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BOLONG-BOLONG AND TIRTANADI
AN UNKNOWN GROUP OF BALINESE TEXTILES

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INTRODUCTION
On late 19th and early 20th-century photographs, South and East Balinese people clad in traditional adat wardrobe for rituals, temple ceremonies and dances often wear transparent, netlike open-work textiles as breastcloth (anteng), shouldercloth (cerik) girdle (seléndang), or headcloth (destar, lelutukan). Information given by elderly Balinese concerning the situation before World War II confirm their use as part of their ceremonial wardrobe, but also as important items in offerings and rituals. Such textiles could be laid over several fabrics, covering the body of a toothfiling candidate, or serve as curtains (langsé) for open pavilions or as an underlay (tatakan) for offerings, thus purifying the area, either in a family temple at the occasion of life and death rituals, or in one of the innumerable temples in the village.

So far, this category of fabrics has received little attention. Maybe, they are not as impressive and appreciated as the sumptuous courtly golden songket and perada textiles or the superb ikat fabrics, and particularly the famous geringsing double ikats. However, they turned out to be an extremely good example to follow up acculturation in its broadest anthropological sense, i.e. how a foreign idea or model (acquired through contact) may lead to forms adapted to indigenous technology, to forms assimilated into formal and informal use in rituals and ceremonies (cross-over), and how these forms may be integrated into existing and further evolving concepts of meaning and worldview (continuity).

NAMES AND DISTRIBUTION
Such fabrics have apparently been produced and used in, and traded to, many different places of Bali - and still are today, in various forms, for various purposes and, bearing various names. The bewildering number of variations is typical for Bali with its multifarious regional cultural expressions. What is valid for one district, for one village, or for one group or caste, might be considered completely inappropriate by another. In this article, we use the terms bolong-bolong, rang-rang and coba for plain-colored fabrics with open-work patterns and tirtanadi for multi-colored fabrics worked in tapestry technique on a spaced warp.

In the former princedom of Tabanan, in other regencies of South Bali and as well as in such of North Bali, production and use of bolong-bolong and tirtanadi (see figs 18-21) has been closely associated with aristocratic families. Wassing (n.d., p. 57) illustrates a Brahmin lady in the traditional costume for a temple feast around 1925, wearing a breast- and shoulder cloth (kamben cerik, which means 'small cloth'). By the 1930's, however, they were quite frequently manufactured and worn by common people outside the palaces (puri). During World War II under Japanese occupation, production of bolong-bolong, and also of other luxury textiles had completely stopped due to extremely difficult life conditions. From around 1950 on, however, bolong-bolong met again with great interest among people of the regencies of Tabanan and neighboring Badung. Pelras (1962, p. 228) noted from his informants the term You can see for bolong-bolong, referring to their gauze-like appearance. At that time they were still being manufactured, and multi-colored tirtanadi fabrics even experienced a considerable revival. Today, any shop specialized in textiles for ritual use in the Badung market of Denpasar offers them for sale to private customers or to dealers who trade them as far as Klungkung.
In East Bali, on the other hand, such textiles were known in the ancient Old Balinese or Bali Aga village societies of Karangasem. In Tenganan Pageringsingan, these so-called rang-rang (Old Javanese 'adornment', but in Karangasem 'space', 'displaced', 'shifted') belong to the category of informal ritual dress. Certain ceremonies demand a uniform-like wardrobe of geringing or other "high" fabrics, but in others, the members of the socio-ritual associations have a certain degree of freedom to select rang-rang or other traditional textile forms. Tenganan also produced rang-rang fabrics for other villages in Karangasem like Bugbug, Timbrah, Asak, Ngis. In the regency of Klungkung, production of open-work fabrics such as kecopong, coba, etc., and their use as part of the official wardrobe, was very important among Brahmin and aristocratic families up to World War II. Such textiles were however not considered as sacred textiles (pawali, bebali or wangsul) to be used in offerings.

CONTACT
An interesting quest in this wealth of regional differences is to search for a possible common root. The hypothesis that the basic idea of manufacturing such open-work textiles has its roots in netlike fabrics or lace which were imported from the Netherlands or were used by Dutch residents in colonial times, still remains to be confirmed. In fact, the Dutch culture has been, and still is, particularly fond of many kinds of open-work fabrics, lace and others, especially for curtains.

