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CLOTH AS MARRIAGE GIFTS. CHANGE IN EXCHANGE AMONG THE LIO OF FLORES

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INTRODUCTION

The exchange of gifts at life cycle ceremonies is one of the most important institutions in Lio society (cf. Howell 1989), as in many other societies in Oceania (cf. Strathern 1987, Weiner 1989). The life cycle event of marriage and its exchange of gifts is often significant, because important sociopolitical alliances between kin groups are initiated or renewed. In these exchanges, cloth wealth may play a crucial role, especially in ranked societies. Weiner (1989:50) contends that in Samoa "each distribution [of fine mats] is an example of the negotiation and validation of rank and power". Gittinger (1979:19) has pointed out the economic and symbolic value of cloth gifts at marriage in Indonesia: "The most important use of textiles is as gifts. This importance comes both from their real value and from their symbolic value as the product of women." I shall investigate the points made by these authors concerning cloth gifts as well as the participation of cloth producers in the exchange of gifts at marriage in Lio society.

In the course of this century, the exchange of gifts at marriage has undergone amazing changes in Lio weaving villages in Central Flores. At the beginning of the more intensive Dutch colonial administration in Flores in about 1910, the highest ranking families in the weaving village of Nggela exchanged up to twenty pairs of traditional golden ear-drops (wéé se kati) against three pieces of cloth at bridewealth ceremonies. About 1950, shortly after independence, a maximum of five pairs of ear-drops were bestowed against six pieces of cloth. Today a maximum of three pairs of golden ear-drops (ómé mbulu se tenga and ómé mbulu rua se tenga) are bestowed as bridewealth prestation, but about fifty, in exceptional cases up to one hundred, pieces of cloth as counterprestation. Gold jewelry and cloth are the most outstanding prestige goods in this society. Whereas gold jewelry as a so-called male gift, given by the family of the bridegroom, has obviously forfeited its former importance, at least quantitatively, cloth as a female gift, given by the family of the bride, has become more prominent. At the end of the 1930s, new rituals were even being created for the public display of cloth wealth, one at the bridewealth ceremony (tolo nata) and one at the wedding (tolé towa). The questions I wish to tackle in this paper are: How does gift exchange at marriage work? Why has cloth wealth as marriage prestation increased, whereas gold jewelry has decreased? And what consequences does it have for women as cloth producers? Before embarking on these questions I shall outline the main characteristics of Lio society and the significance of cloth wealth.

THE ATA LIO AND CLOTH WEALTH

The Lio people of central Flores subsist mainly on swidden agriculture. Traditionally their society consists of politically autonomous village clusters, so-called adat communities, with slightly different local customary laws and headed by a council of adat leaders (mosa...
laki), presided over by a chief (mosa laki pu'u). Dutch colonization and Catholic missionary efforts were intensified in Flores only at the beginning of this century and brought about certain economic and cultural changes (cf. van Suchtelen 1921, Dietrich 1989). Independence in 1945 led to a more thorough restructuring of Lio society, especially on the sociopolitical level. Yet many former societal characteristics survived, albeit somewhat transformed. This especially applies to the rank system, which divides the population, the Ata Lio, into three groups: high-ranking people (ata ria), who descend from the founding clans of the adat communities, middle-ranking people (ana fai walu), who descend from the clans that settled afterwards, and low-ranking people (ata ko'o), who descend from former slaves. Marriage practices are still heavily influenced by the rank system.

Lio society can be further divided into two sections according to the main productive task of the women: North Lio, where the women do agricultural work; and South Lio, where the women produce cloth.3 This regional division of labor is institutionalized by Lionese adat, probably to support trade between the rather dry southern part, where there is frequent shortage of food, and the more fertile north. The weaving population amounts to approximately 10'000 cloth producers, comprising about 4'000 households, i.e. about 10% of all Lio households. The weavers traditionally produce women's sarongs, men's sarongs and shoulder cloths for their own use, for ritual exchange at life cycle ceremonies (pulu) and for regional trade. This regional and gender division of labor enabled a parallel female and male culture to develop in South Lio: on the one hand, women's cloth production, with an elaborate 'cloth system' as I call it, i.e. a repertoire of named cloth types with socially and religiously meaningful motifs and designs; and on the other hand, men's production of food, today mainly for subsistence, with an elaborate system of agricultural rituals (nggua) of sociopolitical and religious significance. This gendered 'dual culture' is particularly prominent in the weaving village of Nggela, where I conducted about two years of field work and which is the starting point of my argument.

