

THREADS OF LIFE

April 2012 Newsletter

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Dear William,

In this issue we review 8 exciting new textiles displayed in the Our Textiles section of our website. There are two pieces each from Savu and Sumba, plus pieces from Java, Sulawesi and Timor, and an unusual piece from Micronesia. Each is complete with detailed photographs, cultural background, and information about the weaver.

There is also an article about a new way to get involved in Threads of Life's work, and a link to a new Threads of Life [blog](#) where you can start participating.



New Textiles on the Website

The Our Textiles section of our website showcases some of the best pieces made by the weavers we work with. In recent weeks we have added 8 new works for you to enjoy.

From Kerek in east Java is a batik [sayut](#) with long fringes at either end. Though made in an area not notable for its Chinese community, the Lok Chan motif draws directly from Ming-period Chinese models and has been adapted in design and color to the artistic preferences of the Javanese.

From Savu, an [ei worapi](#) and an [ei raja](#) exemplify the subtleties of two of the island's three main categories of textile. An ei raja has six narrow stripes of supplementary warp patterning, a technique called raja in Savu. There are seven narrow stripes of black above and below the central seam. On an [ei ledo](#) there are four stripes.

Left to right: A child's ceremony in Boti, Timor; Detail from a Lau Pahudu Hada cloth, Rindi, Sumba; Agustina Soly (right) from Sulawesi contemplating how to market traditional textiles

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Our 2012 Tours

Click on the following links to view our tour brochures for 2012

[16 - 28 September: The Textile Arts & Culture of Bali & Flores](#)

[08 - 12 October: The Textile Arts & Culture of Bali](#)

[15 - 22 October: Trekking in Tana Toraja, Sulawesi](#)

Spaces still available!



The main motif in the large ikat bands at the top and bottom has only two colors, instead of the three colors in the motif of an ei worapi.

[Marilotong](#) are made by the Karataun Toraja of Sulawesi who say that the very first textile was discovered by their ancestors, hanging in a cave, and was colored with mud. Black and white symbolize heaven and earth, and all marilotong represent the human world, where heaven and earth come together.

Even traditional artforms with long, stable traditions have never been completely static. This beaded [lau pahudu hada](#) from Rindi in Sumba is the result of an innovative combination of styles, resulting from the marriage of a princess of Pau into the royal family of Rindi. The supplementary warp patterning technique is called pahikung, and was developed to this level in Pau. This [tiara haringgi](#) shows the original Pau tradition and would be worn by a woman as a shoulder cloth, to complete her traditional dress.

Until recently, Lo'o Neke weavers had to overdye their threads as many as twenty-two times to get a color this deep. Now, thanks to dye plant research by Threads of Life sister nonprofit the YPBB Foundation, weavers can achieve this high quality of color using a fraction of the materials. The increase in efficiency has helped Lo'o Neke weavers begin to manage their dye resources more sustainably. This [bete krao](#) is an example of this new work.

Since 2001 a cultural revival program on the 2-kilometer-long island of Fais, in Yap State of the Federated States of Micronesia, has sought to sustain the tradition of making machi chief's mantles. [Machi](#) are made from a fine thread extracted from the trunks of banana palms and decorated with bark fibers from a local variety of hibiscus. Weavers have since struggled to sell their work, and [Threads of Life is proud to be helping](#) them develop a new market.

Connected and Aligned

Agustina Soly lives 2 days travel from the nearest surfaced road. Her community in the remote highlands of West Sulawesi is beyond the reach of most Indonesian government services. People are very self-reliant here. Agustina is the school teacher and the coordinator for 7 weavers' cooperatives with a total membership of 56 women. Weaving is an important source of income, and making traditional textiles is a huge source of cultural pride.



Last year, Agustina and six other weavers joined thirty other participants from across Indonesia for a four-day workshop in Bali. Several sessions explored the shared values across our network. We often do this, but it is always worth re-exploring. The common themes were: improving family welfare, strengthening cultural values, increasing cooperation, and enhancing mutual respect. Agustina made an insightful observation. She compared the weavers' values to those in the mission statements of Threads of Life and the YPBB Foundation, noting that "Our values are not the same, but they are aligned and connected."

We then explored weavers' ideas about the values of Threads of Life's customers, to whom they are ultimately marketing their work. This generated some powerfully unguarded comments. The majority of responses were a variation of, "They buy our work because they feel sorry for us."



About Threads of Life

Threads of Life is a fair trade business that uses culture and conservation to alleviate poverty in rural Indonesia. The heirloom-quality textiles and baskets we commission are made with local materials and natural dyes. With the proceeds from the [Threads of Life gallery](#), we help weavers to form independent cooperatives and to manage their resources sustainably.



Donate to our Partner:

The YPBB Foundation

Threads of Life's nonprofit partner, the [YPBB Foundation](#), works with the same communities as Threads of Life to support cooperative development and environmental sustainability. YPBB trains weavers in the establishment and maintaining of credit unions, and the sustainable cultivation, harvesting and use of dye plants. Its groundbreaking dye plant and dye recipe identification and documentation is the backbone of ongoing work to safeguard endangered indigenous weaving traditions, and the livelihoods they represent, from extinction. To support the YPBB Foundation, please donate at www.y PBB.org via Give2Asia, PayPal, or bank transfer.

This is a disempowering self-image for the weavers. In the case of Threads of Life's customers, I think it's also largely inaccurate: Our marketing is based on the assumption that our customers' values are also "aligned and connected" with the weavers' values. What is needed is an elegant way of overturning the weavers' misconceptions.

[Reads more on our new blog...](#)

Support Sustainability in Timor

Boti village in Timor maintains forest stewardship traditions that ensure year-round water and food supplies on an island where drought and hunger are common. Critical to maintaining sustainable practices is the validation of customary knowledge and its passing to future generations.



Research by the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew with the YPBB Foundation in 2011 documented over 50 plant species and their uses as medicine, dyes, construction, and ceremonial materials.

The people of Boti wish this research published for use within their schools and churches, and to legitimize their knowledge to the government. YPBB has already raised USD 2,200 but another USD 4,750 are needed to complete the research and publication.

To support this highly cost-effective way of supporting sustainable community, please donate at www.y PBB.org via Give2Asia, PayPal, or bank transfer.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "William". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

from William, Jean, Pung and everyone at Threads of Life and the YPBB Foundation

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