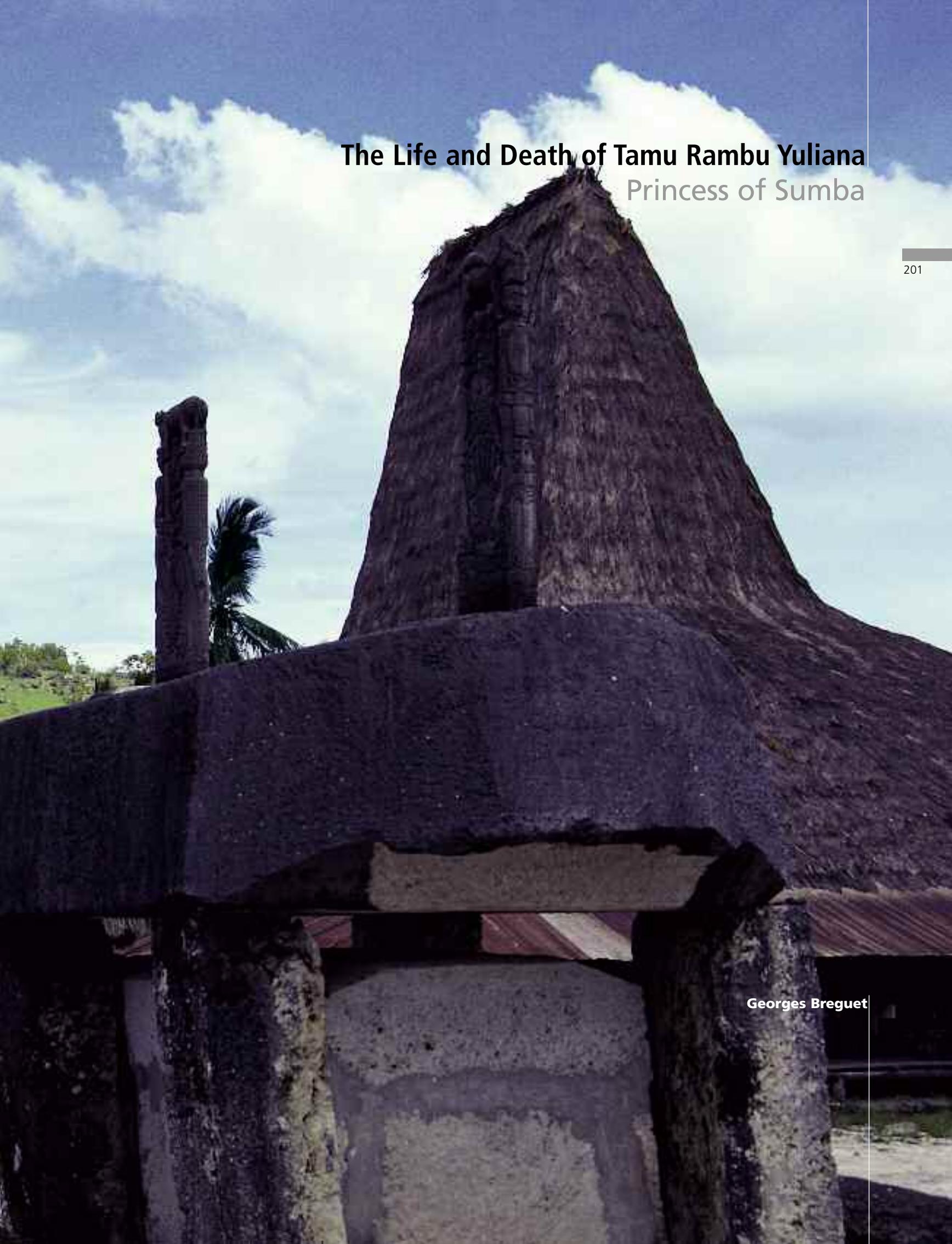




# The Life and Death of Tamu Rambu Yuliana Princess of Sumba

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### THE LIFE AND DEATH OF TAMU RAMBU YULIANA, PRINCESS OF SUMBA AND CUSTODIAN OF THE ARTS AND TREASURES OF RINDI

#### The Island of Sumba and the Domain of Rindi

A fragment formerly detached from the Australian continental plate, the island of Sumba<sup>1</sup> (approximately 11,000 km<sup>2</sup>) is situated south of the volcanic arc of the Lesser Sunda Islands, west of Flores. Made up mainly of limestone and sedimentary rocks, Sumba's topography consists of numerous hills and a plateau covered with grassy savannah interspersed with valleys hollowed out by erosion where gallery forests grow. The climate is hot and arid, except during the rainy season that lasts from December to March.

With fewer than 600,000 inhabitants, Sumba boasts one of the lowest population densities in Indonesia. The island is divided into two administrative districts, West and East Sumba; the east has greater ethnic, cultural, and linguistic unity than the western part.<sup>2</sup> The town of Waingapu is the administrative center of East Sumba; it is also its economic center, with its port and airport, the Chinese, Arabic, and Bugis communities, and its many Indonesian civil servants. The villages of the major traditional domains are in the countryside surrounding Waingapu (to the northeast: Kanatang, Kapunduk, and Napu; to the southeast: Kambera [Prailiu], Kadumbul, Umalulu [Pau], Rindi, Mangili, and Waijila; to the southwest: Lewa; to the south: Tabundung and Karera [Nggongi]). A community of former inhabitants of the island of Savu lives along the coastline and comprises almost ten percent of the population.



**Fig. 1.** Photo taken in the 1950s from the personal album of the old Raja Umbu Hapu Hambandina. On the left is his daughter, Princess Tamu Rambu Yuliana. On the right is Princess Tamu Rambu Mirinai Liaba, third wife of the old raja and mother of the present raja, Umbu Kanabundaung. In the background is an ata "slave" wearing the kahidi yutu or leiding, the symbolic sabre of a princess. Photographer unknown.

The local economy bases itself on breeding goats, pigs, buffalos, and, since Dutch colonization, Brahmin cows. Agriculture in the eastern part consists mainly of food crops (corn, rice,<sup>3</sup> sweet potato, cassava, vegetables, fruits, and coconuts). Local fishing and poultry farming provide most of the island's nutritional proteins; larger animals are consumed only during ceremonies. Betke and Ritonga (2002, 2004)

**Title pages.** *Prai Yawang village, ritual and political center of Rindi. 1992.* Photo by the author.

report that the local economy remains underdeveloped, and that a high number of people live below the poverty line.<sup>4</sup>

Historically, trade between the island and the outside world was dominated by the export of sandalwood,<sup>5</sup> horses, slaves, and local textiles; imported goods came in the form of gold and silver ingots and coins that were melted to produce jewelry. Textiles also came as imports: printed or batik fabrics in cotton; some form of silk known as *patola* decorated using the double ikat technique from the Indies; ikat sarongs in cotton from the Ende region on the island of Flores; indigo blue cotton fabrics, used as a currency, from the island of Buton; and square batik fabrics used as headgear from Java. Other precious objects were imported, such as beads (*muti sala*) of glass or porcelain, canons and other bronze objects, as well as ivory and porcelain.<sup>6</sup> These latter products, along with textiles and locally produced objects of value, constituted the sacred treasures of noble families.

### Origins, Social Classes, and Religion

Myths relate that the Sumbanese descended from migrants who arrived by boat on Cape Sasar, north of Waingapu. They established the first Wungu village and then spread to the rest of the island. Studies of local prehistory and proto-history remain limited, although the excavation sites in Melolo (East Sumba) have revealed objects and structures that date from the Metal Age (500 B.C. – A.D. 1000).<sup>7</sup>

Society was divided into three classes: the *maramba* (nobility), the *kabihu* (free commoners or plebeians) and the *ata* (slaves).<sup>8</sup> The Sumbanese call their local religion *marapu*,<sup>9</sup> which bases itself on a dual conception of the cosmos (masculine-feminine; sun-moon; earth-sky; hot-cold; above-below; right-left), a conceptual tool commonly found among populations in the archipelago.<sup>10</sup> The divine entity that encompasses this dualism and sometimes unites it in an incestuous manner is sometimes referred to as “our common father and mother.” This divine entity continued to watch over the world after having created it, but transferred the management of human affairs to the spirits of the clan ancestors, the *marapu*. Conceived in the sky and inhabiting the earth in accordance with a divine order, the *marapu* are guardian spirits of their human descendants.<sup>11</sup> The *marapu* established the rules that make up customary law (*huri* in local dialect, or *adat* in Indonesian), which may differ from one part of the island to another.

