in style from that of other parts of Java (Gillow 1992:47). If men were the only literate members of Cirebon society, this might explain the presence of calligraphy on the batik from there, but it is doubtful whether the practice of making batik dates back so far as to have been affected by guild prohibitions. It is also unlikely that the batik headcloths, if this is what they were, were made for local use in Cirebon. Cirebon had been ceded to the Dutch in 1677, and became a Dutch protectorate under a treaty of 1705. It is in the nature of textiles, especially those from tropical countries such as Indonesia, that few survive for many centuries. The cloths in museum collections are unlikely to date from before the nineteenth century, and at that time Cirebon had been settled under Dutch rule for generations. If the cloths were used as protection in battle, they are far more likely to have been worn in Jambi, a centre which we know had the knowledge and skills to produce its own batik from at least the second half of the nineteenth century.

That some of the more recent batik cloths containing calligraphy originated in Cirebon is, however, highly likely, especially as Jambi's own production ceased during the Japanese occupation. On the other hand, it is extremely improbable that all of those found in Sumatra were made in Cirebon, as Abdurachman implies (1982:154). Some were probably exported from Jakarta, and others may well have been produced in Pekalongan, where in the 1920s at least one Sumatran Muslim was engaged in exporting batik to Sumatra (Vuldy 1987:190). But Jambi itself had a thriving batik tradition in the late nineteenth century and would have had no need to import all its cloths from Java.

In Jambi, where women were traditionally the batik workers, it may be that they themselves drew in the Arabic lettering. According to Goslings, two of the three women running batik-making enterprises in the twenties were Hajah (i.e they had made the pilgrimage to Mecca). Local informants say that, as members of the wealthier classes, these women would undoubtedly have been educated both in reading the Qur'an and in writing in Arabic script. Seberang is regarded locally as a centre for Islamic learning, to which learned teachers have been coming from Hadramout for generations. Islam was certainly a strong force from at least the seventeenth century, when according to the Dutch "these people are presently so religious that the ordinary man is about half, and the nobles wholly, like priests" (Andaya 1993:67). Although the numbers of Jambi people making the pilgrimage to Mecca declined during the economic depression, in 1930 there were 76 passports issued for this purpose (Tideman 1938:107). The most essential part of the education of both boys and girls in noble families was Qur'anic study, the only difference being that girls would study at home whereas boys usually attended a madrasah. One Seberang woman, Mbok Ma, who is not from a wealthy family, told me that as a girl in the 1950s she studied the Qur'an at home every day, both reading and writing, while her brothers went to school.

#### 4. Use of calligraphy cloths

There is disagreement and some confusion in the literature about what were the functions of the calligraphy cloths. For example, although one such cloth in the A.E.D.T.A. collection is described as a headcloth or shoulder cloth, the authors of

the catalogue also say that it probably did not serve as clothing material (Geirnaert and Heringa 1989:46). Heringa and Veldhuisen (1996) suggest that the large rectangular cloths might have been used as a canopy over a marriage bed or a bridal throne. However, the cloths used for these purposes nowadays are always luxury red cloths of satin or velvet; Islamic influences are not evident in the decorations at weddings. It may well be that this type of cloth was sometimes used as a canopy held over a corpse while it is prepared for burial, a ritual which does have strong Islamic elements (see Chapter Four). Although Jambi informants invariably describe square calligraphy cloths as *destar*, Van Roojen (1994:161) suggests that these batiks, which were "often in the iket format or larger", were used to cover the Qur'an or to kneel on during prayers". The reference to the iket format acknowledges the similarity in shape and design to headcloths (often referred to as *iket kepala*) and it is not clear where the idea of the cloths' use for kneeling originates. It seems unlikely that they were used to kneel on, since in most cases the inscriptions surround the entire cloth. As Cammann points out, it would be inappropriate for a Muslim to kneel on the Word of God, and he discusses designs of prayer mats which avoid this problem (1972a:13). A further use suggested for calligraphy cloths is in burials. Maxwell refers to a cloth collected in Aceh as either a shouldercloth or a shroud. However, these cloths could not have been used as shrouds in the sense of "winding-sheet", since Islam prescribes that the dead should be wrapped in white cloth for interment. The likely use in burials would be as a cover for the body before and during its journey to the burial ground.

### **Rectangular cloths**

It is unlikely that the larger rectangular cloths were used widely in the Seberang villages, and present-day informants seemed unfamiliar with them, though many thought that they might have been used locally in the past. When I showed a red batik cloth of this type to Jambi people, some suggested that it might be a *selendang*, worn by women over their head and shoulders. Others were doubtful as to whether the word of Allah could be worn in this way. For prayer, women wear a special white costume including a large tubular shawl which covers head, shoulders and neck, stretching down almost to the ground leaving only the face exposed. The rectangular calligraphy cloth would not be a

suitable substitute for this, being both too small and too insecure during the movements involved in prayer. All agreed, however, that it would be highly suitable as a burial cloth or *tutup jenazah*. In Jambi, a *tutup jenazah* is used to cover the body as it lies in the house before burial, when family members come to pay their last respects. Another type of *tutup jenazah* belonging to the mosque is also used to cover the *ringgo-ringgo*, the frame on which the body is laid, when it is carried from the home to the mosque or *langgar* and hence to the graveside.<sup>6</sup> Cloths embroidered with calligraphic embellishments were and still are used in Turkey to cover sarcophagi (see illustration of such a cloth in use in Konya in Schimmel 1970:Plate XXXc).

The women in Ulu Gedong who made the *tutup jenazah* embroidered with gold thread belonging to their mosque told me that they could remember when a batik cloth was used for burials. When the last batik *tutup jenazah* was worn out and needed replacing there was no-one who could write the lettering in wax; a cloth was brought back from Mecca to be used in its place.<sup>7</sup> The present cloth was made in Jambi, with the (embroidered) lettering and design copied from the Mecca cloth. One man in Seberang thought he remembered seeing a batik calligraphy cloth used for covering the body, but could not be certain. In the wealthy villages of Seberang, a cloth from Mecca would be far more suitable, and it may be that batik cloths were made primarily for sale to the upriver villages. This would explain why no-one remembered having seen one locally.

One woman who sells unwanted possessions on behalf of other villagers told me that she had acquired a blue and white rectangular calligraphy cloth ten to fifteen years ago in Olak Kemang and given it to the Jambi museum, though it had been in very poor condition. It had been kept by Gede Tema who was the person who prepared bodies for burial. Gede Tema died several years ago, and unfortunately the museum had no record of the donation. The same woman also told me that last year she had sold a similar piece from Peningat, an upriver village, to the

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<sup>6</sup> The body of Adam Malik, the first Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia, was covered with one of these cloths when lying in state before burial. Officials at the Adam Malik Museum in Jakarta say he had bought the cloth himself for this purpose. The cloth contained calligraphic phrases made into the shapes of birds: there is a photograph in the Adam Malik Museum. A similar photograph of the same occasion appears in Draine 1986:159.

<sup>7</sup> There are examples of cloths with similar designs brought back to Sumbawa from Mecca. According to von Welck, these cloths came from Syria. The design appears to have been produced by weaving (See Khan Majlis 1991:269). These cloths are believed to have been worn as headcloths or shouldercloths by Islamic women in Sumbawa.

Museum. Again, the Museum had no record of this.

### Square cloths

Apart from the rectangular burial cloths, nearly all the batik with Arabic calligraphy on it is in the form of square pieces, similar in size to the square blue cloths now used only as headcloths. Geirnaert and Heringa refer to other uses in Sumatra for cloths of this format, in particular as kerchiefs for married men who would wear them slung across their shoulder with toiletries tied to the tip, and as covers for ceremonial food trays (1989:25). Jambi informants found the idea that the calligraphy cloths might have been used for either purpose highly improbable, and said that they were almost certainly headcloths. The coverings used for food at feasts are generally made of paper which is folded, cut into decorative patterns and then spread over the tray or plate, a practice which certainly dates back 50 years and may well go back much further. The other type of food covering used at ceremonies was a circle or square of crochet made from cotton twine. Although adat ceremonies take place in an Islamic context, they have developed from pre-Islamic practices, and while Muslim prayers accompany such ceremonies, the material elements are not specifically Islamic. Thus it is unlikely that calligraphic cloths would have been used as food coverings.

