

Blurry Memories  
of Creating,



shimmery flashes of  
technique



and threads slipping  
through our grasping  
fingers.

*Olivia de Ruiter*

# Index

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Step 1</b> The groundwork for a weave is its warp - Family roots serve as the foundation for the Moluccas.	<b>5</b>
<b>Origin of the Leatemia clan</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Step 2</b> Tying and binding threads - Cultural motifs represent the influences that shaped the identity of the Moluccan people.	<b>15</b>
<b>Story</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Step 3</b> Dyeing the warp – Resilience and absorption	<b>21</b>
<b>Interview</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Step 4</b> Untying the Ties, threading and weaving – Embracing Change, unveiling the fabric of society	<b>29</b>
<b>Working session report</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Poem</b>	<b>back</b>

## Introduction:



Seventy-two years ago, my grandfather and his family made their arrival in the Netherlands, just like 12,500 other Moluccans. Their journey, intertwined with the fate of soldiers from the former Dutch colonial army, is a story about the aftermath of decolonization. It is a narrative often retold by the Moluccan community, a tale of feeling tricked, given empty promises, and being discharged upon arrival. I seek to tell another story, one that sheds light on, in my opinion, one of the most remarkable weaving techniques. Ikat. Its intricate patterns woven by the Moluccan people as they navigate history, adapt to change, and preserve the cultural threads that connect past to present and future.

My journey began with researching the presence of Ikat weaving in the Netherlands. To my surprise it appeared difficult to have a Moluccan teach me their ways, even though this craft is part of their culture. Through conversation I discovered that the second generation still held the memory of this technique but had no experience practising it, whilst the first generation was not able-bodied enough to pass on their knowledge. During my research I encountered the LimaDiti group. Moluccans from Tanimbar who provide traditional song and dance during which they are wearing the most beautiful authentic Ikat cloths. They allowed me to look at their tenun's



up-close, all held personal stories connected to their Ikat. Enthusiasm sparked as they were interested to learn how to make an Ikat themselves. Drawn to the use of natural materials, the patterns that have their origins in the indigenous culture of the various islands, and the significance this has for its use here in the Netherlands, a possibility to re-appropriate and re-evaluate this technique.

I decided to plan a material research trip to Ambon where I would be an apprentice at Hellen and her family's cooperation. She still possesses the remarkable skill of Ikat weaving. For 2 weeks, I visited their village Tawiri where I was taught in their home. A gift I will cherish. Now back home I feel a responsibility to introduce the Netherland-based Moluccas to the craft that is theirs but has skipped a generation, so that future generations can encapsulate the craft. It's a challenge to preserve the bundles of knowledge that define the Moluccan story, one I would like to take on. Hoping to foster a cultural crossover between the weavers in Tawiri, the Moluccan diaspora, and the weaving network in the Netherlands. Can the art of Ikat weaving keep on developing and continue to be nurtured?

The historical tapestry of the Moluccan Islands unfolds like an intricate Ikat weave, where each step of the process mirrors a chapter in its narrative. I will metaphorically compare the stages of creating an Ikat to the trajectory of the Molucca, constructing a parable that captures a deep dive into personal

findings and stories. Hoping to reveal the resilience, adaptability, and enduring identity of this community and craft.

Deepening my understanding of Moluccan heritage allows me to form a more intimate and authentic connection to my roots. Delving into the technical aspects of Ikat weaving, its techniques and the symbolisms behind the motives could reveal new artistic insights, ensuring I can confidently reflect as an artist upon the several layers of this topic. I seek for a realisable future amidst the role of Ikat weaving and its possible evolution into the broader dynamics of cultural preservation and change amidst the Moluccan diaspora to this day.

Drawing of my great grand mother and father Leatemia.



## Step 1

The groundwork  
for a weave is  
its warp

&

Folklore  
serves as the  
foundation for  
the Moluccas.

## The groundwork for a weave is its warp



Instead of a warping mill, the weavers in Tawiri use a simple piece of equipment arranged on the ground. Their warping frame is decoratively carved and has eight holes in its base, to fit in pegs. Three holes at one end, one in the middle, and four at the other end so that the weaver can choose how far apart she will install the pegs. This creates the possibility to influence the length of the final weave, and when necessary to release the tension of the threads. The weaver winds undyed yarn onto the warping frame whilst creating a cross, as is the purpose of the centre peg. The width of the warp is determined by the number of cycles the yarn is wound onto the warping frame, varying from 30 to 60 yarns per centimetre. It was my first time seeing this type of construction. While this frame limits the warp length, a distinctive advantage emerges, the ability to lay out the warp in its width, matching precisely the desired width of the final weave. This will come in handy when binding off an Ikat as it gives a clear perspective of where exactly to apply the pattern when binding off threads.