Because it is not possible to directly address divine entities (in cases of death,



**Fig. 2.** Manju Yanggi is one of fifteen priests (*ama bokul*) who direct and lead the rituals of *Rindi*. Photo by the author.



**Map.** Island of Sumba in Indonesia.

illness, famine, and war), it therefore becomes necessary to call upon the clan's *marapu* ancestors for mediation. In Rindi,<sup>12</sup> this occupation is reserved for specialists in ritual and liturgical matters, elders known as *amabokul* or *mahamayang* (**fig. 2**), who speak to the *marapu* in either ritual or profane language. There are also bards known as *wunang*, specialists in *luluku* ritual language, who are called upon for negotiations and participation in embassies; they are organized in dual form and are therefore always accompanied by a *kandiahang* partner or associate.

### The Domain of Rindi

Rindi<sup>13</sup> is situated approximately sixty kilometers south of Waingapu, near the small trading town of Melolo along the Rindi River. Rindi extends to over 300 square kilometers and is populated by about 3,000 inhabitants. The first half of the nineteenth century saw the wake of local troubles with the emergence of the Ana Mburungu clan (*kabisu*).<sup>14</sup> The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the founding of the village of Prai Yawang, which became the ritual and political center of this independent domain (**fig. 3**) and rapidly gained prominence by instigating raids against its neighbors (Karera, Mangili, and Lewa) and siding with the Dutch, who took control over the island in the beginning of the twentieth century. When the colonial administrators divided the eastern part of the island into nine units, they called on the head of the Ana Mburungu clan to act as the *zelfdeurder* or *raja*. In 1912, the domain of Rindi, to which was added the domain of Mangli, was assigned to the head of the clan, Umbu Hina Marumata (known as Borungu Kanataru, or



**Fig. 4.** Raja Umbu Kanabundaung of Rindi and his wife wearing traditional clothing. His wife, Princess Tamu Rambu Hamu Eti, was the daughter of the former Pau raja. Photo by the author.

**Fig. 3.** Founded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Prai Yawang village has since been regarded as the ritual and political center of Rindi. Photo by the author.





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“The One Who Wears a *Kanatar*<sup>15</sup> for a Belt”). He subsequently became the governmental *raja* from 1912 to 1919 and was succeeded from 1919 to 1932 by Umbu Nggalla Lili (known as Rara Lungi, or “The One Whose Hair Is Red”). From 1932 to 1960, the father of Tamu Rambu Yuliana, Umbu Hapu Hambandima (known as Umbu Kandunu, or “The One Who Wears the Star”<sup>16</sup>) then became *raja*. When Umbu Hapu Hambandima died in 1960, a peaceful transition toward an Indonesian bureaucratic administration took place. Although the political power of the current *raja*,<sup>17</sup> Umbu Kanabundaung (**fig. 4**), is purely symbolic, the Ana Mburungu clan remains an important political force in the region.<sup>18</sup>

**Fig. 5.** Tombs of the noblemen of Rindi erected in the center of the Prai Yawang village. In the foreground, a circle of stones indicating where the tree of skulls (*andung*) once stood. This was also the site where the impaled heads of the state enemies were buried. Photo by the author.



### Prai Yawang: Ritual Village of the Domain of Rindi

Several kilometers from the small coastal town of Melolo, in a region of hills through which the Rindi River runs before flowing into the Savu Sea, lies the village of Prai Yawang, the center of power and the ritual site for the domain of Rindi. A short path leads to the *taluara* or the main square of the village, at the center of which stands a large series of imposing *reti* megalithic tombs (fig. 5). The edge of the square is lined with two rows of houses built from more or less traditional materials (fig. 6). On the eastern side is a curious two-storey colonial-style building once used to receive official visits. Attached to the back is a traditional construction known as Uma Penji, where the former *rajas* once resided and where Tamu Rambu Yuliana spent all

her life. It was also where her body lay in state for several months before her funeral. Further downhill to the south stand a ritual house reserved for the gods and the *marapu* ancestors, known as Uma Ndewa, and the Uma Bokulu ceremonial house, the village's largest traditional building (fig. 7). On the western side is a series of houses

**Fig. 6.** The princely tombs, fabricated with a mixture of stone and concrete, contain underground vaults holding the deceased and part of the domain's treasury, including precious textiles and jewelry. Photo by the author.





inhabited by the other noble families, including the important lineage of Uma Andungu. Most of the 150 or so inhabitants of Prai Yawang consist of nobles (*maraba*), their “slaves” (*ata*), and families of free commoners (*kabihu*). Today, most of the nobility spend only part of their time here, living instead in the larger towns of Melolo and Waingapu.



## RINDI ARTS

### Architecture

All over Sumba,<sup>19</sup> traditional Rindi houses represent a microcosm of the local systems of thought, with internal structures containing complex meanings.<sup>20</sup> Houses are rectangular and have large roofs. There are two basic types: those with and those without a central tower of truncated pyramidal shape protruding through the first level. The type with a central tower is the more sacred because it houses the ancestors, Uma Mbatangu, and other relics associated with the *marapu* ancestors. These constructions are always built around four central pillars and consist of three levels: 1) the ground level for domesticated

**Fig. 7.** Central meeting house (*uma bokulu*) of Prai Yawang village where deceased nobles lie in state before their burial. Photo by the author.

animals; 2) the raised level for people, with a large veranda reserved for men's meetings and half the interior space reserved for women; and 3) the top level or attic of the central tower reserved for the *marapu* ancestors. Large clan meetings and funeral rituals take place in the largest traditional house in the village, known as Uma Bokulu. In the past, a pair of wooden statues (*kadu uma*) depicting a man and a woman were placed on top of the tower and its sides were decorated with large *lamba una*-type jewelry, gold-gilded in front (known as *hanamba*) and silver-gilded in the back (known as *kiri kaheli*).<sup>21</sup>

### Rindi Tombs

The tombs of the princely clan (*reti mapawih*) are set out in rows in the center of the Prai Yawang square. They have four or six pillars or "legs" that support a massive upper stone (*dira lodu*) often in the shape of an animal, most frequently a buffalo. The stone on the ground (*ana dalu* or *lata pahapa*) closes the tomb securely. Below the ground, the tombs themselves form a death chamber that is often concrete and tiled to accommodate one or more bodies, as well as the objects and textiles that accompany the deceased. Two vertical stones, *penji* to the front and *kiku* to the rear, are placed on the upper stone; they are sculpted by specialized artisans in the region's style (**fig. 8**). The motifs commemorate the life of the deceased person, often in symbolic or allegorical manner. The sculpture of a monkey on the tomb of the village founder, Umbu Ngalla Lili Kaniparaingu, is frequently shown in the literature.<sup>22</sup>

**Fig. 8.** A decorated stele (*penji*) stands before the tomb of Tamu Rambu Yuliana. The female figure carved in the center represents the slave (*papanggang*) who takes on the role of the deceased princess throughout the noble woman's funerary rites. Photo by the author.

### Rindi Arts and Crafts

The textile production of Rindi is famous throughout the island, a renown that has spread to collectors and museums abroad (**fig. 9**). Mastery in spinning cotton, natural dye coloring, ikat, and *pahikung* (a decorative technique that consists of adding supplementary warp threads at intervals),<sup>23</sup> embroidery, and weaving collectively formed the education of princesses who, once married, took their *savoir-faire* to other domains of the island. The princesses who married nobles from Rindi brought with them their own technological secrets and clan patterns, giving rise to stimulating cultural exchanges. Furthermore, the iconography that came as a result of contact with the outside world at the beginning of the twentieth century led to the incorporation of foreign images on local textiles. These incursions gave rise to a large number of princely textiles from Rindi inspired by coats of arms and colors from The Netherlands. The transformation of this village production in the 1970s into mass production for the market, with Chinese and Muslim intermediary-entrepreneurs, drove noble families to protect their motifs and production and to try out new strategies for their subsequent sale.<sup>24</sup>





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The princesses of Rindi had perfectly mastered the art of working with glass or porcelain beads. Their techniques manifest themselves on antique textiles and were also applied in the production of ritual objects, the most famous of which are the *kalumbut* (fig. 10), a bag carried by the *papanggang* (the “slaves” who accompany the body of the deceased during the funeral ceremony), the *kaluakatu*, a bag hung near the entrance of the ceremonial house that holds the tableware used in the ritual feeding of the dead; and the *halang*, a large bag that serves to attract the *marapu* ancestral spirits during ceremonies (fig. 11).