If the square cloths were headcloths, they were probably not worn in the Jambi capital itself. Nineteenth century photographs show men wearing Arab-style turbans for the most part and Van der Kam reported that in the twenties local men wore white caps or "*pitji*" (black rimless caps, usually made of velvet) or went bare-headed (Goslings 1929/30a:145). It is possible that Islamic officials wore the square headcloths, and some local people said that they might have been appropriate for *ulama* or *alim* to wear. However, Tideman relates that Jambi headcloths were exported to West Sumatra and used there by village chiefs, and square headcloths seem to be more prevalent in upstream regions. I found one headcloth with Arabic calligraphy in the border design in Sungai Penuh in Kerinci. This had the owner's name and home (Haji Muhammad Sa'id, Padang) written in the corner (see Fig 10.29).

In West Sumatra, headmen sometimes wore batik headcloths on which Arabic calligraphy appeared (see illustration in Heringa and Veldhuisen 1996:184).<sup>8</sup> These headcloths are often starched and stitched into a flat shape. A doll representing a man in traditional Minagkabau costume in the Rijks Museum voor Volkenkunde in Leiden has a blue and white batik headcloth (Fischer 1916:164). These *saluak* are traditionally used by lineage heads to wear at meetings such as those to discuss the contravention of adat rules and are referred to as being of Jambi batik (Ng 1984:31). There is a hat made of a batik headcloth of this type in the University of Hull collection, obtained in West Sumatra in 1972 (Cat no HUMUS 1973-13). A local informant said that such hats were worn at adat ceremonies and could only be worn by persons entitled to have the title "Datuk". This particular cloth has a *cap* printed border and Arabic calligraphy in the centre and was probably made in Java and imported into West Sumatra, since Jambi had stopped producing batik during the Japanese occupation.<sup>9</sup> There are no reports that the export of headcloths to West Sumatra was ever resumed. However, the fact that these hats, used in adat ceremonies, are said to be of Jambi batik, suggests that the original models from which these later versions were copied did originate in Jambi.

Headcloths have played an important part in Malay culture, and are frequently referred to in Malay literature. In the *Sejarah Melayu* they are mentioned as an essential part of court dress for heralds, courtiers, war-chiefs and others (Brown 1952:56) Here, they appear to have more significance than mere items of clothing. At one point, a Bendahara goes out into the night "without his kris and putting on only his headkerchief" (Brown 1952:62). In another story, the Bendahara ordered that Sang Setia be bound with a headcloth (1952:203). Both these references seem to suggest that the headcloth contained some power, in the first case affording some protection; in the second strength beyond the inherent strength of cloth.

There are references to the wearing of such headcloths in the *Hikayat Raja Muda*, an old Malay text believed to have first been written down in the fifteenth or sixteenth century, though later modified in accordance with Islam. Raja Muda

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<sup>8</sup> Although the authors write that this cloth was 'imported from the Pasisir', there is no evidence that this was the case.

<sup>9</sup> There were Javanese cap stamps of designs similar to some elements found in the border of this cloth. Some of these are illustrated in Lewis 1924.

wears a headcloth embellished with the Islamic creed when he sets off to seek a wife in the kingdom of the gods (Hilgers-Hesse 1991:194). Later, when Raja Sri Mandul engages the forces of Maharaja Imbangan Jayar, his rival for the hand of Princess Renet Jintan, he wears a headcloth on which the Creed was written (Hilgers-Hesse 1991:195). Although it is not clear whether the phrases on the cloths in the story were conceived as having been applied as batik, embroidery, or woven into the fabric, the idea of wearing of such cloths in a situation of danger or adversity clearly has a place in Malay culture.<sup>10</sup>

Present-day informants in Jambi still regard the texts of the calligraphy, and some of the motifs on the headcloths, as *jimat* or *azimat*, that is, they are talismans containing supernatural power, which would provide protection in battle.<sup>11</sup> A significant theory, widespread among local people, is that many of the square batik cloths containing calligraphy motifs were worn as headcloths by *pendekar*, or expert swordsmen, leaders in battle, in their resistance of the Dutch occupation. Any bullets striking the person wearing the headcloth would glance off. Most *pendekar* were upstream chiefs, hiding well away from the Jambi capital. If, as seems likely, the batik headcloths were produced for these upstream chiefs, and were later passed down from father to son, it is not surprising that there should be no mention of them in Dutch accounts, and no memory in Jambi City of these cloths in use or even in production. Headcloths are worn, however, by practitioners of *pencak silat*, who generally dress in a black *baju* and trousers, but with a batik headcloth and *sarung* when they are performing at the front of a bridal procession driving away hostile spirits. Although there is no firm evidence, the clear possibility remains that Jambi produced many of the batik calligraphy cloths held in museum collections.

## 5. Calligraphy cloths in collections

In Jambi Museum there are several calligraphy cloths, most bought from a West Sumatran dealer in Jakarta, and some obtained locally. Of these, three are large oblong cloths, approximately the same size as Jambi *kerudung*, described sometimes as *selendang* and sometimes as burial cloths, and ten are smaller

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<sup>10</sup> The Islamic Museum in Kota Bahru, Kelantan, contains a number of cloths with Islamic inscriptions contained in them. Most of these designs have been produced by the *ikat* technique.

<sup>11</sup> Folk tales from the Jambi area tell also of magic shirts which could protect the wearer from harm. See story 8 in H.Idris Djakfar 1994.



square cloths, the same size as a headcloth and usually described as such.<sup>12</sup>

A small square cloth of this type in Rotterdam Museum of Ethnology collected in the "Lesser Sunda Islands" in 1928 (Cat no 26558) was recorded as a Jambi headcloth. There is also at least one calligraphy cloth in Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam (Fig 10.1).<sup>13</sup> I examined calligraphy cloths from two private collections: from the collection of cloths owned by Donald Harper of Yogyakarta there were two large oblong cloths and from the collection belonging to Josephine Bin, Jakarta I was able to study four cloths; three of them large oblong cloths, and one a square cloth. In addition there were some cloths which, though containing no calligraphy, bore other similarities to the calligraphy cloths. For the purposes of my study I will focus in the main on the cloths in the Jambi museum collection, and the other cloths mentioned above.

### Square cloths

As with the blue headcloths, the square calligraphy cloths are normally a little under a metre square. The arrangement of the frame also resembles that in the blue headcloths and selendangs in several respects. All are bounded by *sisir* on all four sides; all have a square foliate motif in each corner and all have a frame made up of three parallel borders, the two narrow "guard stripes" and one wider inner stripe (fig 10.2). The patterns of the two guard stripes normally echo one another. However, the motifs within the three borders differ in most respects from those in the selendangs.

The wider central stripe usually contains cartouches alternating with diamonds. Inside the cartouches there are usually inscriptions (e.g. the cloth illustrated in Fig 10.3). This is sometimes the *shahada*, the profession of faith which is the first

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<sup>12</sup> There are two banners containing batik calligraphy in the Textile Museum, Jakarta, dated to the mid-eighteenth century. Although there is no evidence of banners having been used or made in Jambi, the possibility cannot be ruled out that there were such banners at one time. However, the Jakarta banners do not contain any motifs associated strongly with Jambi, and it seems more likely that they originated in Cirebon.

<sup>13</sup> On my first two visits to Amsterdam I was looking particularly for the cloths brought back by Van Eerde and Van der Kam, which did not include calligraphy cloths. I did not have the opportunity to look through the museum catalogue until the end of my researches in Amsterdam, by which time my purpose was to check entries relating to the cloths I had already examined, a task which consumed all the time available to me. Thus, I did not have the opportunity to search through the catalogues looking for calligraphy cloths.

of the five duties (the Five Pillars of Islam) which every Muslim must perform, sometimes another phrase.<sup>14</sup> In Fig 10.4 the phrases in the border of the cloth alternate between "Allahussalam" and "Allahulailahailallah".<sup>15</sup> Border panels of alternating cartouche and diamond shapes appear elsewhere in Islamic art. A great number of oriental carpets have this feature, including many where the cartouches and diamond shapes contain calligraphic motifs. A striking example from Tabriz in Northwest Persia is illustrated in Erdmann 1960 (plate 53). In this example, the writing is secular, "verses which sing of the carpet as a garden whose blossoms exhale sweet fragrance, where birds are chirping and whose splendour suffers neither under the heat of summer nor the cold of winter" (Erdmann 1960:33). Some cloths (see Figs 10.5; 10.6; 10.7 and 10.8) have an additional border made up of triangular peak shapes or *mihrab*-type shapes, the points directed towards the inside of the cloth (Fig 10.8).

