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## **The Shoulder Cloth luka semba: Being (Trans-)Local in Flores**

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# **STRIKING PATTERNS**

**Global Traces in Local Ikat Fashion**

Publication accompanying the exhibition  
"striking patterns. Global Traces in Local Ikat Fashion"  
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FMB – Freiwilliger Museumsverein Basel  
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UCLA – University of California, Los Angeles

## The Shoulder Cloth *luka semba*: Being (Trans-) Local in Flores

Willemijn de Jong

In the Lio area of Central Flores, the *luka semba* is the type of cloth that is most often produced, used, given as a gift and sold.<sup>1</sup> It is the only man's cloth with ikat patterns of the around thirty types of the cloth system in Nggela (de Jong 1994: 215), a vibrant weaving site and cultural center on the south coast.<sup>2</sup> The *luka semba* is also the type of textile that is best known beyond the Lio region. Although it has become an outstanding textile, locally and translocally, scholarly knowledge about it is still scarce. Kent Watters is one of the first authors who paid attention to this cloth: Lio man's *adat* shawls are worn only once a year for dancing during a four-day *adat* festival, most families have these shawls, and every man is buried with at least one of them (Watters 1977: 89). Others used this information as a source (e.g. Gittinger 1979: 170). In the 1990s descriptions get more detailed (de Jong 1998; Hamilton 1994b; 1994d).

Inspired by Gell (1998) and Pedersen (2007), I will outline the ways local people enact a special sense of self through the *luka semba*, based on how they, and scholars, think about this type of cloth, and how they conceptualize and use it in their social relationships. In particular, I deal with the entanglements of global influences and local practices of making and enacting the *luka semba*. In the wake of Alfred Bühler (e.g. Bühler 1959), Barnes was the first scholar to explore the effects of Indian trade cloths on local textiles in Eastern Indonesia in detail (e.g. Barnes 1989a; 1991; 2002; 2005). Interesting for my study is her suggestion that the cloths of single weavers can have important effects, related to "a new awareness of the self (...), with wide links, some of which are global, but also with a growing sense of the value for the indigenous and locally specific" (Barnes 2005: 162). Niessen proposes the term "modern traditional" to designate a dynamic trend of continual change in conventional cloths and clothing. In this way they show a specific feature of fashion (Niessen 2003a: 70).

In June 2015 I witnessed a welcome ceremony of a Catholic priest, Romo Aloisius Ndate on the occasion of his 25<sup>th</sup> jubilee.<sup>3</sup> Romo Alo steps out of a big car at the village entrance. He is welcomed according to a local *adat*<sup>4</sup> ceremony with the sound of gongs and drums. A *luka semba* is put around his neck, and two rows of four women, wearing an ikat skirt (*lawo kelimara*) and a read blouse, make receding dance steps and sway the *luka semba*. Some *adat* leaders, *mosa laki*,<sup>5</sup> also wearing a *luka semba*, welcome the priest as well, together with other village authorities, adults and children from the village, and many guests. This story shows that the *luka semba*

is not only used on one yearly ritual occasion, also not only by the *adat* leaders, but by the celebrated himself and the female dancers as well. With each kind of wearer the enactment of the cloth is different, and different social relationships come into view.

### **A Flower Basket *patolu en miniature*: Manufacture and Origin**

The *luka semba* is a red-brown shawl with ikat patterns shaped by yellowish lines. Its size is about 170×75 cm. The shoulder cloth shown here (see Fig. 19, p. 46) was sold to me by the daughter of the deceased weaver Maria Pili, as she urgently needed money. The daughter inherited the cloth from her mother and kept it for many years as a precious item of wealth. The texture shows some thin and worn spots, and repairs are visible. This may also have to do with the warp material, which consists of single, untwisted commercial cotton yarn. Mostly stronger, twisted commercial cotton yarn was used for the warp of the *luka semba* until recently, and today rayon yarn is in use as well. For a long time the weft has been made of two threads of untwisted cotton yarn.