This overview of the arts and crafts would not be complete without mentioning their outstanding basketry work. The leaves of the *lontar* palm (*ru menggit*), plaited with fine technical mastery, provide the base for imaginative betel plates, ritual tableware, and decorated lids.

Gold and silversmiths did not practice their crafts in Rindi. Treasure jewelry were produced outside and often by artisans of Savu, who were the first to make a type of simplified *mamuli* (fig. 13) that bears the name *lombu*. In the past, local wood and stone sculptors likely worked within the domain, but the production of the elaborate *penji* on the tomb of Princess Tamu Rambu Yuliana was entrusted to an artisan from Pau (Umalulu).

Fig. 9. From left to right: a skirt (*lau*) decorated with embroidery, a *skit* decorated with the chain *ikat* technique, a *hinggi* also by the same technique, and a piece of cloth from Bali. Photo by the author.





**Fig. 10.** Bag embroidered with glass pearls (kalumbut) designed to contain the deceased's betel chew, will be worn by a papanggang during the funeral. Photo by the author.

**Fig. 11.** During these ceremonies, a basket adorned with glass pearls (haling) functions to attract the ancestor spirits (marapu). On the right is a richly decorated lid made out of palm leaves (lontar). Photo by the author.



### The Treasury

Forth and Rogers explain that the *tunggu marapu* sacred objects are bestowed some of the spiritual powers of the *marapu* ancestors.<sup>25</sup> Because of this, the pieces are regarded as mediators in rituals that take place at the foot of the main pillar of the ancestral house. These objects are divided into three categories.

The first category consists of the oldest relics that are kept in a wooden chest at the top of the clan's ancestral house. The second category, stored in a different container, also at the top of the clan's ancestral house, consists of newer metal objects. Only male elders are authorized to approach these first two categories as they are considered "hot." The third category, kept in the lower section of the building,



**Fig. 12.** Ritual objects from the Rindi treasury on display prior to the burial of Tamu Rambu Yuliana. A papanggang is chosen to wear these during the ceremony. From left to right, from the top: small kalumbut; big kalumbut showing the Dutch arms; ivory bracelets (karangeding); tortoiseshell comb (hai kara). In the middle: two gold lamba (frontal gold ornament in the shape of a croissant); orange pearl necklaces (hai kara njangga or hada langgelu) finished by gold objects or mamuli; two gold kanatar chains; a gold tabilu disk. At the bottom: kahidi yutu or leiding sabre knife symbolic of a princess, a black kabiala sabre knife symbolic of a prince, and a gold pandi belt. Photo by the author.

consists of gold and silver chains and pendants, tableware, betel plates, and antique weaving paraphernalia (fig. 12),<sup>26</sup> as well as gongs and drums. Among the objects used during rituals or ceremonial exchanges are ritual fabrics of various ages and jewelry worn by the papanggang at funerals. Although the objects in this third category may be touched by both men and women, they are not totally “cold” and must always be handled with care.

**Fig. 13.** During the funeral, an old mamuli is arranged on the head of a papanggang slave. Photo by the author.



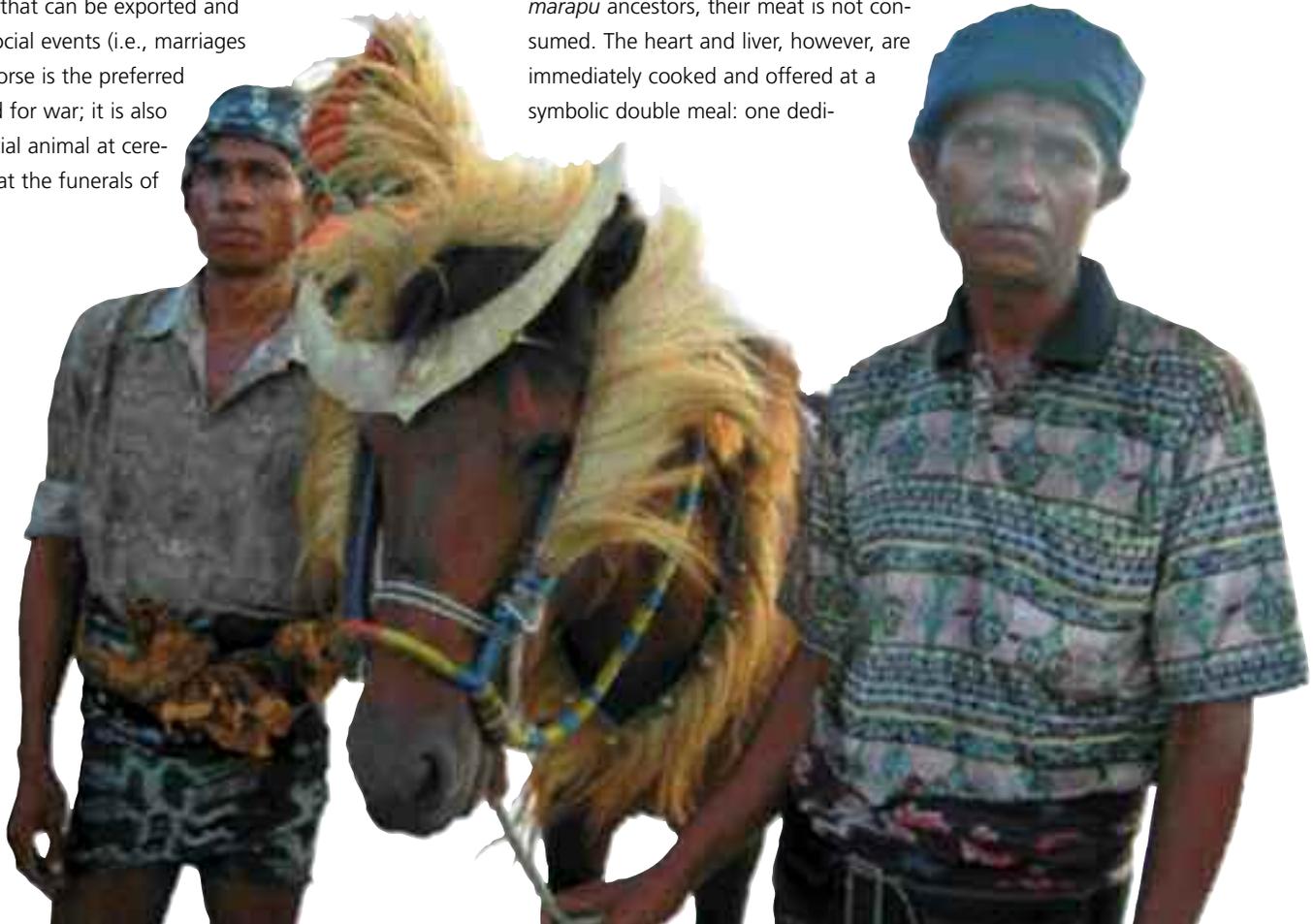
### Decoration and Sacrifice of Horses

In Sumba, the horse (*njara*) is the foremost living symbol of wealth and prestige. Some specific horses can even be considered as property of the *marapu* and must be present at certain ceremonies. Indeed, souls are carried to heaven upon the back of a mythical, winged horse known as *njara ninggu rukappang*, which is why this animal often appears on tattoos, on textiles using the decorative techniques of ikat or *pahikung*, and on golden and beaded objects. It is also featured on sculpted wood and stone figures. Forth notes that the inhabitants of Rindi regard the island of Sumba as itself a representation of the horse.<sup>27</sup>

In Sumba, the horse not only holds symbolic meaning but is also a commodity that can be exported and exchanged during social events (i.e., marriages and funerals). The horse is the preferred mount for travel and for war; it is also the preferred sacrificial animal at ceremonies, particularly at the funerals of the nobility.