## Folklore serves as the foundation for the Moluccas



Bridging from the meticulous process of setting up the warp, which lays the foundation for the tapestry, so too does uncovering the origins of our families' roots begin with aligning the slender threads of history and heritage. Understanding the importance of knowing one's roots can be found in the field of psychology, particularly in the works that discuss identity formation. Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, for example, highlights understanding "*one's heritage as part of forming a healthy identity.*"<sup>1</sup> Knowing where one comes from can provide a sense of belonging, stability, and continuity, which are essential for personal growth and self-understanding. During my time in Ambon, it was hard for me to directly connect with the people I encountered, as I do not possess the skill of speaking Bahasa Indonesia. But upon mentioning my family name, a recognition would spark. I realised that the name Leatemia is widely known on the Islands, the islanders would then know that my family comes from the island of Saparua, neighbouring to Ambon. I felt the initial sense of being an outsider, whether in craft or community. However, just as the warp becomes an integral part of the fabric, my family name Leatemia serves as a key that unlocks doors to deeper connections.

<sup>1</sup> Munley, Patrick H. "Erik Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development and Vocational Behavior." *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, vol. 22, no. 4, July 1975, pp. 314-19. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0076749>.



Dickie Leatemala sent my mother a valuable text that sheds light on the origin of the Leatemala family. This discovery is part of exploring my family's past, which makes me think of James Baldwin's quote : "*History is not the past, it is the present. We carry our history with us. We are our history.*"<sup>2</sup> How every thread in a tapestry, every snippet of family history contributes to a larger picture. The recognition of my family's name in the Moluccas is a testament to the deep roots and lasting impact of my lineage. Just like the Ikat weavers of the Moluccas, I am part of a continuous thread crafting a story uniquely mine, yet deeply connected to the warp and weft of my family's history.

How every thread in a tapestry, every snippet of family history contributes to a larger picture. The recognition of my family's name in the Moluccas is a testament to the deep roots and lasting impact of my lineage. Just like the Ikat weavers of the Moluccas, I am part of a continuous thread crafting a story uniquely mine, yet deeply connected to the warp and weft of my family's history.



<sup>2</sup> Baldwin, James, and Raoul Peck. *I Am Not Your Negro*. Penguin UK, 2017.

### ASAL USUL TENTANG MARGA LEATEMIA

Asal marga LEATEMIA yang pertama berasal dari puncak MANUSELA, sesudah itu turun dan berlayar dengan kijing (pelepah) kelapa dan tiba di negeri HATTU di Seram yang mana di tempat itu (HATTU) sekarang warga dari marga LEATEMIA itu tidak menetap.

Tetapi di HATTU itu sekarang ada air atau sungai dan sebuah batu besar seperti rumah, yang namanya WAYYLESY.

Dari HATTU mereka yang punya marga LEATEMIA itu (moyang) berlayar menuju ke selatan dan tiba di pulau Saparua yang sekarang yaitu antara air WASA dan tanjung UMEPUTI dan daerah itu namanya LEIPOPU.

Pada daerah ini terdapat banyak batu dan sulit di temui sumber air, sehingga moyang dari marga LEATEMIA itu lalu membuat tombak pada sebuah batu dan pada saat itu keluarlah air dari batu itu dan air itu dinamakan air LEIPOPU.

Di sini moyang dari marga LEATEMIA yang I dari MANUSELA itu punya dua orang anak laki-laki.

Mulai dari tempat itu kedua anak itu mulai berpisah untuk mencari tempat yang lebih baik untuk melanjutkan kehidupan mereka.

Yang adik mulai berjalan menuju ke arah barat dan tiba di negeri atau desa KARIU yang sekarang ini dan ia lalu menjadi marga LEATOWA, sedangkan yang kakak berjalan menuju ke arah timur dan tiba di gunung HATTULESAMANNO yang sekarang ini yang adalah negeri lama dari warga marga LEATEMIA khususnya marga HATTULESY, dan negeri lama ini masih ada sampai sekarang ini.

Jadi LEATEMIA ini terdiri dari dua suku kata yang mempunyai pengertian sendiri-sendiri.

LEI = depa atau melangkah

TEMIA // TIMIYE = angkat supaya ringan.

Sedangkan TEUN adalah SULESY alam hutan permata.

Artinya marga ini sudah ada sejak Malank khususnya Seram berada di dunia.

Sedangkan UPU adalah POPU yang artinya sesuai dengan tempat tinggal yang ke 3.

SOA HATTULESY artinya banyak batu atau lebih-lebih.

Ada tata adat istiadat yang mengatur bahwa marga LEATEMIA tidak boleh kawin atau menikah dengan marga LEATOWA sebab itu adalah adik berkakak kandung.

\*\*\*\*\* leally \*\*\*\*\*

### Translation:

## "ORIGIN OF THE LEATEMIA CLAN"

The origin of the LEATEMIA clan first came from the peak of MANUSELA. About that time, they descended and sailed with coconut fronds and arrived in the region of HAMU in Seram, which is now known as MATTU. In that place, the people of the LEATEMIA clan did not settle.