Taking over these models might be understood against the background of a new etiquette introduced by the Dutch. Stamped by Christian concepts of what is suitable clothing and what is not, Dutch officials were shocked at seeing Balinese women bare-breasted in daily life and insisted on clothing which concealed their nakedness. None of our Balinese informants actually confirmed a Dutch origin for these textiles, but several local textile experts, weavers and members of Brahmin and aristocratic families, linked them to the category of foreign textiles, like rembang batiks from East Java, kain perancis (French fabric), kain sina (Chinese silk), imported around the turn of the century and considered very precious and exclusive.

The information given by a Balinese dealer, that prisoners in Mengwi had to weave such fabrics, turned out to be nothing but a story. True, such a model is known from India, where the British forced prisoners in Rajasthan to weave durries, cotton kelim rugs. But in Bali, there never was a prison in Mengwi in Dutch times, and it would have been unthinkable to have men forced to produce textiles. Weaving is considered an exclusively female occupation which a Balinese man would never agree to indulge in.

Another important point to be seen in connection with the phenomenon "contact" is the introduction of synthetic dyes at the beginning of our century. As early as 1908, Dutch administrators in Bulêlêng, North Bali, bemoaned the loss of quality in ikat fabrics dyed with gaudy aniline dyes. The new dyes or garishly dyed yarn quickly gained acceptance; by the thirties, they had reached many parts of Bali. They were infinitely easier and quicker to handle than the traditional vegetable dyes, and their vibrant colors and wider range of shades had an enormous impact on the style of colourful tirtanadi patterns (see figs 18-21) and the color range of plain bolong-bolong.

Fig. 1: Women with cerik bolong-bolong. Bali, probably Bangli. Photograph by Gregor Krause, 1912
Fig. 2: Noble couple in front of the palace Puri Pamekasan Badung (Denpasar). Photograph by F. Weber, 1906
Figs. 3 and 4: Woman with bolong-bolong breast cloth in trance at Rangda drama. Photographs by Henri Cartier-Bresson, 1950's
Fig. 5: Girl with bolong-bolong breastcloth at dance rehearsal. South Bali, Saba. Photograph by Theo Meier, 1930's
Fig. 6: Woman clad in bolong-bolong going to a temple with offerings. South Bali. Photograph by Theo Meier, ca. 1930
So, assuming that Balinese people encountered these foreign models and became enthusiastic about them, how did they integrate them into their own technology and into their traditional system of usage and meaning?

**Technique**

The transfer of a foreign type of fabric into indigenous traditional textile technology is known from other cases in Balinese textile history. The sacred *cepuk* cloth, cotton weft ikat fabrics, are undoubtedly local Balinese variations of double ikat silk *patola*, which had been imported from India for many centuries, and were treasured as precious heirlooms. In a similar way, expert weavers created net-like structures on their existing traditional backstrap looms by spacing the threads. There are different basic methods which also may be combined:

1. Vertical open lines are obtained by mounting the warp threads with spaces between the different groups.
2. Horizontal lines are left open by inserting thin palm stripes (*lidi*) between groups of wefts.
3. Both methods together result in open gauzy lines and stripes in warp and weft direction, producing grid-like structures (see fig. 9); they are sometimes enriched with small extra-weft designs such as tiny flowers or diamonds in contrasting colors.
4. To obtain completely open spaces, or holes (*bolong*), weaving is done in a tapestry technique on a spaced warp (see figs 7, 8), simultaneously using several individual weft threads wound on small flat bobbins (*coba*, or *cawang*) or on old playing cards (*ceki*). The tapestry technique allows an expert weaver much more room for creativity.
5. In Tabanan and Bulêlêng (North Bali), this tapestry technique has been developed for the production of intricate *tirtanadi* textiles with complicated multicolored designs (see fig. 11). Today, such fabrics are produced in large quantities, yet in minor quality, in Tabanan and Badung.

