



Textiles of Timor, Island in the Woven Sea (Fowler Museum Textile)

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Timor has been a divided island at least since the seventeenth century when Dutch and Portuguese colonial empires competed for its control. Despite this fragmentation, the weaving of cloth has remained intimately linked to the cultural history of the Timorese peoples as a whole. Handwoven cotton garments serve as markers of identity and nurture social relationships when they are exchanged.

Women in Timor weave an impressive variety of cloth, routinely combining more weaving techniques than any other region of Southeast Asia. This technical prowess and diversity of design make weaving the most important form of artistic expression in Timor and allow groups as small as individual families to proclaim their unique heritage.

Independence for Timor-Leste (East Timor) in 2002 - following invasion by Indonesia and years of violent warfare (1975–1999) - brought with it more stable conditions and improved access for researchers. *Textiles of Timor, Island in the Woven Sea* brings together for the first time woven works from all parts of the island, demonstrating that the textile arts form a common foundation uniting Timor's diverse peoples despite the painful history of the country's division.

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