However, in HATTU, there is now water or a river and a large rock resembling a house, named WAYYLESY. From HATTU, the ancestors of the LEATEMIA clan sailed south and arrived at Saparua Island, which is now located between the WASA water and the UMEPUTI cape in the area called LEIPOPU.

In this area, there are many rocks, and it is difficult to find a water source. Therefore, water gushes out from the rocks, and the water is called "alai fort." In this place, the ancestors of the IBATEMIA clan, who originally came from MANUSELA, had several male descendants.

From this location, the two sons began to separate to find better places to continue their lives. The younger one headed west and arrived at the village of KARIU, where he became part of the IBATOWA clan. Meanwhile, the older brother travelled east and reached Mount HATTULESAMANNO, which is now the old territory of the LEATEMIA clan, especially in HATTUIBSY. This old territory still exists to this day.

So, LEATEMIA consists of two syllables, each with its own meaning. "LEI" means to step forward, while "TEMIA" means an inquiry to be answered.

On the other hand, "TEUN" is equivalent to "SULESY," which refers to precious gems. The name of this clan has existed since ancient times, especially in Seram, in the world.

As for "UPU" it means "POPU," which is related to the place of residence that is comfortable.

"SOA HATTULESY" signifies many rocks or more specifically, a rocky area.

\*There is a customary law that dictates that the LEATEMIA clan should not marry the IBATOMU clan because they are siblings.



There are lots of educational elements to derive from this text, my ancestors originated from the peak of Manusela, first moving to Hamu (now Mattu) in Seram, then to Hattu and finally to Saparua Island, settling between the Wasa water and the Umeputi cape in the area called Leipopu. The narrative mentions several geographical landmarks that are significant to my clan's history, like Wayylesy (a large rock resembling a house), mount Hattulesamanno, and the rocky area of Soa Hatulesy. Places that form a part of the clan's identity. The text tells how the Leatemia clan divided and expanded. One son became part of the Ibatowa clan in Kariu while the other set ground on the territory of the Leatemia clan in Hattuibsy. From there branching out. The clan name Leatemia is broken down into 'Lei' (to step forward) and "temia' (an inquiry to be answered) this perhaps indicates a culture that values progress and a quest for knowledge and understanding. 'Teun' relates to 'Sulesy' (precious gems) and 'upu linked to 'popu' (comfortable residence). Meanings that may reflect the values and aspirations of the ancestors.

The ancient motif of frigate birds around the sun is called *Oiale*<sup>3</sup>, it symbolises the social structure of moluccan society, portraying our identity and connectedness formed by seven layers (circles)



- Hau/Self
- Amano/Village
- Ami/Us!
- Mata Rumah/Family
- Nusa/Island
- Soa/Clan
- Suku/People

Frigate birds are placed in cardinal directions, symbolising navigation and a reminder that wherever we are in the world, we as descendants of Maluku remain connected. We are responsible for preserving the culture and nature of Maluku. Ami/Us!

The original inhabitants of the Moluccas are often referred to as the Alifurs. Even though it is a term used by some Moluccans nowadays, I learned that 'Alifur' is a complex and multifaceted label, historically used to describe the indigenous inhabitants of the Moluccas. The term is steeped in colonial history and external perspectives, rather than being a self-identification by the people it purports to describe. As Herman Keppy states in his book Saparua meisje:

*“The original inhabitants of South and North America were mistaken by European adventurers as people from India, they were called ‘Indians. People from Africa were given the collective name ‘Negroes’ even though, like the Native Americans, they consisted*

*of several peoples and tribes. Both Indian and Negro are now banned words, where 'Alfur' or Alifuru' is still used. The name probably has an origin in the language spoken on Tidore (North Moluccas). 'Hale' which was later corrupted to 'ali' stands for land, 'furu' means uncivilised. Put together it means something like 'uncivilised, wild islanders'. Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch adopted the word. The Alfur people do not exist and never existed. ”<sup>4</sup>.*

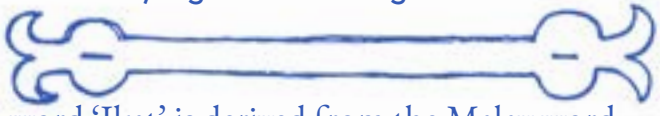
“Alifurs” is a historical construct, an external label applied by colonial powers to diverse groups of indigenous peoples in the Moluccan Islands and beyond. This term, while still used by some in modern times, does not accurately reflect the individual identities and cultures that exist among the indigenous of these islands. I too have referred to the early inhabitants of the Moluccas as the Alifurs, and so has my family, but personally I will try to adapt my language as I do not stand behind the way this term was derived.



## Step 2

Tying and binding  
threads  
&  
Cultural motifs  
represent the  
influences that  
shaped the identity  
of the Moluccan  
people.