It is the oldest *luka semba* I collected during my field research (de Jong 1998; 2015). This piece was woven in about 1957. The ikat work must have been done in the beginning of the 1950s, as the repeated application with morinda dye-stuff took many years. The ikat work is very fine, done with thin coconut fibers, small bundles of yarn with each bundle containing four threads at most, and only a few layers of yarn; the color of the cloth has a "sweet" red hue as different kinds of morinda were used after the dyeing with indigo; the warp threads had evidently been well fixed with thin sticks prior to the weaving; and the weaving of the pattern was neatly done, not "broken", as it sometimes is.

"How beautiful [*gagah!*]", the weavers exclaim with joy when they see such a cloth. The efficacy of its fabrication is enchanting to local observers and others with an experienced eye alike. If this social effect of "enchantment of technology" (Gell 1992) occurs, such pieces are well qualified to be considered not only as an interesting material artifact but an object of art (cf. de Jong 2011; 2016).

When I asked the weavers what they thought about the origin of the *luka semba* as a type of cloth, they unanimously responded that they had received it from their ancestors. They pertinently think that it is of local origin, and that a former unknown female ancestor was its creator. Frequent reference was also made to the late aristocratic weaver Nenek Maria Nduru Muda of Sa'o Ria. She learned the pattern from her mother-in-law Ona, who again learned it from her mother Godhi. Thus we see a strong line of transmission of this cloth in Sa'o Ria. I even assume that the elite women of this house monopolized the pattern in former times as a distinguishing mark of their high rank.

Nenek Nduru did high-quality ikat work from the 1940s to the 1960s. She particularly reinterpreted the *luka semba* and the female tubeskirt *lawo luka semba* (see Fig. 20, p. 47). Formerly, this *sarong* used to be worn at *adat* rituals; today it is worn at all formal events. To date many weavers have claimed to follow her pattern design. One of them, Regina Hara, said, "Before Nenek Nduru tied the *luka semba*, this cloth was not so widespread yet, and only selected persons were allowed to tie this cloth. Nenek Nduru made the *luka semba* well-known."<sup>6</sup> In the 1980s Mama Hara still owned a *lawo luka semba* tied by Nenek Nduru about 1955. In situations of distress she and her husband lit a candle and used the *sarong* to call on the support of the ancestress. It can be argued that the ancestress's agency is activated through the materiality of the cloth, especially its "eyes" (*mata*) or motifs, in a similar way as in the worship of images or other "indexes" of divine presence such as stones or trees (Gell 1998: 116–126). The cloth thus retains agency, too.

Based on the work by Bühler (see Introduction, pp. 7 ff.), and in contrast to local ideas, several scholars working on textiles in Flores (Barnes 1989a; Hamilton 1994d; Maxwell 1980; 2003) relate the origin of patterns such as those of the *luka semba* to the large Indian double-ikat silk *patola* with "eight-pointed flowers" that were traded to Indonesia (see Fig. 8, p. 34). In India this flower or basket pattern (*chhabadi bhat*) is seen as an "eight-petalled lotus, with buds and flowers radiating from it," and as an "old traditional pattern" (Sarabhai & Dhamija 1988: 19). It seems to originate from a fertility ritual at a wedding, in which a basket with flowers was put on the head of the bride. Later, a textile would have been created and draped around the bride's head and body. We also see here a way of being, or rather of becoming, through a cloth that, based on this local conceptualization, can be called a flower basket *patolu*.<sup>7</sup> This pattern was initially reinterpreted in Indonesia by aristocratic circles (cf. Barrkman 2007; Gittinger 1979; Iskandar & Gratha 2013; Nabholz-Kartaschoff 1989), and in fascinatingly different ways (see pp. 34–59).