At the centre of each of the square cloths is a centrepiece, in every case symmetrical about the two central axes. In most cases, this centrepiece contains a Qur'anic phrase, distorted so as to fit into what might be regarded as a four-petalled flower shape. In one cloth (Fig 10.9), the central motif resembles an "endless knot". In another (Fig 10.10), a four-pronged "sunwheel" is filled with lettering. These central motifs are set against a four-cornered background, its points directed either to the corners of the cloth or to the mid-point of one of the edges of the cloth.

Other large motifs are oriented symmetrically around the cloth, in all four corners, the mid-point of the four sides, or on the two diagonals between the four corners. Some, (e.g. Fig 10.5 and 10.6) contain motifs in all these places. Others (e.g. Fig 10.9 and Fig 10.11) contain only some. In all cases, however, the entire cloth is symmetrical about the four diagonals. In addition to these larger motifs, there is a background filler design which is generally arranged in rows, as if of

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<sup>14</sup> The shahada frequently appears on Ottoman flag and banner designs depicted in contemporary European paintings of battle scenes (Baker 1995:92).

<sup>15</sup> A similar arrangement occurs in many oriental carpets. Erdmann (1960:33) describes the borders of carpets from Tabriz in Northwest Persia in similar terms: "In the borders, where one wide principal stripe as a general rule lies between an inner and an outer guard stripe, both of which are narrow and often quite alike in pattern, the preference is for rows of cartouches, quite often alternated with quatrefoils; broad, ribbonlike vines with arabesque leaves; or flowers facing either way in turn and flanked by arabesque vines".

writing, which run parallel to the diagonals from corner to corner of the cloth.<sup>16</sup> This means that mid-way along each of the four edges, the direction of these lines changes.

The elements of design outlined above apply to all the square calligraphy cloths in the Jambi Museum collection with the exception of the ones shown in Fig 10.12 and 10.13. An interesting comparison may be made between the embellishments on the tips of the 8-pointed stars of the blue selendang bersidang shown in Fig 10.14 with those on the second of these two calligraphy cloths, which may suggest a common origin.

All the motifs on these square cloths are oriented towards the centre of the cloth. The overall effect, however, is of the disintegration of space. The area of the cloth is broken up into patterns which themselves break up into smaller and smaller patterns. This principle of what Cammann calls the "Dissolution of Matter" is a feature of the Islamic conception of the spiritual world which is often expressed in art, especially in the stone mosaic or tilework of mosque architecture and the design of Turkish and Central Asian rugs (1972a: 9-10).

### **Rectangular cloths**

The rectangular calligraphy cloths correspond in size and shape with the Jambi selendang without lozenges. Like the selendang, they have sisir at each end, separated from the centrefield by a white stripe, and a frame consisting usually of two narrow guard stripes and a central border (Fig 10.15). Patterns in the border resemble those in the borders of the square calligraphy cloths. Along the selvages of the cloth there is often only one stripe, however, usually echoing the pattern in the two guard stripes on either side of the central border stripe at the short end of the cloth (Fig 10.16).

The centrefields of these cloths are very similar to those in the headcloths in that they are often oriented around a central motif, with large motifs in the corners. Several contain a row of three squares along the spine of the cloth, the corners

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<sup>16</sup> It is not clear whether the script in these areas is actually writing or not. Jambi people believe that all the script is real writing which could be deciphered by a skilled reader. However, simulated Kufic script is a feature of some oriental rugs, and it may be that these filler designs are an example of a similar phenomenon (see Cammann 1972a:13).

oriented towards the sides of the cloth (Fig 10.17). This arrangement echoes precisely the arrangement of three squares in the Syrian cloths brought back from Mecca by female pilgrims to Sumbawa and illustrated in Khan Majlis (1990:269). This seems to confirm that such cloths were used directly as design sources in Indonesia. The cloth illustrated in Fig 10.17 contains a filler design of what is probably simulated Arabic script, running parallel to the edges of the central square, as was described in some of the square cloths. This feature also occurs in the cloths illustrated in Khan Majlis.

## 6. Technical aspects of the cloths

Square cloths containing Arabic calligraphy as part of the motif almost invariably have white motifs on a blue background, the characteristic colour design of Jambi batik.<sup>17</sup> However, although nearly all are tulis work, I found two with borders in "cap", in two different designs.<sup>18</sup> Since Jambi is supposed not to have ever used "cap" tools (that is, until very recently, about 1989), the existence of these two cloths suggests that they, at least, originated elsewhere, and this could be taken to cast doubt on the origin of the other pieces. However, in most cases cap batiks are imitations of already existing cloth types. Since Jambi ceased to produce batik between the Japanese occupation and the nineteen sixties, it is likely that Javanese imports would have filled the gap in the market. A similar origin is likely for the few cloths which appear to have been dyed in synthetic dyestuffs, since these were not introduced to Jambi until the 1970s.

### Siang malam cloths

Amongst the batik cloths bearing Qur'anic inscriptions, many, both square and rectangular, have designs which differ on the face and reverse of the cloth (see Fig 10.18 and 10.19). In Jambi, a cloth with this feature is known as "*siang malam*" (day and night). Exactly how this effect is produced is not clear, but it

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<sup>17</sup> The exceptions were probably not made in Jambi. There are two cloths in Jambi Museum, catalogue numbers 03.2403 and 03.1546 which include areas of orange and red respectively. The former has no border panels, and the use of aniline dyes indicates clearly an origin outside Jambi. The quality and delicate style of the canting work also differ from that displayed in Jambi work. The border of the latter piece has been produced using a cap, and the border design and corner motif differ markedly from other calligraphy batik. Both these pieces were almost certainly produced in northern Java.

<sup>18</sup> Wax stamp border designs from Java show similar patterns (Lewis 1924).

would probably be possible to obtain it by treating the two sides of the cloth with different mordants. If alum is made into a fairly thick paste it will not penetrate to the other side of the cloth, as is the case with the Indian chintz technique described by Veldhuisen where the colours on the cloth are produced on only one side (1993:20-21). The siang malam technique could well be an extension of this technique. Siang malam cloths appear to be peculiar to Jambi: I have never come across any reference to the technique or the cloths themselves having existed in Java. The cloth in Figs 10.18 and 10.19 was obtained in the Lesser Sunda Islands and catalogued as a Jambi headcloth in 1928.<sup>19</sup> This lends strong support to the theory that this technique was known and used in Jambi. The technique appears in several calligraphy cloths, and also some which contain features in common with the calligraphy cloths but which do not contain calligraphy (e.g. Fig 10.20 and Fig 10.21). The foliate shapes in the centrefield and the cartouches in the borders relate this cloth to some of the calligraphy cloths in which they also appear (e.g. Fig 10.22 and Fig 10.23). The siang malam effect is produced in contemporary Jambi batik by one batik-maker in Olak Kemang (Fig 10.24). She is highly secretive about the process used, and reticent about where she learnt the technique from. She says that she had heard of cloths which were different in colour on each side, and experimented to get the effect. This may be true, but it must be significant that it occurred to her to attempt to create this effect in the first place. It is at least possible that she was trying to reproduce a process she had heard described or had seen in a cloth in Jambi, or it may be that she had been taught the technique by her mother.

It is possible that the technique of making cloths with the two sides of different colours originated in India. There is a description and photograph of a fragment of Indian cloth found at Fostat, and tentatively dated fifteenth century in Gittinger, which seems to resemble the siang malam type, with "white clover leaves on a deep blue ground on one side [of the *pallava*, or end panel] and white clover leaves set on a light blue grid with a dark ground on the reverse" (1982:38). More recently, it is reported that a *kalamkari* (sembagi) cloth of this type used to be available for export in Masulipatnam on the Coromandel coast, from where cloths were exported to Indonesia in the nineteenth century. These cloths were known as *dhoruka*. The process is described as follows: "The fabric is treated with myrobalan solution (a tannin-containing fruit) mixed with buffalo milk and

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<sup>19</sup> Catalogue number 26558 in the Museum voor Volkenkunde, Rotterdam.

dried for a day. The process is repeated twice. the dry leathery fabric is printed in black on one side and on the other side with alum. The cloth is then washed to remove excess of gum and alum and dyed in an alizarin bath for red on the side printed with alum" (Mohanty 1987:115). A similar effect is reported in Alwar and Kotah, Rajasthan, where cloths dyed yellow on one side and red or red and green on the other side used to be made (Mehta 1970:33).

