

# The Textiles of Sembiran

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## Introduction

Some museums and private collectors in Europe, the United States, and Australia are proud owners of so-called “*kain* Sembiran”, archaic-looking, striped cotton wrappers with a predominantly patterned centre. This part shows geometrical or stylised floral patterns which are executed with a thick gold thread in supplementary weft technique, and - seldom – interspersed with simple weft ikat stripes. This was a good reason for thoroughly investigations of this category of textiles.<sup>1</sup> As I will show, genuine Sembiran cloth turned out to be of a completely different style than hitherto labelled “*kain* Sembiran”.

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<sup>1</sup> As I could not carry out fieldwork on this subject myself, I am deeply indebted to Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin who encouraged me to undertake this research, and who, during many stays in Sembiran between 1997 and 2006, unremittingly discussed my many questions with weavers, priests and other people in and outside the village. Her main informants in Sembiran were Mangku I Nyoman Sutarmi and the weavers Ni Wayan Landri and Ni Ketut Sri Ngentek. Her valuable data were enriched by photographs of hers and of her husband, Jörg Hauser. She also permitted access to the large photo documentation and fieldnotes in the archives of the University of Göttingen, collected by Christa Schot in 2001 and Christian Riemenschneider in 2003.

I am grateful to many colleagues and other persons who generously participated in discussions, inspired me with new ideas, constructively criticized my work, and allowed me access to comparative material in museum and private collections: Georges Breguet, Francine Brinkgreve, Diana Collins, Marie-Hélène Guelton, Linda Hanssen, Rens Heringa, Robert Holmgren, Norman Indictor, Susi Johnston, Alan Kennedy, Brigitte Majlis, Gerry Masteller, Michael Peter, Claudine Salmon, Heinz Schneider, John Summerfield, Anita Spertus, David Stuart-Fox.

According to Nevermann (1938:18-19), the very first records on cotton weaving in Bali and Java are to be found in the Annals of the T'ang Dynasty (618-907). During this period of China's expansionist foreign policy, a Balinese prince would have sent cotton cloths along with sandalwood and ivory as tributes to the Emperor of China. Nevermann deduces that these cotton textiles would have been produced in Bali itself, and – as gifts to an imperial authority - would testify to an already quite developed art of weaving. The same author also states from the book Hsing-ch'a Shêng-lan by the seafarer Fei Hsin (1486), that Javanese traders imported cotton "Java cloth" to Samudra and Pahang in the kingdom of Srivijaya, which seemed to have been woven in Java and Bali (1938:19).

Stuart-Fox systematically searched through ancient Balinese inscriptions from the late 9th to the 14th century for references regarding textile materials and crafts.<sup>2</sup> These inscriptions concern coastal villages such as Julah, Pacung, Tejakula, Sembiran, or the villages of Sukawana and Kintamani in the central mountain area. Raw cotton (kapas) and cotton yarn (benang) are explicitly mentioned as local products (Stuart-Fox 1993:86). Clear regulations granted the right to trade raw cotton to certain villages, to spin and weave cotton to other villages, while still others were explicitly forbidden to do so (Stuart-Fox 1993:87). The author concludes: "The fact that the great majority of references to cotton and dye-stuffs concern north coast and central mountain villages may indicate that such production was restricted to these areas", and "The inscriptions indicate a well-organized and well-regulated trade network linking north coast villages with mountain villages in the Batur area", and he finally states that Balinese textile products, particularly cloth, played an important role in inter-island trade (Stuart-Fox 1993:91).

Various sources from the 16th to 19th centuries confirm the importance of Balinese cotton products in this trade; let us quote a few examples: According to Dutch reports of Javanese maritime trade at the beginning of the 17th century, merchants from the important port of Tuban exchanged pepper in Bali against pieces of simple cotton cloth, woven there in quantity and in "various colours and workings, which they are very artful in and supply the surrounding islands with", and which were particularly in demand in the Moluccas.<sup>3</sup>

William Marsden, an employee of the East India Company in Sumatra from 1771 to 1779, gives a detailed list of foreign textiles in circulation in wealthy Sumatra which includes not only different cloths from India, Makassar and Java, but also a variety of sarongs (skirt-lengths) from Bali (Guy 1998:68). Even Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles mentions in his "History of Java" (1817 I:204) under the headline "Exports and Imports of Java" that "cloths are also sometimes imported

<sup>2</sup> These royal edicts bearing dates and names of kings contain pieces of information on cotton production and textile manufacture in connection with the imposition and raising of taxes and tributes, as well as trade regulations for certain North Balinese village communities to the royal centers of power, on traders of different origins along the North Balinese coast and on protection from piracy (see also Hauser-Schäublin 2004:33).

<sup>3</sup> Schrieke 1955:20-21,32 and notes 80 to 82.

from Bali" and adds that "the island produces cotton of the most excellent quality and in great abundance" (1817 II:ccxxxiv). In 1830, a Frenchman, Comte C.S.W. de Hogendorp, reports in his «Coup d'oeil sur l'Île de Java et les autres possessions hollandaises dans l'Archipel des Indes» that raw cotton from Bali is highly estimated, and exported to Java (Salmon 2005:20). Under Dutch rule, Pabejan Buleleng, Sangsit and other important seaports on the North Balinese littoral were bustling centers of an international and inter-insular business network. In a list of imported goods dated 1873, we find foreign and domestic textiles from neighbouring islands, as well as raw silk, gold leaf and gold thread, whilst the corresponding table of export goods lists indigenous cloth and a relatively small amount of raw cotton (Van Eck 1880:20-21). Van Eck adds that Bali had previously been famous for red yarn, sarongs and selendangs woven locally, and exported them in huge amounts to other places. Javanese traders bought them under the label "Caeyn-baly" (cloths from Bali). Their manufacture, however, had steadily decreased due to the import of foreign goods; production continued on a low scale and for local consumption only (Van Eck 1880:22-23), and by the beginning of the 20th century, textiles were no longer exported. Only foreign visitors would here and there acquire such indigenous fabrics (Fraser 1908: 333).

The village of Sembiran has been discussed extensively by several authors.<sup>4</sup> In the frame of this article, we only summarize a few topics which are relevant in connection with the manufacture of textiles, their use by the people of Sembiran and in other places, and in connection with possible outside influence. While most anthropologists have labeled the village as a classical "Bali Aga" community, Hauser-Schäublin has pointed out, based on "an analysis of oral histories, temples and rituals as well as of its social organization", that "Sembiran has been a village where people of differing origins and with different ritual practices met, producing a culture that displays corresponding traits, Islamic elements being among the most prominent" (2004:28-29).

In the course of this study, we shall discover that the particular textile culture of Sembiran was not one restricted to an isolated Bali Aga village, even if it shows a few traits in common with the most renowned Bali Aga village, Tenganan Pagersingan in East Bali. For centuries, however, Sembiran has been deeply embedded in a wide inland and even transmaritime trade network, due to its location near the North Balinese seaports. It also has played a role as part of a system of ritual connections with important temples in the areas of Batur and Sukawana in the central mountain region.<sup>5</sup> According to local oral histories, the population of Sembiran is a conglomerate of so-called "original" inhabitants (Bali Mula), still

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<sup>4</sup> See e.g. Hauser-Schäublin 2004; Riemenschneider 2004; Riemenschneider and Hauser-Schäublin 2006; see also Hauser-Schäublin this volume.

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. Reuter 2002:51, 52, 107, 187; Hauser-Schäublin 2004; Hauser-Schäublin 2005: 761.

speaking their own language, mixed with immigrants who migrated to Sembiran in a number of "waves" from outside Bali going back to pre-colonial times; most of these immigrants are associated with Islam (Hauser-Schäublin 2004:54). Among them are descendants of the Sasak people who arrived in the middle of the last century from Lombok and East Bali to Sembiran and the neighbouring village of Julah, where they still live in a separate ward (*dusun*).<sup>6</sup> It is therefore only to be expected that the textile culture of Sembiran has undergone a lot of external influences, and that connections to Lombok are of particular relevance to our subject.<sup>7</sup>

In spite of its label as a "Bali Aga" village, Sembiran today is a progressive community. Its inhabitants are ready to throw overboard old customs and traditions, and to adopt and integrate innovations. Recollection and consciousness of the past play a very minor role, are not cultivated and do not appear to have any particular value. Even older informants often lack memory of certain subjects and seem to be surprised that past times should give rise to so much interest.<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, it is surprising to see to what extent importance is still attached to a few traditional forms of garb for certain special occasions and social groups, and how much these simple indigenous, hand-woven cloths have become a sign of distinct identity to the members of the village community of Sembiran (p.82-84).

## The Manufacture of Textiles

As mentioned above, firm written testimony of cotton cultivation and cotton yarn production in North Bali go back as far as the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD (Stuart-Fox 1993:86). In colonial times, cultivation of different species of cotton<sup>9</sup> was widely spread in Java, Sumatra (Palembang), as well as on Lombok and Bali. In Java the production was strongly promoted by the Dutch government with a view to export possibilities (Jasper en Pirngadie 1912:11-12, 20; Heyne 1927:1039-1046).

<sup>6</sup> Hauser-Schäublin 2004: note 61. Part of Lombok had been ruled by the Balinese kingdom of Karangasem between 1692 and 1894. At the beginning of the 20th century, 4,000 Sasak immigrants lived in Karangasem (Korn 1932:65); after the eruption of the volcano Gunung Agung in 1963, many Sasak and Balinese escaped from there to North Bali.

<sup>7</sup> Apart from Sasak from Lombok, there exist other small communities of Muslims that immigrated during centuries from Makassar in South Sulawesi, from Java and Madura, and from Sumbawa. They had settled down in Jembrana, Klungkung, Badung and in Buleleng (Pagajaman, Tegallindah, Banjar Jawa, Pabean, Kalibukbuk, Temukus, and Watu Gunung). In Bali, they are generally called Bali Slam or Bali Slem. This term refers to types of ritual practices that differ from Hindu-Balinese norms. They frequently married Balinese women, in spite of royal decrees restricting marriage between Muslims and other Balinese subjects (Vickers 1987:39, 43-44, 53, and note 51, following Korn 1932:67).

<sup>8</sup> Personal communication from Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Nevermann (1938:31-39) enumerates many different species of *Gossypium* cultivated in Indonesia, and gives dozens of indigenous names; Jasper en Pirngadie (1912:13) mention a kind called *kapas huma besar* as being typical of Bali.

In his short report on Bali, Raffles confirms that the island of Bali “produces cotton of the most excellent quality and in great abundance” and mentions cotton yarn and coarse cloths among the main export goods (Raffles 1817 II:ccxxxiv).

Apart from the villages of Julah and Pacung, it was particularly Sembiran that had been famous for cotton cultivation (Hauser-Schäublin 2004:38). During World War II, the traditional *kapas Bali*<sup>10</sup> had been replaced by the Japanese by a new species called *kapas tuan*, which developed quicker and needed less care, but under the present climatic conditions – too hot, too dry – both of these had to be abandoned. However, the use of handspun cotton yarn is also essential in a number of rituals. For this purpose, people buy raw cotton or hand-spun cotton yarn directly from personally-known producers in other villages, in particular in Julah, or they plant in their backyards small quantities of a new species, *kapas lilit*.

This variety (the botanical name of which we could not yet determine) has long, curly staple fibres, appropriate for industrial spinning (the Indonesian word *lilit* means “to turn”, “to twist”); in Java, its cultivation for spinning mills has been highly promoted by the government since the 1970s<sup>11</sup>; it is, however, not suitable for the production of hand-spun yarn or for hand-weaving.<sup>12</sup>

In the past, all steps from planting and processing the cotton up to spinning and weaving had been carried out by women within their family. There were no specialists for particular tasks, except that some women were better weavers than others.