## Typing and binding threads



The word 'Ikat' is derived from the Malay word mengikat, which means 'to tie' or 'to bind.' Approaching the creation of the warp like I was taught in Tawiri makes room for binding off threads with a clear perspective of the result after dying. Hellen and her mother held a big folder containing all kinds of drawings. On grid paper there were many traditional motifs and to my surprise alternations and modern depictions. These drawings were shared within the village among weavers. Some would free hand, others held the paper drawings underneath their warping setup, keeping a close eye on the design to mimic it. The weaver meticulously ties sections of threads using traditional tying techniques. These bundles bound with precision will resist the penetration of dye during the colouring process. The ties become the boundaries that define the motifs. As the weavers' hands bind the threads, they also pay homage to cultural continuity, ensuring that each motif remains not just a design but a bridge connecting generations.

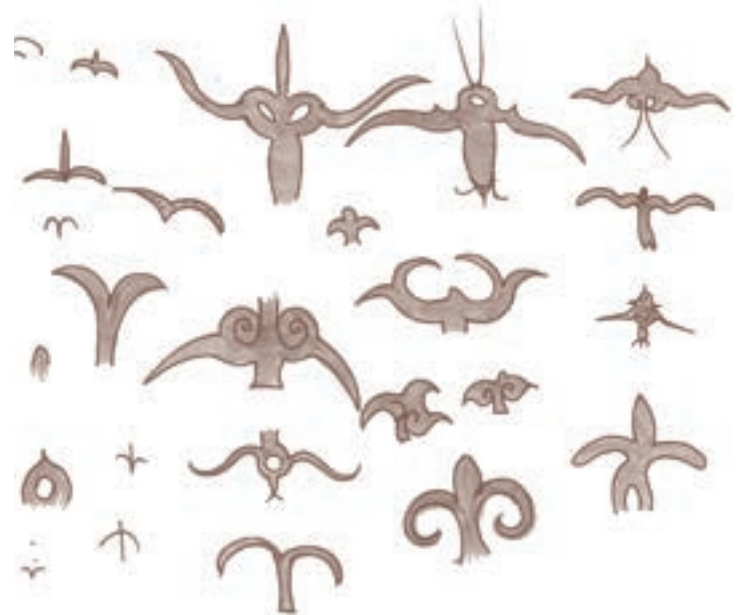
Hellen explaining steps of the process through a translation app



Cultural motifs represent the influences that shaped the identity of the Moluccan people.



In the artistry of Ikat weaving, motifs are not just arbitrary designs, they are carriers of cultural identity. Motifs speak to the history, beliefs, and traditions, finding a reflection of the community in each textile. Edith Hamilton has stated in 'Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes'<sup>5</sup>: *To be able to grasp the meaning of a myth one must understand that it does not attempt to convey a literal truth, but rather a larger one through the medium of symbol and metaphor.* She underscores that the essence of myth lies in its symbolic and metaphorical content, conveying truths that are not literal but are reflections of human experience and cultural values.



<sup>5</sup> Hamilton, Edith. Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes. 1942, moefrosh.weebly.com/uploads/1/0/2/4/10248653/set\_one\_-\_intro\_\_chapter\_1\_the\_gods.pdf.



When moving around the island certain depictions would stand out to me. Lots of motifs I recognized in the cloth, returned in the street scenery, like a frigatebird carved out of wooden beams. The depiction of the frigatebird belongs to the Patasiwa and is associated with the male principle, they are head-hunters, the conquerors, the killers. The frigatebird is a predatory sea bird, aggressive by nature, on top of the food chain, and a carrier of our ancestors' souls, by myth. My grandfather appears in my dreams ever so often.



## Frigatebird - Carrier of our ancestors' soul



### STORY:

After the passage of time, he called the Netherlands his home. I know it took a lot to do so and wonder what sacrifices had to be made. The parts that were his but had to be let go. Pieces tucked away to make place for a modified version of himself, for the sake of integrating into Dutch society.

When me and my brother used to visit my grandparents' house, an air of anxiety and excitement surrounded us. As my grandfather could be very strict, we had to make sure to properly follow his commands. But there was also a naughty, joking side to him. When played well and poked in the right places his eyes would sparkle and another side of his would reveal, the house filled with laughter. A fascination with British furniture and tableware made their home barely childproof. We were constricted and not allowed to just touch any object, a little tap on the hand would remind us of this. But this naughtiness of his must have rubbed off on me, as I could be the nosiest child.

One time when there was no one around I entered their bedroom, unknown territory. With my brother on the lookout, I quickly gazed through the room. Where to begin? I moved to their closet, in there lay a Batik cloth and once uncovered, a small bamboo box revealed itself. It felt warm to the touch and as I held it close to my face the cosy scents of nutmeg and clove wrapped around me like a comforting cloak. A delicate motif engraved in the bamboo depicts the story of two brothers


descending a mountain, one travelling east and the other west.