The village society of Nggela, one of the centers of Lio adat (cf. Prior 1988:62), reflects the main traits of Lio society and culture and at the same time shows some peculiar characteristics of its own. The people of Nggela, the Ata Nggela, also identify themselves as a local group, with a culture and a language of their own. Traditionally, Nggela is more stratified than many other Lio villages. Today it is still more determined by stratifying principles of rank than of class. Rivalry about status positions, which is typical of rank systems, dominates village life. It permeates social relations generally as they are often conceived of in terms of "winning" and "losing", and it is particularly evident in life cycle ceremonies and formerly also in agricultural ceremonies.4 In Nggela, the highest amounts of bridewealth are given and the most abundant counterprestation, particularly cloth. Descent is calculated not only patrilinearly, but also matrilinearly. Membership in certain matriclans (kunu) is decisive for rank as well as for titles and positions, and confers special qualities in the ikatting of cloth.5 Cloth is also inherited in the matrilineal line. Succession as well as the inheritance of land is organized through membership in patrilineages (suku) or named Houses (sa'o).6 In Nggela, residence is matrilocal, whereas in other Lio villages residence is patrilocal. The weavers have created the largest cloth system, with thirty-three named cloth types (cf. de Jong 1994). On average they invest about a third of the fifteen pieces of cloth they yearly produce in gift exchange.

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3 Howell (1989), who did fieldwork in North Lio, also proposes this division.
4 The yearly cycle of agricultural rituals has not been performed in Nggela since 1980.
5 Sugishima (1994) is the first scholar who to emphasize the significance of Lio matrilineal descent. He focuses on its symbolic aspects, but does not investigate its sociopolitical dimensions.
6 The named Houses are physically represented in the ceremonial houses (sa'o nggua) of the patrilineages. A normal living house is normally called one in Nggela. Cf. also nai one, the term for betrothal which literally means "to enter the house [of the future wife]".
and the more they produce, the more they give. This strategy runs counter to Western ideas of
development, because the weavers cannot directly obtain cash income if they bestow cloths,
rather than sell them. The exchange of cloth wealth used to be performed most abundantly at
death, but today it is at marriage. I shall now analyze the marriage process and its exchange of
gifts.

THE MARRIAGE PROCESS

There are several publications which deal with Lionese marriage according to adat
marriage practices, on which I shall focus here. In the village society of Nggela, three kinds
of marriage are performed: marriage by formal courtship (tana alé), marriage by informal
courtship (po’u uta, wangga kaju) and marriage by elopement (paru nai). They differ in re­
spect of the involvement of the parents and of the bride and bridegroom. With marriage by
formal courtship, the parents have a decisive say from the start. This most prestigious kind of
marriage implies a high brideprice from close kinsmen of the bridegroom (bride-takers) to the
parents and to the mother's brothers of the bride (bride-givers), comprising traditional vulva­
shaped golden ear-drops (wea) (Figure 1), if available, animals and money (eko kereta). The
bride's kin reciprocate with cloths and rice (pata benga), as well as other raw and cooked
food (are podo). Only high and middle ranking, wealthy and large families, approximately
50% of the village population, can afford this large expenditure. According to Lionese adat ,
every marriage should entail the giving of bridewealth. As this is not guaranteed before the
wedding with the other two kinds of marriages, I shall concentrate here on marriage by
formal courtship.

Formerly this kind of marriage began with the official request and a betrothal cere­
mony, with exchange of minor gifts, and was completed after the ceremonial delivery of the
main part of the bridewealth. More elaborate exchange of gifts at betrothal only started in the
1960s. A real wedding feast did not exist until the 1930s. Today, influenced by the Catholic
church, the marriage consists of three main ceremonies: betroth, bridewealth delivery and
wedding. The wedding feast normally takes place immediately after the church marriage and
can be regarded as a kind of complement to adat marriage. At each ceremony, bridewealth
goods and countergifts of cloth are exchanged. Actually the whole marriage process, which
lasts about two years, centers around the exchange of gifts and one could regard the betrothal
as the first step and the wedding as the last one in the presentation of bridewealth goods.

