THE PHILIPPINE AUSTRONESIANS AND THE ORIGIN OF TIE-DYE (IKAT) WEAVING

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Distribution of Ikat Weaving Tradition

Map 3. Distribution of *ikat* weaving traditions
Ikat on Alor island. Tie-Dyed Warp threads stretched on a frame
Ikat is based on the integration of 5 Austronesian cultural complexes:
- Backstrap loom weaving,
- Tie-dye (resist dye) techniques,
- Bast production through fiber extraction from abaca (Musa textilis),
- Dye and mordant extraction from plant and mineral sources, and
- A spiritual cultural depiction of the transmutation of cosmic forces.
Salient Points

- There are typical Austronesian ikat dyes (colors), motifs, fibers, traditions, applications and uses.
- The presence of other resist dye methods among Austronesians such as “tritik”, “plangi”, “cerita” and “batik” argues for the origins of ikat weaving in Southeast Asia.
- The presence of the simplest to the most complex ikat techniques found among Austronesians argues for its antiquity and origins in Southeast Asia.
Southeast Asian Ikat

Figure 3. Examples of Southeast Asian textiles with Ikat decoration. A: Detail of Timor ikat cloth with bands of supplementary weft decoration, formerly part of a tabard worn with a waist band above and a narrow band of plain cloth below. B: Ikat from Kaimu, Honshu, made up of 3 panels of warp Ikat decorated cloth with one panel of supplementary weft decoration. C: Ikat tubestock from Borneo with warp Ikat and supplementary weft decoration. D: Ikat tubestock from Borneo with supplementary warp Ikat and warp stripes. E: Ikat tubestock from Nias, Indonesia, made up of two panels of warp Ikat and supplementary weft decoration. F: Ikat tubestock from Nias, Indonesia, made up of three panels of warp Ikat decorated fabric.
Salient Points

- The widespread practice of ikat weaving across Austronesian communities argues for its origins in Southeast Asia.
Geographic Distribution Of Warp Ikat Weaving
The pioneering maritime lifeways of Austronesians allowed ikat’s spread throughout the world.

- The trade routes established by Austronesians paved the way for the Spice Trade, Maritime Silk Route and the China-India-Mediterranean Trade Continuum.
- Southeast Asia will become a pivotal nexus in this Trade Continuum.
- A manifestation of this Trade Continuum is the spread and development of ikat. Ikat can be found in all coastal regions of this Trade Continuum, areas within the established expansion and exploration routes and reach of Austronesians.
The Spice Route
Intermediate forms of ikat weaves can be found in the tie-dyed grass skirts of Papua New Guinea.
Ikat design motifs can be traced to earlier pottery, tattoo, mat, basket and bark cloth traditions. The motifs represent a belief system specific to Austronesians.
There is no substitute in the use of the backstrap loom in the production of intricate and complex ikat weaves.
The high level of craftsmanship of ikat evolved due to its strong association with ancient spiritual beliefs of Austronesians. Early Ikat artifacts like in Japan and Yemen have spiritual ceremonies and significance suggesting association with Austronesian cultural practices.
Grass Skirt in Papua New Guinea

Here is a picture of a traditional singsing group in the coastal area of Papua New Guinea. They were dressed in traditional grass skirts, which is made from the young leaves of sago palm.
Polynesian “Tapa” Bark Cloth
Ikat Weaving on Hainan Island
Ikat weaves in South America arrived in two waves, during the pre-Columbian era, particularly in Peru/Chile from Austronesian Polynesians and during the colonial era in Guatemala and Mexico from the Philippines.

Linguistic evidence supports the Austronesian origins of ikat weaving and backstrap looms in South America.

In general, Austronesian Polynesians seem to have lost the tradition of loom weaving but must have passed it on to Quechua speakers in South America before it went to disuse among Polynesians.