The overall design structure and arrangement of the pattern of the *luka semba* is almost exactly the mini-scale model of the *patola* with the eight-pointed flowers. The *luka semba* mostly consists of a central panel with two large *semba* patterns (sometimes one continuous pattern) of five floral motifs (*mata ke'a*) in the length and three in the width as well as linking motifs; two longitudinal side bands with small rectangular motifs, triangular motifs and dots; and two bands (sometimes two double bands) across on top and at the bottom with elongated triangles framed by border motifs. Today's weavers have never seen a *patolu*. But they immediately recognized differences between the motif on the flower basket *patolu* and the motif on their cloths when I showed them pictures (Hamilton 1994b: 32). The weaver Maria Ferdinanda Bela, called Mama Din, commented as follows: "It is like the *luka semba* but they have made our motifs a little differently. Maybe they are made

in Malakka. In the song of the rain dance it is said that our ancestors came from Malakka. They already had the knowledge of weaving from there. Formerly, our ancestors made the *luka semba*. Only some people had a *lawo luka semba*. Most people wore a black cloth or a white cloth."

In 2010, only one man from the village had ever seen a *patolu*. In the 1960s a trader from Sumba had shown him one and inquired whether they existed in Nggela. However, a textile trader with a large shop in Ende did not know anything about *patola*. In contrast, a trader in the market in Maumere said that until 2004 there had been many *patola* with flower and elephant motifs that people from Adonara wanted to sell.

To sum up, Nggela weavers have localized the flower basket *patolu* in their very own way, regarding design and interpretation of the pattern. They created two prestigious, gendered textiles, one of which, the *luka semba*, allows gender crossing today. Moreover, when natural dyes are used these days, it is mostly for the *luka semba* and the *lawo luka semba*. The *semba* pattern, or the *ke'a* motif, socially connects the weavers with their ancestresses in an ambivalent way, as we shall see. These cloths are imbued with historical global relations. They bear witness to the "inventiveness of tradition", in the sense of extending indigenous traditions to novel situations; or, on the other side of the coin, they bear witness to an early form of "indigenization of modernity" (Sahlins 1999: 410, 414).

### **Innovation and Tradition:**

#### **Change in Manufacture — Continuity in Interpretation**

There are striking changes in manufacture, especially regarding the use of yarns as well as the ikat and dying work (Hamilton 1993). They have led to a higher productivity, as more layers of yarn are placed on the ikat frame, e.g. six cloths instead of one or two are tied and dyed at once; and "more attractive motifs", in the view of the weavers, with a slightly brighter result, can be achieved, as since about 2000 the *luka semba* has been produced with yellow or orange pre-colored rayon yarn. These cloths are also perceived as less rough to wear. The dying step with yellow is not necessary in this case, so costs and working time can be saved. But for gifts among close kin, only the more sophisticated *luka semba* made from white yarn are accepted. According to local aesthetics, colors should not be too bright. More vibrantly colored *luka semba* are made for gifts or for sale beyond the village.

In the view of the elderly weavers, the ikat patterns have also changed, in spite of their hard efforts to stick to the "heritage of the ancestors", or "tradition", which often implicitly means the example of Nenek Nduru. Not long ago one of the elderly weavers, Anastasia Teke said: "Since former times we follow the ancestors, for example when we tie the *luka semba*. We do not want variations of our own. But the

young women have changed it already." For example, in a second working step more motif elements used to be filled in, to make blue motif elements. This meant a longer ikat process.

In contrast to the manufacture of the *luka semba*, local interpretations of its pattern do not seem to have changed much during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, many ikat motifs of the local cloth system in the region just have names.<sup>8</sup> However, the *mata ke'a* of the centerfield pattern triggers very specific interpretations, cultural assumptions and social tensions. It is the most important local ikat motif indeed.

When I asked Mama Din to elaborate on the *ke'a* motif (see Fig. 19, p. 46), her reaction was: "In the middle is the liver, below and on top of it is the heart. It is the same as the body of us human beings." As an illustration, she drew the heart of a chicken and the widespread symbol of the human heart in my notebook and commented the latter with, "just as the drawing 'I love you'". "*Tete kadho* means breast", she clarified, pointing to the four squares. "Hip is the name of the motif above and below the liver. In between the *mata ke'a* is the back as a motif. These are all things we human beings also have."<sup>9</sup> And she stressed once more: "The *ke'a* motif is a human being. One has to follow [the original motif], don't change it, if we develop it further we can get sick."