The raw cotton was cleaned from its seeds with the help of a cotton gin (*pemipisan*), loosened with the help of a bow with a cord (*penjetetan*), then spun into yarn on a hand-spinning wheel (*jantra*), and wound into skeins on a skein-winder (*mutuban*). All these tools are similar to the ones found all over Bali. However, as late as the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they still did not use the *jantra* for winding the weft thread on a spool-stick, as elsewhere in Bali, but used a very special shape of tool, a wooden fly-wheel fitted on to the base of the spool-stick. This archaic implement is also known from Tenganan in East Bali<sup>13</sup>, from Kintamani in the central mountain region<sup>14</sup>, as well as from Cempaka near Bubunan and from Sasak people in Lombok<sup>15</sup>; in all these places, it bears the same name, *keper*.

The great significance of cotton cultivation in the past is confirmed by a still existing ritual relationship between Sembiran and the temple of Batur (Pura Ulun Danu Batur), which was a major tax- and tribute-collecting institution for North

<sup>10</sup> According to Nevermann (1938:35) *kapas bali* is the Javanised name for *Gossypium indicum Lam var. arborescens*.

<sup>11</sup> Personal communication from Rens Heringa, 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Personal communication from the Sembiran weaver Ni Wayan Landri to Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin, 2006.

<sup>13</sup> Museum der Kulturen Basel no. IIc 7460; see Bühler 1943:206 and fig. 165.

<sup>14</sup> RMV Leiden no. 2407-153, acquired in 1939.

<sup>15</sup> Bolland and Polak 1971:154-55, and fig.5; Bolland 1971:176. Note, that Tenganan, Cempaka as well as Sembiran were considered to be genuine Bali Aga villages at the time of Bolland’s research.

and Central Bali. As one of Batur's traditional temple-supporting villages, *pasyan*, Sembiran is still expected to bring certain tributes when on pilgrimage to the Batur Temple on the occasion of a huge temple ritual of the last Balinese month. Some time ahead of the ceremony, each village receives an official invitation written on palm leaf, containing a list of offerings and goods to be brought along. The nature of these kinds of taxes depends on the villages' economy and their products.

For Sembiran, this means bringing among other items unprocessed raw cotton to be used for rituals (Photo 1).<sup>16</sup>



Photo 1: Raw *kapas lilit* cotton, offered as tribute to the Batur Temple by villagers of Sembiran. Photo: Jörg Hauser 2006.

The so-called *cagcag* loom used by Sembiran weavers is of a type widespread in the traditional home-industry all over Bali for the manufacture of plain, striped and checked cotton and silk cloth, for weft ikat (*endek*) and for *songket* textiles with supplementary weft designs. It is a backstrap loom with a long, one-layered discontinuous warp wound around a plank-like warp roller (*pandalan*). This plank is mounted in the slots of two massive fork-shaped slanting posts which are fixed in

<sup>16</sup> Personal communication from Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin, 2006; see also Hauser-Schäublin 2005:759; Reuter 2002:107.

a heavy wooden construction (*tatakan cagcaq*). The warp ends nearest the weaver are attached to a bipartite breast or cloth roller (*apitan*), fixed to her back with a rather broad wooden yoke (*por*). A heavy horizontal post placed on the ground under the warp roller facilitates the bracing of the feet when the weaver leans back to give greater tension to the warp. The ground sheds for the foundation plain weave are opened by means of a shed stick (*mumbungan*) and one rod with heddles (*jeriring*). There is a reed (*serat*) with the twin function as warp-spacer and for beating in the weft threads in combination with a heavy long weaving sword (*belida*), which can be temporarily deposited on a support (*rorgan*) made out of a thick bamboo tube.<sup>17</sup> The combined action of a reed and a sword allows a much denser beating-up the weft threads. The weft spool (*peleting*) is fixed in a quiver (*tundak*) made from a hollow bamboo tube, open and split into four or more tongues at one end.<sup>18</sup>

Only cloths in simple tabby weave and of limited width can be woven on this loom. Supplementary weft patterns would need much more sophisticated equipment with additional hand-operated pattern heddle rods, and cloths of a bigger width are always composed of two webs sewn together. In Photo 2, Ni Wayan Landri is seen weaving the middle section of a woman’s shoulder-cloth with blue and white stripes which is usually 45 to 50 cm wide, and which takes her five to six days of work. The price for such a shoulder-cloth amounted to about 30.000 Rs in 1998.<sup>19</sup>

While the loom itself has not undergone any changes since the 1920s (Photo 3), it is possible that in earlier times a less developed device than the weft spool in a quiver was used in Sembiran for introducing the weft.

In her analysis of oral histories, Hauser-Schäublin (2004:38 and note 62) pointed to the fact that Muslim immigrants were innovators of different kinds: “One of the stories deals with a technological innovation a Muslim man – a “black dog” – brought to the village. [...] One day a young woman – the story calls her the daughter of a pig, alluding to the fact she was a descendent of an indigenous couple whose ritual practices included the ritual offering of pigs and pork – was tired from the inefficiency of her weaving gear because the yarn frequently dropped from her weft stick (*peleting*). She swore that whoever brought a device that prevented the yarn from dropping she would serve for the rest of her life. It was a

<sup>17</sup> The weaver in Sembiran called it a *kulkul*.

<sup>18</sup> A similar loom from Sembiran in the Wereldmuseum Rotterdam (no. 25998) acquired from L.C. Heyting in 1924 was mentioned by Bolland (1971:173). The construction is made of aren palm wood and bamboo. I checked the lengths of the main parts: warp roller 105 cm, breast roller 103 cm, heddle rod 104 cm, shed stick 103 cm, reed 65 cm); these dimensions would never allow the weaving of large widths; the half-finished cloth on the loom is only 57 cm wide. Also, the reed has relatively wide openings (65 per 10 cm only); thus it was only suitable for weaving rather coarse cloth of hand-spun cotton, while finer cloth would require at least between 100 and 150 openings.

<sup>19</sup> Personal communication from Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin, 1998.

black dog who brought her such an ingenious device, a quiver (*tanduk*) consisting of a bamboo tube that prevented the yarn from dropping from the weft stick. So she gave him food and let him in her house at night." I had suggested that this story might refer to a possible technical change from an early type of weft stick without a quiver which is still used in eastern islands of East Indonesia (e.g. Timor, Rote, Savu, etc.), to the weft stick in a quiver mentioned above, which is used throughout Bali, in Java and Sumatra (Batak), and on Sumba, as well.



Photo 2: Ni Wayan Landri weaving a shoulder-cloth with red, yellow and white end stripes. Photo: Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin 1999.

This innovation could have accelerated the weaving process, as the new device would allow a quicker and more regular unwinding of the weft. The dropping of the yarn from the weaver's weft stick would just be a metaphor for the fact that a new device can be manipulated better and more efficiently. The question, however, as to when such a possible change could have taken place remains unanswered.

The dominant colour met within Sembiran is blue in different shades, mainly dark hues. Yellow and red stripes decorate the shoulder-cloths of women.



Photo 3: Women in Sembiran. The weaver is manufacturing a type of *saput poleng* worn today by bridgrooms, and all women are wearing checked hip-clothes which still form part of the present-day ceremonial *daba* costume. Photo: Controleur L.C. Heyting 1924; Collection Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, inv.no. 910128.

As synthetic colours were introduced in North Bali as early as the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Fraser 1908:326)<sup>20</sup>, practically no recollections of traditional dyeing with natural dyestuffs could be obtained from the weavers of Sembiran. They only remembered indigo as having been used for dyeing blue and leaves from an unknown bush (*dann sugih*) for green. Apparently, the village of Tejakula was specialized in indigo dyeing.<sup>21</sup>

We can only conjecture from information on dyeing found in ancient sources and from other places in Bali what dyestuffs might have been used in Sembiran in former times, namely indigo, *mengkudu* and turmeric or, possibly, safflower.

According to Stuart-Fox (1993:87), the oldest inscription (Sukawana 883 A.D.) mentions dyeing with indigo and with *Morinda citrifolia* in mountain villages: “In

<sup>20</sup>As early as 1908, Dutch administrative officials in Buleleng had been bewailing the loss of quality in *endek* materials when they were dyed with gaudy aniline dyes (Hauser-Schäublin, Nabholz-Kartaschoff and Ramseyer 1991:21).

<sup>21</sup> Personal communication from Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin, 1998.

north Bali, until at least the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, indigo was still grown as a secondary crop on rice land. Various ritual restrictions were attached to indigo production and dyeing." (Stuart-Fox 1993:88). Dyeing red, purple and reddish brown shades is achieved with *mengkudu*, the bark of *Morinda citrifolia*. The dyeing process is very complicated, as it needs pretreatments with oil and mordants, and is extremely time-consuming, repeated immersions in the dye-bath being required. Red-dyeing with *Morinda* was widely practised all over Indonesia (Jasper en Pirngadie 1912: 61-69). In Bali it is still used nowadays in the village of Tenganan Pageringsingan in Karangasem, where it is called *sunti*.

Safflower (*Carthamus tinctoria*), or *kasumba*, for dyeing yellow or orange appears in the inscription of Bwahan, dated 995, and in many later inscriptions, such as for instance from Sembiran (A.D. 1016, 351 Sembiran A III) in connection with the exemption from taxation for the village of Julah. Its cultivation in the mountain regions continued up to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Stuart-Fox 1993:89). Whether safflower was really used for dyeing in Bali, and particularly in Sembiran, remains uncertain; it is locally planted turmeric (*kunyit*) that was preferred for this purpose as elsewhere in Indonesia (Fraser 1908:326; Bühler 1948:2489).

Lac dye, which very rarely appears in connection with textiles used in Sembiran, was an imported dye-stuff (p.94-95).

As mentioned above, imported synthetic dyes had begun to take over in North Bali at least as early as the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By the 1930s, they had driven out traditional dyestuffs even in such remote places as Nusa Penida, where *sunti*, *kunyit* and indigo had been used before (Hauser-Schäublin, Nabholz-Kartaschoff and Ramseyer 1991:99). This development is also confirmed for Java, Sumatra, and the coastal regions of Borneo by Jasper en Pirngadie (1912:73-74,77).

I came across only few examples of really old products that had originated with certainty from Sembiran:

- a complete set of clothing for a bridal couple (note 37),
- a cotton *selendang* (local name according to the collector *blanja*) with a white and indigo blue check design, and broader indigo blue and red stripes at one end (the other end is missing). It was acquired from Controleur L.C. Heyting by the Rotterdam Wereldmuseum in 1924 (no. 25994),
- a small man's jacket with a chequered dark blue and white poleng design (*baju poleng*) in the same collection, the use of which was unknown to present-day weavers - "one should have asked generations before us", was their comment - and - a badly damaged fragment, possibly of a cotton *selendang*, with dark indigo blue stripes on a white ground in the collection of Robert Holmgren and Anita Spertus (IA-276) which the owners attribute to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, possibly to the 18<sup>th</sup>. Some of the older shoulder and hip cloths worn today by unmarried girls and women at festivals of the *daba* group and weddings may go back to the first half of

the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as they are not in every-day use but are passed down within the families.

At present, only two elderly weavers produce the cotton cloths used for ceremonial purposes. Ni Wayan Landri, for example, is still able to manufacture ritual women's shoulder- and hip-cloths and men's hip-cloths and *saput poleng* (Photo 10). On order, she also may weave white and blue checked hip-cloths for the priests of Sukawana (Photo 12).