As I was fidgeting with the metal clasp the box opened itself. A wind came at me, whistling past my ears and pulling me towards the salty breeze of sea. In an instant the sight of my grandparents' bedroom melts away, in its place, I found myself standing on the shores of my ancestors' homeland. Suddenly a Frigatebird soared into view, its wings outstretched like a sail catching the wind. Its bird's song rose, echoing stories of generations past, carrying the spirits of my forebears.

The bamboo box, held tightly, seemed to guide me as I spotted a parang bathed in warm golden light. As I approached, Moluccan elders welcomed me with open arms, their laughter merging with melodious sounds of music, draped in Ikat fabrics with symbols of unity and pride. The frigatebird, perched on a nearby branch observes with a watchful eye, its feathers shimmering in hues of indigo and gold.

Quicker than I can realise my hand encloses the parang, and all laughter turns into tears. The symbols on the Ikats seem to drip off the cloth, the elders do not want me to see their motifs anymore. The Frigatebird ascends higher and higher into the sky till its dark shadow casts itself over me, enveloping me in darkness.

## Step 3



# Dyeing the warp & Resilience and absorption

### Dyeing the warp



Hellen and her mother possess an array of natural dyes, derived from the richness of the Moluccan environment, hues of indigo, earthy browns, and vibrant reds ready to breathe life into the threads. Carrying with them the terroir of the islands and its essence. As my time on Ambon was limited, we chose to use a synthetic dye, fastening the lengthy process of creating the weave. In their kitchen, we submerged the warp with its bound sections into the pot of simmering dye. Each tie resisting the vibrant embrace of dye into the bound threads whilst the open parts infused with colour. Just outside of Hellen's home and weaving studio, we hung out the bundles to dry in the strong Moluccan sun, witnessing the magical transformation of the warp, a key stage.

### Resilience and absorption



After they arrived in the Netherlands the Moluccans underwent numerous chapters of cultural transformation. In the mid-1950s my grandfather lived in Westkapelle, a former concentration camp, then used as a residence for the Moluccans. A peek at his last moments there reflect the resilience and absorption he has gone through. As the bound sections of the warp absorbed the synthetic dye, akin to his ability to withstand external pressures while maintaining his own self. Facing challenges that have threatened and may have altered the very fabric of his identity. There is so much I would love to ask my grandfather, but he has sadly passed away

Luckily an interview was held before his passing, by the TV program 'Andere tijden'<sup>6</sup> where he tells about a transformative part of his life.

In 1956, the Moluccan residential area in Westkapelle exploded. The residents are indignant about the government's measure to abolish the central kitchen in the residential area. They each must cook and pay for their own food. 28 'thieves' take groceries from several shopkeepers in the village, saying that the government would pay. The police arrive to quell the unrest. The result: nine Moluccans were injured. In the camp where Moluccans choose to live temporarily, it gradually becomes clear to them that they will stay in the Netherlands permanently. The resistance to this and the reaction of the Dutch took a toll.



## Interview:



CHARLES: This was my father, as a soldier, yes, my father was a corporal in the army. When they left, they thought, well, it was said, 'you are going to the Netherlands temporarily,' so people thought we would still retain our status as military. Without further explanation, it was immediately stated: 'From now on, you are civilians.' People were shocked. I have witnessed a few people cursing, thinking, how can this be?

The Moluccans are placed in camps, residential areas scattered throughout the Netherlands. In Westkapelle, the most militant group ends up. While waiting for their return to the Moluccas, they receive pocket money and a daily warm meal from the communal kitchen.

In the mid-1950s, the Dutch government realizes that the return to the Moluccas might take longer. The Netherlands believes that the Moluccans should now take care of themselves. Food supply is cut off, pocket money is withdrawn, and the communal kitchen is dismantled. Everyone gets their own small kitchen. The Moluccan community feels even more deprived of their identity due to this measure and protests.

CHARLES: But then the people, including myself, said, no, we do not agree with the system you want. Because you promised to always take care of us until we return to Indonesia. If you build the kitchen, when it's done, we will break it down. And that's what we did.

No kitchen, no pocket money, no food, hunger strikes among the Moluccans.

Charles: They stole those chickens, not to steal, but to wake up the Dutch government a bit, like, hey, we've been here for so long and you haven't done anything, that's how they stole those chickens.

It was not so much a criminal action; the emphasis was clearly on a political action. But it was considered a criminal action. A curfew was imposed. No one was allowed to leave the camp between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. The next morning, a new provocation follows; the Moluccans go in groups to the village to shop. With the message: The government pays.

They were military, did not accept discharge from military service, and believed they should still be cared for as soldiers. The Dutch state had to take care of them. And so, send it to the queen, the woman they had always fought for in Indonesia. It was clearly a political action. But for the mayor, it was a violation of the law.

Then the bomb explodes. It is Saturday, August 4, 1956; the mayor calls in the riot police, the mobile unit. The camp is surrounded.

CHARLES: I grabbed my bike; I was the first. I got on my bike, went outside like that. I saw police officers, but I didn't know anything else.