Elisabeth Pango, called Mama Ango, lucidly explained that the word *ke'a* relates to the name of a coconut shell with which meat was eaten at ceremonies on the one hand, and to the name of a small hexagonal basket with a cover, which is used for rice and other crops at planting and harvesting ceremonies, on the other hand. The association with a basket makes sense, if we look at the hexagonal shape of the *ke'a* motif on the cloth, and it is interesting with respect to the Indian basket motif. Whereas the weavers interpreted some motif elements differently, the *mata ke'a* as a whole was uniformly conceptualized as a human body. Some of them explicitly spoke of the *ke'a* motif as a "symbol" of the body. Moreover, it was closely associated with rice and other food that nourishes the body and plays a fundamental role in *adat* ceremonies.<sup>10</sup>

### **Living and Dying through the *luka semba*: Secure Earnings — Dangerous Motifs**

Considering the fact that the *ke'a* motif triggers interpretations of the human body, it is hardly astonishing that making a *luka semba* is closely related to living and fertility — and we see here similarities again with the flower basket *patolu*. In certain cases, however, it also relates to illness and death, as Mama Din indicated.

As the demand for the *luka semba* in the village community and beyond is great, it is also the cloth that is most often produced. Through its manufacture the women can make a modest living. Like many economically weak weavers, Etridus Nggela, called Mama Efe, cannot always focus on selling textiles of her own, as she has too



little money to buy the necessary thread and dyestuff. She belongs to the category of weavers who additionally have to accept orders from other households.<sup>11</sup> When I visited her over the past thirty years, she was usually making a *luka semba*, either for another woman or for herself. In 1987 she managed to produce ten pieces of her own (de Jong 1998: 208), as she participated in a weaving group of the governmental PKK (Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga). The government provided yarn and dyes to facilitate earning an income through stimulation of the individual production of *luka semba* and the partly collective sale. When I later visited her, she was often manufacturing a *luka semba* to sell in the regional market in Wolowaru, or recently in the village itself. Her economic situation today is more or less the same as in earlier times. Her husband worked in construction and now cultivates vegetables for sale; many other men work in agriculture for subsistence and some cash. The income of most of the local people is low but the *luka semba* guarantees some basic earnings.

During the last couple of years the production of the *luka semba* and other textiles has also been supported by international funding. In the context of the PNPM program (Program Nasional Pemberdayaan Masyarakat) financed by the World Bank, for example, the village got two billion rupies in 2009. The mayor of the village formed twelve weaving groups that should also produce *luka semba* "to preserve our tradition".

To tie the pattern of a *luka semba* and some other patterns can be "dangerous", in the wording of a weaver. Until the 1970s it was taboo to tie the *luka semba* before the age of menopause. But during the 1980s, many women in their twenties began to tie this cloth because they could get good prices selling them to traders and tourists. Until today the safest way to learn how to tie the *ke'a* motif, is when an older maternal relative shows it directly, or an ancestress "in a dream". It need not be one's own mother, she may not know it because she feared to tie it formerly. Maria Reja narrated: "Nenek Bara, an ancestor whom I did not know personally, showed me the *semba* design in a dream. I saw the ikat frame with a *luka semba*. The ikat work was already finished. Nenek Bara was staying behind me and said: 'Follow me now'. After that I had the feeling that my hands were working very easily and were not stiff anymore."