## 7. The calligraphic elements themselves

All the calligraphy on the cloths in question is in Arabic script. The calligraphy on both square and rectangular cloths is usually distorted into other shapes, frequently into flower or leaf forms but also often into the shape of birds, some of which appear to resemble ducks. The formation of figurative animal and bird shapes from Qur'anic phrases is very common in Islamic art, and it is likely that the designers of these cloths had been inspired by similar designs seen elsewhere.<sup>20</sup> Many of the headcloths have similar or even identical phrases represented in the calligraphy, though they are often hard to read as the letters are heavily embellished and turned in different directions to fit the design. The most common are "Allah"; "Muhammad"; "There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet". These phrases usually appear in the centrefield of the cloth, arranged in a symmetrical fashion, or in cartouches in the border.

## 8. Other motifs

Another common motif is the double-bladed sword of Ali, Mohammed's son-in-law (see Fig 10.17). This is a symbol commonly used in Jambi in items designed to protect the owner from attack, and is often found in inscriptions hung inside houses as "tangkal", or objects with supernatural protective properties.<sup>21</sup> This motif also frequently appears on jimat for sale in the market area of Jambi City, usually in the shape of a tiny book or cylinder containing inscriptions on folded paper or a scroll. Many of these are said to protect the owner in his business

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<sup>20</sup> Schimmel shows a depiction of a bird formed from a bismallah, the phrase which starts the Qur'an and each separate surah of the holy book, and a cock from an Iranian design (1970:Plates XLVI and XLVII). An Indian depiction of a horse formed from the surah al-Baqarah is illustrated in Welch 1979:180.

<sup>21</sup> The double-bladed sword, the *dhul faqar*, was said to have been given by the prophet to Ali, his son-in-law, after the Battle of Badr AD 624. This motif frequently appears in Ottoman banner and flag designs shown in contemporary European paintings (Baker 1995:92).

dealings, and thus ensure prosperity.

Alongside the calligraphy, scattered in the background, small flower motifs often appear, frequently in the simple five-petalled form known in Jambi as "melati" or jasmine (see Fig 10.15). The design known as "buah pauh" occurs in four corners of one cloth. Another motif, more identifiably a Jambi motif, is the "ancak", which appears in the border of the Kerinci headcloth and also in other cloths (see Fig 10.25 and 10.29). The "cengkeh" motif is scattered all over the cloth in Fig 10.26. The Kerinci headcloth unusually has no calligraphy in the centrefield, which is filled with motifs resembling Jambi motifs in size and arrangement, though they do not correspond with motifs found elsewhere in sarungs or selendangs. The width and the scope of the canting work as well as the white motif on a blue ground are also typical of Jambi batik.

## 9. Mode of signification

If the cloths under discussion were part of the Jambi repertoire, their calligraphic motifs do not operate the same system of signification as their floral counterparts. This is not just because the written word necessarily articulates its meaning and undergoes a further level of interpretation to that of the figurative image, being encoded twice, first into words and then into writing, although this is also the case. The Iranian calligrapher Qadi Ahmad ibn Mir Munshi distinguished between the "vegetable qualm", that is the reed which was the tool of the scribe, and the "animal qualm", the brush used by the painter. He saw the reed as far superior to the brush; writing is the supreme art, and the production of images is a much humbler enterprise (Welch 1977:63). The reason for this relates to the way in which the Word of Allah was transmitted to humankind directly in the Qur'an. Welch explains that whereas in Christianity the Word of God was made manifest through Christ, and could thus be symbolised in imagery of Christ, in Islam the Word of Allah passed directly through Muhammad merely as messenger. Muhammad himself was not considered to be divine. "The Qur'an is the unmediated, uncreated Word of Allah. The most tangible visualisation of that Word is through calligraphy. Thus, the most pious act which a Muslim can do is to read or write the text of the Qur'an" (Welch 1977:72).

The content of the verses represented in any calligraphic representation from the Qur'an is therefore almost secondary to the text itself. Those who cannot read the verses are still able to recognise the power and presence of Allah in the inscription, and the beauty and skill with which the calligrapher has embellished the script serves to express the reverence in which the Word is held. In fact, as Ettinghausen points out, it would have been extremely difficult for even an educated person to read many of the highly ornate religious Arabic inscriptions in Islamic texts, so that he suggests they were not intended to be read as communication, but to be recognised as symbolic affirmation of allegiance to the faith (Ettinghausen 1974).

There are two common misconceptions about Islam: that Islam does not permit figurative representation, and that it is iconoclastic, intolerant of the figurative depictions of others under its rule (Welch 1977:63). In fact, there is no prohibition on the depiction of living creatures in the Qur'an, though the Sunni Hadith (the collections of the prophet's pronouncements) is hostile to such representations (Talbot Rice 1975:18). The Shi'i attitude was more relaxed, depending on the context in which the textile was used (Baker 1995:16). Animals and birds are in fact frequently depicted in Islamic textiles. There is, however, some evidence of these ideas in Jambi: the destruction, as I understand it, on the advice of the ulama, of most of the Hindu statuary which used to be situated outside Wiro Kusumo's house in Olak Kemang, and the instruction from the ulama in Ulu Gedung that goose-blankets should not be made for adat antar belanjo ceremonies. These two examples suggest that in Jambi, prohibitions relate to three-dimensional depictions of living creatures. Although there appears to be further evidence of this attitude in the customary belief that bird motifs should not be used on cloths used in burials, the reason given by local people for this prohibition is that the birds might steal the soul of the departed. Calligraphy in the shape of birds was clearly not subject to the same prohibitions, nor were bird motifs forbidden in secular cloths.

It is possible to transcribe many of the calligraphy phrases and thus discover their superficial meaning, but we can assert confidently that the significance of these calligraphic motifs is deeper than this, in that the Arabic script in itself has significance. For some of the other motifs, such as the sword of Ali, and perhaps



some of the flowers, we can be fairly certain as to why they appear in the designs and what type of significance they had. It is far more difficult to draw conclusions about the meaning, if any, of the layout and designs of the cloths. Furthermore, while it is fairly certain that these aspects of the batiks had significance, it is equally certain that the users would have accepted a degree of mystery about them. For the cloths to be powerful, the inscriptions on them must have meaning. But for that power to have any force, the nature of their meaning must remain a secret.

In Jambi there is a strong belief in the power of sacred phrases taken from the Qur'an. Babies under two years old often wear a talisman around their neck which consists of such an inscription sewn into a black cloth square hung round the neck with a black cloth tape. After childbirth, mothers may wear a similar talisman in a belt around their waist. Phrases from the Qur'an may also appear on a ring or on paper placed inside the entrance to a house, above the door. In all cases they function to ward off evil. In addition to these written examples, phrases taken from the Qur'an are spoken by a *dukun* as spells (known as *mantra*, and thus probably replacing spells with a different origin) when a bride is showered with an infusion of flowers, when a boat is launched or similar occasions. One informant told me that before his exams, his father had written phrases from the Qur'an in ink inside a white bowl. Water was then added and swirled round, and he then drank the inky infusion. This would help him pass his exams. Holy phrases are also apparently written on the foreheads of the dead.<sup>22</sup>

I have already remarked on the symmetry of the layout of the motifs in both square and rectangular cloths. That symmetry is an important and necessary feature of cloths imbued with magic power is not surprising. Another manifestation of belief in the inherent power of symmetry is its use in magic squares in Asian contexts, including India, China and Islamic cultures. Cammann has remarked that the symbological interpretations of these magic squares vary from one nation to the next, but in all of them lay the notion that "a magic square was a miniature diagram of the Earth or of the Universe" (1969:183).

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<sup>22</sup> It seems that holy writing is on the foreheads of the living too, though not visible to humans. One informant told me that if a tiger sees a Muslim's forehead, however, it can see the holy writing there and so cannot eat for 40 days. This is why tigers so rarely appear in Jambi villages.