Someone gets a hit with a police baton. Others in the camp run towards the police. An officer fires 4 shots.

CHARLES: Just shot! With buckshot, yes. So, I was shocked. Aimed at my foot, then I got hit, and I fell to the ground. Immediately, a police officer came to help me. I turned that police officer upside down. Then the others came too.

One person got a bullet in his neck and eye, not dead, just blind in one eye.

9 injured, dozens arrested.

According to Mayor Tydemand, it was not a big deal.

MEINARD TYDEMAN: Yes, they made a big deal out of it, but one man lost his eye, at least.

But those people were unarmed, right?

MEINARD TYDEMAN: Well, but does that matter? We did make a sally and the police didn't carry guns for nothing, did they? Then you don't shoot at people? You shoot on the street! On the cobblestones. Then not much else happens. I think 1 or 2 shots were fired. It didn't make much of an impression to me.

CHARLES: I was taken to the hospital, yes. And later, the next day, to Scheveningen. A Scheveningen prison. When I got there, someone said: this man stays here; no one is allowed to come near him. Yes, then I was completely... Completely gone.

Grandpa cries

Everyone was arrested and spent 3 months in prison. There was a lot of suffering among the Westkapelle residents.

Finally, the Netherlands gives the Westkapelle residents a choice. Stay in a camp under these conditions or integrate into Dutch society.

CHARLES: My father and family were in Doeninghem at that time, in an internment camp, and they said yes, you must sign because if you sign, in the assimilation process, you are free. At that moment, I was angry. I said, what scoundrels you are, you are cowards. I dropped the phone, and then after ten minutes, the phone rang again, and it was my mother. My mother said: We all signed it, so you must sign the document. Okay. I hung up the phone, went to the director. I want to sign the document. Then I was free.

Charles chooses the Netherlands; others fear of losing their Moluccan identity in the country. Half of the Moluccans in Westkapelle eventually choose to return to the Moluccas.

Charles draws a line under his past. I will stay here in the Netherlands; I will try to work and study. In Delft, I met my wife, and from there, we got married, now married for 55 years. I am happy.

Grandfather's hand



This hectic time in the Moluccan residential area serves as a stark illustration of the challenges faced by the Moluccan people, particularly in their struggle for recognition and identity. My grandfather's account of reluctantly signing assimilation documents underscores the emotional toll and the internal conflict he and many have experienced. Grappling with the choice between preserving his Moluccan identity and seeking freedom in Dutch society. This is a story told by my blood, additionally becoming my story. One that transcends through my artistic expression. The act of intertwining these intimate family histories with broader social issues can transform my artistic expression into a vehicle for activism, becoming a tool for social change, cultural education, and the building of communities.

Candice Lin is an artist whose work became an ongoing research into marginalised histories. Like her installation work 'Pigs and Poison'<sup>7</sup>. They bring together a multitude of narratives, histories, and substances revolving around themes of colonialism, race, and labour. Through meticulous research spanning addictive plants, viruses, migrant labour, and colonial goods, Lin unveils the complex layers of history that have shaped Guangzhou's trajectory. The title itself, "Pigs" symbolising the exploitative "Pig Trade" of coolie labour and "Poison" representing the devastating impact of opium, encapsulates the dual forces of labour exploitation and substance abuse that defined this era. Lin's artistic vision transcends mere historical documentation or correction. They intertwine personal experiences with speculative

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/382925/candice-lin-pigs-and-poison/>

elements to reveal the political implications of materials, archival absences, and opaque historical narratives. By blurring the boundaries between past and present, personal and collective, Lin challenges viewers to reconsider their understanding of history and its ongoing impact on contemporary society. They reinterpret historical narratives, thereby altering perceptions of cultural inheritance. This is a position I aspire to take on in my future as an artist as I feel this can be a gesture towards

freeing history's past. What happens when a craft is freed from its chambers and re appropriated by the Moluccan diaspora in the Netherlands?



a still of Candice Lin: Pigs and Poison

at Spike Island | Video Tour



## Step 4

Untying the Ties,  
threading and  
weaving  
&  
Embracing  
Change, unveiling  
the fabric of  
society

## Untying the Ties, threading and weaving



It is a moment of anticipation and revelation when the fabric emerges from the dye bath. This unveiling symbolises not only the completion of the dying process but the liberation of threads from their temporary captivity. Ties are untied and showcase the intense labour and dedication previously invested, untying these knots is akin to unwrapping a carefully packaged gift, exposing the interplay of colours and patterns that will adorn the final textile. A testament to the artistry and skill embedded in the Ikat. Burnham defines weaving as ‘interlacing of warp and weft threads in a specific order’<sup>8</sup>. During my time with Hellen and her mother I discovered that the weavers would weave a textile in about 2 days. The loom they use does not look like a loom until it holds a weaving, warp yarns give it its essential form. In its un-warped form, this loom is merely a set of loose sticks. Storing the rolled-up loom in their house and bringing it out in the morning to weave. Using a backstrap loom, the weaver’s body becomes an extension of the instrument, using body weight to increase or ease tension on the warp to alternatively create natural and counter ‘sheds’. In weaving, the shed is the temporary separation between the top and bottom warp yarns through which the weft is woven. I was not used to weaving on the ground with a backstrap loom, as I was taught weaving on a western loom. My endurance is low as it took lots of effort for me to sit in this position, so with intervals of about 20 minutes, there in Tawiri, I wove my Ikat.