Several animals are sacrificed at the beginning and often at the end of clan reunions and funerals. According to my estimates, the rituals associated with the funeral of Princess Tamu Rambu Yuliana necessitated the sacrifice of about fifteen horses, eight of which occurred on the actual day of the funeral. Sacrificed animals are called *dangangu*, a term also used for male and female “slaves” who, in former times, were put to death at funerals to serve their masters in the afterlife.<sup>28</sup> Up to the middle of the twentieth century, such sacrifices were performed in isolated areas in the island. To stop the practice, an Indonesian police officer told me that they positioned themselves in full force during traditional funeral ceremonies.

Although horses are sacrificed in honor of the *marapu* ancestors, their meat is not consumed. The heart and liver, however, are immediately cooked and offered at a symbolic double meal: one dedi-



**Fig. 14.** During the princely funerals in Rindi, richly harnessed horses wear a big gold lamba as frontal decoration. Photo by the author.



**Fig. 15.** During the raja's funeral in Kanatang, a horse is covered with a plaited saddle and ikat cloth. Photo by the author.

cated to the deceased person and the other to the *marapu* ancestors. The horses sacrificed on the day of the funeral are decorated with red ribbons attached to their front legs, head, and tail. A designated officiant is responsible for cutting their throats with a local sword. Death follows rapidly and dogs lap up the streams of blood.

In line with local tradition, the favorite horse of the deceased, as well as one or three other horses, are harnessed and decorated to accompany the mortal remains from the ceremonial house to the tomb. One of these horses, decorated with jewelry (**fig. 14**), is straddled by a *papanggang* "slave". A flat ornament called *lamba* is fixed on the front of the horse: silver (as the case in Kanatang) and gold (as the case in Rindi); adorning the tail is another ornament: *maranga* (made of brass in Kanatang) and *tabilu* (made of gold in Rindi). A small silver bell and a decorated harness are also attached. Saddles are specially made for the funeral and consist of mats covered with ikat fabric (**fig. 15**). After the funeral, these are hung on the wall of the ceremonial house.

**Fig. 16.** Red cloth called *tiara tamaling* is placed on the pile of fabrics that covers the deceased princess. This cloth was made using the *pahikung* technique and decorated with elephants, a motif that signifies royalty. Photo by the author.

### Textiles Used in Rindi Funeral Rites

Once death has been pronounced, the body is washed, anointed with coconut oil, and groomed.<sup>29</sup> If the deceased is a prince, he is clothed with an ordinary black loin cloth (*hinggi miting*). Two rectangular ikat cloths (*hinggi*) are then prepared: one predominately red for the hips (*hinggi kombu*) and one over the shoulder that may either be of predominately red or blue (*hinggi kawuru*). A three meter-long woven strip (*rohu banggi*)<sup>30</sup> is then wrapped around the body and held together by a rattan belt. An ikat turban (*tiara*) is placed on his head and held in place with red-colored strips.

If the deceased is a princess, the body is covered by a black tubular skirt (*lau miting*) then by another, longer sarong known as *lau rohu banggi*. She is dressed with a red blouse and adorned with a tortoise-shell comb (*hai karajangga*), earrings, ivory bracelets, and beaded necklaces. A turban is then placed on her head and a skirt on her feet.

The direction of dressing occurs in a counterclockwise manner on the corpse, whereas the opposite applies to the living. The same holds true for the prince's turban, which must fall on the right side, whereas



for the living, it falls on the left. A gold coin is placed in the mouth and on the hands and another upon the seat. The arms of the corpse are folded over the chest and the knees brought up to the shoulders. Coconut paste (*kawitakokur*) is applied to the neck to prevent the head from sagging. The body is then wrapped in several dozen textiles, *hinggi* for men and *lau* for women. These textiles cannot be white, so the family must quickly dye them if no other textiles are available. They must also be sorted to eliminate textiles dyed with chemical agents. Once bound, the body is fastened with one vertical and two horizontal strips. A type of red hat, known as *tiara tamaling* (fig. 16), is placed on the head. The entire body is then covered with a textile of Indian origin.

Once the body is placed in the ceremonial house, a sample of the deceased's favorite textile is hung behind the body on a pole suspended from the roof. In Kanatang, but not in Rindi, a *hinggi* is hung from the roof and laid flat above the coffin of the *raja*. Once the body is in the tomb, more textiles, brought by the guests, are placed around it. In the case of Princess Tamu Rambu Yuliana, about a hundred textiles were offered in this manner. Previous funerals of important people had seen several hundreds offered.



**Fig. 17.** Covering the body of the deceased is an Indian-inspired *hinggi* cloth showing Prince Rama in the epic story *Ramayana*. Photo by the author.



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**The Papanggang: “Slaves” Covered in Gold, Guardians and Substitutes of Deceased Nobles, the Companion-Guides of Souls**

Among the traditional institutions of Sumba, the *papanggang*<sup>31</sup> is one of the most misunderstood. A popular misunderstanding is the belief that the nobility wear gold from the family treasury during funerals. Although it is true that princes and princesses are dressed in their finest fabrics, they wear neither jewelry nor ornaments during funerals. Who then are the people covered in gold and whose presence at the burial is a symbol of the wealth of the princely clans of Sumba? They are, in fact, “slaves”<sup>32</sup> bound by tradition to fulfil the role of guardian, to substitute for the deceased, and act as companion-guide for their souls. They are called *papanggang*. Without their presence, the princely funerals of Sumba would not be so spectacular.

Each domain maintains its own customs, and this article will provide only a brief description of what occurs in Rindi. The number of *papanggang* varies from two to six and they are organized in couples. The first couple consists of a man who mounts a horse (*makaliti njara*) and a woman wearing a red hat (*matidungu tubuku*); the second, a man carrying a cock (*malunggu manu*) and a woman carrying a feminine betel plate of metal (*mayatu kapu*); and, finally, the third is formed by a man carrying a masculine betel bag of beads (*mahakili kalumbutu*) accompanied by a woman designated to prepare the betel quid for the deceased (*matunggu tuku*). When only two couples



**Fig. 19.** During the dressing of the male *papanggang*, a *lamba* is arranged on his head. Photo by the author.

are used, as was the case at the funeral of Princess Tamu Rambu Yuliana, the first couple also performs the tasks assigned to the third couple.

A number of other “slaves” have precise ritual tasks and do not hold the *papanggang* title; for example, the pretty young girl (*mayutu kapu luri*) who leads the procession.

On the day of the burial, the *papanggang* are dressed in public on the veranda of the ceremonial house. They are carefully covered with jewelry and ornaments in gold and beads from the family or clan treasury (**fig. 19**). Their hair and clothes must be arranged according to the rules pertaining to the dead (i.e., in the opposite way to the living). They represent the deceased man or woman, particularly the male *papanggang* who mounts the horse and the female *papanggang* who

**Fig. 18.** While the body of Tamu Rambu Yuliana is being settled in its final resting place, a *papanggang* remains vigilant by the gravestone. Photo by the author.

**Fig. 20.** Before the transport of Tamu Rambu Yuliana's body to her resting place, the two male papanggang dressed in ritual attire pray before her. Photo by the author.



wears the red hat. After gathering around the body in the ceremonial house, they accompany the deceased to the tomb (**fig. 20**). As they are expected to enter a trance,<sup>33</sup> they are accompanied by assistants to support them. Once in a state of trance, they are considered to have entered into the world of the souls, which is why they can bring back wishes to the living, who must respect them.

During the burial of Princess Tamu Rambu Yuliana, one *papanggang* remained by the tomb and the other—the horseman—climbed on to the upper gravestone and stayed there until the tomb was sealed. Once the animal sacrifices were completed, the procession returned to the ceremonial house where the *papanggang* undressed. Thus the *kawarungu* ritual did not take place during this funeral. The *kawarungu* ritual consists of building a shelter on the tomb of the deceased in which the *papanggang* must reside after the burial<sup>34</sup> and remain until the *pahili mbola* ceremony, when the complete

assimilation of the soul of the deceased into the land of the dead is confirmed.<sup>35</sup> The *banjalu wai mata* ceremony, which marks not the end but the suspension of mourning, must be held three days after the burial. Indeed, this ceremony only ends after the *pahili mbola* ceremony. For Princess Tamu Rambu Yuliana, these two ceremonies were brought closer together, with the *pahili mbola* taking place the day after the *banjalu wai mata* ceremony. The day after the *pahili mbola* ceremony, the *papanggang* return to their normal lives. In acknowledgement for their ritual services, they are treated with the utmost respect; in Rindi, however, the *papanggang* were not granted the status of free men.