Ikat weaving is strongly associated with women among Austronesians in contrast with South America. The difference suggests that male Austronesian seafarers were the main transmitters of this practice during the Galleon Trade.
Manila-Acapulco Galleon Trade

The galleons followed Urdaneta's pioneering route for over two centuries.

Detail from map by Juan López de Velasco (c. 1565-1570),
John Carter Brown Library, Providence, R.I.
Ikat in Peru and Backstrap Loom in Mexico


**Fig. 39.**

Nahuat (ancient Mexican) girl weaving. Mendoza Codex, Kingsborough Vol. I, Pl. 61. Note the bit of weaving at the warp end A.
Fragments of ikat found in Berenike (Egypt, Roman period) on the Red Sea dated to 1\textsuperscript{st} – 3\textsuperscript{rd} century CE are the earliest examples of the dyeing technique. Although this find has been attributed to Indian traders, the periodization and motifs and other associated artifacts and historical sources suggests Austronesian origins.
Ikat Fragment from Berenike 1st to 3rd CE
Salient Points

- The periodization of the appearance of ikat in India, historical references, location of ikat production sites along the eastern seaboard of India facing Southeast Asia and the possible Austronesian linguistic roots of ‘patola’ (double ikat silk cloth), the use of silk and the pioneering maritime trading activities of Austronesians in the Indian Ocean are indicative of its Austronesian roots.
Ikat Silk, Gujarat, India
Salient Points

- The presence of ikat in China, particularly among the Daic groups of Southern China and documented during the Yueh kingdoms, from the 9th century BCE to the Han period indicates the presence of Austronesian colonies in Mainland China and contacts with Southeast Asia. Chinese chronicles of Yueh indicate the practice of tattoo markings which would indicate the absence of ikat weaving as can be observed among some Austronesian communities. On the other hand its absence in Han China in general would also indicate its late introduction and development. The Daic groups of Southern China are probably the transmitter of this cultural complex to Central Asia through the Silk Road prior to the 5th century CE.
Statue of tattted man from Yue state, China
Dai Weft Ikat. Yunnan, China
Li Hainan Island Warp Ikat
There are five historical periods that can characterize the development of Ikat among Austronesians. The periodization indicates the growth of an expanding trade network, radiating westward from Southeast Asia.

- Proto Austronesian (Insular Southeast Asia)
- Dong son Period (Southeast Asia)
- Indic Period (India)
- Muslim Period (Middle East)
- Colonial Period (Europe)
Conclusion

- If validated, the story of the journey of ikat from its earliest beginnings when Austronesians made contact with Papuans in New Guinea to its permutations and transmission to the farthest extent of the Austronesian exploration activities half way around the world and its transformation by other peoples is truly an incredible story.

- The story of ikat continues to find resonance today, as it did in the past, due to its unique aesthetic ethos, universal appeal and deep spiritual significance.
Pioneer Maritime Activities of Austronesians

The global origins and development of seafaring

Edited by Atholl Anderson, James H. Barrett & Katherine V. Boyle
Conclusion

- Ikat is a testament to the unique and common expression of heritage of Austronesians, their innovative, intrepid, inquisitive and integrative spirit borne by its contacts with other cultures, Southeast Asia’s position as a nexus in world developments and Austronesians’ wonderful contribution to the world.

- And most of all, it must be noted that Filipino Austronesians are an integral part of the story of ikat.
T’nalak Ikat Cloth (Mindanao)
Transmission of Plants by Austronesians

Figure 2. Map summarising major prehistoric translocations of economic plants between Southeast Asia and South Asia, as discussed in the text. Archaeological sites with banana phytoliths are indicated (based on reviews of Lensen 2009; Fuller & Madella 2009). Probable wild distributions of some taxa are indicated based on a best guess of the first author, drawing upon a range of botanical sources.
Timeline

- **2000 BCE**  Austronesians come into contact with Papuans on New Guinea
- **1000 BCE**  Austronesians come into contact with Dong Son Culture (present-day north Vietnam, Southeast China)
- **200 BCE**  Estimated appearance of ikat in Eastern Maritime Southeast Asia – most probably in the Mindanao-Borneo-Celebes area. Start of the iron age in the Philippines. Start of an intensification of trade in the China-India-Mediterranean Trade Continuum. Han chronicles mention of “spotted cloth” among the Yueh kingdoms of Southeast China. Incorporation of the Yueh kingdoms into the Han Empire.
Timeline

1 - 3rd Century CE

Ikat fragments found in Berenike, Red Sea, Egypt was then under Roman Rule.

