Conclusion

Siakiana has changed more rapidly than many other communities in the Solomon Islands. This may be related to its small size which leaves it vulnerable to outside influence. But it also reflects the choices and desires of the Siakiana people who wished to incorporate western institutions and technology into their society and sought what they perceived to be the advantages derived from the incorporation of these outside influences. It is difficult to predict the extent to which Siakiana will remain a distinctive community. Certainly, through emigration and the development of western institutions on the island, it is becoming assimilated into a wider social and cultural system. This raises an important issue about the development of a national culture within the Solomon Islands. Solomon Islanders from many different local communities share experiences in their conversion to Christianity, administration by a national government, working for wages, and attending national secondary schools. Moreover, the churches, government and schools are all centralized administrative systems that are attempting to integrate culturally diverse local communities. Although these institutions were introduced originally by Europeans, they have developed according to indigenous interpretations. Future studies of social change in the Solomon Islands should investigate two issues: (1) the traditional culture and the history of western influences within specific local communities, and (2) the extent to which different local communities in the Solomon Islands are developing shared institutions and values as they incorporate these outside influences.

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Acknowledgment

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Volcano usually hidden in clouds, from which the Minangkabau ancestors are supposed to have descended long ago (Fig. 1). Expanding outward from this center, referred to as the heartland (daerah) of the Minangkabau world, is the migration area (rantau) where some one-half of the Minangkabau people live. The rantau is located in the western coastal lowlands of West Sumatra and in all the adjacent Sumatran states. A substantial number of Minangkabau have also made their home in other parts of Indonesia, as well as in Malaysia where the state of Negri Sembilan was formed from groups tracing their origin to the Minangkabau heartland sometime in the 18th century (Fig. 2).

Matrilineal and migration constitute two crucial axes in the social life of the sexes. Traditionally, young men were expected to leave their homes and villages in order to prove their worth, leaving their sisters and mothers securely in charge of the matrilineal property.

The Codification of Minangkabau Viewpoint

PEGGY R. SANDAY and SUWATTI KARIWA

One of the prominent Indonesian ethnic groups, the Minangkabau constitute 3% of the entire Indonesian population and one-quarter of the Sumatran population. The Minangkabau pride themselves on their matrilineal social system, believing this to provide the core of their customary law and the basis for their social identity. Known also for their literary flair, practicality, flexibility, and acute business sense, Indonesians of Minangkabau ancestry hold important political, economic, and domestic offices in the political mainstream of their country. These are a proud people who celebrate their traditional identity and participate actively in the affairs of their nation.

Local tradition places the origin of the Minangkabau world in the highlands of West Sumatra, an area of stunning natural beauty, which has probably been inhabited since at least the Neolithic period and probably much earlier. Here lies Mt. Merapi, the enigmatic
While away from their villages men were expected to provide economic support to their mothers and wives. Although separated from the matrilineal household during their years in the ruton, men played a crucial role along with their kinwomen in the economic and social continuation of the matrilineage, and they continue to play this role today. Women remain in the village with their kinwomen, where they form a structurally central core which upholds the lineage and customary law. As one woman said: “Women cannot leave their homes to go somewhere like men do. A woman stays in the place where she was born and upholds Minangkabau custom [adat]. The way a woman behaves is part of custom; she keeps adat going through her behavior.” The co-resident core of kinwomen is reinforced by the practice of matrilocality. Traditionally, women live with their families in the matrilineal longhouse. This house, with its distinctive roof type (Fig. 3), symbolizes both matriliney and Minangkabau ethnic identity. The buffalo-horn shape of the roof top is repeated in the ceremonial headdress worn by women (Fig. 4).