### Tamu Rambu Yuliana 1932–2003

The “Queen” of Rindi was born in June 1932, in the middle of the colonial period. She was the lone survivor of the three children from the first wife of the *raja* Umbu Hapu Hambandima, who died in December 1960. Their father was a man of power whose position was recognized by the colonial authorities in The Netherlands, a former family alliance assumed with pride. The *raja*, in fact, named his daughter after the princess and future queen of the Netherlands, Juliana (1909–2004). Shortly before the *raja*’s death, his young third wife gave birth to a boy, Umbu Kanabundaung, who was to be future heir to the title. He was twenty-eight years Yuliana’s junior.

Like all children of the tortoise (*anakara wulang*), the metaphor for princesses in Rindi (Tamu Rambu), Yuliana was expected to marry the son of the crocodile (*ana wuya rara*), a metaphor designating a prince (Umbu). He was expected to come from a powerful external domain, to allow Rindi to consolidate its power. Yuliana’s family chose the *raja* of Kapunduk, a domain north of Waingapu. The marriage, however, never took place. She refused to meet the delegation sent to ask for her hand, a gesture that immediately annulled the proceedings. The reasons remain unclear, but legend has it that Tamu Rambu Yuliana sacrificed herself to prevent part of her family treasure going to Kapunduk, particularly the textiles required by custom to be presented to the groom’s family by the wife-giving clan. As she was then an only child of the *raja*, questions about inheritance and the assumption of her father’s title were focal concerns in the 1950s.



**Fig. 21.** Princess Tamu Rambu Yuliana photographed in 1983 by Susan Rodgers in preparation for the book *Power and Gold* (1985).



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Custom dictated that the princess learn to spin cotton and weave using the ikat technique (the tying and coloring of warp or weft threads) and the *pahikung* (the use of supplementary raw or colored pieces of warp fabric to create patterns). Yuliana was regarded as a master in the art of ikat, preferring to use indigo blue (*wuara*) and red (*kombu*) vegetable dyes. Her creations were unique and often combined tradition with personal invention. She was also prolific. After having begun to weave on the loom, she would leave one of her slaves to finish it under her supervision. She had a passion for basketry work, particularly decorative betel plates, boxes, and lids made of *lontar* palm leaves. Not only did she conceive and produce objects of outstanding quality for daily and ritual use, but she also collected them.



She was not considered an easy person. She was known to leave her visitors waiting, sometimes for days. She disliked bargaining with those who did not accept her final price for textiles and basketry and was known to abruptly terminate these meetings, rapidly withdrawing to her quarters. I recall my meeting with the princess in January 1986, when I left carrying a betel plate of *lontar* leaves decorated with bird motifs and an ikat turban, half red, half blue, where the color arrangement was inspired by the *pagi-sore* batiks, which she had been one of the first to use on the Sumba ikats.<sup>36</sup> She fully cultivated this reputation, adding greater depth to her intransigent personality. She agreed, for example, to be photographed only on rare occasions and systematically refused to have her treasury textiles and jewelry included for fear that they would be copied. A notable exception was when Susan Rodgers visited Rindi in the eighties during her research for the *Power and Gold* (fig. 21) exhibition and catalogue.<sup>37</sup>

**Fig. 22.** Lau sarong, designed and executed by Tamu Rambu Yuliana for her own funeral, features a stag suffering just before its death. Using chain ikat and decorated in pahikung, the cloth is embellished with gold coins representing skull trees (*andung*). Photo by the author.

Managing her assets and acting as custodian of the family treasures was not a simple task. Many antique dealers, collectors, and museums dreamed of possessing a portion of these treasures, and visitors frequently arrived in Rindi from Europe, Japan, and the United States. Although the sale of the daily production of textiles did not pose a problem, the sale of the family treasures was not so easily arranged. As time passed, financial obligations imposed a departure from these firm principles. Some gold objects were left at the governmental pawnbroker's in Waingapu and, when the textile or gold jewelry could not be redeemed, they were discretely sold to a local intermediary who subsequently sold them to a Balinese antique dealer. The objects would often end up abroad.

It is worth mentioning the friendship that developed between Yuliana and the Balinese antique dealer Verra Darwiko. During his frequent visits to Sumba in the 1980s, he organized several exhibitions of Sumba textiles in Jakarta, giving reason for Rindi textiles to travel to the capital. It was in the context of promoting her artistic production that Yuliana occasionally left Sumba to visit Bali and Java. Her daily life was otherwise confined to Rindi, where she looked after the crafts production of her household and sought to maintain the traditions within her community. She took an active role among her constituents and visited the rich and the poor, giving advice in matters of marriage, funerals, prayers, and *marapu* rituals. She was also remembered for finding appropriate names for newborns.

Regarding her personality, Susan Rogers made the following observation: "My brief meeting with Tamu Rambu Yuliana left me with the impression of a serious and stubborn woman; she seemed to know everything. In regards to the traditional aspects of jewelry in East Sumba, this was very probably the case."<sup>38</sup> As guardian of their traditions, she played a discrete yet effective role in keeping the *marapu* religion alive in Rindi. She was aware that her own funeral rites would likely be the last to respect the princely pomp and *marapu* ritual, which was why she had prepared it in all its detail, including the choice of objects from her treasury that would accompany her to the afterlife. She designed and produced the sarong that was to be worn by the *papanggang* "slave" who would symbolically represent her during the bearing of her body to the tomb (fig. 22). When her health declined at the turn of the twenty-first century, Tamu Rambu Yuliana refused to seek treatment in Bali. She passed away peacefully in her Uma Penji family house at Prai Yawang in Rindi in early April 2003.

## THE FUNERAL OF TAMU RAMBU YULIANA

In August 2003, during an extended stay in Bali, I was approached by Umbu Charma, a nobleman from Sumba and a member of one of the princely families<sup>39</sup> in the domain of Rindi. He announced the death, several months earlier, of the famous weaver princess, Tamu Rambu Yuliana. Upon agreement with the other members of the princely clan, he suggested that I actively participate in the funeral ceremonies in order to gather as much documented evidence as possible: personal observations, photographs, and video recordings.<sup>40</sup> As I had been unable to attend in 1981 the large funeral of the *raja* of Pau, Tamu Umbu Windi Tanangunju, nor in 1988 that of the *raja* of Kapunduk, Umbu Nai Wolang,<sup>41</sup> I accepted with enthusiasm. The forthcoming collective funeral, together with the princess's, was probably going to be among the last held on a grand scale and in line with the strict *marapu* ritual.

**Fig. 23.** Coffin of Raja Kanatang covered with an ikat cloth being carried to his tomb. Photo by the author.



**28 August 2003:  
Meeting in Prai Yawang and Eve of the Funeral  
of the *Raja* of Kanatang**

When I arrived in Prai Yawang, where I had not set foot for almost ten years, I found nothing had really changed. It was still as hot as I remembered. The village conveyed a sense of emptiness, like a human desert. The grand Uma Bokulu ceremonial house appeared abandoned. A few children playing nearby saw my arrival as a chance to ask for gifts; I gave out a few sweets without taking in the social origins of the children, whereupon I was immediately informed that the children of nobles should have been served before the children of slaves! I proceeded to my official introduction to the noble household of Uma Andungu. There I partook of betel quid<sup>42</sup> with the princess matriarch of the family line, Tamu Rambu Anamotur,<sup>43</sup> another great weaver, who ruled with an iron fist over her eight children, numerous grandchildren, and dozens of “slaves”.

Her eldest son, Umbu Laratuka, the *camat* (prefect) of the district, took me under his wing. He would later introduce me at the ritual meeting of the men of the domain, shortly to be held in the ceremonial house, the veranda of which was already packed with people. Next, we would proceed as a delegation to the funeral of the *raja* of Kanatang, Umbu Rara Lungi, who had died about three years earlier. This funeral ceremony was also to include a dozen other deceased members of the *raja*'s family, including his sister, his aunt, and his mother.

Before attending, I was asked to dress in accordance with local tradition. I wore an ikat turban (*tiara*), a predominantly blue ikat mantle (*hinggi kawuru*) on my shoulders, and another ikat mantle of predominantly red color (*hinggi kombu*) around my waist.