The betrothal (nai oné) takes place after the young woman and her parents have
agreed to the marriage proposal of the young men, which is officially made by a go-between
(gha'i jala), sent by the family of the young man. In a small family circle in the house of the
young woman, the betrothal is officially announced. As a first visible sign of the new rela­
tionship, three pieces of cloth, a men's sarong and shoulder cloth and a women's sarong, are
presented to the intended husband. As a countergift the go-between gives bridewealth goods
on behalf of the parents of the groom: gold jewelry, if available, and money. Later on, ani­
mal, for instance. a horse and a pig, and betelnuts, are brought to the house of the wife.
Gifts of betelnuts (mota kêu) symbolize, that the young man is now engaged and not sexually
free any more. The young, high-ranking woman is generally expected to keep her virginity,
otherwise the brideprice would be reduced. If gold jewelry has been given, the parents of the
brides bestow further large gifts of food some days later (tu longgo wea). Through these initial
acts of gift exchange, close relations are established not only between the engaged couple, but
also between their families. These affinal relations, called wuru mana, oblige both families to
reciprocal help and services (para laka) and to gift exchange (pati welli) at future life cycle cer-
Figure 1. A pair of traditional vulva-shaped golden ear-drops, weá, lying on a large men's sarong, luka ria. Nggela, 1993.

Figure 2. The bride and her kinswomen offer bundles of cloth to the father of the groom and his kinsmen in the tolo nata ritual. Nggela, 1987.
emonies. Moreover, the bride has now acquired certain rights and obligations in the family of the groom. She can distribute food and she has to perform a kind of groom service for their parents-in-law until the wedding.

The delivery of the main part of the bridewealth (tu ria) is much more elaborate and many more kin participate in it. It is a public event, because the delivery of bridewealth is only validated if the village community can witness the occasion. Before, at the house of the bridegroom and at the house of the bride, animals and money, and cloths and rice are collected from the respective relatives, sometimes accompanied by large meals. At the feast near the house of the bride (nggewa té’è), the parents of the groom, their closest consanguinal kinsmen (aji ka’è) and their bride-takers (weta ane’), present animals and money (for instance two horses, five pigs, one goat and Rp. 400.000), and possibly another pair of golden ear-drops, to the parents of the bride. In return, the parents of the bride, their consanguinal kinsmen (aji-ka’è) and their bride-givers (nara amè) offer betelnuts and bundles of cloths (for instance fifty-three pieces) to the groom’s kin, who have given animals. This ritual is called tolo nata (Figure 2). After these acts of gift giving, the family of the bride serves an opulent meal. Some days afterwards, the parents of the bride again give large gifts of raw and cooked food in return for the gift of gold jewelry (tu longgo wea). If the brideprice does not come up the expectations of the bride’s parents, they are entitled as bride-givers to demand more animals or money. And if the counterprestation does not correspond to the wishes of the groom’s parents, they have recently started to request more cloths. The elaborate gift giving often causes conflicts between the two families, because both sides are anxious not to be disadvantaged. This may also lead to frictions between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law and between mother and daughter. In certain cases, it even leads to the separation of the couple after marriage. With the delivery of the main part of the bridewealth the bride is officially incorporated into the patrilineage of the groom, with full rights and obligations.