The Minangkabau mother enjoys an ideologically and structurally central position. In the Minangkabau ‘state myth,’ Bundo Kanduang, a queen, whose name in translation means “real mother,” is considered the source of wisdom, the original queen who “stood by herself, created together with the universe,” and who is equal in fame to the kings of the “Land of Rum, the Land of China, of the Sea, and of a four-branched lineage.” Today, this myth is enacted in a musical form (song narrative drama) which displays the Minangkabau concept of their history (Fig. 5). It is not surprising that in the literature of the past and even today, the Minangkabau are often referred to as “matrarchical,” but Nancy Isherwood’s term “matrilocal” is a more apt term for it preserves the structurally central position of the mother while leaving room for the very important contribution men make to Minangkabau culture (1974:133).

Men occupy the main leadership roles, and are also seen as the upholders of customary law. They maintain this position by virtue of their knowledge of the adat words and...
speeches so essential to the proper performance of customary ceremonies (Fig. 6) which, in turn, are framed by the equally indispensable contributions by women of ceremonial food and the traditional costumes worn at these ceremonies. Thus, although the roles of men and women are kept separate, these roles form the interconnected strands of the rope of adat that upholds and perpetuates the Minangkabau world.

This paper presents an analysis of the materialization of Minangkabau adat in traditional textiles (called songket). These textiles provide more than the material for the colorful costumes worn for all traditional ceremonies (Fig. 8). The way in which songket is worn and the symphony of motifs woven into the fabric make a statement to the world at large, a statement that gives form to Minangkabau worldview and feeling to the tone, character, and quality of Minangkabau life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood. Although not every Minangkabau can speak with the same degree of authority about the meaning of traditional clothing, those who do can engage the investigator in a discourse on Minangkabau worldview and expected behavior as codified by their adat. Because weaving is solely a woman’s occupation, the following focuses primarily on women’s contribution to the perpetuation of Minangkabau traditional culture. It is important to keep in mind, however, that men understand the meaning of many of the weaving motifs, which are also found in the designs carved by men on traditional houses and are passed on, in oral form, in the proverb men speak on ceremonial occasions.

The Relationship Between Adat and Weaving

Most behavior is discussed by the Minangkabau in terms of its fit with adat. Often a person’s reputation is based on his or her expertise in adat lore. Adat, an Arabic word, is referred to by scholars as tradition, custom, or "customary law.” According to Abdullah, a Minangkabau social scientist, adat pervades Minangkabau thinking and philosophy: it is "the whole structural system of society"; it forms "the entire value system, the basis of all ethical and legal judgment... as well as the source of social expectations" (1966:1). A male leader said:

Adat is central to our life, it determines the way we act, and gives us rules for living. Without adat people would be like wild animals in the jungle; the strong would conquer the weak, the tallest would defeat the shortest, and the strongest would hold down the smallest.

Discussions about adat quickly become considerations of rules for behavior and the underlying philosophy that forms these rules. Discussions about adat also wander into the realm of symbolism because the precepts are expressed in proverbs, epigrams, and house carving, and are enacted in ceremonies and curing practices as well as encoded by the motifs of traditional textiles. Folk exegesis of sung narrative drama, the motifs of textiles, the organization of traditional clothes, and ceremonies are phrased in terms of the grammar of adat Minangkabau. Adat is expressed through all the senses—speaking, eating, seeing, touching, and hearing—and is rendered in mundane, abstract, performative, and magical forms.

Adat ceremonies are rife with meaning. Food prepared and served by women, words spoken by men, ritual interaction in same-sex groups and between men and women, and the way in which traditional dress is worn are glossed in terms of adat. Informants say that traditional ceremonies and dress are "the skin of adat." The ceremonies mark major episodes...
in the life cycle (birth, circumcision, marriage, and death) and other major events such as building a traditional house and the ascension to hereditary titles by men. The traditional clothing and headgear worn by men and women on these occasions (Fig 9) are woven with motifs that can be translated by an expert into a series of proverbs and epigrams. Even the way the clothes are worn and the form into which the headdress is shaped tell a story about rules for living. In these ceremonies, then, aadat becomes a living form; the message and the medium are merged with the performance.