In this sumptuous clothing, designed and arranged by Tamu Rambu Anamotur, I felt ready to join the delegation. Several hours later, we

arrived in Kanatang, a suburb of Waingapu. The central square was lined with concrete structures and tombs and several traditional houses of ritual function remained. As a part of the wife-giving group (one of the deceased princesses was from Rindi), we were received with all honors. Using ritual language, our bard (*wunang*) and his companion, made a grand impression at the recital, where polite phrasing is recited as rapidly as possible. The men then moved on to the veranda of the traditional house while the women, dressed in black, gathered inside it. I attended some animal sacrifices and, with the other men, was served a few pieces of pork and a mountain of rice. The time came for meetings and discussions among the men from various domains. As the night would be long, we chewed betel quids, smoked, and drank. I took the opportunity to look at the coffins in the ceremonial house and attend one of the last symbolic meals of the deceased *raja* and his kin.



**Fig. 24.** In eastern Sumba, the sacrifice of horses is an integral part of certain ceremonies.  
Photo by the author.

**29 August 2003:**

**The Funeral of the *Raja* of Kanatang**

In the morning, we watched a procession of the delegations from various domains on the island. These were groups with whom the *raja* of Kanatang maintained social relations, the most important being the giving or taking of wives. The more groups that came to pay their last respects to him, the more the clan showed its power and renown. The groups considered as wife-givers were expected to bring textiles and/or pigs, whereas the wife-takers were expected to bring metal objects (gold, silver, iron) and/or buffalos and/or horses. As the Ana Mburungu clan of Rindi was considered a giver of wives in relation to my party, it was our duty to offer a pile of textiles along with pigs and we would, in turn, depart for Rindi with horses and *mamuli*.

During the afternoon and under the guidance of a master of ceremonies, the coffins were brought out to complete their final journey to the new concrete and tile tombs (**fig. 23**). The *papanggang* remained discrete and wore only a few pieces of golden jewelry. It was rumored that certain ritual objects, essential to conform with tradition, had been borrowed from other families for the occasion. The procession turned around the tombs, several people went into trance, the bodies were placed in their new dwelling place, and the ceremony ended, as it should, on the blood of sacrificed horses and buffalos.

I was left with a strange impression, witnessing the remnants of Kanatang's past greatness melting into an ever-so-common modernity. I now more fully understood the eagerness of the people of Rindi to share the funeral of the *raja* of Kanatang with me: it was to demonstrate that the domain of Kanatang was not equal to the preparation for the funerals in Rindi. Princely funerals in Sumba can thus be compared to a display of wealth and the generosity of the host that together serve to enhance his symbolic power and political authority.<sup>44</sup>



**Fig. 25.** The body of Tamu Rambu Yuliana is covered by ritual fabric and laid in state in the ceremony house. A bamboo ladder is placed nearby to facilitate the ascension of her soul to the other world. Photo by the author.

**30 August 2003:****Conveying the Tombstones of Tamu Rambu Yuliana**

I had to return to Bali and so could not witness the conveying of the princess's tombstones. They had to be moved over several kilometers, from the quarry in the hills that overlook Prai Yawang to the village square. The upper stone was a large rectangular block that was said to weigh around thirty tons. With the help of the *marapu* ancestors, who were invoked by a *wunang* bard and a priest, all went well, which was fortunate as accidents were frequent during these occasions. Today a truck would be used and the ritual conveying, where the tombstone is pulled by dozens of men and rolled on wooden trunks, would only take place over the last few meters. The four hewn tomb supports would be left in the quarry, as the government now requires that they be made of concrete in order to avoid accidents.

**18 October 2003:****Moving the Body of Tamu Rambu Yuliana**

I arrived back in Rindi for this important day, which marked the beginning of the final phase of the funeral. A horse was sacrificed (fig. 24) in the Prai Yawang square, then the body of Tamu Rambu Yuliana was brought from the Uma Penji family household to the Uma Bokulu ceremonial house (the house of the clan's ancestors), where it would remain for several days. The ritual arrangement of the corpse in the ceremonial house bore the name of *pahadangu*. Before this took place, the deceased was considered in a state of sleep and was placed in seated position to patiently await burial (fig. 25). The body was positioned on a wooden chest covered with textiles, opposite the main pillar of the house, placing it in contact with the

*marapu* ancestors. Behind it, two bamboo tubes were erected and joined by horizontal slats to form a ladder that symbolically assisted the ascension of the soul. Her betel basket (*tandikapu*) and knife (*kahidi yutu*) were placed to her left (in the case of a man, it would have been his *kabiala* knife-sword). Here, again, was an inversion of the rules with respect to the living, as the betel basket and the knife are always carried on the right side. Various essential ritual objects were placed in the room, such as the beaded bag (*kaluakat*) to hold the ritual tableware and the deceased person's favorite clothes that was placed behind the body, in case she wished to change. At regular intervals, the women moaned and cried, a behavior not expected of the men. The deceased then had to be ritually fed, which was done morning and night using wooden tableware decorated with silver motifs. Her meals continued until the day of the burial. In the nights that followed, the women remained seated and next to her in the large room, while the men gathered on the veranda to sing in honor of the deceased.<sup>45</sup> Between songs, drums and gongs resonated throughout the night, a privilege reserved for the funerals of nobles.

**1 November 2003:****Oracles for Setting the Date of the Funeral**

The time had come to set an auspicious date for the funeral, so the men of the village and their guests reunited. This morning, it would be necessary to examine the entrails of a pig and several cocks (fig. 26). After having ritually bled and prepared the cocks, specialists carefully examined the tubes of their duodenum. The one on the right represented humans, and the one on the left represented the ancestors. If the entrails were different from each other,

**Fig. 26.** Priests (*ama bokul*) read pig's liver and give advice about the future of the community. Photo by the author.





this indicated an imbalance between humans and ancestors, a situation that could lead to later problems. Great care was to be taken when making any decisions. Then came the reading of the pig's liver, where each lobe represented a different individual or probable future event.

**8 November 2003:**

**The Embassies**

In the morning and under the direction of the elderly *amabokul* (half bard, half priest), Mutu Pati May, the men gathered on the veranda of the ceremonial house. They chose the members of the various embassies to be sent as envoys to allied clans (fig. 28). An embassy was expected to always include a specialist in *luluku* language, a form



Here, again, appropriate measures were expected to be taken if an anomaly was perceived. However, interpretations were far from unanimous. Finally, the oracles spoke and the date was set for 20 November 2003 (fig. 27). The entire night was again dedicated to singing songs in ritual language, punctuated with the music of drums and gongs in honor of the deceased princess.

of ritual language that must be spoken as rapidly as possible and that is used for negotiations and invitations. The *wunang* of the delegation, always accompanied by an associate to echo him, would be received by the *wunang* of the guest, accompanied by his own associate. These two groups would orally joust and the one who spoke as rapidly and as distinctly as possible, and without fault, would gain a victory of prestige over the other group.

Gifts were also expected: a piece of *mamuli*-type jewelry and a metal chain that resembled a snake (*lulu amahu*). The *mamuli*, representing the female element, and the *lulu amahu*, representing the male element, would be

bound together in red fabric and presented to the guest by the embassy. I was accepted into a group of a dozen people who were to visit Pau (Umalulu). This was a great honor, as it was the most important embassy; indeed, the mother of Tamu Rambu Yuliana was a native of this domain and we would therefore go as the wife-taking clan, paying homage to the wife-giving clan. The social position of the latter was always superior in Sumba. We renounced traveling there on

Our party made its way to the princely clan of Pau (Umalulu), where the *raja* Tamu Umbu Ngikku received us in splendor. We were granted the rare honor of listening to a sacred Ana Mongu gamelan concert in the house dedicated to the *marapu* ancestors. After the ritual verbal exchange, we handed over our gifts and invitation. The celebration was closed with the sacrifice of a fattened pig over which were poured many alcoholic libations. These offerings were then shared in good spirit.



horseback and instead took a car to Lai Handang, a small hamlet near Pau, where we first had to invite a secondary clan. We were received, as was proper, on a veranda and partook in the welcoming betel quid. However, the local *wunang* and his associate, who were supposed to receive us, were late. Tensions began to mount, but an incident was avoided as, despite our impatience, we were all required by tradition to remain calm. After more than an hour, they arrived and we proceeded as planned.