Quite some women told me of weavers who had become infertile, ill or even died because they had tied certain motifs too early or in the wrong way. Anastasia Rona, called Mama Anas, was not young anymore but she did the ikatting in the wrong way. Her younger sister, Petronela Ji'e, called Mama Pape, narrated: "The first motif was not complete. That is a big mistake. After two months she fell ill. During her illness Anas said that she had seen a younger sister of Nenek Nduru in a dream, who scolded her by saying: 'Why do you tie the motif so arbitrarily? You can do that only

when you know the motif already.' A month later, before she had finished the ikat work of the *luka semba*, she died. I completed the cloth." After she told me the story, she earnestly added: "This is a good piece for teaching your students." Then she offered me that cloth. It has also been used for dancing, as the green raffia sign indicates.

The technology of this *luka semba* is still enchanting but in a most ambivalent and destructive way for the cloth producer — an effect with which Gell (1992) did not deal. But it can be explained by resorting to his reflections on "volt sorcery" (Gell 1998). If we see the *ke'a* motif, as the women do, as a prototype of the body of the weaver, then we can understand that the injuries of the weaver are the result of the injuries that the ikat motif as an image of the weaver has received by the weaver's incorrect ikat work. The weaver as a victim appears both as the prototype (the *ke'a* motif) and as the recipient of the injury or destruction. Or, in Gell's words, "The victim is ultimately the victim of his own agency, by a circuitous causal pathway" (1998: 103).<sup>12</sup>

Only when we know these different stories of the weavers and their way of thinking through the *mata ke'a*, we can see, i.e. conceptualize and understand (Pedersen 2007) that through this cloth social relations are not only made and strengthened but also painfully dissolved — as a kind of reversal of the process of coming to be. Moreover, we have here an impressive example of how tradition is materially and socially enacted.

### **Strengthening Social Relations: Ancestors and Living Kin**

The tying of the *luka semba*, especially the *mata ke'a* pattern, can thus heavily affect the integrity of the weaver's body and her social network. In contrast, wearing and using the cloth contributes to the protection of bodies and strengthens social relationships. A male interlocutor, who did not want his name mentioned, told me: "You feel different when you wear or use the *luka semba*. It sticks to the *adat* rituals. (...) The *luka semba* does not have a special sacred value as a cloth, but only in relation to *adat* rituals." It can be argued that in the rituals the *luka semba* enables and visualizes the strived for "harmonious" social relations with ancestors. But also relationships with relatives living in the village and in other places in Indonesia are at stake.

This can be shown by means of a third special piece of *luka semba* from my collection. It is the *luka semba* of *adat* leader Gabriel Mane. For several years he has been the *mosa laki pu'u*, that is the most important one of the three *mosa laki* of Sa'o Ria.<sup>13</sup> His mother-in-law made this cloth in the 1970s, and gave it to him at his marriage at the end of the 1980s. His sister-in-law sold it to me on behalf of him, as women organize everything that has to do with textiles (de Jong 2000). He urgently needed

money for his wife's medical treatment, his son's studies and for himself as he was planning to do his official ceremonial inauguration meal as an *adat* leader.

He used this cloth for ceremonies related to the agricultural cycle, including offerings in the ceremonial house and on the public cult place. During these ceremonies, *laki* Mane and the other sixteen *adat* leaders get in touch with the divine, the ancestors and other spirits. They ask them for support regarding the fertility of the cultivated plants and human beings, and make sacrifices to them

(see Fig. 58). "The *luka semba* then becomes a part of the body of the *mosa laki*", the anonymous interlocutor commented. Formerly, before shirts were introduced, the *mosa laki* used it even as everyday wear. One can argue that the *luka semba* worn by the *mosa laki* in *adat* ceremonies acts as a "hyper surface", akin to the shaman's costume in the study by Pedersen. In this context, the *luka semba* also has the effect of "opening up" the *adat* leader towards the cosmos of the spirits (Pedersen 2007: 152–153)—and the pattern seems to regain its ancestral quality and agency.