The key element that connects the motifs of traditional textiles and aadat precepts is the reverence that both make to nature. The Mi-nangkabau see no opposition between nature and culture; appropriate behavior entails the studied imitation of nature. In response to the anthropologist's probing about culture, the following epigram is nearly universally repeated:

Take the small knife used for carving
Make a staff from the lintubung tree
The cover of pinang flowers becomes a skirt
A drop of water becomes the sea
A fist becomes a mountain
Nature is our teacher.

Nature, as encoded by the Minangkabau, provides the model to which all aspire and upon which aadat is based. Nature is the basis for constructing an ontology and rules for behavior. Informants say:

We study everything around us; human life, animals, plants, mountains, hills, and rivers. Everything surrounds us in all events of our lives. The rules of aadat are based on nature. Like nature, aadat surrounds us.

Thus, the meanings that the Minangkabau impute to nature are reflected in their code for behavior and are tangibly expressed in their weaving. Reading about weaving leads us to the core symbols of Minangkabau ethos and world view.

Songket Motifs, Nature, and Expected Behavior

The term songket applies to both the designs woven into the textile and the product itself, and refers to the use of supplementary gold or silver wefts which were introduced into Indonesia through international trading. The term derives from the word jungket or songket which means to elevate the warp by weaving on a loom. The weaving is done with a supplementary gold or silver weft. This is a modification of the traditional loom.

Songket motifs are based on models from nature. The fauna of surrounding nature (Figs. 12, 16). Songket motifs resemble motifs carved on houses, and the designs are inspired by the fauna and flora from China and India, the bird’s nest. The geometric motifs consisting of spirals, triangles, meanders, circles, squares, and combinations of these forms are probably of considerable antiquity.

The majority of songket motifs are based explicitly on models from nature. The animal motifs include all domestic animals. The majority of motifs listed in Table 5 are based on the fauna and flora from China and India. The motifs are used in the preparation of different types of food for the household. The motifs are used in the preparation of different types of food for the household. The motifs are used in the preparation of different types of food for the household.

Table 1

<table>
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<th>GLOSSARY</th>
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<tr>
<td>aadat—Minangkabau custom, tradition, aadat for living</td>
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<tr>
<td>akata—&quot;China root&quot;, a spiral motif similar to the fem leaf motif</td>
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<td>batang pinang—pinang tree motif</td>
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<td>batam—starlike motif</td>
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<td>darat—heartland of the Minangkabau world</td>
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<td>pinang putang—dark duck motif</td>
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<tr>
<td>jungket, songket—to elevate warp thread in a loom and insert a supplementary gold, silver, or colored weft thread; the term from which songket derives</td>
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<tr>
<td>kain songket—West Sumatran gold and silver cloth</td>
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<tr>
<td>kain songket balapak—a type of songket woven with gold or silver wefts over the entire surface</td>
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<tr>
<td>kain songket batalub atau batalub—type of songket woven with gold or silver wefts</td>
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<tr>
<td>konkak bara—fem leaf motif</td>
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<tr>
<td>konjak—traditional loom</td>
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<td>punuk rebung—bamboo sprout motif</td>
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<td>ranum—migration area around the Minangkabau heartland</td>
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<td>sagam bungai—ceremonial plate and weapon</td>
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<tr>
<td>sagka gula-m—ceremonial cake and weaving motifs</td>
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<td>surun—tube skirt</td>
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<tr>
<td>songket—traditional Minangkabau textiles</td>
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A similar message is reflected in the form of the ceremonial headdress worn by men. The top of the headdress must be pointed to the earth, but not too far to the rear. If he is given a clan title and becomes a clan leader (penghulu), he has responsibility to the children of his matrilinage. He must treat all children alike, including his own. The creases in the front of the headdress symbolize the joining of all heads of families into one clan. These creases also represent steps of the aadat house as well as procedures to be followed in aadat discussions. These discussions begin in the close family and then extend outward to include the men’s sisters and daughters as well as the clan leaders. The headdress has two sides, one with a narrow fold and the other with a wider fold. The wider fold indicates that a father carries his children. The narrower side indicates that an
uncle leads (that is, educates) his nephew. The material is square but, after folding, the headdress is round. The round shape and the flat top signify the evenness and similarity with which all the parts are to be treated.