With the wedding (tau nika), the adat marriage is confirmed by the Catholic church and therewith also recognized by the Indonesian state. The wedding can also be considered as the last stage in the delivery of bridewealth, because once again the family of the groom gives animals, mostly two pigs and one goat or one cow (tu éko nika), money and some time ago, in rare cases, gold jewelry, too. As a countergift, the parents of the bride bestow rice. These gifts are given at the announcement of the marriage in the church (pai naja) and shortly before the wedding feast. On the eve of the wedding, the mother’s brothers of the bride offer the groom wedding clothing for the couple, in a similar way as at the betrothal. After the wedding mass, the couple first visits the house of the groom and afterwards goes to the house of the bride, where the actual feast takes place, with eating and traditional dancing with the swinging of shoulder cloths (toja). Several hundred guests are invited to this feast. All bring gifts, a small amount of money at least, or a household article, thread for weaving or a shoulder cloth. Relatives of the groom give money too, without a special ritual. Before the meal, the ritual of cloth giving (for instance twenty-five pieces) takes place, by close consanguinal and affinal kinsmen of the bride, called tolé towá. After the wedding feast, the couple will eat for four nights with close kinsmen of the bride (ka are dengè). This represents the wedding ceremony of former times, the joint meals symbolizing marital life. The couple was not allowed to change clothing and had a ritual bath only after this period of four days. Gift giving by the newly wed couple, betelnuts to the parents of the bride and cloths to those kin of the groom who gave animals for the wedding, complete the marriage in Nggela. The couple is now responsible for its own household, although for some time they will often live in the house of the parents of the woman. In patrilocal Lio villages, according to adat, the

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7 Marriage exchanges in other Eastern Indonesian societies create similar affinal relations, as Barnes (1980) has shown.
8 The Catholic church does not allow divorces.

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marriage is only validated after an additional ritual of leading the bride to the house of the groom (*tu mera sa'ō*) with gifts of three or five pieces of cloth and rice by her parents.

**MARRIAGE GIFTS AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN**

With marriage by formal courtship, the presentation of bridewealth (*ngawu*) is of central concern. From an indigenous point of view, the giving of bridewealth goods is proof that the groom will provide for the bride and her offspring and that she is gradually being incorporated into the House of her husband. At the same time, rights are conferred on the bride, and especially on her offspring, by the family of the bridegroom. The bride herself also acquires rights in the family of the bridegroom, for instance to inherit wealth, especially land and animals, from her husband after his death. Moreover, she also maintains certain rights in her natal family, for instance to inherit cloth from her mother and to receive gifts and support from her brother.

Bridewealth with gold jewelry, called *belis*, and locally manufactured out of Portuguese gold coins, is most highly valued. A bride who marries with gold jewelry is held in much higher social esteem than a bride for whom no gold jewelry is given. Before independence, according to *adat*, bridewealth always had to include golden ear-drops. Almost all marriages were contracted with gold jewelry at that time, and bride-givers had the right to claim it, which was a hardship for poor bride-takers. Brides sometimes practised marriage by elopement to avoid exorbitant bridewealth demands by their parents, but these brides were not respected in Nggela. Around 1950, Ata Nggela still used to give at least two pairs of golden ear-drops (*omé mbulu se liwu*) for a bride with special skills in ikat weaving. Subsequently much of the gold jewelry was sold to provide for school fees, and as a bridewealth item it was partly substituted by money. Bridewealth without gold jewelry, which is less valued, is now called "mother milk" (*air susu ibu*).

According to the norms of *adat*, patrilineally related kin groups of men arrange marriages and gift giving in Lio society and in the village community of Nggela. Looked at in a more narrow context, gift exchange takes place between married sibling pairs, i.e. between sisters and brothers. The Ata Nggela say: "The brother gives cloth and the sister gives animals" (*Nara pati luka lawo, weta pati ēko*). Accordingly, the bride-givers who give cloth are addressed as brothers (*nara amé*) and the bride-takers who give animals are addressed as sisters (*weta ané*). This corresponds also to the ideal marriage of the matrilateral cross-cousin. In this case, brother and sister also exchange their daughter and son respectively. Whether they exchange their children or "only" material items, the institution of gift exchange enables the sister to keep a close social, economic and ritual contact with her natal family and House. The participation of women in gift exchange in the role of sister is thus formally acknowledged in Nggela society.

Considered from a household perspective, women in their role of wife and mother can also participate in gift exchange at marriage. This seems to be based on three factors of control. Firstly, they have the right to control the production and distribution of their own wealth, cloth, which has become the most important multifunctional product in Nggela: a necessary daily and festive piece of clothing for women and men, a significant prestige item and an indispensable market product. Through the selling of cloth it is mainly women who earn money and buy additional food and provide for school fees now. Secondly, women

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9 Marriages of this kind may comprise 10% in Nggela today, whereas in some Lio villages 90% of the marriages are of this kind (cf. Prior 1988:250).