## Embracing Change, unveiling the fabric of society



Translating my experiences in Tawiri to a working session in the Netherlands involves opening this intimate process to a broader audience. Surfacing from the individual act of creation to a collective experience of learning and sharing. By inviting professionals, weaving enthusiasts, members of the Moluccan society and anyone considered an important link in the story, a melting pot of perspectives, skills, and backgrounds was created. The gathering is not just about sharing technical aspects of weaving but also to weave together various cultural understandings and interpretations of the craft. By sharing knowledge, threads can be aligned. Each participant brings their unique ‘thread’ - their personal and cultural understanding of Ikat – which when aligned forms a more comprehensive and complex understanding of the craft. When weaving, patterns emerge from the interplay of threads, just as our session creates a pattern. More than just the sum of its parts, a new collective creation that makes way for individual contributions, creating something uniquely communal. Drawing these patterns symbolises the emergence of new perspectives and ideas. A collective design enriched by each viewpoint makes room for transformation, inherent to turning raw threads into a woven fabric. We are facilitating transformation by personal and collective growth.

I will share parts of the working session.



## Workshop Reflection and Analysis Report

**Event:** Connecting Generations and Cultures through Ikat **Date:** Friday, December 1 **Venue:** Weefstudio Leatemala

An enthusiastic and inspiring group of people gathered on Friday December 1 2023, to discuss the start of the project: Connecting Generations and Cultures through Ikat. They also aimed to see, feel, and study ikat cloths. Various people had brought ikat cloths from their private collections. The entire studio was filled with them, a remarkable and festive sight.

During the meeting, we discussed the setup/idea of the project and presented our work so far. We talked about how to further shape the project. For this, we had set up two discussion tables.

**Table 1: Connecting Generations and Cultures through Ikat**  
During the discussion, examples were shared of what other foundations, groups, and organizations have done or plan to do to involve different groups in their projects.

**Table 2: Ikat Technique. What is the technique of weaving an Ikat, can we simplify it for a wider audience, and what is the interest from the Moluccan community in learning this?**

Many questions and topics arose. During the conversation examples were shared from other foundations, groups and organizations on what they have done or will do in the future to involve different societies into their projects. Sharing insights on where we are situated now knowledge wise. Can we make weaving on a backstrap loom more accessible? And how can we bridge the gap between experienced and inexperienced weavers? Can we stress the importance of preserving and renewing Ikat weaving to a larger crowd? By making this clear we could involve everyone, reaching different communities, both far and near our own ideas. An abundance of arguments arises as to what exactly this necessity entails.

Inês Queirós, leveraging her experience in Mexico City, has introduced innovations such as using high stools for backstrap weaving, alleviating physical strain, making the weaving process more comfortable, thereby extending the

duration one can engage. This adaptation is particularly significant in bridging the gap between traditional methods and contemporary considerations.

The idea of collective involvement arises, highlighting a community-based approach to learning and practicing Ikat. As an individual, each step acquires lots of time, with help of others the workload will be lifted. This approach not only eases the learning process for newcomers but also fosters a sense of communal belonging and shared responsibility. Miranda Suripatty offers the involvement of the communal gardens: Tuinen van Brasa in Amsterdam Southeast. They could provide a sustainable and localized approach to harvesting our dyeing materials.

If we made an effort to adapt, teach, and practise Ikat weaving in the Netherlands, intersections of tradition and innovation could be presented. This seems crucial to ensuring that cultural heritage remains, as it can not persevere on its own. In practical terms, the workshop could blend traditional Ikat weaving techniques with contemporary artistic practices, encouraging experimentation and innovation while honouring the cultural roots of the craft. Through hands-on workshops, lectures, and exhibitions, participants can engage deeply with the cultural significance of Ikat weaving and its relevance in today's global context. There is a responsibility when engaging with different cultures to respectfully and ethically ensure everyone is presented accurately and sensitively. Particularly when dealing with a community that has faced the struggles of marginalisation.

A fine line exists between collaboration and appropriation. That is why engaging and involving directly with Hellen and the other weavers in Tawiri is key in the decision-making processes, to maintain authenticity. Amplifying their voices is essential so that they remain the primary narrators of their own story. A must is to keep an open dialogue between the different groups involved, this will foster a sense of collective ownership over the project. This collaborative approach will hopefully support the aspect of altering perceptions of cultural inheritance by fostering cross-cultural exchange and appreciation.



Hands of my great grand mother and father  
Lestemia.

