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*UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History*

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## **Warp Ikat in Mindanao and Indonesia: Some Comparisons and Their Implications**

by  
Roy W. Hamilton

Although textiles were a major focus of Laura Watson Benedict's work, the only book she published deals primarily with Bagobo ceremonial life and only tangentially with textiles. She never followed up with any direct treatment of the textiles themselves and neither she nor anyone since has ever published a systematic description and classification of the warp ikat textiles of the various weaving groups in Mindanao. The work that went into developing *From the Rainbow's Varied Hue*, involving not only Benedict's collection, but several others around the world, has put us in a much better position for doing so. This paper will begin by reviewing the current status of such an effort, based on the methods used by Mindanao weavers, not only for the production of fiber and cloth, but also for the structuring of warp ikat designs.

In the process of this review, it will be apparent that the methods used in Mindanao differ in important ways from those in Indonesia (most obviously in fiber production), but also show some surprising similarities (especially in design formatting). These similarities and differences will be examined in terms of their implications for the textile history of the region. In particular, the often repeated assumption that warp ikat weaving on abaca fiber represents an "archaic" tradition will be called into question. Furthermore, similarities in design formats over wide areas suggest that something more than the often cited influence of Indian trade textiles might have been at work.

Roy W. Hamilton is Curator for Southeast Asian and Oceanic Collections at the UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History. He is the curator of the exhibition *From the Rainbow's Varied Hue: Textiles of the Southern Philippines* and the principal author of the catalog for the exhibition. He is currently overseeing the development of a number of Asian projects at the museum, as well as the planning for a formal series of textile publications. Earlier projects include *Gift of the Cotton Maiden: Textiles of Flores and the Solor Islands* (1994, curator and principal author) and *The Women's Warpath: Iban Ritual Fabrics from Borneo* (1996, managing director).