Usually, they do not process hand-spun thread any longer – cultivating cotton and spinning have completely stopped – but instead buy industrially-spun, undyed yarn in the market. Only for the pattern stripes in women's shoulder-cloths is pre-dyed yarn purchased. They dye the yarn for the dark parts - which previously used to be indigo-dyed - with a black, synthetic dyestuff of Indonesian or Chinese origin (brand: WANTEX). As it fades quickly, it easily turns into a grey or grey-bluish shade after some time. Sometimes, cloths that have become faded and ugly are re-dyed.<sup>22</sup>

In 2001, the government tried to promote a project for the revival of weaving traditions in Sembiran. Several women who still had some experience in weaving were to be trained under the guidance of the expert weaver Ni Wayan Landri. The first difficulty they met was to acquire appropriate yarn. There were in fact coarser and finer qualities on the market of Singaraja; hand-spun Balinese yarn, however, was hardly available. They finally found three skeins, and started dyeing, winding and weaving on Ni Wayan Landri's equipment. The dyestuffs were synthetic ones, but they planned to return to traditional vegetable ones.<sup>23</sup> Five years later, the project to stimulate home-industry in the village failed due to lack of potential customers for woven products of this type.<sup>24</sup>

## The Use of Textiles Manufactured in Sembiran

The village of Sembiran is organized in different ritual and social associations among which is the association of married couples (*kerama desa*), the association of unmarried men (*teruna*), and the association of unmarried girls (*daba bunga*) and women (*daba tua*).<sup>25</sup> The eldest girl of each family becomes a member after having finished school; if she gets married, or leaves the village, the sister next to her in age will join the organization. The *daba* hold regular gatherings (*sangkeapan*) in the Pura Bale Agung (Photo 4) at fixed dates (on Buda Wage days, six times a Balinese

<sup>22</sup> Personal communication from Rens Heringa, 2006. Recently, she was still able to acquire in Sembiran a shoulder-cloth woven of hand-spun yarn. It probably had been woven some years ago, but is dyed with synthetic dyes.

<sup>23</sup> Fieldnotes Christa Schot, 2001.

<sup>24</sup> Personal communication from Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin, 2006.

<sup>25</sup> Hauser-Schäublin 2004:48.

year of 210 days, or every 35 days respectively), and on Galungan and Kuningan, the most important festivals of the Balinese calendar.<sup>26</sup>



Photo 4: Members of the *daba* association in the Village Temple at Galungan Festival.  
Photo: Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin 1997.

All these ritual associations are organized on principles of duality and seniority (see Hauser-Schäublin this volume). The elder *daba tua* have administrative, organisational and ritual functions. They advise and support the *daba bunga* in their duties to bring rice, other food and sweet palm wine, flowers and other components for offerings (Photo 5) etc. and to prepare offerings and the food, which is divided and arranged under the guidance of *daba tua*, and consumed in common by all members (Photo 6).

<sup>26</sup> In 2001, the association counted around 190 members, out of which about 60% attended Galungan; only 10 to 15% were present on Buda Wage days (Fieldnotes Christa Schot, 2001).



Photo 5: A young *daba bunga* with the characteristic *daba bunga* flower offering at Kuningan Festival. Photo: Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin 2005.



Photo 6: Preparation of the common meal for the *daba* at Kuningan Festival. Photo: Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin 2005.

Up to the 1970s, the unmarried *daba bunga*, who are regarded as pure (*suci*), also performed ritual *rejang* dances at Galungan and Kuningan festivals. These days, there is only a small group of girls that dance in public on the occasion of village contests (*lomba desa*) or Bali Art Festivals (*pesta seni*).<sup>27</sup>

On all these occasions, the *daba* mark their membership of the association by wearing a very special form of dress which is entirely made of cloths woven in Sembiran (Photo 7).



Photo 7: Young *daba bunga* at Galungan Festival, showing the varieties of hip-cloths and shoulder-cloths.

Photo: Jörg Hauser 2005.

They are clad in a long, open hip-cloth (*kamben*), wrapped tightly around their bodies and falling down to their feet. It is usually of dark blue indigo colour with extremely thin, undyed warp and weft stripes that produce a discreet check design. There are, however, quite a number of variations: from plain blue cloth up to refined forms with a middle section of slightly different colour and check design. The upper part of the body is tightly wrapped from hips to armpits with a long,

<sup>27</sup> Detailed information on the *daba* association is based on personal communications of Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin and fieldnotes of Christa Schot.

narrow, usually white band (*sabuk*), forming a kind of corset. Many young women have replaced it by a more fashionable corsage of elastic material, called *streples*, and a bra (Photo 8).



Photo 8: *Daba* gathering at Galungan Festival in the Bale Agung. The photo illustrates the many variations of stripe designs and ground shades (grey, indigo blue, black). The young *daba bunga* prefer to wear a modern *streples* of pastel colour instead of the old-fashioned white *sabuk*. Photo: Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin 2005.

Both shoulders and the body are then completely hidden under a shoulder-cloth (*selendang*, local name *banja*, or *panja*) with fine, carefully twisted fringes (*kucih*) which Sembiran women consider to be a very important sign of quality. The *banja* is fixed over the bosom by means of a safety pin or held in place by hand. It is

dark indigo blue (some dyed with synthetic colours are faded to pale blue or grey) with thin, white weft stripes and broader, coloured bands in the center and at both ends (*pala*), called *sisib*.<sup>28</sup> There are many variations in the arrangement of these bands in terms of width and succession, but they ultimately have to be white, yellow and red.

My surmise according to which these primary four colours might symbolize the four points of the compass, and hence the divine powers as in several other Balinese textile categories<sup>29</sup>, was not confirmed by Sembiran women. Nor did they see any relation between the number and arrangement of the stripes to certain clans, nor to the wearer's hierarchical position within the *daba* group. On the contrary, it is obvious that some old *daba tua* wear undyed greyish shoulder-cloths (Photo 9).



Photo 9: An old *daba tua* at the meeting *sangkapan* in the Village Temple on the day Buda Wage. Photo: Christa Schot 2001.

But sometimes, shoulder-cloths of old women just look grey, because their synthetic colours have completely faded away through sunlight and washing. Young

<sup>28</sup> In old and modern Javanese, *sisib* means "two, one at each end" (personal communication from Rens Heringa).

<sup>29</sup> Hauser-Schäublin, Nabholz-Kartaschoff and Ramseyer 1991:60, 72-73, 78, 92, 114.

*daba* may also wear such faded cloths; however they prefer gaudy colours and feel ashamed of wearing such tired-looking ones.<sup>30</sup>

As a matter of fact, the Sembiran unmarried women's dress code of covering their bare shoulders is extremely unusual for Bali, and we do not know of any other local culture in Bali hiding women's bare shoulders like this. Is it a relic of a much older form of dress that disappeared long ago from other parts of Bali and beyond?<sup>31</sup> *Daba tua* say that their garb corresponds to the form worn in olden times, and that the only modern change was that young girls prefer an often pastel-coloured girdle-cloth or a *streples* and a bra instead of a *sabuk*.<sup>32</sup> Does this rather "puritan" sense of shame and modesty reflect a relic of Islamic influence (see Hauser-Schäublin 2004)?<sup>33</sup> The answer is, as given by most of Sembiran informants, more pragmatic. Until a few decades ago, the *bania* was tightly wrapped around women's chest. The shoulder part above the breast had to remain naked to allow older people to check, if any of the girls was pregnant; pregnancy was thought to be recognised by bluish veins above the breast. In fact, a pregnant girl would immediately lose her *daba* status, and she would be absolutely forbidden to enter a temple, because she was not considered to be pure anymore. In the course of modernization – after women had started wearing bras – naked shoulders were considered shameful. Therefore the *daba* started to wear the *banja* as a shoulder cloth.

After the death of a *daba*, her ceremonial attire was in former times buried with her corpse.<sup>34</sup> Today, it is inherited by her nieces, or sold.<sup>35</sup>

Unmarried boys and men, *teruna*, have, in principle, to fulfil comparable duties and hold gatherings similar to the *daba*. But as many young men have left the village to work elsewhere, the members of the *teruna* association are much less active than

<sup>30</sup> Personal communication from Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin, 2006.

<sup>31</sup> According to Rens Heringa, the style of wrapping both shoulders in a *selendang* or mantle is known in Java as *rimong*; it is typical for the bride costume in Tuban, or for dancers in Jogjakarta. Sumaryoto (1993:35) describes the leading character of a 20<sup>th</sup>-century Javanese novel as wearing *rimong limar katangi*, and comments: "*rimong* is a *selendang* ('long wide shawls worn over the shoulders')"; and finally, moving to more Eastern islands, we may observe that dancers and young noblewomen in Roti use to wear an ikat *selendang* over the shoulders (Breguet 2006:149; Guy 1998:Ill. 119).

To my question as to whether it might possibly correspond to clothing traditions among Sasak Wetu Telu in Lombok, Sven Cederroth answered that he had never seen anything worn like this in North Lombok. However, he continued: "I think that it resembles quite closely the South Lombok festive dress". I have not yet found time to follow up this idea.

<sup>32</sup> Fieldnotes from Christa Schot, 2001.

<sup>33</sup> Like the renunciation of butchering and consuming pigs and of their use in offerings in *agama slem* rituals (Hauser-Schäublin 2004:46-47).

<sup>34</sup> Personal communication from Hauser-Schäublin, 2006

<sup>35</sup> It is the custom in Sembiran to bury a corpse together with a few objects, such as clothing, an umbrella, etc., that might be useful to the deceased person on her way to the upper world (Riemenschneider 2004:84-85; Riemenschneider and Hauser-Schäublin 2006:43), Fieldnotes from Christa Schot, 2001.

the *daba*, and there are only few gatherings.<sup>36</sup> Presumably, *teruna* members also had their special form of attire in former days, yet it is no longer worn. As it is often the case, men depart more easily from old dress codes than the more conservative women. At weddings, however, bridegrooms are clad in a very special outfit, which possibly corresponds to an ancient *teruna* style of clothing that has now disappeared.



Photo 10: Young couple in traditional wedding dress at the entrance to clan temple.

Photo: Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin 1998.

<sup>36</sup> Teruna are for instance supposed to hold gatherings every new moon, Tilem.

During the first parts of their wedding, bride and bridegroom wear festive clothing (*pesaluké*) entirely made of textiles woven in Sembiran (Photo 10).<sup>37</sup>

As a matter of fact, the bride – and we suggest the bridegroom, too – are by means of this traditional garb marking their final departure from unmarried status during this important life cycle ritual.

Thus, the bride’s attire is the *daba* clothing as described above. The groom is wearing a *kamben* of the same type, dark indigo-blue with minute white check design, draped in pleats and knotted in front, and fixed with a belt-like sash (*sabuké*) in bright orange and red shades. Over this, he wears a second broad cloth (*saput*) knotted on his right hip, and wrapped around his body, coming down from his armpits to his calves and with one corner tip drawn over his back and his right shoulder. Its design consists of big dark blue and white checks (*poleng*) with red and yellow stripes at both ends; a narrow decorative band (*tepi*) with supplementary warp patterns is sewn to the upper border.

This apparel is worn during the first parts of the wedding ceremony at a ritual common meal of the couple, and at the so-called “small marriage ritual” (*peragat nik-beakawon*) which symbolically marks their transition from unmarried to married status. Their appearance in bachelor’s garb marks their status as being still members of the organisation of unmarried people. This ceremony takes place in the family temple of the bride’s family, or in a special sacred room (*pengijen*) in their house. On this occasion, the bride asks her ancestors for permission to leave her clan (*dadya*) before joining that of her future husband. The couple continue to wear this garb during a procession through the village during which they bring offerings to different relatives and pray at different places, as also at the “big marriage” ceremony (*peragat gedé –penyar*) in the temple of the bride’s family. After a feast gathering of both families, the married couple dress up in the conventional Balinese festive wardrobe (Riemenschneider 2004:68-69, 106-107; Riemenschneider and Hauser-Schäublin 2006:32-33, Photo. 9-10).

Only couples who both originate from Sembiran would wear this garb of the *daba* and *teruna* organisations, whereas a couple with a bridegroom from Gianyar, or another one with a bride from Sumatra did not. At a purification ritual (*ngotonin – ngeraja singa / ngeraja sewala*, see Hauser-Schäublin this volume) which one couple had to go through before the actual wedding ceremony, the bride did not wear the *daba banja* over her shoulders as usual, but wrapped it as a breast-cloth in the old style, as in Balinese *adat* clothing of the highest level.<sup>38</sup>

In spite of rich field research material on Sembiran in terms of notes and illustrations, I have not met with one single old textile from the village that was used

<sup>37</sup> A full set of attire for a Sembiran bridal couple from around 1950 is kept in the Museum der Kulturen Basel, nos IIC 21399-21403. The hip-cloth of the bride is of an older type with a central section in red silk (see Photo 14). The check design of the bridegroom’s *kamben* is not composed of white but pale blue stripes; the originally white and blue cloth has apparently been refreshed by over-dyeing with indigo (*sembuban*).