The *adat* rituals in which *luka semba* perform prominently also include life cycle rituals. In all the events they are worn, used as a dance accouterment, and as decoration. In life cycle rituals they renew relationships in gift giving in the village and beyond, especially in bridewealth transfers (de Jong 1995). In the process of a high-ranking marriage in 1992, consisting of a betrothal, a bridewealth ceremony, and a wedding, the relatives of the bride gave altogether fifty-five pieces to the relatives of the groom and to the couple, together with many men's and women's sarongs and blouses. Thirty-four pieces of them were included in the counter-gift to the bridewealth gifts (de Jong 1998: 278). Today it would be even more. At death, men are buried with at least one piece of *luka semba*. In 2009 the coffin of an *adat* leader was covered with one piece and the corpse with four pieces, together with three men's sarongs and two batik headcloths. Moreover, the *semba* pattern is popular for official dress made from local hand-woven cloth that civil servants and students have to wear once a week, alternating with the national uniform (see Fig. 59, p. 112).

### **Beyond the Local Community: Enacting Translocal Ways of Being**

In relations with strangers the *luka semba* also performs in many ways. In the 1980s the *luka semba* was the most important textile sold to foreign tourists in the village and in art shops in Flores and Bali; it was even available in the well-known Jakarta shopping mall Sarinah. In the 1990s and 2000s, due to several reasons, international



*Adat* leaders (*mosa laki*) during a rice ritual at the ceremonial ground of Nggela in 1988. They are dressed in blue-black men's sarongs with horizontal stripes (*luka mite*), batik head cloths (*lesu*) and *luka semba* shoulder cloths. Each man has his own distinct way of wearing the cloth. Lio, Nggela, Flores, Indonesia

Fig. 58



tourism in Central Flores strongly decreased and at the same time the taste of tourists regarding souvenirs changed, with the effect that the *luka semba* is now much less commercially exported.

Another example is the *adat* dance, called *gawi*, performed during the recordings of Trans TV, a camera team from Jakarta in 2009. Usually, this circle dance is displayed at the annual four-day feast. It is part of the final ceremony of the agricultural cycle that aims to clean the village from evil spirits and illness. At this event, the TV team first recorded the production steps of ikat textiles. During the subsequent recordings of the dance, the *semba* pattern figured most prominently, on the shoulder cloths and on the tailored jacket of the lead singer (see Fig. 60).

Not yet mentioned in the introductory story about the jubilee feast of Romo Alo was that the car that brought Romo Alo to the village was covered with the *luka semba*, and the old local textile prestige object was thus linked to a new metal one from today's global world (see Fig. 61, p. 113).

During the main feast important clerical and governmental guests received the *luka semba* as a gift and wore it when they were giving their speeches

on stage. These kinds of large feasts show that the *luka semba* acts in multiple ways, ranging from older to newer forms, as a powerful decorative and protecting cloth and clothing. In sum, the *luka semba* interacts in intriguing translocal and modern ways with other things and persons. This is particularly evident by the role of this cloth in ceremonies in which non-local people interact with locals. One could say that in such cases the *luka semba* clothes the social body of the village, including kin and strangers from afar. From a national point of view the *luka semba* visualizes the complex relationships that exist between *adat*, the Catholic Church and the state (cf. also Howell 2001). Finally, from a global point of view, on a transnational level, it visualizes and makes tangible practical and imagined social relationships between people from the village and interested persons such as international tourists, textile collectors and anthropologists, as well as institutions such as museums and legal bodies abroad.

Once a week schoolchildren are asked to wear clothes featuring local ikat. In 2009 the *luka semba* pattern was highly popular and still is today. Lio, Nggela, Flores, Indonesia

Fig. 59

Performance of the *gawi* dance wearing traditional *luka semba* shoulder cloths during a shoot by Trans TV from Jakarta in 2009. Apart from the *luka semba*, the women wear the *lawo kelimara* sarong and a red blouse for this official event. As is normal for *adat* events, the men are dressed in typical *luka mite* sarongs and the batik head cloth *lesu*. Lio, Nggela, Flores, Indonesia

Fig. 60

## Conclusions

The *luka semba* visualizes earlier and recent processes of globalization: textile scholars can see the former effects of the flower basket *patolu* on its design and patterns, and weavers and researchers can fathom the recent effects of the need to speed up productivity through the use of different materials and through adaptations in techniques of tying and dyeing. *Luka semba* are both traditional and modern: a focus on tradition is concerned with cherished former and contemporary cultural achievements, be they tangible, such as textiles, or intangible, such as rituals; a focus on modernity is concerned with the change of technical and formal aspects as well as the extension of use.