The principle behind the magic squares was that numbers placed in columns on a square grid would add up to the same figure, whether counted horizontally, vertically or across the two main diagonals. The number lying in the central square was often imbued with particular significance since it represented the central axis of the Universe. In the case of the Chinese magic square of three, they considered that the number in the centre of the square represented their ruler, at the centre of the Middle Kingdom (China). It may be significant that in Jambi, special significance is accorded to the *tiang tuo*, the central pillar of the nine which support the core of the house, the *induk rumah*. In Cammann's discussion of Islamic developments from this Chinese model, he reports that the central square came to be taken as a symbol of Allah (ibid:199). Whilst there is no direct correspondence between these numerical magic squares and the designs on the batik cloths, the link between the square arrangements, the sense of harmony in the Universe and the power of Allah suggests that similar Islamic concepts might lie behind the symmetrical arrangements on the cloths.

#### 10. Brown/blue selendangs with cartouches.

Another category of batik appears in the museum in Jambi and in private collections which has strong resemblances to the calligraphy batik, but differs in the quality of the colour and the centrefield design. The two examples illustrated in Figs 10.27 and 10.28 are typical in colour and layout. The cloth in Fig 10.28 contains calligraphy in the border, whereas that in Fig 10.29, while it does have cartouches, has no calligraphy. Some of these cloths are so worn as to be almost transparent while others are in good condition and of sturdier cotton. Some are drawn by hand while others contain printed elements. The colour combinations suggest that a mordant printing process has been employed involving both iron and alum mordants with mengkudu as the dyestuff. Many of these cloths, though not the ones in the Jambi museum, are siang-malam or double-sided cloths. Some dealers suggest that these too are Jambi cloths; others believe they originate from Bengkulu. The elements of similarity between them and the calligraphy cloths described above suggest that there is a connection in their origins or destinations. They may well be examples of production from another Sumatran textile centre, perhaps in the Jambi area, perhaps not, but they certainly represent a type as yet unexplored in academic literature.

## 11. Conclusions

Although it has not proved possible to establish without doubt the provenance of any of the calligraphy cloths in museum collections, the evidence suggests that some of them were produced in Jambi. The cultural context of Jambi, the style and processes used in much of the work as well as oral tradition all serve to support the view that Jambi artisans made calligraphy batik before the decline of batik-making in the later years of the Dutch administration. It is also clear that there were other centres producing similar batiks, probably imitations for export to Sumatra.

There is no direct evidence that Jambi had copper stamps, and calligraphy batik including cap elements was almost certainly produced in Java. Similarly, any calligraphy batik containing synthetic dye materials, with the exception of present-day production, could not have been made in Jambi. On the other hand, unless evidence of the technique's existence elsewhere comes to light, it seems safe to conclude that batik of the siang-malam type is likely to have been made in Jambi. Of the remaining cloths hand drawn in wax, those closely resembling the siang-malam cloths and those containing motifs and handwork similar to that in the blue cloths are most likely to have been made in Jambi. Unfortunately, for most of the old calligraphy cloths it will probably never be possible to identify with absolute certainty the origin of any particular piece.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### Jambi batik in context.

#### 1. Court and country traditions

Batik produced in Java in the nineteenth century are generally described as belonging to either a court or a country tradition. Most writers accept that these court and country traditions were parallel, and that the origins of each lay in the simple country cloths which predated the invention of the canting, cloths whose decorative patterns were produced by using rice-paste or similar substances as a resist. Vestiges of such a craft survive in the *sarita* cloths of Sulawesi and the *kain simbut* of West Java.

Scholars have related the designs of Javanese batik to the social context and world view of the people who produced them, whether at court or in the countryside. The designs of the batiks of Indramayu, for example, have been seen as reflecting the lives and surroundings of the fishermen's wives who produced them (Djoemena 1986:43ff). A more thorough study by Heringa examined the textiles of the Kerek district of East Java in relation to the social fabric of the villages in which they were produced and used in so far as this can be reconstructed from present-day evidence (Heringa 1991, 1994b). "Court styles" have been interpreted in relation to the structures and culture of the kraton. The courts of Mataram and Cirebon are thought to have taken up and developed the simple techniques and patterns used in the countryside. They then refined the process into one suitable for ladies of the court to undertake as an aristocratic pursuit (Labin 1979:42; Veldhuisen 1993:23). This more sophisticated development, it has been said, only became possible with the introduction of smooth imported cotton cloths, and probably occurred during the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup> The patterns on the cloths were redefined, with some proscribed under sumptuary laws (Djoemena 1993:435). Batik was thus raised to

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<sup>1</sup> The two cloths presented to the British Museum in 1859 and said to have been brought back to England from Java by Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles about 1815 are likely to have been obtained at one of the courts of Central Java, since they feature designs which were allowed only to members of the royal family. The size of the motif in one of the pieces (1939. AS 4.120) is such that it would have been appropriate only for a very high-ranking member of the royal family. However, although the batik work in the cloth is competent, it does not display the level of skill shown in twentieth century batik, which suggests that batik had not reached a high state of refinement by the early nineteenth century.

the status of an art. The motifs and designs of the court batiks from Solo, Yogyakarta and Cirebon have been analysed in terms of court structures and beliefs (Boow 1988; Djoemena 1993). Tirtaamidjaja suggests that batikkers would have been among the talented local craftsmen summoned by members of the Javanese ruling class to work for them and their families, thus drawing a rural craft into the court circle (1966:18).

The question then arises as to how the Jambi batiks now found in museum collections fit into this picture. Was there a domestic craft used by Malay villagers to decorate home-produced textiles in centuries gone by as Heringa suggests (1994a:26)? Were the nineteenth century examples now found in Jambi part of a village tradition or are they remnants of an aristocratic art introduced into a Javanised court? Or did Jambi batik have some other relationship to the social structure?

## 2. The Jambi court

The court of the Jambi sultanate left the Jambi capital in 1858, and descriptions of it are few and far between. To what extent it resembled the court of Palembang, the courts of Java, or those of the Malay states on the peninsula and elsewhere is hard to ascertain. In the nineteenth century, the 1823 mission of John Anderson to the east coast of Sumatra did not reach the Jambi capital. In 1834, however, the resident of Palembang, J.W.Boers, did pay a visit to the Jambi court. His account focussed on the rather ambiguous nature of his reception there, the less than satisfactory gun salute he received, the delay in arranging meetings with those he expected to receive him, and the shabby nature of the accommodation provided for him and his delegation. This last would have contrasted dramatically with the splendour of the Palembang court, and his interpretation was that this was evidence of "the sultan's poverty" (Boers 1850:465). Given the half-hearted nature of his welcome, however, it may well have been merely a veiled insult, or it may be that the arrangements at the Jambi kraton simply did not fit with Dutch preconceptions of court life.

In the early to mid-nineteenth century the Dutch had little familiarity with the situation in Jambi. An American traveller, J. Walter Gibson, was told in

Palembang by a Dutch infantry captain that although the Dutch Government referred to the Jambi sultan as a vassal, "not one of our people dare set foot within the dominions of his Jambee Highness" (Gibson 1856:146). A Malay chieftain, Panyorang Osman Laksana, provided Gibson with further information about Jambi. The Sultan of Jambee, it was said,

had a great many kubu slaves in the rich gold region of Kerinci and in the gum benzoin forests and the Batang Lekoh. The country abounded in gold, pepper, camphor, cinnamon, nutmegs, benzoin and other rich commodities, which the sultan and the traders of his country wished to exchange with Americans or English. The Sultan was independent, and though the Dutch had placed guns at Muara Kumpeh, anyone might go to see him who was not afraid of them.

Another informant referred to "the wealth and curious interest about the place [Jambi]" and Gibson dictated a letter to the Jambi sultan with a view to visiting him (Gibson 1856:204). Unfortunately, Gibson was arrested by the Dutch before he had a chance to reach Jambi, and we have no account of the Jambi court from him.