<sup>38</sup> Field photographs from Christa Schot, 2001.

in a ritual context, either in offerings or in any decorations for sacred objects or buildings. The only likely exception was a shrine outside the village near the burial-ground. At this Pura Rajapati, or Pura Ngelumbahan, the third purification ritual (*ngelumbab*) for the deceased is performed by his *dadya* 42 days after his demise (Riemenschneider 2004:88-90; Riemenschneider and Hauser-Schäublin 2006:47). This sacred place is the seat of Dewa Rajapati who will accompany the soul of the deceased to his "ancestors' village". The stone seat, where an anthropomorphic figure representing the departed person is deposited, is clad with a very old, faded textile which seems to be a typical Sembiran cloth, possibly a *banja* with the characteristic end stripes (Photo 11).



Photo 11: The stone seat of Dewa Rajapati is clad with a faded Sembiran textile.

Photo: Christian Riemenschneider 2003.

From time immemorial, a special kind of outer hip-cloth used to be woven in Sembiran for the two *kubayan*, heads of the ritual village community of Sukawana (Photo 12), who hold the highest ritual offices (Hauser-Schäublin 2003:167; Reuter 2002:13<sup>th</sup> Ill.,196-197). It is a simple white cotton cloth with thin dark indigo-blue weft and warp stripes, forming a check design, and called *saput kotak-*

*kotak pelung* (“outer hip-cloth with dark blue check pattern”).<sup>39</sup> This kind of textile was never used in Sembiran itself.<sup>40</sup> Under this *saput*, the *kubayan* wear a nearly black *kamben* with a check design of fine white stripes. It looks like the hip-cloths of the *daba* mentioned above, and could have been woven in Sembiran, too. The same type of cloth is used as *kamben* by the wife of a *kubayan* who also holds a high position in accomplishing rituals (Photo 13).

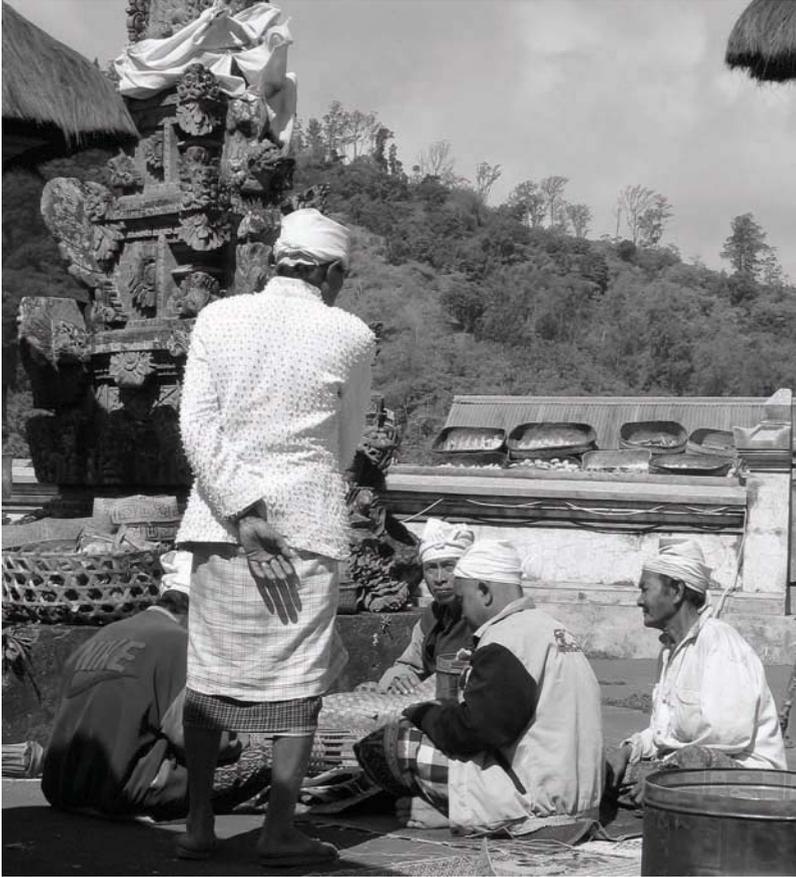


Photo 12: *Kubayan* of Sukawana at a Tilem Karo celebration, wearing a *saput kotak-kotak pelung* from Sembiran over a nearly black *kamben* with check design, probably also from Sembiran. Photo: Jörg Hauser 2004.

<sup>39</sup> This cloth is of exactly the same type as the *saput gotia*, worn in Tenganan Pageringsingan by married women as a kind of “working garb” for performing certain sacrifices and other ritual activities (Ramseyer 1984:208-210, figs. 3, 6-9, 16). These *gotia* as well as other checked cloths have either been manufactured in the village or ordered from a neighbouring village, and were not made on the typical Tenganan loom for weaving *geringsing*, but on a single-level loom (Ramseyer 1984: 203).

<sup>40</sup> Personal communication from Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin, 2006.

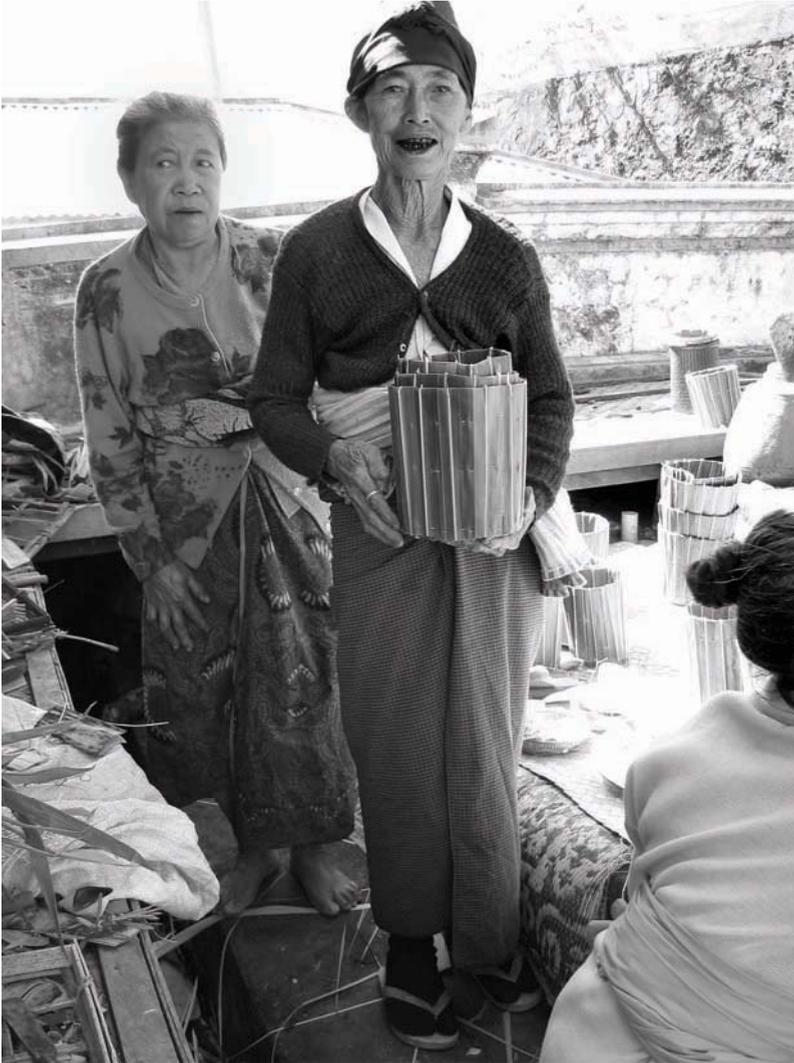


Photo 13: Wife of *kubayan* of Sukawana at a Tilem Karo celebration, wearing an indigo blue *kamben* with white check design, probably manufactured in Sembiran.

Photo: Jörg Hauser 2004.

Of course, Sembiran was not the only village to manufacture cotton cloths in North Bali. Fraser (1908:324) reports that Sembiran was the most important cotton weaving centre, whilst other villages only wove a few cloths for ceremonies such as, for example, tooth filing. Let us just briefly exemplify: Julah and Pacung were important cotton cultivation and weaving centres long ago. Julah still produces plain white cloths nowadays; and in Pacung weaving traditions have sur-

vived up till now and have successfully been revitalized through the activities of the Surya Indigo Project.<sup>41</sup> Weaving in Kubutambahan is confirmed by a *selendang* with a check design of white, yellow, red, olive, blue, and black weft and warp stripes.<sup>42</sup>

### ***Kain kumalo* – A Textile from Outside Sembiran**

In Sembiran, a very particular kind of hip-cloth was formerly used by women as part of their wedding costume or as an outfit for presenting offerings and praying at festivals (*maturin*). It could be considered a luxurious and more colourful variation of the usual ceremonial *kamben* of *daba* and brides (Photo 14).



Photo 14: Old *kain kumalo* from Sembiran, acquired by the Surya Indigo Foundation in Pacung.

Photo: Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin 2004.

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<sup>41</sup> Personal communication from Rens Heringa, 2006.

<sup>42</sup> No. 25992, Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, collected by L.C. Heyting before 1924.

Informants from Sembiran call it *kain kumalo*, or are speaking of *sutra kumalo* ("kumalo silk").<sup>43</sup> Its over-all design has the same structure as the usual *daba* hip-cloth: dark blue or black lateral parts with thin white stripes in the warp and weft, forming a discreet check design; its decorative panel (*kepala*), however, is of a luminous red with narrow white weft stripes. This *kepala* may be set in the center of the cloth, but in most cases it is shifted towards one end. This led to the fairly common assertion that *kain kumalo* with a central *kepala* were associated with male dress, the ones with an asymmetrically placed *kepala* with female dress. These hip-cloths are always composed of two webs (from 61 to 72 cm wide), sewn together to achieve a total width (or height when worn, respectively) of about 140 cm. The basic material is cotton; but the extremely fine white warp and weft stripes of often only single pairs of threads consist of undyed ramie, as on the Kintamani breast-cloth mentioned below (p.94). Outside Bali, this feature of fine lines of only single pairs of warp threads of ramie occurs on old Minangkabau textiles from Sumatra (Summerfield 1999:203-204).<sup>44</sup> The red weft of the *kepala* is a rather coarse, only slightly twisted mulberry silk yarn, dyed with lac-dye<sup>45</sup>, and in more modest forms a most probably *mengkudu*-dyed cotton thread (p.78). Some simpler models have no silk, being entirely woven from cotton.

As a matter of fact, we will have to consider three new components in our study, namely silk, ramie, and the dyestuff lac.

There is apparently "no evidence for silk weaving in Bali during the 9-14<sup>th</sup> centuries, although it is likely that silk textiles reached the island through trade" (Stuart-Fox 1993:90). In pre-colonial and colonial Bali, no silk was cultivated in Bali itself.<sup>46</sup> This precious raw material was essentially imported from China, usually

<sup>43</sup> One example could be acquired by Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin for the collection of the Museum der Kulturen Basel, no. IIc 21400, see note 37.

<sup>44</sup> Among the Minangkabau, this material is called *ramin*. Bast fibers of *Boehmeria nivea* or another *Boehmeria* species are not spun, but their ends are joined by knotting or twisting the ends of the fibers (Summerfield 1999: ills. 8.6 and 8.7; Personal communication from Summerfield, 2006). This extremely fine yarn is only found on Minangkabau textiles that are at least one hundred years old.

<sup>45</sup> Degummed mulberry silk *Bombyx mori* L. and the dyestuff lac from *Kerria lacca* (*Kerria* 1872) have been analyzed in a similar textile (Museum der Kulturen Basel, no IIc 14027) by the Koninklijk Instituut voor het Kunstpatrimonium, Brussel, 2003; the use of lac-dye has also been confirmed on the piece from Sembiran (Museum der Kulturen Basel, no. IIc 21400) by Dr. Harald Böhmer and Dr. Recep Karadag, Marmara University Istanbul.