The *luka semba* enacts social relationships in many events in complex and flexible ways. Although it performs in different secular contexts, it has not forfeited its basic local role as the most important *adat* cloth. My suggestion is that the *luka semba* has no sacred agency *per se*, and thus we cannot categorize it as a sacred cloth, as several scholars including me assumed earlier. However, it has a sacred potential that is performed in specific contexts. In *adat* rituals the *luka semba* enacts sacred agency, despite changes in its manufacture. The specific basket design and the continuous norms of tying enact specific kinds of agency as well. I would even suggest that the material and ritual enactment of the *luka semba* makes the particular local and translocal *adat* culture, in that the shoulder cloth helps us to see and conceptualize this culture and its ramifications.

Since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, after Indonesian independence, the *luka semba* has acted as a crosser of social boundaries of class and gender as well: from high-ranking, better-off elite men who wear it at the most sacred rituals, to non-elite, not affluent men, women and children. All classes and genders participate in its performance. In this sense we can also see the *luka semba* as performing a kind of mitigation of social hierarchies.

We have seen that the textiles of single weavers have widespread local and translocal effects, similar to the cloths of certain weavers that Barnes (2005) studied. It is fruitful to think through the *luka semba* and conceptualize the fashioning of it, as well as the enactments of the persons that make, wear and use it, as parts of a complex process of negotiating a specific kind of modernity. Subsequently, one could conceptualize the *luka semba* as "traditional modern" rather than as "modern traditional" as Niessen (2003a) proposed for similar kinds of cloths. When the *luka semba* was



Here the *luka semba* appears in a novel ritual context. It is used to decorate and protect the stately car which drove the Catholic priest Aloysius Ndate to his jubilee event in his natal village of Nggela in 2015. Lio, Nggela, Flores, Indonesia

Fig. 61

introduced in former times, it was a fashion object of the most important men. In the meantime, it performs as a fashion object of former times in ever-newly created *adat* and non-*adat* contexts.

- 1 I thank Traude Gavin for her comments on this contribution.
- 2 Most of my account applies to Nggela, a community with a regionally acknowledged *adat* culture of its own. Erb distinguishes three kinds of *adat*: *adat* as "culture" or "art"; revival of ritual or religious ceremonies; and revival of institutions of political authority and control over land (Erb 2007: 247–248).
- 3 Catholicism has been the most important official religion in Flores since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- 4 Concerning *adat* see note 2.
- 5 *Mosa laki* are the aristocratic heads of fifteen of the thirty houses in the village. "Houses" are named kin groups, each of which owns a ceremonial house. Sa'o Labo and Sa'o Ria are the most important houses.
- 6 All quotations in Indonesian translated into English by the author.
- 7 It is not sure whether this flower motif originates from India. Guy (2013) points to the fact that European stylistic elements influenced Indian chintz design.
- 8 For a discussion of patterns and meaning see Gavin 2003 and Hamilton (pp. 27 ff.).
- 9 The motif elements to the right and the left of the liver are ornamental *lombo* or *tumpal*.
- 10 Interestingly, weavers in Lembata did not only imagine certain floral patterns of *patola* as human beings but also locally transformed them into stylized human figures (Barnes 1991).
- 11 Note the local division of labor: weavers of average wealth only produce for their own households; wealthy weavers additionally place orders; and economically weak weavers additionally accept orders (de Jong 2000: 269).
- 12 In this context, Gell (1998: 103) claims that works of art have to be treated anthropologically as person-like and thus as sources of and targets for social agency. He further introduces the clarifying concept of the "distributed personhood".
- 13 See note 5.

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