Although in 1642 the Jambi ruler had ordered anyone in his presence to wear Javanese dress, it is not clear that this stipulation referred to batik. Demand amongst the ladies of the court was for luxury gold-thread cloths from India and silks and velvets from Holland. This demand continued unabated (Andaya 1989:40). Dutch attempts to monopolise imports of cloth had met with considerable resistance, especially from the royal family, and when in 1683 the VOC had obtained a monopoly on the import of Indian cloth, the women of the courts began to send out their own ships to ports in Riau, Malacca, Batavia and Macao (Andaya 1989:38). Further, although there is some evidence that batik was being worn in the courts of Java during the seventeenth century, Javanese court dress may also have consisted largely of luxury imported cloths. The production of batik in Java may still have been largely a country pursuit at that time, and there is a case for arguing that the key constituent of Javanese court dress at that time was Indian patola cloths. If this was so then the Jambi sultan, with his control over cloth imports, would have been able to profit from his stipulation.

There are no later references to Javanese dress in Jambi, and since Jambi broke with Mataram in the mid-eighteenth century, there is no reason for the court to have followed Javanese styles. As the centre of a Malay sultanate, the Jambi court is more likely to have resembled other Malay courts in many of its traditions. Modern day wedding costume, when bride and groom are deemed to be king and queen for a day, consists largely of songket, the traditional textile of the Malay aristocracy, with no batik elements at all. Whereas in the eighteenth century, the Sunan of Surakarta and the Sultan of Yogyakarta proscribed the wearing of certain batik patterns by their subjects, in Malay courts it was songket which was the cloth of kings. In his article on silk weaving in Terengganu Hill refers to *larangan raja* (things forbidden by the king); songket with the best gold thread was reserved for the royal family (1949:83). The other aspect of royal dress which was forbidden to those outside the immediate family of Malay rulers was the use of the colour yellow. In Jambi this rule was strictly followed, and at the meeting between the Dutch political agent H. J. A. Raedt van Oldebarneveldt and Sultan Taha's son, Pangeran Ratu Kesuma Anom Yuda, in 1894, the Pangeran Ratu was dressed in a yellow silk robe embroidered with gold threads. Twelve lancers wearing long scarlet robes and headcloths of the same colour, probably of songket, marched in front of his yellow sedan (Locher-Scholten 1993:587-8).

### 3. Rural production

While there is no specific reference to batik as court dress either before or after the departure of the royal family to its upstream hiding-place, the earliest references to Jambi batik which do appear seem to suggest a rather different context. Tassilo Adam first encountered Jambi batik of the blue type in the Pasemah Highlands, and reported having seen similar cloths being worn in the Bungo and Tebo river areas. Local informants in the Bangko region say that the blue type was made there in the past, and this would support the proposition that blue batiks were made outside the sphere of the court. The use of indigenous dyestuffs and the elements of design including layout and motifs which differed from those found in Java suggest a tradition predating the arrival of the canting in the mid-nineteenth century. Similarities between the kain simbut of Banten and the Jambi selendang bersidang, especially the size and proportion of the

central lozenge, may indicate that the blue Jambi cloths of the 1920s had developed from a similar rural craft. On the other hand, the similarities in pattern arrangement and motifs between Jambi batik and songket suggest that there is a strong connection between them with the batik motifs probably copied from songket models. This would place the blue batiks in the context of the wealthier sections of society rather than in a village context..

One difficulty in seeking to place Jambi textiles in either a country or a court environment may be that this dichotomy, though relevant in Java, was not applicable in nineteenth century Jambi. Although the Jambi sultanate had a court and an associated aristocracy, chiefs in the upstream regions retained considerable power. The Sultan was always as reliant on their co-operation for the supply of forest products as they were on him for the supply of rice and other items. In addition, there were times when the kingdom was divided between competing claimants to the throne and the allegiance of the upstream chiefs must, to a certain extent, be bought. Thus, while they were not members of the court, their relatively powerful position meant that they might be wealthy in their own right. Textiles of various kinds, including both blue and red batiks, were associated with these district chiefs, and the evidence suggests that batik headcloths and selendangs formed part of adat dress in these circles. A photograph reproduced in Gillow (1992:11) shows upstream chiefs seated in front of two cloths, one apparently songket, and the other possibly batik with a border of prada. The chairs on which they are seated also appear to be draped in songket, and it is clear that luxury cloths such as these were not the preserve of royalty alone. The embellishment of batik cloths with prada cannot therefore be taken unquestioningly as evidence that they were court dress.

#### 4. Islam

The inclusion of sacred texts on many of the cloths found in Jambi indicates another context for Jambi batik, which does not fit exclusively into either the court or country designation. Islam was available to all the inhabitants of Jambi, and the right to wear texts from the Qur'an on a headcloth could not be reserved for any particular social rank. Islam is an aspect of life in Jambi which allows any literate person the opportunity to achieve high status, and those who wore



calligraphy headcloths would have been those who had distinguished themselves in religious life. Whilst men who had the time and opportunity to become ulama or alim were more likely than not from reasonably wealthy families, the protection provided by such motifs as the sword of Ali and the shahada was available to everyone. If the headcloths were worn also by pendekar in resisting the Dutch, this again suggests an upstream location for the wearers, who were as likely to be district chiefs as members of the royal retinue.

## 5. Commercial context

By the 1920s, however, the blue batiks seem to have become trade items. In Seberang, informants say that batik produced in workshops there was traded upstream in the 1920s to purchasers from West Sumatra, and this is confirmed by Tideman's 1938 report. Some of the clients were Minangkabau adat chiefs and the fact that some calligraphy headcloths appear to bear their owners' names indicates that at least some of these traded cloths were commissioned locally. Van der Kam's report that Jambi batik had formerly been made for members of the royal household suggests another market for the cloths (Goslings 1929/30:145). It is possible that the blue batik was used in a range of social contexts, but Van der Kam's statement is unsupported by any direct or corroborating evidence, and may have been based on assumptions based on Javanese practice. In any event, it does not exclude the possibility of a wider market.

Attempting to place the red cloths in their context presents further problems. Those produced by the tulis method may have been produced by the same makers as some of the blue cloths, and thus in the same context and for a similar market. The red areas of these were produced by a dye process which could have been introduced, with the canting, from Java, with the mengkudu and mordant mixed and applied at the same time. Those cloths produced by printing, however, are most likely to have been associated with volume production and were therefore probably manufactured by some sort of commercial enterprise. The elements of mordant printing they contain show a production method which departs from the models reported in Java, and which closely resembles processes found widely in India. Jambi's trade connections with India seem to

have continued much longer than those in Dutch-controlled Java. Although some of the cloths may have been imported from India, it seems more likely that at some point Indian immigrants or local people began to produce mordant-printed cloths patterned by means of wood blocks for local consumption. Both mengkudu and alum were used in Sumatra (Marsden 1811/1986:95), and whereas the evidence suggests that in Java the mengkudu and alum-bearing jirek were mixed prior to application (Heringa 1989b:119), the availability of alum in Sumatra in its mineral form would have meant that the Indian process of mordant-printing followed by a red dyebath could easily have been replicated.

The introduction of the canting to Jambi in the mid-nineteenth century may have coincided with the demise of this industry, which was probably interrupted by the installation of guns by the Dutch at Kumpeh and the subsequent disruption of trade. Knowledge of how to dye using alum and mengkudu probably remained in the hands of only a few, and eventually died out. The technique of hand-drawn batik filled the demand for local designs until the Japanese period, when it too all but died out.

## 6. Malay context

A central feature of Malay culture in Jambi is that of assimilation. This notion applies specifically to people: marriage is an occasion when one family assimilates the son of another into it, but both families are assimilated into each other and become a new kin group. The process of assimilation is also symbolised in the rituals of shared feasting and the exchange of cakes. To eat from the same plate or from the same hearth is in a sense to become one. It is not only marriage partners who are absorbed into the family. Babies and adults are adopted, either formally or informally, and can become "Melayu" instantly. The only requirement is that they also "masuk Islam" or join the Islamic faith.

In the same way, elements of other cultures are rarely seen as alien, but rather as possible objects for adoption into Malay forms. Designs, motifs and processes found in trade cloths were enthusiastically taken up and adapted for use in local textiles. However, elements chosen for assimilation always had some existing significance in Jambi. Indian sembagi cloths containing eight-pointed rosette

motifs were probably copied because they brought to mind the eight-petalled *tanjung* flower, an omnipresent feature in Jambi ritual, or the mangosteen calyx, symbolic of fertility. Other designs with no such significance were not adopted. For example, although imported cloths containing the central Javanese *parang rusak* design are widely used, the design was not incorporated into Jambi batik, probably because it had no resonance in Jambi. The designs in Jambi batik seem to be drawn from a limited field and to share a similar meaning. Flowers represent purity, seeds and fruits represent fertility; other motifs may suggest protective properties. These three qualities of purity, fertility and protectiveness seem to be expressed singly or in combination in all cloths, and any cloth may be regarded then as providing for the well-being of the person who wears it.