**Raw Materials and Colors**

Old specimens consist of fine handspun Balinese cotton yarn, while new ones (probably only since the 1980's) are made of much smoother and more resistant rayon yarn. There are some rare old examples woven from silk. The favorite colours for plain open-work fabrics are white and yellow. Somebody wearing white is engaged in some holy activity and is aiming at pureness. In Balinese religion and its very complicate concepts of cosmic levels, the color white is associated with the main direction East and with God Iswara, yellow with West and God Mahadewa. Both are considered ritually pure, yet white is "higher" than yellow; both together form a supplementary pair. Dark shades like purple and black which is associated with North and God Wisnu, are preferred by elderly women. But sometimes, such dark specimens are just originally light-colored ones which have been over-dyed at a later

Fig. 7: The widow of the former Raja of Belayu weaving *bolong-bolong* cloth. Tabanan, Belayu. Photograph by M.L. Nabholz-Kartaschoff, 1990.
Fig. 8: Weaving *coba* with weft wound on playing cards (*ceki*). Karangasem, Tenganan. Photograph by Monika Palm-Nadolny, 1994
Fig. 9: Weaving rangrang *bungung jangkrik* with inserted palm sticks (*lidi*). Karangasem, Tenganan. Photograph by Monika Palm-Nadolny, 1994
Fig. 10: Cricket cage (*bungung jangkrik*, 'bamboo', 'cricket') covered with *bolong-bolong* cloth. Karangasem, Manggis. Photograph by Monika Palm-Nadolny, 1994
Fig. 11: Weaving *tirtanadi* (Tabanan/Badung style). Badung, Mengwi. Photograph by M.L. Nabholz-Kartaschoff, 1994
Fig. 12: Selling *tirtanadi* (Tabanan/Badung style)in a shop specialised in ritual garb at the market Pasar Kumbasari. Denpasar. Photograph by M.L. Nabholz-Kartaschoff, 1994

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occasion. Yellow bolong-bolong, dyed with the fugitive color of turmeric (kunyit) or some fugitive synthetic dyestuff, used to be washed and bleached in the sun and then dyed again before important festivals, as for instance Galungan. In Klungkung, black coba were mainly worn at death rituals.

**Pattern Names and Their Meaning**

The variety of patterns is overwhelming. In many cases, names for a specific pattern change not only from one regency to another, but even from village to village. In this paper, we have to limit ourselves to a few examples, which are interesting from the point a view of integration into an already established system of design motifs and meanings.

While designations for the fabric as a whole often refer to technical aspects, i.e. coba, ca-wang (‘spool for inserting the weft’) or bolong-bolong, rangrang (‘holes’, ‘spaces’), specific pattern names are often descriptive or associative. Some are used for both bolong-bolong and tirtanadi designs.

Some names simply describe the geometric form of the design, i.e. beka-beko for zigzag lines (only in Karangasem), garis-garis for vertical lines (see fig. 14a), ririsan for diagonal lines (see figs 14b, 22a), petak-petak or celondongan (‘compartments’) for a pattern composed of several squares (see fig. 26a, 27a), empat (indones.) in case of four squares (see figs 6 and 32).

Others describe designs in an associative way: zigzag lines (see fig. 16a) are called tumbak, tumbakan (bal. ‘spare, lance’ referring to its point) or meru-meru (‘mountains, holy mountains’). Tulang lindung (‘bones’, ‘eel’), patterns with vertical bands of alternating squares or with teeth, refer to fishbones (see figs 10, 15a, 25a). Enjekan dara, a designation given to lozenge designs (see figs 15b, 22b, 25b, 27b) means ‘footprint of a pigeon’, kurung (see fig. 16b) is a cage, roster (see fig. 23a) a grid, and megamendung (see figs 23b, 24a) a rainy cloud. A more recent name is used for a group of four squares (see fig. 32, left person): jendela (‘window’).

The name of the gridlike bumbung jangkrik pattern (see figs 9, 33) refers to the openings cut into a piece of bamboo (bumbung) used as cages for fighting crickets (jangkrik). Openwork textiles are also used to cover such cages (see fig. 10). This pattern, however, may also be called bias membah (‘flowing sand’), a name usually used for fine striped gauze textiles without openings. The regular check pattern of full and empty spaces (see figs 13, 32, right person) is referred to in most places in Tabanan as bolong-bolong, but there are other names such as hujan ngerimis (‘drizzling rain’).