**Fig. 27.** While the princess lay in state, three symbolic meals were served to her daily. Photo by the author.

**Fig. 28.** Chief priest ama bokul Mutu Pati May prepares gifts and distributes them to the various embassies. Photo by the author.

**Fig. 29.** The "beautiful young woman" called mayutu kapu luri goes into trance before the princess is transferred to her final resting place. Photo by the author.



**20 November 2003:  
The Burial of Tamu Rambu Yuliana**

The day of the burial (*tangu*) had come. Some of the princely delegations from other domains had already arrived, having spent the night in the village. The body of the deceased had been guarded all night by a cohort of weeping women, and several horses had already been sacrificed in honor of the *marapu* ancestors.

In the early morning, *raja* Umbu Kanabundaung departed from tradition, first by having an official portrait taken of his family in full dress, a godsend for the many photographers in attendance, and second, by displaying before all the guests the portion of the sacred treasure to be used for the funeral ceremony. This show of the clan's wealth was a response to the rumors that had spread in Sumba regarding the disappearance of certain objects since the death of Yuliana. It was important to show that the Ana Mburungu clan remained one of the wealthiest on the island.

**Fig. 30.** In the presence of her mortal remains, women attendants must express their sadness and grief, this behavior reaching a climax when the body is taken to the tomb. Photo by the author.

**Fig. 31.** The funeral procession makes its way through the crowd to the tomb. Photo by the author.



During the day, various delegations, with men and women in separate groups, were received in houses where betel quids and a place to rest were offered. Then, accompanied by the animals they had brought as gifts, the delegations walked in file to the ceremonial house, into which the women gathered and participated in the lamentations. The men remained on the veranda, while the *wunang* and his associate went inside. Once there, they were expected to speak before the *wunang* of Rindi and his associate and present them with the traditional gifts depending on whether the invited group was a giver or taker of wives. They received the reciprocal offering. Once the visit ended, the delegations went to rest in another house, where they were offered food while awaiting the burial.

Toward midday, the village and the square had become crowded. Most of the traditional delegations had arrived, as had the inhabitants of the domain and the surrounding villages. There were numerous official guests, curious onlookers, and some tourists.<sup>46</sup> The animals (buffalos, goats, and pigs) brought as gifts were grouped under a shelter behind the houses and in various cattle farms. Their cries mingled with the sound of drums and gongs. The weather was fine and dry despite the fact that we were in the middle of the rainy season. To keep down the dust, tankers watered the square. The few delegations yet to arrive made a noticeable entry, such as the Tabundung Paraing Kareha, led by the *raja* Oemboe Nai Luta, and, most important of all, that of Pau (Umalulu), led by the *raja* Tamu Umbu Nggiku.

Toward the end of the afternoon, we noticed a commotion on the veranda of the ceremonial house. The four *papanggih* and their assistants placed themselves among an important group of people who were to help them get dressed; among them were the members of a local clan of freedmen, Tau Uma Paterangu, who were responsible for attaching their turbans. The tension increased when a group of police officers formed a line of security to prevent guests from approaching the veranda. The dressing of the *papanggih* in the manner of the dead is customarily a powerful moment. One can only

imagine their state of mind during their transformation from “slave” to the deceased. Some of them progressively went into trance as they donned the attributes of their ritual function.

Once dressed and covered in gold, they were presented to the guests. Cameras clicked madly away before the *papanggih* stepped inside the house to meditate near the body of the princess, who was served her last meal. By this time, some of the *papanggih*, as well as the young girl known as *yutu kapu luri*, were in a trance (**fig. 29**). Outside, while this was happening, the two horses for the procession were being prepared and decorated.

Without warning, a group of four horses and four buffalos were sacrificed in front of the ceremonial house. This signalled that the burial itself (*taningu*) could begin. Inside, where the women’s cries and tears intensified (**fig. 30**), a group of men seized the body of the princess, which was covered in fabric. This abduction was not straightforward, as the close relatives of the deceased crowded around her body and, amid heartbreaking goodbyes, tried to hold her back or, at least, touch her one last time. The *yutu kapu luri* was the first to emerge, surrounded and supported by other women. She carried the betel basket and the knife of the princess, while her assistant carried a metal plate containing ingredients for the betel quid, a metal bowl filled with coconut balm, and a glass bottle filled with coconut oil. The plate was placed on a red textile of Indian origin that concealed a decorated skirt (*lau*).<sup>47</sup> According to Forth’s informants,<sup>48</sup> the balm and the oil represent the bodily fluids of the deceased, while the metal plate and the textiles represent her soul.

It was then the turn of the nearest relatives to leave the ceremonial house. The wife and daughters of the *raja* were in tears, while the *raja* himself, the princess's half-brother, had gone into a *haranga* trance. In this state, he could accompany the soul of his half-sister for as long as necessary before the final separation. Then the *papanggang* left, supported by their assistants. The person assigned to ride the horse to the tomb mounted his decorated steed on the left side,

again a sign of inversion with respect to the living. The procession rapidly got underway, with the young girl known as *yutu kapu luri* and her assistant at its head. Then came the *papanggang* on horseback, accompanied by an assistant who held a red parasol (**fig. 31**), followed by a second horse without a rider, accompanied by an assistant with a yellow parasol, and, finally, the body of the princess carried by about ten men and the other *papanggang*.



**Fig. 32.** After the tomb is sealed and the prerequisite animals sacrificed, the funeral party makes its way back to the ceremonial house (*uma bokulu*).

Having arrived at the square, the mounted *papanggang* climbed onto the upper stone of the tomb with his assistants, while the others, most of whom were still in trance, remained on the ground near the tomb. Several men placed the body in the tomb, and several additional textiles and precious objects were added. The women, gathered around it, continued to weep and moan. When all was ready, the men used a thick rope to slide open the heavy stone used to seal the tomb and protect it from both the sun and robbers. The women placed the metal plate and the ritual objects on this stone and scattered several betel quids for the deceased. This ritual would be repeated each day until the end of the mourning period. The newly sacrificed horses and buffalo were placed around the tomb, this profusion of blood enabling the soul of the deceased to travel to the land of the dead.

When nightfall came, the procession, along with the *papanggang* and the horses, returned to the ceremonial house (fig. 32). Once inside, the remaining participants who were still in a trance regained consciousness. The jewelry and ceremonial clothing were returned to their chests, to be later placed back in the treasury. Some guests took their leave, while others returned to the houses they had been allocated. Over the course of the evening, dozens of pigs provided by the host clan and brought by the guests were sacrificed. Their meat was served to the guests over a large meal with plenty to drink, and the feast went on well into the night.

In the days that followed, other rituals would be performed.<sup>49</sup> I would not attend them as I had to return to Bali. Several days later, the mourning period would be considered over, and the soul of Tamu Rambu Yuliana would begin the final stage of its journey: the princess-weaver of Rindi taking her place among the *marapu* ancestors of the Ana Mburungu noble clan.<sup>50</sup>

### Epilogue

Having returned to Sumba one month after the burial, I traveled back to Rindi by invitation of the *raja* and his wife. The ritual village of Prai Yawang was again quiet and deserted. Upon my arrival at the central square, I was dazzled by the imposing white, massive tomb that contained Tamu Rambu Yuliana, almost blinding in the tropical sun. If, through her personality, she dominated Rindi during her life, now deceased, her strong presence continues in the sacred site of Prai Yawang. Her soul, having moved on to the land of the dead and transformed into a *marapu* ancestral spirit, would permanently guard her lineage and domain. Would this vigilance guarantee the continuity of the *marapu* religion and the ancient traditions? What would become of Rindi and its treasures now that its irrepressible custodian has disappeared?

Her young half-brother, the current *raja* Uumbu Kanabundaung, who covered the expenses of this spectacular and costly funeral,<sup>51</sup> now faces difficult decisions. He only has five daughters and must provide them with good education in the universities of Bali or Java, safeguarding their future financial and intellectual independence. A consequence of this exclusively female lineage is that portions of the treasury will be progressively transferred to the families of their future husbands: its disappearance is thus foreseen. As for his numerous irrigated rice fields, they will require significant investment to increase their productivity and adequately feed the local population.