<sup>46</sup> Only the province of Aceh in North Sumatra and to a lesser extent Lampung in South Sumatra and later South Sulawesi produced silk from the 16th to the 19th centuries. It might be possible that, because of intensive inter-island connections of North Bali, the material used in Buleleng was imported from Sumatra (see Salmon 2005; Nevermann 1938:43).

Recently, Georges Breguet was told by members of a Brahmin *griya* in Budakeling, that silk worms had been reared there up to the 1970s; one member remembered having helped her mother to unwind silk from cocoons when she was a child.

The processing of silk in Bali and Lombok has been described in detail by Jasper en Pirngadie (1912:47-48).

through Chinese traders.<sup>47</sup> That this was the case in North Bali, we learn for instance from Chinkak, the Chinese master of a Siamese merchant junk, who sailed from Bangkok via Singapore to Buleleng in 1845-46, and who wrote a detailed report about trading and living conditions in North Bali. Among the goods for exchange trade, he carried raw silk, silk cloths and gold thread (Graves and Kaset-siri 1969:83, 95, 102). According to the Dutchman Van Eck (1880:20), import goods in the main port of Pabejan Boeleleng in 1873 included considerable amounts of coarse raw silk, gold leaf and gold thread. These luxury items were in demand among aristocratic circles. In general, silk was considered to be a sign of prestige for the families of the royal court who claimed the exclusive right to weave and use silk clothing. Let us again refer to Chinkak's report on his official visits; he meticulously described how local aristocrats and high officials in Buleleng were dressed in silk (Graves and Kaset-siri 1969:89-98).

Ramie (*Boehmeria nivea* Gaudich) is a typical textile raw material in China, Formosa and the Philippines.<sup>48</sup> A report on an expedition of the Ming emperors to the kingdom of Majapahit mentions ramie among the goods brought from China (Yoshimoto 1988:175). According to Bally (1957:10), it is highly probable that the Chinese brought the ramie plant to Indonesia.<sup>49</sup> The Chinese ramie is known as "white ramie", or "China grass". There are, however, also indigenous kinds of *Boehmeria* in India and Southeast Asia. They belong to several forms of so-called "green ramie" (*Boehmeria tenacissima* or *Boehmeria utilis*, Indian name: *rhea*) which appear to be better suited to tropical conditions. *Boehmeria sanguinea* Hassk., for instance, was used for knotting fisher nets and weaving cloths in Java (Heyne 1927:585-586; Junghuhn 1842-54 I:175). "Green ramie" grows wild or is cultivated on a small scale in Bali, too, where it is sometimes called *bagu*.<sup>50</sup> It is possible

<sup>47</sup> Fraser 1908:325, 327; Nevermann 1938:44.

<sup>48</sup> Bally 1957:4, 6, 13-14.

<sup>49</sup> Jasper en Pirngadie 1912:52-53; Nevermann 1938:23-24; Van Bloemen Waanders 1882. As early as in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the cultivation of *Boehmeria nivea* was fostered in Java by the Dutch for export to the Netherlands. During the Japanese occupation, the cultivation of ramie was particularly emphasised in Java and Sumatra (Bally 1957:10).

<sup>50</sup> There seems to be some confusion as to the translation or interpretation of the term *bagu*. The dictionary Kamus Bali-Indonesia edited by I Wayan Warna (1978) translates the word *bagu* as "*serat*" (fiber), "*rami*" (ramie), the Kamus Bahasa Bali by Sri Reshi Anandakusuma (1986) as "rope of rice straw". According to informants in Mungsahan and Catur (1988), it means ramie. However, it may also be used for other bast fibers, in Sembiran for instance for pineapple fibers (information from the Kelian Desa in 1988). Van der Tuuk (v. 4, p. 1044) explains *bagu* as "vezels in't blad v.d. ananas, in den bast v. versch. bomen of planten", thus pineapple fiber, too, or bast fiber of other trees and plants. Finally, Susi Johnston informed me that "*bagu* or *bagoe* or *bago* are different terms in Balinese, Javanese, Kawi, and various other local languages used on other islands for the *melinjo* or *belinjo* tree (*Gnetum gnemon* L.)", and that the bast fibers of this tree are used in Bali to manufacture ropes, strings for nets, and paper. *Gnetum* is also present in Java and serves for the manufacture of ropes and paper (Junghuhn 1842-1854:175; Jasper en Pirngadie 1912:52; Heyne 1927:121-122). However microscopic analysis of the core fibers of the gold thread mentioned below (p. 19-20) confirms that they are ramie, not *Gnetum*.

that Balinese used their own ramie for weaving instead of buying it from outside.<sup>51</sup> In any case, ramie appears only rarely in Balinese fabrics, as for instance in a particularly interesting ceremonial breast-cloth which was attributed by its former owner to Sembiran, or some village in the Kintamani region.<sup>52</sup> This hand-spun cotton fabric has a rather loose structure of varying density; its check design is formed by single pairs of undyed ramie threads in the warp and weft, and thick gold threads with a ramie core in the weft. Outside Bali, this feature of fine lines of only single pairs of warp threads of *Boehmeria nivea* occurs on old Minangkabau textiles from Sumatra (Summerfield 1999:203-204).<sup>53</sup>

Lac-dye<sup>54</sup> is the product of different kind of lac insects of the family of *Lacciferidae*; the most frequent species used is *Laccifer lacca* Kerr. (synonym *Coccus lacca*). Their females produce a resinous secretion on twigs of host trees. These encrustations include the red colour lac-dye contained in the female insects, and a resinous substance used for producing lacquer (shellac). Lac is a mordant dye which acts in combination with alum and sour constituents (tamarind, citrus fruits, or alike). It produces a cool red with a slightly bluish hue; by mixing with or dyeing over other colours, or by using another combination of mordants, all kind of shades from warm red tones to dark purple or violet can be obtained.

Dyeing with lac, mainly on silk, was wide-spread throughout India, Continental South-East Asia (in particular in Thailand, Burma) and the west of the South-East Asian archipelago; since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it has been gradually supplanted by cochineal and synthetic dyestuffs.

In Indonesia, lac is known under the name of *blendok trembalo* in Java, or *ambalau* in Sumatra (Jasper en Pirngadie 1912:73-75), where it was mainly used for dyeing red silk. In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, an indigenous, non-domesticated form of lac (*Carteria lacca* Kerr) used to be collected in the forests of these islands.<sup>55</sup> Raffles (1817, I:170) reports: "Stic-lac, used in dyeing, is procured in many parts of Java, and can easily be obtained in a quantity sufficient to meet

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<sup>51</sup> It is very difficult to determine exactly the different types of the genus *Boehmeria*. Even Summerfield (1999:205-206) in his detailed study of the use of ramie among the Minangkabau, had to refer to future analyses to be made by Sumatran botanists.

<sup>52</sup> No. IIC 20689, Museum der Kulturen Basel.

<sup>53</sup> Among the Minangkabau, this material is called *ramin*. Bast fibers of *Boehmeria nivea* or another *Boehmeria* species are not spun, but their ends are joined by knotting or end-twisting (Summerfield 1999: ills. 8.6 and 8.7; personal communication from John Summerfield, 2006). This extremely fine yarn is only found on Minangkabau textiles that are at least one hundred years old.

<sup>54</sup> For detailed information on lac-dye see Böhmer 2002:208-209; Bühler 1948:2787; Gittinger 1992:28, 245; Kajitani 1980:317; Mohanty 1987:56, 75, 82.

<sup>55</sup> Salmon 2005:10, following Jules Itier: Journal d'un voyage en Chine en 1843, 1844, 1845, 1846. Paris 1848-53:36.

the demand.” The best quality, however, was cultivated lac from Burma, particularly the one imported from Pegu.<sup>56</sup>

We have no information on possible lac cultivation for Bali, but lac-dyed silk yarn frequently appears in early *songket* fabrics with beautiful patterns worked in gold and silver thread. The weavers of Sembiran, however, had never ever heard of such a dye-stuff.

We came across several textiles similar to the *kain kumalo* type of Sembiran. They are attributed to different regions of Bali<sup>57</sup>, and were used as hip-cloths for women and as over-hip-cloths (*saput*) for men. The Sembiran piece mentioned above was worn as a bridal hip-cloth and may be also worn as part of the *daba garb*. Sembiran informants, however, insisted that this was long ago; the weaver Ni Ketut Sri Ngentek reported she had bought, and not woven herself, such a *kamben* at the request of her ancestors; other women confirmed they had done so as well. Older informants added that women sometimes cut out the red panel as they felt embarrassed to wear it over their buttocks<sup>58</sup>; this remark expresses the same sense of modesty as mentioned above (p.85). The black and red cloths could also be used in a ritual context: a textile of this type was for instance laid out, together with a sacred *cepuk* cloth and white and yellow fabric, on the occasion of a purification ritual of a family temple in Kerambitan (Tabanan) in order to create a pure site for symbols representing ancestors.

We have no evidence for any of the samples as to where they might have been woven, with one very interesting exception: both weavers in Sembiran insisted that such fabrics had never been manufactured in their own village, but had been bought from Lombok dealers from Timbali, a village near Gretek and Tembok near the border between Buleleng and Karangasem. One of them incidentally remarked that the pattern was Sasak.

Another fact points towards such a possible relation with Lombok: The general Balinese appellation for these textiles is *kain sara*<sup>59</sup>, but other names were

<sup>56</sup> Heyd 1936:613 (Appendix); Jasper en Pirngadie 1912:76, following G.P. Rouffaer: Catalogus der tentoonstelling van Oost-Indische weefsels, 's Gravenhage 1901 give sample descriptions of the dyeing methods with lac.

<sup>57</sup> For instance, nos. IIC 14027, 14028, 14067, 14068, 14088 in the Museum der Kulturen Basel collected by Alfred Bühler before 1949 in South Bali (without any reference to precise provenance) and IIC 21400 acquired in Sembiran (see note 37); nos. 25645 and 25646 in the Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, collection L.C. Heyting 1924, attributed to Nusa Penida, and no 25973 from Buleleng with prominent red, blue and white weft stripes in the side parts, which is referred to by the collector as “*kémaloé*”; nos. 1987.1082 and 1083 in the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra, dated 1900-1925, collection Mary and Michael Abbott 1987; one example coming directly from Sembiran in the collection of the Surya Indigo Project in Pacung; and some more in private collections in Leiden (acquired in Singaraja) and in the US.

<sup>58</sup> Personal communication from Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin, 2004 and 2006.

<sup>59</sup> Personal communication from David Stuart-Fox, 2006: for *sara*, Van der Tuuk (v. 3, p. 51) gives different meaning derived from the Sanskrit and Old Javanese, but also: “bal. weefsel, halfroode zijde (z. kapala) en halfzwart; kamben sara sama”.

heard in different places, for instance *belasbas kemalu* in Padangkerta, and *kain kumalo* in Sembiran. Informants there admitted that this word was not Balinese; its meaning was incomprehensible to them.<sup>60</sup> We shall follow up this designation below.

As a matter of fact, we have found several examples of the same type of cloth in Dutch museum collections and elsewhere which originate from Lombok.<sup>61</sup> The Wereldmuseum Rotterdam has a few very interesting old textiles showing exactly the same basic checked pattern structure with a central panel and two contrasting lateral parts. They may be executed in other colours.<sup>62</sup>

Sometimes, centre and side panels have the same basic colour all over, and the contrast is formed only by a different size and arrangement of the checks.<sup>63</sup> By the end of the 1980s, shoulder and hip cloths with thin white lines forming a check design on a plain blue, or red ground were still worn as everyday clothing by Sasak Telu men in Central Lombok villages (Photo 15).