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Fig. 13: Bolong-bolong cloth with simple check pattern. Tabanan, Belayu, woven 1990 (Museum of Ethnography Basel MEB Iic 20820)
Figs 14 to 16: Sampler with different bolong-bolong patterns. Tabanan Belayu, woven 1990 (MEB Iic 20819)
14a: garis, 14b: ririsan, 15a: tulang lindung, 15b: enjekan dara, 16a: tumbak or meru-meru, 16b: kurung.
Fig. 17: Bolong-bolong Bangli. Tabanan, Belayu, woven 1990 (MEB Iic 20822)
Fig. 18: Tirtanadi cloth. Cotton, colors beige, orange, red, purple, violet, olive green. Tabanan, beginning 20th c. (MEB Iic 21171)
Fig. 19: Tirtanadi cloth. Cotton, colors white, beige, orange, purple, violet, blue, turquoise. Negara, beginning 20th c. (MEB Iic 21172)
Fig. 20: Tirtanadi cloth. Cotton, colors beige, orange, purple, violet, grey, pale green. Bulêlêng, Singaraja, beginning 20th c. (MEB Iic 21173)
Fig. 21: Tirtanadi cloth. Cotton, colors white, yellow, orange, purple, violet, pale green. Bulêlêng, Singaraja, beginning 20th c. (MEB Iic 21174)
Figs 22 to 24: Sampler with different tirtanadi patterns. Tabanan, Belayu, woven 1990 (MEB Iic 20825)
22a: ririsan, 22b: enjekan dara, 23a: roster, 23b and 24a: megamendung (two variants), 24b: bebekadgan.
Figs 25 to 27: Sampler with different tirtanadi patterns. Tabanan, Belayu, woven 1990 (MEB Iic 20826)
A very special type from Tabanan with finely worked flower designs (see figs 17 and 28) is called *cawang Bangli* or *bolong-bolong Bangli*. So far, no proof has been found that this style was once woven in the regency of Bangli.

*Tirtanadi* is a typical example of how a name can designate completely dissimilar types of cloth in different parts of Bali. In Tabanan and Badung, as well as in North Bali and in Negara (West Bali), it stands for patterns woven in tapestry technique and with many different colors on the same piece, in opposition to the plain *bolong-bolong*. The variety of designs and their development since the beginning of this century, and especially in the last 15 years, are impressive (see fig. 12).

In Karangasem and Klungkung, however, *tirtanadi* is a plain white or yellow fabric with open spaces arranged in triangles or in zigzag lines, in opposition to *coba*, *rang-rang* or *bumbung jangkrik* cloth which have openings throughout or display a grid-like structure.

### Meanings of Open-Work Textiles

Experts from the Brahmin caste attach deep meaning to the name *tirtanadi*, a symbolism which is concealed to "ordinary" people. *Tirta*, holy water, expresses absolute pureness and contains divine luminous aspects; *nadi* means a conduit, a channel, comparable to a meridian, open to the flux of pure or divine energy. The open spaces create a connection towards *niskala*, the intangible and invisible world. Rare examples are completed with a set of parallel red, white and black lines which, together with the uprising triangle form, symbolise the trinity of Brahma (Fire), Iswara (Air) and Wisnu (Water) or *ulu candra*, the head of the moon, the primary source of all life. It is for this reason that such textiles can be used as *busana bhatara*, i.e. to wrap shrines or clad statues of gods.

In the case of *bolong-bolong*, and particularly of the relatively simple chessboard pattern composed of full and empty squares, we meet with the same spiritual dualistic background as with the black and white checked *polêng* cloth, which is so important in Balinese belief and worldview. The following examples and comments by priests, offering specialists, and Brahmin weavers illustrate how their inner potency and protective powers might act:

- The base of an old stone shrine in a holy and spiritually strong ("hot") place at Sanur coast, which was devoted to some netherworld deity, was decorated, or better "clad", with an old black-and-white *polêng* fabric and with a very brittle white *bolong-bolong* cloth wrapped over it (see fig. 34). It seems quite obvious that the two textiles expressed the same basic idea, however *polêng* is considered "higher" than *bolong-bolong*. When two pieces of cloth are wrapped around a statue, a shrine or an object, the "higher" one is wrapped first. Hierarchy on different levels (objects, humans, rituals, cosmos) is a very important characteristic in Balinese culture and religion.

- According to a priest from Canggu in Badung old people long ago used to cover their head with a cloth at night in order to keep off any evil forces while sleeping.