Another important motif drawn from nature and reflecting social relations is the itik pua-lang patung, the baby duck motif (Fig. 19). An S-shaped design, this motif provides a horizontal border separating the various statements made in textiles and wood (Fig. 20; see also Figs. 12, 16). People are to act like baby ducks, from the family to the highest level of the village; they go together in a file to the pond and swim in group formation. Although baby ducks may swim boldly out away from their mother, they always come back. Flexibility is a key trait of ducks: they can walk on

8 Woman dressed in saungkat.

9 Bride and her attendants at a wedding ceremony in Koto Baru.

land and swim in the water. The use of itik pua-lang patung indicates that the Minangkabau are flexible, adaptive, and above all corporate in their actions. As baby ducks go in a file following some leader, clan chiefs lead the people and their nephews. The communal and corporate nature of Minangkabau life is echoed in a well-known adat proverb:

Sharing alike, sharing shames.
Sharing burial sites, sharing graveyards.
If going up a mountain, climbing together.
If going down a ravine, descending together.
Juggling together like iron.
Charging together like chickens.
If there is good news, sent for.
If there is bad news, coming to help.

(Koto 1978:5-6)

Borders such as those formed by the fern leaf tendrils or the baby duck reflect adat’s stress on cooperation. Besides these motifs there are scattered motifs of flowers or stars that appear in the center of a fabric and symbolize the spreading of villages and lineages. While these are arranged in the center of the fabric (appearing down the center of the saung or tube skirt; see Fig. 13), they are always bound by the border motifs which means that the villagers are also bound and surrounded by the rules of adat. Other important motifs are sujambu sukau, a ceremonial plate, and ajik galamun, a ceremonial cake. Sujambu sukau is a large plate, big enough for four people. On this plate should be placed four kinds of ceremonial food. If the plate is not properly arranged the
The Origins of Minangkabau Motifs

The decorative design of textiles and carving probably represent ancient designs constructed from observation of natural phenomena. Many motifs, such as the ornate deer, the butterfly, the cloud, and the sun, are found on textiles and carvings throughout the region. This wealth of motifs reflects the rich cultural heritage of the Minangkabau people.

While the motifs mentioned above are closely interwoven with the Minangkabau people's daily life, their symbolism conveys messages about nature, the environment, and the social structure of the Minangkabau society. For instance, the deer symbolizes the connection between the human and the natural world, while the butterfly represents change and transformation.

However, these motifs are not only a reflection of the natural world but are also a means of expression for the Minangkabau people's artistic creativity. The motifs are often combined in intricate designs, creating a harmonious blend of form and function.

In conclusion, the motifs of the Minangkabau people are a testament to their rich cultural heritage and their deep connection with nature. These motifs continue to play an important role in the region, serving as a source of inspiration for artists, architects, and designers.

Weaving Centers

The weaving centers are located in the heartland of the Minangkabau region, where the traditional techniques are still practiced. The weaving centers are characterized by the use of natural dyes and the incorporation of local flora and fauna into the designs. The weaving centers are not only economic hubs but also cultural centers where the traditions and values of the Minangkabau people are preserved.

In the weaving centers, the weavers work together to create intricate patterns that reflect the natural beauty of the region. The weavers use a variety of techniques, including the use of natural dyes and the incorporation of local flora and fauna into the designs. The weaving centers are not only economic hubs but also cultural centers where the traditions and values of the Minangkabau people are preserved.

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... major ceremonial events... require wearing traditional textiles.

gold necklaces (formerly these necklaces were probably of solid gold). She also wears a ring and two kinds of bracelets.