Finally, there is an example from the village of Suela in East Lombok in the Leiden museum, the pattern structure of which is exactly similar to the Sembiran piece described above (Photo14), but with opposite base colours: the central panel is dark indigo blue whilst the side parts are red.<sup>64</sup>

This type of fabric has been manufactured up to now in Lombok. On a short exploration trip in Lombok in 1988, we had the opportunity to see a woman in Central Lombok weaving such hip-cloths from mercerized cotton, with a pinkish-violet center panel. We acquired an example in Sukarara, which was called *tapuk kemalu* (*tapuk* is the Sasak word for "hip-cloth")<sup>65</sup> and we came across Sasak women from the village Ujung near Kuta wearing such *tapuk kemalu* at a wedding.

<sup>60</sup> They also spoke of *sutra kumalo*, which could be a reference to the lac-dyed red parts. According to Rens Heringa, the word *kemalo* can be translated as "resin" or "lacquered", which might be related to the dyestuff lac. This word is used in Java, but it is not of Javanese origin. Van der Tuuk (v. 2, p. 344) explains the word *kamalo* as "jav., om garen te verven", and gives the example "*sutra kamalo*" without further explanation (Personal communication from David Stuart-Fox, 2006).

<sup>61</sup> No. 2407.269 from the village of Suela in East Lombok, in the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde Leiden, acquired from Kleiweg de Zwaan in 1939; no. 74519 in the Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, a bridal cloth, most probably woven in Sukarara, Central Lombok, collected by C. Hagoort, 2000, and several examples called *kemalu* at a dealer's in Ampenan (1988), which, according to him, had been worn in Sembalun as part of the festive dress, either as *kamben*, or one half of it as *selendang*.

<sup>62</sup> For instance no 2153, collected by E. van Rijckevorsel before 1884, has thin cotton warp and weft stripes in white, yellow, green, blue and black colour and broader silk weft stripes on an overall red cotton base.

<sup>63</sup> For instance no. 27182 from Sasak Wetu Telu in Middle Lombok, collected by L.C.Heyting before 1924, is an extremely finely woven piece with an overall blue ground with thin white lines forming the check design. Its name, according to Heyting is *kemali kain ragi kamok*, and it was particularly worn at festivals and at common big feasts.

<sup>64</sup> No. 2407.271 from the village of Suela in East Lombok, in the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde Leiden, acquired from Kleiweg de Zwaan in 1939.

<sup>65</sup> No. IIC 20383, Museum der Kulturen Basel.

Also among Sasak in Lombok, we frequently met with different denominations bearing a resemblance to the word *kumalo*, which was used by Sembiran weavers, but not understood by them.



Photo 15: Young Sasak Wetu Telu man in everyday clothing. Central Lombok, village Lentok. Photo: M.L. Nabholz-Kartaschoff 1988.

This seems obvious for the Sasak name tapuk kemalu just mentioned above.<sup>66</sup> The word kemali or kēmalé is designating “a sacred place”, or a “sacred cloth”, or a “sacred object or stone”.<sup>67</sup> Paul Wirz (1931:6,43-45) gives the variant kamáli or kambáli to magic cotton fabrics of the Sasak in Lombok, equating them to sacred Balinese babáli or wángsul cloths.

<sup>66</sup> According to personal communication from Sven Cederroth, 2006 “the word *kemalu* could be *kemaliq* which translates approximately as 'sacred' and which is the word used for the sacred cloths, the *umbaq kombong* in Bayan which are said to collectively belong to the category of *kain kemaliq*. The Sasak language has several dialects and the language spoken in South Lombok is quite different from *bahasa* Bayan, the language spoken in the North. Maybe *kemalu* is the South Lombok equivalent of the Bayan word *kemaliq* (the q is a glottal stop and is not pronounced)”.

<sup>67</sup> See Haar 1925:48, 51; Paauw 1923:184-185; Damsté 1923:177.

All these facts corroborate my presumption that the *kain kumalo* used in Sembiran and in other places in Bali are actually of Lombok origin, or at least that they have been manufactured in Bali under strong Lombok influence. Certainly, in common with checked cloths on a plain ground, they clearly follow the same basic design concept, which was probably wide-spread on both islands once upon a time.

### **“*Kain Sembiran*” – A Label?**

Many Balinese textile collections include fabrics usually called “*kain Sembiran*” by museum experts, collectors, and dealers.<sup>68</sup> We shall discuss this name later. These hip-wrappers have a basic design structure similar to the *kain kumalo*: a prominently decorated panel (*kepala*) between two lateral parts (*badan*) with narrow weft stripes of two or three shots each. Their colour combination is generally reduced to brick or rusty red, white and dark blue, or to rusty red, white, yellow and green, but it may be enriched with more colours and single metal threads. The much thinner, sometimes hardly visible warp threads are of white, red, green and blue shades. The decorated panel is usually more or less placed in the centre of the cloth; in the type with floral patterns (see below), it is often shifted sideways to one end, and small bands repeat part of its central side borders at both ends. The length of these fabrics goes from 163 to 238 cm; their width is relatively large (100

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<sup>68</sup> Museum der Kulturen Basel: no. IIC 14954, from Lombok or Bali, collected by L. Langewis before 1956, nos. IIC 15389 and 15390, from Lombok, collected by L. Langewis before 1959, no. IIC 15969, from Batur region, collected by M.L.J. Lemaire before 1966 (Hauser-Schäublin, Nabholz-Kartaschoff and Ramseyer 1991:Ill. 1.3), no. IIC 17582, from Buleleng, collected by U. Ramseyer in Klungkung from a person from Singaraja before 1974

Collection Georges Breguet, Geneva: nos. Bali-1-018 and 019 (Breguet 2006: cat.no. 58 and 59)

Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum Köln: no 24363, acquired in Buleleng by Thomann-Gillis 1907/1908 (Khan Majllis 1984:Kat. 341)

Wereldmuseum Rotterdam: nos. 25988, 25989, 25991, 49559, from Buleleng, collected by L.C. Heyting before 1924, no. 27821, from Nusa Penida, collected by E. Jacobson, before 1931, no. 60856, from Buleleng, acquired from J. Hartman, 1970s

Museum of Fine Arts Boston: no. 25.64 (no precise data at hand)

Asian Civilisations Museum Singapore: one example with figurative design (inventory number not at hand), acquired from a dealer in Jakarta end of 1990s

National Gallery of Australia Canberra: nos. 1990.1266-1269, collected by Michael and Mary Abbott, acquired by them from dealers in Bali before 1990; nos. 2000.846-847, former collection Robert Holmgren and Anita Spertus (original nos. I-828 and I-827), acquired by them from dealers in Bali in 1987

UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History Los Angeles (UCLA): no. X61.28, collected by Katharine Mershon in Bali, 1930es, no. LX7 4.279, collected by Miguel Covarrubis in Bali, 1930s

Collection Robert Holmgren and Anita Spertus, no I 936, acquired in Bali, 1980s

Private Collections in Germany and the US

This list is not exhaustive.

to 108 cm for the ones with geometric patterns, 88 to 106 for the floral ones). All originals available for study were woven in one web, and were never composed of two webs sewn together. Thus, they must have been manufactured on a larger loom than the Sembiran loom described above.

There are two quite different types of decoration for the dominant *kepala*: The first group is characterized by a combination of weft ikat stripes and supplementary weft bands with geometrical motifs such as small diamonds, complicated rhomboid forms, crosses, arrow-heads, stars, stylised blossoms, etc. (Photo 16)-



Photo 16: “*Kain Sembiran*” of geometric style with weft ikat stripes, Lombok. Museum der Kulturen Basel no. 15389. Acquired from L. Langewis 1960 (before in an old Dutch collection).

Some of the white-and-red, white-and-blue, or white-and-red-and-blue ikat designs with elongated lozenges and crosses are elaborated with greatest precision, whilst others appear quite blurred. We know only of one single example with anthropomorphic motifs, rows of small, stylized human figures in supplementary weft technique, placed in between the usual ikat stripes.<sup>69</sup>

The second group has no ikat decoration; its supplementary weft patterns are much more elaborate, and in an ornamental floral style (Photo 17).

They are slightly reminiscent of designs of courtly silk *songket* fabrics worked with gold or silver threads; as a matter of fact, they look like rough interpretations of the same design concept. They are formed of two opposite rows of elegant shrubs, framing a grid-like structure of lozenges with stylised blossoms, enclosed by two bands with artistically designed lozenge-like motifs.

<sup>69</sup> Collection of Asian Civilisations Museum Singapore (see note 68).

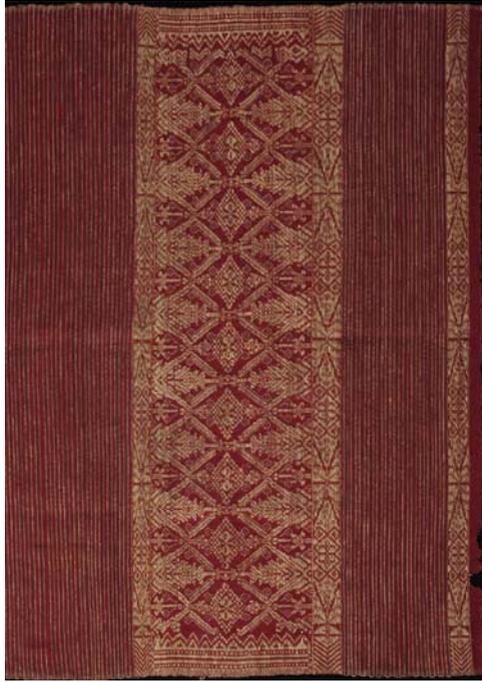


Photo 17: “*Kain Sembiran*” of floral style, Buleleng (Bali) or Lombok. Museum der Kulturen Basel no. IIC 17582. Collected by Urs Ramseyer, acquired in Klunglung from a person of Singaraja 1974.

It is striking that both groups show relatively few differences with respect to their basic design idea and patterns. Especially in the second group, the decoration of the central panel is practically always the same, with some minor variations. We are, therefore, inclined to believe that they might have been produced in two separate weaving centers, or at least have been influenced by two such dominant centers.

The most characteristic feature of these “*kain Sembiran*” is the use of a coarse metal thread as supplementary weft in the central panel or as single shots in the lateral parts. Narrow strips of paper, coated with gold leaf with quite a high content of silver are wrapped Z-wise around a rather thick core. This core is undyed, and was identified on many samples as ramie, *Boehmeria nivea* Gaudich (p.93).<sup>70</sup> The wrapping is rather loose with intervals in between the windings through which the core is visible. The yarn is very brittle; often the golden paper strips are totally worn out, so that only the core remains intact. Elsewhere, the formerly shiny gold

<sup>70</sup> In one example, hemp (*Cannabis sativa*) was identified by the Koninklijk Instituut voor het Kunstpatrimonium, Brussels, 2003.

leaf has corroded to grey or to a blackish colour, or is completely rubbed off; sometimes just tiny spots of metal stratum and remnants of a red or orange bolus are left on the remaining paper base.

This coarse gold thread also appears on narrow girdle-like cloths with supplementary weft designs which look like the stylised blossom patterns of "*kain Sembiran*".<sup>71</sup> In ancient times, they were even used in Sembiran, as part of the wedding garb (*pesaluk*), as a breast cloth (*anteng*) when carrying offerings at festivals, or as a kind of scarf (*panja selimbag*) worn diagonally on the occasion of *daba* gatherings.<sup>72</sup> This metal yarn is also to be found as decorative warp stripes in another girdle of very great age (150 years or more)<sup>73</sup>, in the Kintamani breast-cloth mentioned above (p.94), in the end parts of several shoulder-cloths collected in South Bali.<sup>74</sup> And it appears again on rare examples of *geringsing* textiles, the end part patterns of which had been over-embroidered.<sup>75</sup> Those *geringsing* were usually not used in Tenganan itself, but were gifts or tributes given away to royal courts like Klungkung<sup>76</sup>, Karangasem or Buleleng, and were most probably enriched with gold thread embroidery there; one weaver in Tenganan remembered that this was a speciality of Buleleng.

