



Legacy in Cloth: Batak Textiles of Indonesia

By Sandra Niessen

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Weaving in the Batak region of North Sumatra is an ancient art practised by women, and exhibits some of the oldest design and technical features in the Indonesian archipelago. Since colonial annexation at the turn of the twentieth century, innovative Batak weavers from the Lake Toba region in northern Sumatra have successfully adapted their art to new economic and social circumstances - but at great cost. In recent decades, weaving has fallen into decline and the tradition is threatened, while at the same time Batak textiles are highly prized in museum collections around the world. "Legacy in cloth" offers the first definitive study of the woven heritage of the Toba, Simalungun, and Karo Batak. The most complete analysis of Batak textiles ever published, it provides a record of more than 100 different design types, including archival and contemporary photographs showing how the textiles are woven and how they are used in Batak culture.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Sandra Niessen is an anthropologist based in the Netherlands. She taught in the Department of Human Ecology at the University of Alberta, where she specialized in textile traditions around the world and sustainable lifestyles. Niessen holds a Ph.D. from Leiden University. She has published widely on Batak textiles. In 2006, she curated *Woven worlds*, an exhibition on the history of Batak textile collecting by the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam.

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