- In Sempidi (Badung), where women still wear *bolong-bolong* at temple processions (see fig. 31), an interesting comment was given: "Our women wear these textiles at temple festivals so that they are not disturbed by any ghosts or evil forces.

When discussing with priests and other spiritually strong persons the idea of full and empty spaces in checked *bolong-bolong* (see figs 13 and 32) representing two equal antitheses (*isi* and *kosong*) in balance and, thereby, symbolizing a harmonious whole, turned out to be generally accepted by them. But common users are not conscious of this meaning. Most of them consider *bolong-bolong* just a beautiful fabric, and a very typical traditional Balinese one (*Bali asli*). More than to its pattern of empty and full squares, they attach deep significance to the yellow or white color it frequently displays and which are related to West and East, to the deities Mahadewa and Iswara, or to Buddha and Siwa respectively, or whose combination symbolizes the divine and pure in general. However, they believe in the pro-
tective and exorcistic power present in other objects with openings, which can be compared to fabrics with holes:

- When a child is born, the family suspends a *klangsah*, a small object loosely plaited from a (lontar ?) palm leaf, above the house entrance in order to prevent evil spirits to come in and harm the baby. The evil, according to their belief, would be caught in the holes.
- A similar concept explains the common custom of hanging up a *pompongan* at house corners. This is a hollow coconut shell with holes through which squirrels or other animals have eaten the contents. Bad spirits are believed to enter it and to get trapped inside.15

CONTINUITY

Today, production in Karangasem and Klungkung has practically died out, and only a few textile experts are still weaving these fine fabrics. Elderly Brahmin weavers and priestesses express their regret that after Independence and with the general tendency towards an all-Indonesian national style, both everyday and ceremonial dress have lost their fine differentiation of social identity. The rich language of textiles with its meanings, silent expressions, values and symbols is ultimately lost, they say.

Since around 1960 the people in the regencies of Tabanan and neighboring Badung, however, have shown great interest again in *bolong-bolong* and *tirtanadi*. Today, any shop specialized in textiles for ritual use and dance in the Badung market of Denpasar offers them for sale (see fig. 12). This wave of fashion for a younger generation is moving back to East Bali.

Several factors have caused this new development:

- the strong revival of Balinese textile production in various forms as a result of preference given to wearing indigenous fabrics as a symbol of self-identification with Balinese culture;
- the strictly followed *adat* rules concerning ritual wardrobe and cloths to be used in offerings and temple decorations;
- the efforts in revitalizing traditional, and creating new non-sacral, dance forms which require adequate costumes;
- the economic development in many parts of the island and the increased democratization of Balinese society, which allows many more of its members to acquire and wear expensive handmade Balinese textiles instead of gaudy industrially-manufactured fabrics from abroad;
- the creative and well-organized activities of an entrepreneur of the princely family in Belayu (Tabanan) which led to the extensive manufacture of *bolong-bolong* in that region and to a vivid trade to Denpasar and other parts of Bali.

At present, the use of *bolong-bolong* and related textiles can be observed at many ceremonial occasions:

- Women wear them as girdles (*seléndang*) or breastcloths as part of their formal apparel (see fig. 28). Even ladies of the Muslim and Christian minorities like to use them as headcoverings and shawls.
- At ceremonies for new born children (either at the navel cutting ceremony, at *ngaluang* 42 days, *nelubulanin* 105, or *otonin* 210 days after birth) in Denpasar. They are either part of the child's wardrobe, or else they are included in offerings (*rantasan*) presented to the ancestor thought to be reborn in the child. In fact, after birth, the family asks a *duāsm* for help to know who is incarnated in the child, and what desires she or he is expressing for the ceremony (*metetagahan*). It happens, though not too often, that the ancestor asks for a *bolong-bolong* which he or she used to wear during lifetime. Quite often, this fabric is placed in a small shrine suspended above the baby's sleeping place together with daily offerings for the ancestor.
- At a tooth filing ceremony in the palace Puri Dalem Mengwi in 1994, the offspring of the princely family was clad in sumptuous gold-printed perada and fine silk cloths. However, some girls of common families yet closely related to the family who were filed at the same ceremony, were wearing yellow sumping waluh (a transparent cloth with tiny brocaded flowers) or bolong-bolong as shoulder cloths (see fig. 29). Here it became obvious, that today bolong-bolong is considered as being of much lower status than the gold-decorated fabrics.