10 This fact shows that gold jewelry exchanged in alliance relations does not belong to the House, as Howell (1989:431) assumes, but to individual households.

11 Howell (1990) emphasises the importance of the relationship between brother and sister among the Lio.
have the right to control household resources, such as food and money, a kind of control which in practice is extended to gift exchange. Thirdly, after their husbands' death, women have the right to control their husbands' wealth, such as animals, which means that they can also have some say over it beforehand in their role of wife and household manager.

The mother of the bride can thus directly decide about the range of female gifts. This is the case with the numerous gifts of food such as rice which she distributes herself. But it concerns even more the clothes she produces and the ones collected from relatives. This can lead to conflicts with her daughter, for instance if the mother withholds certain pieces. Indirectly she can also influence male gifts. By "seducing" the parents of the groom with abundant gifts of food she may lead to them also making generous gifts of animals and money. As a member of the bride-givers she can have a say in rejecting animals or even gold jewelry of minor quality and demanding more animals and money.

The mother of the groom can usually participate in gift giving indirectly. She may have influence on the giving of male valuables: on gold jewelry which the household may have obtained through her marriage or through the marriage of her daughter which she may have brought about; on money, which she herself may have earned by the selling of cloth; and even on animals, after they have been collected from relatives and given to her husband for the delivery of bridewealth, for instance by replacing a pregnant pig by another one. Moreover today she can influence the giving of female gifts. She may demand more cloths as a counterprestation for the bride-price or she may request the bride to change a piece of cloth if its quality is inadequate. Here she may come into conflict with her daughter-in-law.

Traditionally the bride and the bridegroom do not contribute goods of their own in the exchange of gifts during the marriage process. But they provide their labour, particularly the bride. She can also indirectly influence the giving of cloth. If her relatives do not give enough cloth or if it is of poor quality, she may press them to give more pieces or some of better quality. Unlike the groom, she also presents herself publicly: she offers cloths to her father-in-law at the tolo nata ritual during the feast of the delivery of bridewealth as a sign that she is now a "child" (ana) of his family and House. At first glance it is mainly men who arrange marriages and bridewealth transactions. But if we have a closer look behind the scenes, women take an active part in marriage arrangements, in exchange of bridewealth and especially in the giving of counterprestations. Women's participation in marriage affairs, which is based largely on acknowledged domains of control, is also publicly expressed in the rituals of cloth giving.

THE RITUALS OF CLOTH GIVING

The tolo nata ritual consists in the public offering of betelnuts, together with bundles of one to four cloths by the kin of the bride to those kinsmen of the groom who have given animals as bridewealth to the parents and the mother's brothers of the bride. Only female kin of the bride and the bride herself, but not her mother, participate in this ceremonial act. In the presence of the bride the mother of the groom examines the cloth gifts afterwards and will eventually demand more or other cloths. She keeps one bundle for herself and her husband and distributes the others. The bride and her friends bring the packages of cloths to the relatives of the groom.

In the tolé towa ritual (Figure 3) it is mainly female kin of the bride who present cloth gifts, the wife of the eldest mother's brother (fai eda) of the bride first. This time the cloth gifts are for the wedding couple and represent the initial wealth of their household (pati pu'u). This ritual act symbolizes that direct economic cooperation of the bride with her parents is over now, which the bride usually expresses in an outburst of weeping. In her role as a wife she has to start to manage her own household resources and has to come to terms with the delicate task of gift giving.
Fig. 3. Female kin of the bride offer cloth to the wedding couple in the *tolé towa* ritual, while the bride is weeping. Nggela, 1991.

Figure 4. The shoulder cloth *luka sëmba* with patola motifs is an important ritual cloth worn by *adat* leaders and it is given to male bride-takers at marriage. 211 x 61 cm. Collection of author.

Figure 5. A naturally dyed women's sarong with patola-derived motifs, *lawo redu*, is given as a bridewealth cloth to the mother of the groom. 182 x 75 cm. Collection of author.
The development of new rituals for cloth giving at marriage indicates that cloth gifts have become increasingly important. Furthermore there has gradually been an increase in the numbers of cloths given at these rituals, as surplus production of cloth grew. Particularly high-ranking families tended to bring about changes that were emulated by other families. For example, at the end of the 1970s one of the important high-ranking families started to give a third piece of cloth, a women’s sarong, at the betrothal ceremony. This is now a common custom in wealthy families.