In principle, metal yarn made of gilded paper strips wrapped around a white or yellow silk core is regarded as a typical Chinese material, but usually it is of much finer quality.<sup>77</sup> According to Jasper en Pirngadie (1912:22-23), all metal threads used in Indonesia were imported. They were of two types, metal wire wrapped

<sup>71</sup> For instance Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde Leiden, no. 300.172, exhibited in the Paris World's Fair 1878; Museum der Kulturen no. Ilc 2432, collected by Paul Wirz in Bali, before 1925; or National Gallery of Australia Canberra: nos. 1990.1270-1273, collected by Michael and Mary Abott, acquired from dealers in Bali before 1990.

<sup>72</sup> Personal communication from Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin, 2004.

<sup>73</sup> Collection Georges Breguet, Geneva: no. Bali-2-086, from a village of Balinese emigrants in Lampung, South Sumatra, who left Bali in the 1950s or 60s.

<sup>74</sup> Museum der Kulturen Basel, nos. 14076, 14098-14100.

<sup>75</sup> Brigitte Majlis drew my attention to this fact.

<sup>76</sup> Breguet 2006: cat. 60.

<sup>77</sup> Many different techniques have been developed to produce elastic metal thread for weaving and embroidering:

hammered and cut strips of metal foil (Ancient Egypt, Persia); fine metal wire (India); cut strips of leather, parchment, animal gut coated with gold- or silver-leaf (Orient, Europe); cut strips of paper coated with gold- or silver-leaf (China); solid metal strips, or wire wound in spirals around a silk, linen or cotton core (India, Middle East, Europe); cut metal-coated strips of leather and animal gut wrapped around a core (Near East, Spain); cut metal-coated strips of paper wrapped around a core (China).

According to Jolly (2002:184) paper strips coated with gold leaf around a yellow silk core, or with silver leaf around a white one, were used in China and in Central Asia since as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

Metals used are basically gold, silver, copper, brass, or alloys. Metal strips and wires often have an extremely thin outer stratum of precious metal only. The coat of gold- or silver-leaf is usually applied to the support with a layer of red or white bolus as an adhesive under it (Járó 1996:35-36; Peter 2006; Watt and Wardwell 1997:142, 150, 152, 188).

around a core, most probably originating from India, and metal-coated paper strips wrapped around a core, from China. William Marsden's list of foreign goods in circulation in Sumatra in the 1770s (p.70) includes coarse silks and metallic thread from China (Guy 1998:68). The Minangkabau in Sumatra used both kinds in weaving, metallic strips as well as gilded paper strips, wrapped around a core (Summerfield 1999:203; Indictor 1999:226-231; Hanssen 2000:44-45), and used the expression *benang Macao* for metal thread.<sup>78</sup>

In Bali, gold thread was acquired through dealers from Singapore, as reported by Captain Chinkak in 1845 (p.93). Thanks to a French silk ribbon manufacturer, Isidore Hedde, we learn that in 1844, thread wrapped with gold-leaf coated paper strips imported from China was woven into "*kaen sonquet?*" (*kain songket*) in a big Singapore workshop; he considered this yarn to be of much inferior quality than European gold thread (Salmon 2005:9). In Dutch colonial times, the high valued metal threads came from Singapore via Buleleng to Klungkung, on boats that had transported pigs from Buleleng to Singapore before.<sup>79</sup> Not all of this paper-strip wrapped material is of such coarse quality as that used in "*kain Sembiran*". Fine silk *songkets* from the Puri Badung (Denpasar) from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century are woven with extremely fine gold and silver threads with gold-leaf-coated paper strips wrapped around a silk core.<sup>80</sup>

One last typical technical detail has to be mentioned: quite often, single gold thread wefts in the lateral parts are accompanied by a white cotton thread in the same shot in order to increase their protruding effect. According to the labels of L.C. Heyting on several "*kain Sembiran*" in the Rotterdam collection, this is called *renteng*<sup>81</sup>; Sembiran weavers mentioned this term in connection with shoulder-cloths with gold thread from Lombok (Photo 18).

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<sup>78</sup> This points to the fact that they probably bought this material through traders from this important Portuguese trading post on the Southern coast of China. Indictor (1999:226-227), however, maintains that *benang Macao* consists of solid metal strips wrapped around a core, and is thus not of Chinese, but rather of Indian, Persian or European origin, possibly traded through Macao. Diana Collins has suggested that this material was possibly produced in Kanton.

<sup>79</sup> Personal communication from Georges Breguet, 2006.

<sup>80</sup> Confiscated by the Dutch after the *Puputan* War of 1906 and now in the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde in Leiden.

<sup>81</sup> According to Rens Heringa, the term *renteng* used in Java means "two or more in front or behind each other", which seems appropriate for the technique of entering two threads together in one shot.



Photo 18: Ceremonial *selendang*, Lombok. Museum der Kulturen Basel no. IIc 15395. Acquired from L. Langewis 1960 (before in an old Dutch collection).

But where did this coarse gold thread with a ramie core come from? None of several competent experts has ever met with such a material, neither in Indonesia, nor in China, nor in Japan, nor elsewhere. Could it, eventually, have been manufactured locally as a cheaper substitute for the expensive imported material? There are good reasons to believe this. Compared to Chinese material, the thread's quality is quite poor. One could imagine that the local producers used imported gilded paper sheets which they cut up in narrow strips<sup>82</sup> to wrap around the ramie core. Gold- and silver leaf had been imported from China, too, and Balinese craftsmen were actually familiar with processing gold-leaf on textiles (*kain perada*), leather and wood. Or was it from Lombok? Sembiran weavers took the gold thread in several shoulder-cloths collected in South Bali (see note 74), and also in a Lombok shoulder-cloth (Photo 18), to be typically Sasak and slem (see note 7), and mentioned at the same time Chinese traders in the village of Bondalem near Tejakula who were evidently specialized in selling such yarns. China, Bali, Lombok, or perhaps Sumatra? Stimulated by a remark made by Brigitte Majlis shortly before

<sup>82</sup> This is how they proceeded in China and Japan (Personal communication from Alan Kennedy, 2006).

printing of this article, I discovered the same coarse gold thread with a ramie core on several very old ceremonial women's sarongs (*tapis*) and ship-cloth (*palepai*) from the region of Lampung in South Sumatra. This important fact opens up a new possible interpretation, which needs to be followed up in the future.

There is very little information available about what "*kain Sembiran*" were actually used for. Their size and basic design structure give us reason to assume that they were worn as hip-cloths on festive and ritual occasions. This is supported by the occasioned labels of L.C. Heyting on his collected samples (see note 68) on which he wrote "temple- en offerkleed".

As in the case of *kain kumalo* (p.91), it is doubtful whether the use of the two different types was gender-specific. Those decorated with floral motifs are generally smaller. One might infer that this type was rather worn by women - a asymmetrically placed *kepala* would be better suited to wrap the cloth around their body - whilst a centred arrangement might be preferred by men who knot their hip-cloth more or less symmetrically. The weaver Ni Wayan Landri from Sembiran added that such fabrics could have been worn by *baris perisi* dancers.<sup>83</sup>

Let us state from the very beginning, that the denomination "*kain Sembiran*" never appears in connection with samples in old museum collections (Basel, Neuchâtel Köln, Rotterdam, Los Angeles); it was only mentioned for pieces collected from the 1970s onwards when collecting Indonesian textiles became extremely popular. None of the many "*kain Sembiran*" known to us was acquired in Sembiran itself. Some were said to come from Buleleng, others were purchased without any detailed information on provenance, some were said to come from Lombok, and we know of two Lombok dealers who offered such pieces of Lombok origin for sale. Weavers in the village unanimously stated that these fabrics were not manufactured in Sembiran. One of them assumed, it might be Sasak, another added that dealers from Buleleng were selling such fabrics and commented: "this is a very expensive cloth".

I suspect this kind of "fashion designation" was propagated relatively late by dealers. Stamping them with the provenance "Sembiran", which was considered a Bali Aga village made them more interesting for their clients and gave them a certain aura of mystery.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>83</sup> According to Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin, different forms of ritual *baris* dances are still performed by men in Julah and in Sembiran on the occasion of temple festivals. They symbolize the eternal battle between Good and Evil. Nowadays the dancers' costumes only include relatively new fabrics. In the *baris perisi* the dancers represent particular kinds of soldiers (*praejurit*).

<sup>84</sup> This may be compared with the once-maintained myth that all *cepuk* cloths came from Nusa Penida (many in fact are from Tabanan and Buleleng, see Hauser-Schäublin, Nabholz-Kartaschoff and Ramseyer 1991:114).



Photo 19: *Anak néné* (detail), North Lombok, Sembalun or East Lombok, Masbagik area. Museum der Kulturen Basel no. IIC 21383, 19<sup>th</sup> century, acquired from A. Flick 1997.

But where do they actually come from, Bali or Lombok?

Summing up all the data given on provenance for examples collected before the 1970s and analyzing the different complementary information available, we find that a provenance from Lombok prevails for at least the first group. This corresponds to the fact that their designs have remarkable counterparts in Lombok textiles. Their supplementary weft decoration is very much like similar patterns on certain *kain usap*<sup>85</sup> from Sasak in North Lombok, and in shoulder-cloths of the type illustrated (Photo 18), which by the way also shows the *renteng* effect (p.102).<sup>86</sup>

<sup>85</sup> *Usap* are small square ceremonial cloths with purely geometrical patterns, either repeated all-over or arranged in bands. They are used as ceremonial head-cloths for women, as ritual cover over betel chewing ingredients, and in life cycle rituals (Cederroth 1993:305, 311). For comparison see Museum der Kulturen Basel, nos. IIC 18846, 18848, 18853, and Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde Leiden, nos. 2407.230, 231, 252; for illustrations see for instance Maxwell 1990:Ill.246).

<sup>86</sup> Let us add that the weaver Ni Ketut Sri Ngentek from Sembiran identified this shoulder-cloth as Sasak (*slem*) and said that such fabrics were brought by Muslim Lombok traders over Padangbai up to her village. They could be used there by women on the occasion of temple festivals.

As regards the anthropomorphic figures on one single "*kain Sembiran*" (note 69) which are not at all Balinese in style, there is a certain resemblance to human figures on *musla* or *pesujutan* fabrics<sup>87</sup>, also from North Lombok. And exactly the same type of weft ikat designs may be found in *anak nene* textiles (Photo 19), another kind of very rare old ritual cloth from the Sasak Wetu Telu in North and East Lombok.<sup>88</sup>

Sven Cederroth, the best expert for Sasak Wetu Telu in North Lombok never saw any cloth similar to "*kain Sembiran*" but suggested it could possibly come from Sembalun. Also the narrow fabrics with the same gold thread mentioned above would resemble similar girdles from the same area.

Finally, all these arguments convinced me that the "*kain Sembiran*" with geometrically patterned bands and weft ikat stripes might originate from Lombok.

The case is different for the second group. Their technical features and the design concept is similar to the first group, but the stylized floral patterns speak a totally different language, somewhat reminiscent of Buleleng silk *songket* fabrics. A letter dated June 6, 1924 from L.C. Heyting to J.W. Noyhuys, then director of the Rotterdam museum, might enlighten this question of provenance.<sup>89</sup> He wrote in connection with Balinese influence on ikat weaving in Lombok:

*"Een plaatselijk onderzoek geeft dikwijls allerlei verrassingen. Zoo keek ik vreemd op toen ik te Pengastoelan, een der weefcentre van Boeleleng, opmerkte, dat de patronen der ikatweefsels in zijde en halfzijde door Mohammedaansch-Balische vrouwen ontworpen worden, in hoofdzaak althans, en ook het ikatten. Het eigenlijke weven geschiedt meest tegen betaling door Hindoe-Balische vrouwen, die goedkoopere arbeidskrachten zijn.*

*De Mohammedaansche Baliërs verhandelen deze ikatweefsels. Zoo koopt Fatima wel van deze weefsels en heeft dan van uit Singaradja (Boeleleng) de uitvoer plaats. Bij beschouwing van de patronen der te Singaradja gekochte inslag-ikats heeft man dus rekening*

<sup>87</sup> *Musla*, or *pesujutan*, is a long, rectangular cotton cloth with supplementary weft patterns at both ends. It is one of the most sacred textiles of the Sasak, used by Muslim religious leaders (*keiyai*) in the mosque, and also by a bridegroom during the wedding ritual (Cederroth 1993:305-306, fig.7). For comparison see Museum der Kulturen Basel, no. IIC 20328; see for instance Khan Majlis 1991:168, Ill.149; Maxwell 1990:Ill.184.