The queenly dress of the bride displays the importance of the role of women. In turn, the groom's dress symbolizes the importance of his role and obligations as a senior male or, possibly, a clan leader (Fig. 35). He wears the headgear for men which is folded in the manner described above to reflect his responsibilities to his own children and to those of his sister. The rules of women are symbolized

flowers (see front cover). The bride's sarung is any kind of kain songket bulapak, a heavy doup gold-thread design. Her blouse is velvet with embroidered metal flowers. In the highlands her shawl is also songket bulapak, in coastal areas her shawl is embroidered. She wears many layers of imitation
by the yellowish gold color of her jewelry and the clasp gold thread designs of her costume. These show a woman’s richness and glory, and her economic importance, for she must support her family from her share of the maternal family’s ancestral property.

The bride and groom are like a queen and a king for one day. They sit on a wedding couch that is adorned with textiles and embroidered cloth having symbolic meaning. For example, in Pande Sikek, the bunch of cloth tied over the couch symbolizes the unity of the couple; the hanging cloths in the shape of a tongue indicate that they must use careful speech with one another. The hanging bird decorations around the top of the throne symbolize the peaceful life as they strive to understand and love one another. There are colorful banners of black, yellow, and red that also spread out from the top of the throne. The black color symbolizes the core of adat, that which cannot be changed and which the couple must always follow. The red is a symbol of their life together, and the yellow symbolizes their prosperity and glory.

Marriages also join two clans, and this joining is celebrated in the eating and exchange of food between the women of the two clans (see Fig. 7). The serving of the food in the ceremonial plate, aspambo makam, also makes statements about adat rules that must be followed in daily life (see discussion above).

The inauguration of the clan leader follows a similar procedure in serving ceremonial food. The newly appointed clan leader is served in formal ceremonial style at his mother’s house and at the house of his wife’s maternal uncle. This ceremony also brings members of different clans together.

In Pande Sikek the man’s costume on this occasion consists of a black shirt and trousers, which means that the clan leader is a knowledgeable and experienced man (see Fig. 26). The sleeves and the collar of the shirt are loose, and the sleeves and pockets are decorated with stripes of woven gold thread. The loose sleeves mean that he has authority to give advice to his nephews and to solve their problems in conformity with adat. The stripes on the sleeves identify him as a man who keeps to adat rules. The loose black trousers symbolize wisdom and flexibility in guiding villagers in any aspect of adat. The short sarung placed on his hips is red and has bamboo sprout designs woven in gold threads. The color and the designs mean that he is a brave and noble man. The belt, made from a piece of cloth, symbolizes his responsibility to guide his nephews in the rules of adat. The shawl on his shoulders symbolizes his wish that his nephews will not break adat rules. The close interrelationship between adat and traditional dress is also seen in Payakumbuh (see Kartwa 1984).

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The textiles shown in Figs. 19-22, 16, and 23 are part of The University Museum’s collection of Minangkabau textiles. 
Conclusion

In West Sumatra, traditional arts, including weaving, represent the materialization of adat, that is, Minangkabau custom. Weavers apply the aesthetic standards of their adat by the way in which they compose and construct textile motifs. The way in which clothes are worn makes statements about rules for behavior. The motifs of weaving are drawn largely from the natural environment. Nature is the primary source from which the Minangkabau people draw the metaphors for being by which they externalize their moral values. The importance of nature is found in the main symbols of adat, in the motifs of ceremonial clothes and materials, in ceremonial food, in house carving, and in the proverbs spoken on ceremonial occasions. It is impossible to escape the centrality of the concept of nature for the Minangkabau. Some say that Islam and adat were compatible from the very beginning because both are based on nature.

Traditional clothes woven by women are called the skin of adat. These clothes are a visible and tangible materialization of the Minangkabau worldview. All women, including weavers, are conscious of adat rules and describe the way women should wear clothes at adat ceremonies. The colors, designs, shapes of the blouses, shawls, headresses, and sarongs are determined by the local adat and identify women as belonging to a particular region. The wearing of songket on ceremonial occasions, the motifs woven into the fabric reflecting the things of nature, and the transmission of cloth through the matrilineal lines reflect that part of adat that cannot be changed. This discussion of adat and weaving illustrates how the study of material culture can illuminate a way of experiencing, a view of the world, of self, and of society.

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