Bridewealth goods are still considered as marriage gifts of primary importance in Nggela society as they publicly confirm the incorporation of the bride in the family of the groom with its corresponding rights. Cloth gifts are said to honor the groom and his family only. But there is evidently more behind them, otherwise the mother of the groom would not try to request more cloth and the bride herself would not eventually seek to give more of it to her in-laws. And interestingly enough, gift giving at marriage starts and ends with the giving of cloth. In addition to the symbolic value as women’s products connected with the flow of life, cloth gifts also have an economic value in Lio society, as Gittinger (1979) has noticed in other Indonesian societies. Poorer women in Nggela sometimes compare the system of gift exchange with a saving or insurance system, similar to the rotating credit associations (artisan). Moreover, gifts confer prestige and influence or power to the giver, especially to men and women of high rank, who are able to give abundantly. This also applies to cloth gifts, as Weiner (1989) has indicated for the ranking society of Samoa. Nggela women say that the giving of a highly valued large men’s sarong represents "a large mouth" (wiwi ria). "To have a mouth" (wiwi) means to be able to speak and is often used as a metaphor for authority. Statements of adat leaders also indicate that adequate cloth gifts strengthen the voice of the bride-givers and particularly the decision-making power of the bride herself in the family of the groom. This aspect may also find its cultural expression in the rituals of cloth giving.

PREFERRED CLOTHS AS MARRIAGE GIFTS

If a large bridewealth with gold jewelry and many animals is given, the parents of the bride should respond with an adequately large amount of women’s ikat sarongs and men’s striped sarongs and ikat shoulder cloths. Women’s sarongs with horizontal bands which show only simple ikat design (de Jong 1994: fig. 10-7) and which the women slightly contemptuously call "non-ikatted thread sarongs" (lawo Ielu) should not be given as marriage gift.

Cloth gifts as counterprestation to bridewealth should include at least a large naturally dyed black ritual men’s sarong with fine squares (luka ria) (Figure 1, de Jong 1994: 12).

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12 I therefore cannot agree with Howell (1989:429) when she uses use the more general term 'alliance exchanges' rather than 'bridewealth'.

13 Comaroff (1980:20-21 also points to the political character of marriage gifts, but does not go into detail. I suggest that any act of gift giving conveys the giver a certain power, as it causes debts in a broad sense and consequently relations of dependence which are not as easily balanced as in transactions of buying and selling. Mauss (1923/24:33) already made the same statement, but with a somewhat different argumentation: "What obliges in the received or exchanged gift result from the fact that the received object is not lifeless. Even when the giver has transferred it, it still is a part of the giver. Through the gift the giver has power over the receiver (...)" (Translation WdJ). Bourdieu (1976:135) contends that the size of marriage gifts in a peasant society reinforces the position of the spouse who brings it into the marriage: "The position of the spouses in the domestic power structure or, to use Max Weber’s vocabulary, their chances of success in the competition for authority over the family, that is, for the monopoly of legitimately exercising power in domestic affairs, are definitely related to the material and symbolic capital [i.e. the value of kin, life-style and social respect] they bring into the marriage.”
fig. 10-14), the "large mouth" mentioned before, as well as a ritual shoulder cloth with patola motifs (luka sêmba) (Figure 4, Hamilton 1994: fig. 6-35) for the father of the groom and a naturally dyed women's sarong with certain traditional patola-like motifs (lawo redu) (Figure 5, de Jong 1994: fig. 10-9) for the mother of the groom. Both large men's sarongs and naturally dyed women's sarongs are cloths that are highly valued, but scarce, in Nggela today. Like gold jewelry for bridewealth, Nggela women store the large men's sarong that comes into the household with the marriage of a son in order to exchange it later at the marriage of a daughter. The other cloths they receive are also exchanged at future life cycle ceremonies and sometimes they are sold. The weavers seldom wear cloth that has been bestowed. However, there are no sarongs which are exclusively used as bridewealth sarongs in marriage exchange today (cf. Barnes 1989). Most cloths are now produced with synthetic dyes and until recently large men's sarongs had ceased to be manufactured. Single high-ranking weavers have started to make it again, in order to be able to adequately reciprocate the bridewealth for their daughters.