<sup>88</sup> Haar 1925:74; Khan Majlis 1984:78; Khan Majlis 1991:168, Ill.151; Maxwell 1990:165, Ill.99.

<sup>89</sup> I am grateful to Linda Hanssen for having discovered this letter for me in the archives of the Wereldmuseum Rotterdam.

*te houden met het feit, dat Mohammedaansche ideën invloed gehad kunnen hebben op het ontstaan der patronen, en dat ze niet ziver Hindoe-Balisch behoeven te zijn.*<sup>90</sup>

As the quotation above shows, Heyting was himself surprised to encounter professional weaving workshops in Buleleng, for example in Pengastulan<sup>91</sup>, where Muslim-Balinese women created designs for ikat fabrics, which showed Muslim (Lombok?) influence. Their products were executed on the loom by cheap-labour Hindu-Balinese women, and traded through Muslim-Balinese traders to Buleleng, and maybe to other places. Did they also possibly create other kind of textiles, maybe among them these floral "*kain Sembiran*", quite a number of which Heyting had acquired for the Rotterdam museum in Buleleng? This also supports my opinion that such wide cloths could not have been woven on simple village looms, and had possibly been manufactured in some specialized weaving centre (see p.75, p.100). Such Muslim-Balinese workshops might be compared to the famous Chinese-Javanese and Dutch-Javanese batik centres on the North coast of Java, which, in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, created patterns strongly marked by European and Chinese influence (Khan Majlis 1991:117, 122).

Most "*kain Sembiran*" are attributed to the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, maybe even earlier. One narrow cloth with the same supplementary weft design (note 71) is known to have been exhibited in the 1878 Paris World's Fair. Early dating also seems to be indicated by the harmonious colour scheme. The obvious lack of gaudy hues suggests that no synthetic dyes – which were already quite widespread at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century - were used for them.

To sum up, we come to the conclusion that so-called "*kain Sembiran*" were not manufactured in the village of Sembiran. The first group with geometrical supplementary weft and weft ikat patterns is most probably of Lombok origin. As to fabrics of the second group with floral design, we suggest that they might have been products from Muslim-Balinese workshops in North Bali.

<sup>90</sup> "Research on the spot often brings all kinds of surprises. Thus, I was very astonished, when I observed in Pengastulan, in one of the weaving centers of Buleleng, that Muslim-Balinese women designed patterns for silk and mixed silk ikat cloths, and did also most of the ikat dyeing. The weaving itself was realized against salary by cheap-labour Hindu-Balinese women. Muslim-Balinese traders sell these cloths. Thus, when Fatima buys such textiles, she thinks they originate from Singaraja (Buleleng). When looking at designs of weft ikats acquired in Singaraja, one therefore has to bear in mind, that their creation may have been influenced by Muslim ideas, and that they do not necessarily have to be pure Hindu-Balinese" (Translated by M.L.Nabholz-Kartaschoff).

<sup>91</sup> Pengastulan is situated between Seririt and Bubunaj, west of Singaraja.

### *Parba Cili* – A *Lamak*-Style Hanging

The extent to which the designation "Sembiran" has become a token for interesting textiles of archaic look – expensive ones – will be demonstrated by a unique hanging (Photo 20) said to originate from Sembiran.<sup>92</sup>



Photo 20: *Lamak*-style hanging (*parba cili*), Bali. Museum der Kulturen no. IIC 20290. Acquired from a Balinese dealer 1988.

It fascinates its viewer with its huge format (height 65 cm, width 260 cm) and its attractive patterns: four large female *cili* figures above rows of mountain-like patterns and small anthropomorphic representations on a dark indigo blue base, flanked by two flowering trees on a red background. Each pair of *cili* is separated by a rectangle with lozenge motifs, while the centre is formed by a grid with smaller diamonds.

At first glance, the style of the representation has much in common with designs on *lamak* decorations.<sup>93</sup> These are elaborate constructions of different lengths, fashioned of white and green palm leaves (Photo 21), which are joined with little bamboo pins (*jejaitan*, from Balinese *jait*, "to sew").

They are created by women as ephemeral ritual adornments for altars or shrines, or as underlays for offerings. These vertical runners are always quite narrow, and may vary in length from about 30 cm up to more than 10 metres, when they serve as huge decorations at New Year or important temple festivals. There exist innumerable regional variations, but invariably present are a number of motifs replete with symbolic meaning: The sacred mountain Gunung Agung is the representation on earth of the cosmic Mount Mahameru, linking the three spheres as an axis.

<sup>92</sup> No. IIC 20290, Museum der Kulturen Basel, acquired from a Balinese dealer in 1988.

<sup>93</sup> See Brinkgreve 1992; Brinkgreve 1993; Langewis 1956; Pelras 1967.



Photo 21: Women preparing „sewn“ *lamak* from fresh palm leaves for a festival at Batur Temple. Photo: Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin 2005.

The flowering tree, or Tree of Life, unites all living creatures, flourishing vegetation and wild life. The stylised female figure with her typical fan-shaped headdress, *cili* or *deling*, is an expression of human life and fertility, and may be sometimes associated with Dewi Sri, the rice goddess, who stands for fertility, prosperity and wealth. The sun and moon also appear, which are part of the upper world and bestow fertility on earth. The stylised geometric patterns are related to the base of the world, or the underworld.

The motifs are always placed vertically in a certain sequence that expresses symbolically a path or a bridge between heaven and earth and, in this way, the general Balinese view that the world or the universe is vertically ordered in underworld, middle world and upperworld. On small *lamak*, the representational elements are always placed at the top, the geometrical ones at the bottom. On large samples, these different elements may alternate, but the geometrical ones have implicitly to appear in the lower field. A *lamak* may be compared by the Balinese to a textile that is said to be the "clothing" of a shrine, dressed up for a festive occasion.

Actually, there exist a relatively small number of permanent *lamak* made of cloth instead of palm leaf.<sup>94</sup> They are usually worked on blue, black or red cotton cloth with fine white stripes in a very special weaving technique. To realize the pattern, groups of thick undyed yarn bundles are inserted during the weaving process and led in parallel lines to the warp threads floating on the reverse side. Only a small number of motifs, like the sun and moon, are embroidered.<sup>95</sup> According to Brinkgreve (1993:144, note 4) some examples were never ritually used, but "already in the thirties they might have been made especially to sell at art-exhibitions" to interested foreigners.<sup>96</sup> As true *lamak* are extremely rare and much in demand, "art shops in Bali ask exorbitant prices for the few pieces they have in their possession, or they try to sell recently made embroidered copies" (Brinkgreve 1993:135).

Let us come back to the hanging in question:

The cotton base is most probably a complete web intended to be cut and sewn into a hip-cloth of the *kain kumalo* type; its external lateral parts had just been cut off. In fact, such full lengths were often stored away to be made up into a festive dress on a later occasion.<sup>97</sup> The design is embroidered in quite a coarse way with a very thick ramie yarn<sup>98</sup>; knots are visible on the reverse side. The running stitches

<sup>94</sup> Brinkgreve 1992:135-136; Brinkgreve 1993:135 and note 2; Langewis 1956; Pelras 1967.

<sup>95</sup> Langewis 1956:32-33; Pelras 1967:257-264. According to Pelras (1957:259-261), this technique was invented by a weaver in Kesiman, Badung district.

<sup>96</sup> A typical example is the *lamak* no. 23937 in the Museum Nasional, Jakarta (Hardiati and ter Keurs 2005:143, 145). It was acquired by Engineer T.A. Resink in the 1930s in Bali, and sold to the Jakarta museum in 1941 (personal communication from Francine Brinkgreve, 2006).

<sup>97</sup> The Museum der Kulturen Basel owns an uncut web of this type with a total length of 328 cm intended to be cut and sewn into a *kain kumalo* (no. IIc 14028).

<sup>98</sup> Confirmed by analysis of the Koninklijk Instituut voor het Kunstpatrimonium, Brussel, 2003.

imitate woven warp floatings; however the threads only run in the direction of the warp in the rows of triangles along the selvages, whilst all other patterns are embroidered in the direction of the weft, or are executed, as in the case of the flowering trees, in oblique stitches.

The former owner designated the hanging as a *parba cili*,<sup>99</sup> used as a decoration on the occasion of tooth filings or ceremonies in honor of the rice goddess Dewi Sri when it would be suspended in a rice granary. He firmly maintained that it was made and used in Sembiran although rice cultivation in Sembiran has long been completely abandoned (see Hauser-Schäublin this volume), and rice granaries (*jinang*) have disappeared too. However, there still exists a shrine in the form of a *jinang* in the Pura Desa which has replaced a bigger one pulled down in 1959/60, and where a ceremony for Dewi Sri is performed every new moon Tilem Sadha.<sup>100</sup> The weaver Ni Wayan Landri had never ever seen such a hanging in Sembiran, but she spontaneously associated its design with a kind of palm leaf *lamak*, locally called *gelebegan-grantangan*. It was used in ancient times in the rice fields to decorate a small altar, *nini*, where rituals were performed at the beginning (*pinta gede*) and the middle (*pinta nengabin*) of the harvest.<sup>101</sup>

Thus, there are several reasons to believe that this hanging was neither manufactured nor used in Sembiran, nor that it had served ritual purposes. Its horizontal shape is unparalleled, and its embroidery technique imitates in a rather crude way the rare weaving technique of genuine textile *lamak*. Above all, the style of combining the individual motifs arouses some suspicion. They are not arranged in the conventional order replete with symbolic meaning (p.110), but seem to float in an empty space, without meaningful relation to each other. Thus, for instance, the stylised geometric patterns that represent the base of the world are set somewhat randomly in between the *cili* figures.

Discussing these facts with Francine Brinkgreve and David Stuart-Fox, who are today the leading experts in this matter, we came to the common conclusion, that this astounding hanging was either an inspired creation of the 1930s intended to be sold to interested collectors (p.110), or that it is simply a recent fake for those gullible customers that are so keen to acquire authentic *lamak* textiles, indeed any textiles that were said to originate from the famous village of Sembiran.

## Summary

We have shown in this chapter that the village of Sembiran produced, and still is producing, hand-woven cotton cloths, which are used as traditional festive garb by

<sup>99</sup> A *parba* is the wooden back wall of an open building (*bale*), which sometimes is embellished with paintings.

<sup>100</sup> Personal communication from I Wayan Partheyasa, *kelian desa* of Sembiran, 1988.

<sup>101</sup> Personal communication from Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin, 1999.

the group of unmarried girls and women and by brides and bridegrooms. They were also manufactured for villages outside Sembiran. Cultivation of cotton and weaving have been important home crafts since ancient times.

The textile traditions of Sembiran have undergone foreign influences and have integrated fabrics from outside the village; some of them presumably originate from Lombok. One typical case is represented by hip-cloths called *kain kumalo*, which are particularly interesting in terms of the raw materials used and their design.

Checked cloths with fine white lines on a plain ground obviously represent remnants of a common elementary design tradition, which probably was widely dispersed on both islands once upon a time.

So-called "*kain Sembiran*" textiles have been thoroughly investigated with regard to raw materials used, technical aspects and patterns. This led to the final conclusion that they were not manufactured in Sembiran, but either in Lombok or in some Muslim-Balinese workshop in North Bali.

The connotation "Sembiran" seems to have been propagated by antique dealers at a relatively late date since the 1970s in order to increase collectors' interest in these textiles by attributing them to a village that once had unjustly been seen as an isolated and pure "Bali Aga" community. Thus it is not by accident that this label was also given to a particularly decorative hanging, which turned out to be a creative re-interpretation for sale to foreigners in the 1930s, or perhaps a recent fake.

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