The systems of use of particular designs for particular purposes in Java (see Geirnaert-Martin 1983; Boow 1988) do not exist in Jambi. Javanese society is much more highly stratified, and people may belong to named classes in a hierarchical structure. Batiks have been widely used for the expression of status in Javanese society, where rank and position are finely articulated not just in aristocratic circles but also in a village context. Factors other than the design are often more important in the use of cloths in Jambi. One such factor is the number of cloths used, as in the piles of cloth placed in a crib, under a young baby or beneath a corpse. All cloths will share a similar function. Similarly, the particular type of cloth given at an *antar belanjo* is less important than the shape into which it is folded. The cloth is transformed by folding into the object whose shape it echoes, just as folded paper is transformed into flowers for the wedding procession. In a sense, the decoration of a Jambi cloth has a similar function, in that the plain cloth is transformed into a field of flowers, similar to all other cloths.

Where there are references to social distinctions between wearers of cloths made in Jambi in the past, these relate to age. As we have seen, cloths with a blue centrefield and red border were thought to be appropriate for older people, whereas cloths with a red centrefield and blue border were deemed suitable for the young. The similarity between the two groups of cloths is evident, however. Cloths of each type must combine the same elements, with merely the arrangement reversed.

## 7. Definitions of batik

In Indonesia, surface-decorated cotton cloths produced by methods other than batik tulis have been largely ignored. Those decorated by the batik cap method, the printing on of a wax resist, are mentioned in definitions of batik but have not been the subject of serious study, probably because they were not regarded as art objects by western observers. In addition, batik has usually been defined in terms of the processes found in Java, where tulis and cap techniques were found. Mordant-printed cloths are not discussed in the literature under the heading of 'batik' at all, though most Indonesians would regard them as batik and describe them as such. The narrowing of the definition of batik and the subsequent invisibility of alternative processes has contributed to a distortion of the picture of textile production in Indonesia. Collectors of textiles have also played a part in limiting the range of textiles which have been studied. Private collectors and to a lesser degree museum collectors have tended to disregard what they consider to be less elevated pieces of work, focussing in the main on what are seen as the best examples, produced by the most skilled makers.

The survival of examples of printed batiks from Jambi has perhaps occurred as a result of two factors. One is that in Jambi, unusually, printed textiles were regarded as valuable and were stored carefully for many years for use in adat ceremonies. Secondly, the waxing of the printed motifs to protect them from the indigo dyebath left irregular outlines on these Jambi cloths, which led many of them to be categorised as batik tulis. Less expert collectors may have been taken in by these irregularities, and assumed that they were buying hand-crafted and thus superior cloths, when in fact the main patterning was produced by block printing. Even so, the inclusion of some examples of these Jambi cloths in collections did not attract serious study, perhaps because the cloths were seen as inferior to those produced in the Javanese courts.

This study has provided evidence of a range of techniques which have been disregarded in studies of Indonesian batik. These techniques were probably employed at various centres in Sumatra, as is suggested by the lists of types of local cloth produced in eastern Sumatra and Aceh which were drawn up by European officials such as Anderson. I hope to have demonstrated that the

discrepancies between descriptions of Javanese processes and the evidence of the "Jambi" cloths themselves, including both mordant-printed and siang-malam types, show that they may well have been produced in Sumatra and that it is wrong to dismiss references to "Jambi batik" out of hand.

## 8. Museums

The original intention of this study was to establish the characteristic features of Jambi batiks and to clear up the confusion surrounding those cloths which, although known as "batik Jambi", have come to be regarded as Javanese imports. It has been possible to produce a fairly accurate description of the production processes and a catalogue of designs found in the blue tulis cloths of which those collected by Adam, Van der Kam and Van Eerde are examples. In addition, I have pointed out similarities between motifs in many of the siang-malam cloths and the blue cloths which suggest a clear link between them. The technical connection between Sumatran use of mordants and the siang-malam technique together with the existence of the siang-malam technique in Seberang today lend further justification for the naming of such cloths as "Jambi batik". Further, I have shown that since many of the siang-malam cloths contain calligraphic elements, it is likely that the labelling of many of the calligraphy cloths containing natural-dyes as "Jambi batik" is likely to have been accurate. In the twentieth century a number of centres in Java also produced calligraphy batiks, at least some of it for export to Sumatra, and I have suggested that this, combined with the dearth of literature about Sumatran batik, has led some commentators to assume mistakenly that all calligraphy cloths came from Java.

It has not proved possible to distinguish with certainty between those calligraphy cloths produced in Sumatra and those imported from Java. Uncertainty also remains surrounding the question of the origin of many of the cloths containing red. The lack of documented evidence relating to the techniques found in the printed cloths and to techniques used outside Java is one reason for the difficulty. There are also problems in establishing provenance through examining museum collections, and these fall into three main areas. First, a great many of the cloths in such collections were acquired through dealers who had little information about the place of manufacture of each cloth, nor about the uses to

which it was put. Second, even where cloths were obtained in the field, collectors may not have ascertained whether the cloth originated in the place where it was collected.

The third problematic area relates to the shortcomings of the systems which were used for cataloguing textiles in museum collections. Entries in many museum records were organised under headings which could be interpreted in different ways. Thus the Dutch heading "herkomst", meaning "origin", might be followed by the word "verkoopt" (bought), or by a place name, which may have been the place where the cloth was acquired by the original collector or the place where the cloth was believed to have been made. The citation of authorities in museum records is also often unhelpful to the researcher. In most museum catalogue entries relating to "Jambi" textiles containing red, Goslings' articles are given as the authority for descriptions in the records. These articles, however, consist largely of his deliberations and trace changes in his opinions over a period of many months. While they do provide useful information, they cannot be taken as an authoritative statement on the nature of Jambi textiles. A further problem associated with opinions expressed in museum records is the alteration of details contained in them, often as a result of the transfer of records from one system to another. Later curators have often scored through entries made by earlier curators, often giving no reason for the changes they have made. Where the records are transferred onto new cards, valuable information is sometimes lost. This is especially true when the original accession entries are superseded.

## 9. Summary

This study has challenged a number of assumptions which have been made about batik in Indonesia. I have confronted static models and others which have focussed too narrowly on Javanese techniques and meanings. I have demonstrated the importance of approaching textiles from a perspective which recognises change and diversity. I have tried to emphasise the need to understand the central role of trade and colonial experience in relation to textiles in South-East Asia. I have also shown the need for taking into consideration the wider geographical context, beyond the Indonesian archipelago and beyond the notional boundaries of South-East Asia. Previous studies of Indonesian batik

have tended to apply Javanese models to all of Indonesia. Indonesia was viewed with Java as the centre and the other regions as satellites to it: a Java-centric model which has marginalised batiks from Jambi.

Finally, I believe I have shown the crucial importance of studying the technical aspects of textiles. Many other studies of textiles in South-East Asia have employed an anthropological perspective focusing almost exclusively on the symbolic to the neglect of the technical. This has resulted in a paucity of information which could help museum curators to identify both how and where the textiles were made. This lack of information made the study of textiles from Jambi, as it must do for many other marginalised places, particularly difficult. I hope that this study has not only revealed this problem, but has gone some way to remedy it.

## GLOSSARY

Not all the Indonesian words and phrases which appear in the text are included here. Where a word appears only once and its meaning is explained in the text, where the meaning is clear from the context, or where the word has fallen out of use and its meaning is not known, it has been omitted from the glossary.

**adat:** customary practice and local law.

**air yasin:** holy water which has been consecrated by having the Yasin read over it.

**akad nikah:** Islamic part of the wedding ceremony at which the union is legally formalised.

**alim:** Islamic religious scholar.

**ancak:** lozenge-shaped tray rarely found now in Jambi; motif of that name.

**antar belanjo:** procession during which a bridegroom and his party bring gifts to the home of his bride-to-be.

**antelas:** satin; motif of that name.

**azimat:** amulet; talisman. Usually with religious (Islamic) connection.

**macam:** a mixture of aromatic leaves and flower petals used at ceremonies in Jambi.

**badan:** the "body" of a sarung; the area of the main field of the design.

**baju kurung:** woman's tunic.

**bersidang:** (of selendang, q.v.) with a central lozenge.

**biji timun:** cucumber seed; motif of that name.

**bunga matahari:** Lit. 'sunflower'. Place on which folded sarungs are laid on which a groom, and usually also a bride, will sit during the akad nikah ceremony.