- Dealers at Denpasar market reported bolong-bolong and tirtanadi being sold for wedding wardrobe purposes and dance apparels (see fig. 30);

- Yellow or white bolong-bolong breastcloths (see figs 31 and 32) are still part of the uniform-like wardrobe for women at the procession for the annual temple festivals of the three main temples (kayangan tiga) at Sempidi (Badung). In neighboring villages of the same region, where wearing bolong-bolong breastcloths was a rule till the 1980s, this tradition has been given up under the influence of the Parisada Hindu Dharma, the Council of the Hindu Religion. This Council was established in 1959, after the recognition of Hinduism as one of the acknowledged religions of Indonesia, and gave out the order to wear all-Indonesian style kebaya blouses.

Summary
The authors suggest, that open-work bolong-bolong, tirtanadi and related fabrics are probably based on a foreign model (contact).

Further they show, how they were adapted to indigenous Balinese textile technology and deeply integrated into existing culture patterns and concepts of meaning and worldviews (crossover).

They also present, how they were, and still are (continuity), used in different categories of life cycle and temple ceremonies, performed either for humans (manusa yadnya), for the dead (pitr yadnya), or for the gods (dewa yadnya), however not at the highest ceremonial level (utama), but rather at a medium level (madia), as performed by people who are not too well-off.
References

Notes
1 The material presented in this article was collected by M.L. Nabholz-Kartaschoff in Tabanan and Badung (Southwest and South Bali), and completed with information about Karangasem and Klungkung (East Bali) from M. Palm-Nadolny, a Swiss living there since many years. We are grateful to Rens Heringa for several inspiring comments on this subject.
2 Only a few examples have been mentioned so far, i.e. Pelras 1962, p. 228; Wassing-Visser (n.d.), pl. 84; Khan Majlis 1991, fig. 128. The Museum of Ethnography Basel owns about sixty old and new specimens; more examples are in the collections of the Fowler Museum, UCLA, Los Angeles and in the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.
3 Other names for open-work textiles in Bali: bias membah, fine striped gauze fabric without any or with a few open weft bands only (Tabanan); cecawang, (cerik) macawang, from cawang, 'spool' (Tabanan, Badung); coba, (cerik macoba), from coba, 'spool' (Tabanan, Badung, Klungkung, Karangasem); gegalaran, striped gauze-like cloth with a few open weft bands, from galar, 'plaited bamboo mat for a bed (Karangasem); kakancan, striped ritual cloth with floating weft stripes and open weft bands at both ends (Karangasem); (cerik) langah (indones. 'spaced', 'wide open' (Badung); langah tepen duren, compared to an open durian fruit (Mengwi); (mapagan) papah, referring to a 'midrib of a palm leaf' introduced as lidi (Tabanan); remes popare, compared to an open paré, a kind of bitter melon, Momordica charantia Linn. (Tabanan); saudan, (cerik) saud, referring to plaitings or weavings with holes, 'not normal', 'with holes', saud also means 'a vow' (Badung).
4 The name rangrang is also used in Tabanan, however rarely.
5 Personal communication of Dr. H. Schulte-Northolt.
7 Pelras (1962, 228) explicitly mentions lontar palm stripes. The suggestion of Rens Heringa, that the use of lontar palm stripes might have a deep meaning will be followed up by the authors.
8 Hinzler 1993, p. 81.
9 Hinzler 1993, p. 77-78.
10 Ririsan is also used in Java for batik designs with a structure of diagonal pattern bands.
11 There are other textiles with gauze-like structures all-over or with spaced weft stripes, which are not included in this article, i.e. loosely woven weft ikat fabrics (endek), bebali textiles like kekancan (see Hauser-Schäublin, Nabholz-Kartaschoff and Ramseyyer 1991, pp. 17, 66), or the red gegaleran used at ritual occasions wrapped over a long hipcloth in Karangasem.
13 Personal communication and photograph by B. Hauser-Schäublin.
14 Hinzler 1993, pp. 72-73, 76.
15 Rens Heringa mentioned this similarity. She also pointed to the fact, that the threads of an angeenan are said to repel evil spirits. Angeenan is a coconut shell with a roof-like structure made from threads mounted with intervals which represents the "memory" of a deceased at death rituals.