(Austronesians are believed to have been active in the spice trade off East Africa (Somalia) as recorded in *Periplus Maris Erythrea* (Greek navigational guide) as early as 1 CE. Sewn boats of Austronesians are called “*rhapton ploairion*”. Austronesian ships were called “*kolandiophonta*” or Kolan ships in said text. In Chinese chronicles by 5th century CE, *Kunlun po* are acknowledged to be Southeast Asian ships. The present “Bedan” sewn ships of Somalia traces their provenance to the sewn ships of Insular Southeast Asia.)

Indigo and cotton introduced to Southeast Asia from India. Cotton replaces indigenous bast materials such as abaca in Southeast Asia.
Imprint of Austronesian Maritime Knowledge Across the Indian Ocean

Figure 4. Map showing the general distribution of nautical related loanwords of inferred Austronesian linguistic origins in South Asia and the Indian Ocean. This is depicted over the ethnoarchaeological/historical distribution of single and double outrigger sailing canoes, believed to originate as a technology in Island Southeast Asia.
Timeline

5th Century CE

Estimated transmission of ikat from Daic groups in southern China to Central Asia along the Terrestrial Silk Route
Silk used as bast material for ikat weaving

6th Century CE

Historical references of ikat in India
Indian Patola Silk Double Ikat
Timeline

618-907 CE (Tang Period)
Ikat cloth found in Horyuji Temple, Nara, Japan

7th Century CE
Ikat cloth made of hemp located in a church in Switzerland

5th - 7th Century CE
Ajanta Cave paintings indicative of ikat in India

939 CE
Ikat recorded in Java
Horyuji Temple, Nara, Japan Ikat 7th CE
Ikat Depictions in Ajanta Cave, India
Timeline

10th Century CE
Tiraz Ikat Fragment of Yemen found (With Arabic Islamic inscription)

Development of patola (double silk ikat) in India
Yemeni ikat introduced to West Africa

11th Century CE
Ikat cloth found in Peru

13th Century CE
Madagascar exports Ikat cloth to Yemen
Tiraz Ikat Fragment from Yemen
Madagascar Ikat

Overview and details of three ROM akotifahana cloths
14\textsuperscript{th} Century CE
Earliest ikat cloth in Southeast Asia found in Banton Island, Central Philippines

1349 CE
Yuan Dynasty records ikat weaving in Basilan

14 – 15\textsuperscript{th} Century CE
Weft ikat introduced to Insular Southeast Asia from Mainland Southeast Asia

Ikat from Southeast Asia introduced to Okinawa, Japan
Banton Island Ikat Burial Cloth
Timeline

15th Century CE

Start of Islamic influence on ikat weaving in Southeast Asia

16th Century CE

- Madagascar Ikat sought after by the Portuguese.
- East Java, Madura, Bali and Sumbawa become centers of ikat production.
- Ikat introduced to Meso America through the Galleon Trade.
- Islam and Christianity undermine the spiritual foundation of ikat weaving in Southeast Asia.
- Yarkant Khanate of Central Asia recognizes 10 different styles of ikat.
Mexico Rebozo Ikat Shawl
Timeline

18th Century CE
Ikat introduced into the Cordillera communities of Luzon
France produces silk ikat called “chine a la branche taffeta”.

20th Century CE
Introduction of commercial dyes
Chine a la Branche Taffeta (France)
Maraming Salamat, po.