**candi:** temple (Buddhist); motif of that name.

**canting:** small instrument used for drawing hot wax onto the cloth and consisting of a copper bowl with a narrow spout and a bamboo handle.

**cap:** stamp made of copper strips formed into a batik design fixed on a handle; used to stamp wax onto cloth.



**cengkeh:** clove; motif of that name.

**cerano:** container for ingredients for betel chew.

**chaya:** dyestuff containing alizarine used to give red in India.

**colet:** painting of dyes directly onto the cloth.

**destar:** folded square headcloth for man.

**dukun:** indigenous medical practitioner; shaman.

**duren pecah:** split durian fruit; motif of that name.

**durian pecah:** see *duren pecah*.

**garis miring:** diagonal lines; group of designs in Javanese batik in this style.

**gotong royong:** mutual co-operation in community tasks.

**ikat:** weaving where pattern is created by tying and dyeing the threads before weaving.

**ikat kepala:** headcloth (for man).

**iket kepala:** see *ikat kepala* (q.v.).

**jerenang:** substance obtained from species of *Daemonorpha*; used to give a red colour in basketry.

**jimat:** see *azimat*.

**jirek:** Javanese name for bark of *Symplocos fasciculata*, an alum-bearing plant used as a mordant with *mengkudu* (q.v.).

**kabupaten:** administrative districts into which each province of Indonesia is divided.

**kacang:** peanut; bean or nut.

**kain jumputan:** tie-dyed cloth.

**kain kafat:** white cloth, usually about 15 metres long, wound around a corpse before burial.

**kain lama:** Lit. 'old cloths'; the name by which Jambi people refer to heirloom cloths. Most of these contain red.

**kain panjang:** Lit: 'long cloth'. An unsewn hipcloth, wider and longer than the cloth which makes up the sarung, with the puncak rebung (q.v.) at each end.

**kalam:** tool used in India for applying wax to cloth for batik.

**kapur:** quick lime made from ground shells; used in betel chew and as a mordant.

**kawung:** Javanese motif consisting of interlocking circles.

**kebaya:** long fitted blouse for a woman.

**keluarga besar:** extended family

**kemben:** Javanese breast cloth worn by a woman.

**kepala:** the "head" of the cloth; area of sarung consisting of triangular motifs with a panel on either side.

**kerudung:** large shawl used by women as head covering.

**kerupuk:** dried crackers made of fish and cassava.

**kraton:** palace.

**kundur:** type of gourd placed under women's beds to ensure fertility.

**lacak:** head garment worn by groom, usually of red velvet.

**lar:** Javanese batik motif depicting single garuda wing.

**lembato:** yellow dyestuff obtained from wood of *Artocarpus cf dadah*.

**lengseng:** Javanese word meaning speech or lecture, but also referring to motif resembling Jambi anak

**lok can:** type of design usually produced on Chinese silk and containing symbolic Chinese motifs. Usually combines two shades of the same colour on a cream ground.

**marelang:** name used in Jambi to refer to a tree (*Pterospermum cf acerifolium* (Sterculiaceae) from which a brownish-red dyestuff is produced.

**melati:** jasmine; motif of that name.

**mengkudu:** morinda tree (usually *Morinda citrifolia*) the bark of whose root was used widely in Indonesia to produce a red dye.

**misra:** category of taxable commercial activities listed in early Javanese documents.

**nilo:** term used in Jambi for indigo dye (**nila** in standard Bahasa Indonesia).

**nitik:** batik pattern made up of small dots, lines or tiny squares, often thought to imitate the appearance of woven textures.

**ombak-ombak:** Lit. 'waves'. Border designs on cloths characterised by an undulating line; pelmet above pelaminan (q.v.).

**pagi-sore:** Lit. 'morning-evening'. In Jambi, a kain panjang (q.v.) in which the two ends and the border designs along the selvages are in two different colours. In a pagi-sore headcloth, the pattern on the cloth differs across the diagonal.

**pantun:** verse used in Malay adat ceremonies.

**pasar:** market.

**peci:** black rimless man's hat, usually made of velvet.

**pelaminan:** throne on which bride and groom are seated during the pesta penganten (q.v.)

**pelangi:** term used in Sumatra to refer to multi-coloured silk shawls decorated using tying and sewing to resist the dye.

**pencak silat:** art of self-defence in which the stylised movements of sword-play are performed as if in a dance.

**pendekar:** expert swordsman.

**pesta malam:** (in relation to a wedding) the celebration of a wedding which takes place at night after the pesta penganten.

**pesta penganten:** wedding celebration which takes place some time after the akad nikah, and at which guests are entertained.

**pihak laki-laki:** the family and friends of the groom.

**pihak perempuan:** the family and friends of the bride.

**prada:** gold leaf embellishment applied to cloth with glue.

**puncak rebung:** bamboo tips; motif of that name appearing in the kepala (q.v.) of a sarung (q.v.) or at each end of a kain panjang (q.v.).

**rantai:** Lit. 'chain'; part of design in songket.

**remukan:** process whereby wax covering is deliberately cracked to allow the dye to penetrate, thus producing thin veining in the finished cloth in areas where the process has been employed.

**ringgo-ringgo:** frame, nowadays made of metal but in the past of bamboo, on which a corpse is carried to the burial ground.

**saluak:** headcloth worn by Minangkabau leaders.

**sampan:** small boat with no motor and propelled by means of a paddle.

**sanggar:** workshop; also showroom.

**sarita:** cloths used as ritual objects by the Torajans and which employ the batik techniques.

**sarung:** skirt-cloth sewn into a tube.

**selendang:** shawl or stole, usually worn by women over the head, over the shoulder or across the body.

**sembagi:** Indian cloth, usually mordant-printed.

**semen:** name of group of Javanese batik patterns including a background of tendril designs.

**shahada:** Islamic profession of faith.

**siang-malam:** Lit. 'day-night'. Cloths where the patterns on the two surfaces differ in some aspects of the colour and sometimes parts of the design.

**sisir:** comb; the design on the edge of a batik cloth resembling a fringe.

**soga:** brown dye.

**songket:** silk or cotton cloth with gold-thread supplementary weft patterning.

**Syarak:** Islamic law.

**syukuran:** thanksgiving ceremony for baby at which locks of hair are ceremonially cut and the child is given a name.

**tagapo:** type of cake; motif of that name.

**tampak manggis:** mangosteen calyx; motif of that name.

**tangkal:** object with supernatural protective properties.

**tangkal:** a fishing net on a square frame used for scooping fish from the river.

**tapak besar:** rectangular panels vertically bordering the kepala (q.v.) on a sarung.

**tape:** fermented paste of rice or similar substance; used in indigo vat.

**teluk:** Lit. 'bay'; part of design in songket.

**tepung tawar:** mixture of water and rice flour used in purification ceremonies.

**teratai dada:** (lit: chest water-lily) collar usually worn by bride and groom for pesta penganten (q.v.).

**teruntum:** Javanese motif consisting of repeated discrete star-shaped elements.

**tjeplokkan:** (old spelling) Javanese term for patterns made up of repeated geometric motifs usually based on more or less circular shapes

**tritik:** technique of ornamenting cloths with tie-dyed dots

**tudung jenazah:** cloth used to cover corpse.

**tumpal:** area of kepala (q.v.) on sarung (q.v.) consisting of triangular shapes.

**tunjung:** iron sulphate, used as a mordant.

**tutup jenazah:** see *tudung jenazah*.

**tulis:** Lit. 'to write'. Batik tulis is made by hand, using the canting (q.v.).

**tembok:** part of the batik process which takes place after the initial waxing of the design when motifs or background areas are filled in with wax.

**tudung jenazah:** the cloth used as the topmost covering for the corpse when it is being carried to the graveside.

**tunjung:** iron sulphate, used as a mordant

**ulama:** Muslim religious leader

**Yasin:** a chapter from the Qur'an.

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