Formerly the bride also received the above-mentioned lawo redu from her mother's brothers as a wedding dress. Today she has any cloth with rich ikat designs or even a Western bride gown. The groom has a small men's sarong (luka mîté) with chemise and a shoulder cloth, or sometimes a suit.

WHY HAVE CLOTH GIFTS AT MARRIAGE INCREASED?

We have seen that striking changes in gift exchange have taken place in the village society of Nggela. Cloth gifts have become much more prominent. Why is it that cloths as marriage gifts have gained such importance? At the end of the colonial area, with the growing integration of Lio society into an Indonesian state, the village council of high-ranking lineage heads gradually lost its legitimacy to enforce adat rules that were too strict and too hard to fulfill for the poorer part of the village population. This included high bridewealth demands to which bride-givers were entitled, particularly gold jewelry, a wealth item that had become more and more scarce. High-ranking bride-givers probably tried to secure their threatened loss of prestige and power by creating rituals for the public display of their cloth gifts and by giving larger amounts of cloth, a wealth item that had become increasingly available. The abundant giving of cloth as a counterprestation to bridewealth among the neighboring Ende people (van Suchtelen 1921: 112) may have served as an example, possibly because of intermarriage with Ende people in high-ranking families.

In addition to these sociopolitical factors, which may have led to the increase of cloth gifts, economic factors created a necessary condition for the availability of cloth wealth. At the end of the 1930s, after the Depression, the monetary economy expanded on Flores, so wealthy and high-ranking families were able to purchase more machine-spun thread, which actually was available since the intensification of Dutch colonial administration. Thus cloth production grew. After independence, the manufacture of cloth became more egalitarian, because high-ranking women lost their monopoly on certain ikat motifs. Weavers of all ranks could now create all ikat motifs, at best limited by age. So high-ranking wealthy weavers could have poorer women work for them more easily and produce a larger surplus. During the 1970s, synthetical dyes were introduced on a large scale in the village society of Nggela. Through this technological innovation cloth production increased even more.

CONCLUSIONS

To get access to new resources of wealth, prestige and power, namely formal education and public offices, Ata Nggela have sold a great deal of gold jewelry since the
1950s and also more and more cloths, particularly with the spread of tourism in the 1980s. As gold jewelry has grown scarcer, it has increased in value, so that twenty pairs of golden ear-drops in the past have roughly the value of three pairs today. But whereas the economic and cultural importance of gifts of gold jewelry may be the same, its sociopolitical importance, which is also expressed in the number of wealth items, is not the same as in former times. The growing availability of cloth wealth has not affected its devaluation, as market demands have also risen. The value of large men's sarongs and of naturally dyed women's sarongs has even increased. So cloth gifts have become more important in economic, cultural and sociopolitical terms than before independence.

As a consequence, by giving cloth that women themselves produce and control, they participate more than ever before in the system of prestige and power, and they exercise influence that goes beyond their own households. Moreover, by manufacturing cloth they provide their family and themselves with essential clothing, and by selling cloth they provide their households with essential funds. But the more surplus cloth the weavers produce, the stronger is the social pressure to bestow them as gifts, and the more easily there arise conflicts among women about cloth gifts, especially between mothers and daughters and between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. For in their different roles these women have different interests and pursue different strategies in the exchange of cloth gifts, be it quantitatively or qualitatively, as managers of their own households and as active members of their marital and natal families.

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15 Converted into horses, the value of twenty pairs of golden ear-drops formerly and three pairs today approximately corresponds to seven horses. Formerly one women's sarong was worth one third of a horse, the same as today. Now a large men's sarong is worth one horse, and a naturally dyed women's sarong is worth one horse and a half.
Hamilton, Roy W.  

Howell, Signe  

de Jong, Willemijn.  

Mauss Marcel  

Misa Wasa, Leo W.  

Prior, John M.  

Strathern, Marilyn  

van Suchtelen, B.C.C.M.M.  
1921 *Endeh (Flores).* Weltevreden: Papyrus.

Sugishima, Takashi  

Weiner, Annette B.  