## CONCLUSION:

Blurry memories of creating, shimmery flashes of technique and threads slipping through our grasping fingers.

Depictions on Ikat cloths have an almost shadowlike quality to them, because of the shifting movement the threads make during the weaving process. Just as the shimmer on Ikats adds a mystical quality to the textile, the “shimmery flashes of technique” in the narrative evoke moments of insight and understanding that are fleeting yet profound. The tactile process of Ikat weaving becomes a metaphor for the hands-on exploration of cultural heritage – a journey that involves both learning and letting go, weaving and unravelling, much like the threads slipping through one’s fingers. Memories can be blurry, techniques can simmer in and out of focus. Reconnecting with cultural roots involves a process of piecing together fragments of the past and daring to reinterpret these narratives. I am happy to have dissected the making of an Ikat and to have connected this to different stories. As I was not seeking to retell the story I grew up with, but to explore it through various lenses. I realize how my grandfather did not have space for reflection and contemplation. He could not stand still because of the constraints and pressures of his era, instead, he had to look forward. Trying to focus on foraging a path in a new country. Ensuring the future of his family did not leave room for preserving cultural practices and traditions. However, I grew up in a different set of circumstances, with peace to delve into the past, creating the ability to pause and reflect. By perusing to educate me about Ikat weaving as more than merely a craft, but as a cultural identifier and medium for storytelling, I hope to honor the past whilst boldly stepping into the future.



## Bibliography

Amaone deel III Molukse handvaardigheid in de praktijk - Christien & Ada Lilipaly-de Voogt (1985)

Aveling, Harry. Ik Wil Nog Duizend Jaar Leven: negen moderne Indonesische dichters. 1979.

Baldwin, James, and Raoul Peck. I Am Not Your Negro. Penguin UK, 2017.

Barnes, Ruth. “Niessen, Sandra: Legacy in Cloth. Batak Textiles of Indonesia.” *Anthropos*, vol. 106, no. 2, Jan. 2011, pp. 697–98.

Hamilton, Edith. *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes*. 1942,

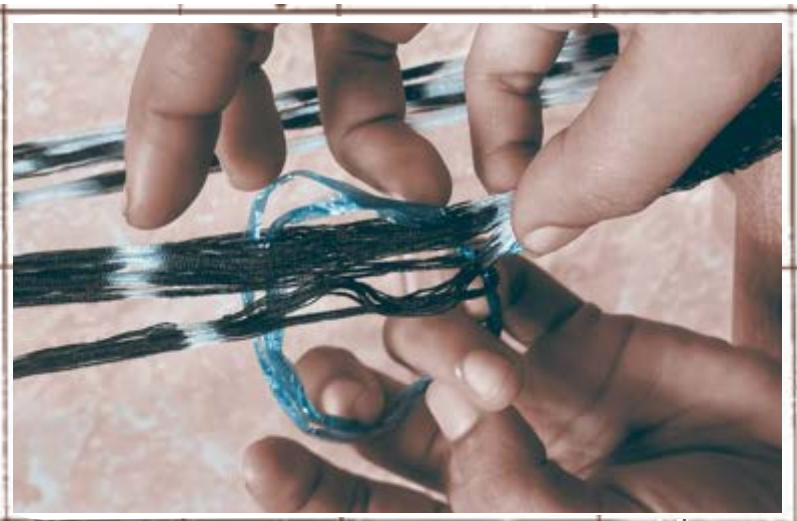
Keppy, Herman. *Saparua, Meisje: Molukse verhalen van vroeger tot nu*. 2023.

Munley, Patrick H. “Erik Erikson’s Theory of Psychosocial Development and Vocational Behavior.” *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, vol. 22, no. 4, July 1975, pp. 314–19. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0076749>.

<https://anderetijden.nl/aflevering/710/Westkapelle-1956>

<https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/382925/candice-linpigs-and-poison/>





Thanks to the people that made me enthusiastic to write:

Jasper Coppes  
Loes Leatemia  
Charles Leatemia  
Hellen Watumlawar  
and Timo

Olivia de Ruyter  
Designed by Timo van Sark  
Gerrit Rietveld Academie 2024

The poem on the back is by an Indonesian poet. It was also on the back of my grandfather's funeral invitation, chosen because of the resilience my grandfather had shown till the very end. He did not want to go. I think it also suits my view of honoring the craft of Ikat weaving and its vitality.

## IK WIL NOG DUIZEND JAAR LEVEN<sup>9</sup>

Als mijn tijd gekomen is

Wil ik van niemand rouw

Ook niet van jou

Niks geen gesnik en gesnotter

Ik ben een eenling geworden

Uitgestoten uit de horde

Laat kogels mijn huid doorboren

Ik blijf tekeergaan en schoppen

Wonden en gif voer ik mee op mijn vlucht

Tot de schrijnende pijn zal verdwijnen

En ik zal er nog minder om geven

Ik wil nog duizend jaar leven.

*Maart 1943*