Otherwise, his agricultural domain heads towards a downward spiral, its inhabitants certain to suffer from poverty and the consequences of under-development.<sup>52</sup>

His wife, Tamu Rambu Hamu Eti, is a graduate from a Javanese university and daughter of the famous *raja* of Pau (Umalulu), Tamu Uumbu Windi Tanangunju. She would like to preserve the high level of quality in the production of traditional Rindi textiles, which her small family

unit continues to make in the ancient technique.<sup>53</sup> She is aware of the consequences involved in the selling of a family treasure: after the death of her father, her uncle, the new *raja* of Pau (Umalulu), Tamu Umbu Ngikku, sold the entire family treasury, including its most sacred items.<sup>54</sup> A small museum to testify to the past grandeur of Rindi is being considered; it would also attract tourists to Sumba, whose current numbers are not significant.

The question therefore arose as to what to keep and what to sell. After deliberation, it was decided that the most beautiful textiles woven by the hand of Tamu Rambu Yuliana would be relinquished alongside some of the antique textiles still in the treasury.<sup>55</sup> If any duplicates of gold or beaded ritual objects were found, then the most representative of these would be kept and the others sold. It was a difficult period, but a transition toward modernity was deemed essential for a better life for their children. There also remained the danger of selling one's soul and rapidly consuming the capital obtained from it. I limited my advice to insisting on the importance of selling the objects for as much as possible, according to the state of the market, and trying to sell to only a small number of buyers—the ideal would be to a collector who, in turn, would take sole custody of the treasures. This would avoid them from becoming too widely dispersed. The future will decide if this strategy was a success and would allow the family of the *raja* of Rindi to enter the modern world by means of these sales.

As for Tamu Rambu Yuliana, her name will remain associated with the defence of the *marapu* religion. She will be remembered by her efforts to maintain the traditional arts, the artistic innovations that she brought to the production of fabrics, her imposing tomb, and the stories that her grand funeral have imprinted in the Sumbanese collective memory.

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Georges Breguet graduated from biology and human ecology at the University of Geneva. Since the 1970s, he has conducted numerous scientific assignments to Indonesia, including a major study on the inhabitants of Tenganan, a Balinese village known for its fabric production. Aside from collecting textiles, he has also organized several exhibitions in Switzerland and France on the art of the Indonesian archipelago.

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#### NOTES

1. A good overview of the ethnography of East Sumba appears in Adams 1999.
2. The Austronesian language spoken in the eastern part of Sumba is Kambara. For the written forms of the local terms used in this article, I consulted Kapita 1982 and Forth 1981. When differences arose between these and the terms suggested by my local informants, I chose the form currently in use in Rindi.
3. There are very few irrigated rice fields in East Sumba; however, this agricultural technique has been significantly developed in the Melolo region, near Rindi. Some of these rice fields belong to the *raja* of Rindi.

4. These reports are available on the internet:

[http://www.mekonginfo.org/HDP/Lib.nsf/0/3320CA20F0B923D847256D2B0027BACA/\\$FILE/I%201.7%20-%20Political%20Economy%20East%20Sumba%20-%20Betke.pdf](http://www.mekonginfo.org/HDP/Lib.nsf/0/3320CA20F0B923D847256D2B0027BACA/$FILE/I%201.7%20-%20Political%20Economy%20East%20Sumba%20-%20Betke.pdf) and [www.rcpm.net/files/pdf/Who\\_Are\\_The\\_Poor\\_In\\_East\\_Sumba.pdf](http://www.rcpm.net/files/pdf/Who_Are_The_Poor_In_East_Sumba.pdf)

5. This essence had practically disappeared from the island by the early twentieth century.

6. A large majority of the treasures of noble families ended up in the tombs of its ranking members (where, for the moment, they remain in peace) or were exchanged—and occasionally stolen—in exchange for favor, goods, or ready money. These pieces were exported to Bali or Jakarta (Batavia in the colonial era), and then sold abroad, ending up in public and private collections. These transactions involving objects of high artistic value took place in two separate waves:

-First, in the colonial period between 1910 and 1950, when the main objects of interest were quality textiles, known as *kain raja*, and objects of ethnographic nature.

-Second, from the 1970s to this day, when textiles remained highly sought after alongside objects in gold, beads, wood, and stone. These purchases were often made by Chinese and Arab merchants from Sumbanese (who often had an antique shop in Bali) and by visiting art dealers and collectors from Europe, America, and Japan.

For information on this first wave, see:

- Djajasoebrata and Hanssen 1999 for the Wielanga collection, obtained locally in Sumba at the beginning of the twentieth century; this collection is at the Museum of Ethnography of Rotterdam—currently the Werldeuseum (World Arts Museum);

- Nieuwenkamp 1927 for the collection obtained locally in Sumba by Nieuwenkamp himself;

- Langevis and Wagner 1964 for the Sumba textiles at the Tropen Museum of Amsterdam, as well as those in the Langewis collection;

- van Brakel, van Duuren, and van Hout 1996 for the Sumba textiles in the Tillmann collection at the Tropen Museum of Amsterdam;

- Bühler 1951 and 1953 for the large collection gathered locally in Sumba in 1949, consisting of almost 6,000 articles, around 100 of which are textiles. The collection is at the Museum of Ethnography in Basel—currently the Museum of Cultures.

For information on the second wave, see:

- Rodgers 1985 for gold ornaments and jewelry from Sumba in the Barbier-Mueller Museum, now at the Quai Branly Museum in Paris;

- Holmgren and Spertus 1989 for the Sumba textiles in their collection, some of which are at the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra;

- Khan Majlis 1991 for the Sumba textiles in the Luth collection; and

- Yoshimoto 1996 for the Sumba textiles in the Okada collection.

The question of the erosion of material culture in the Sunda Islands has been analyzed by Moss 1986 and 1994. To gain a greater understanding of the impact of these changes upon Sumbanese society, see Forshee 1999 and 2001. In 2004, only a small number of cultural objects of any value remained in the possession of noble families of eastern Sumba, with the notable exception of the Rindi treasury.

7. For a good overview of the current knowledge of local prehistory and proto-history, see Adams 2004.

8. The existence of an *ata* or “slave” class on Rindi was established as early as the eighteenth century (Forth 1981: 217). Dutch colonial and later Indonesian laws, however, never gave this practice legitimacy. Only free citizens are officially acknowledged in Rindi. During ceremonies, however, descendants of old *ata* “slaves” who, for the most part, continue to live in noble houses, are given the ritual roles originally reserved for *ata* “slaves”.
9. The Christianization of the island, led mainly by the Dutch Calvinist Church, began at the beginning of the twentieth century. Christians are currently estimated to make up half the local population, with a significantly rising number of people in Pentecostal-type protestant sects. The large majority of the inhabitants of the domain of Rindi and, more particularly, its nobility, are still followers of the *marapu* religion.
10. Masculine-feminine dualism in the Indonesian archipelago was the theme of a recent exhibition, where the author of this article was its scientific representative (Breguet 2002). The catalogue contains an analysis by Geirnaert 2002 of this type of dualism in Sumba cultures.
11. For a more thorough description of the founding myths in Rindi, see Forth 1981: 89-94.
12. Elsewhere in Sumba, religious activities take place under the leadership of the *ratu*, a responsibility given to certain clans who act as counterpart to the temporal powers exercised by the *maramba* noble clans. See Forth 1981: 237-91.
13. Refer to the large ethnography in Forth 1981 for a comprehensive study of Rindi.
14. Forth 1981: 10–13.
15. *Kanatar* is a chain; the one alluded to is in gold and measures several meters long. It is still part of the Rindi treasury.
16. The star refers to a Dutch decoration that he wore on his chest.
17. Called Umbu Wunggi Keimaraku (known as Umbu Kudu) in Forth 1981: 422.
18. In 2003, for example, the post of *camat* (district prefect) was held by Umbu Laratuka, a member of the Uma Andungu lineage.
19. For a more thorough and illustrated analysis of the arts of Sumba, see Hoskins 1988 and 1998. On the topic of textile art, see Adams 1969; Warming and Gaworski 1981; Holmgren and Spertus 1989; Geirnaert 1989, 2002; Adams and Forshee 1999; and Forshee 2001. For objects in gold, see Rodgers 1985.
20. Forth 1981: 23–44. For an excellent illustration of a traditional house, see Forth 1998.
21. The original statues were replaced some twenty years ago with statues of more symbolic form. The ornaments of the large traditional house have not been displayed on the roof for many years. They were, however, still in the clan’s possession in 2004, although discussions were underway for their possible sale to cover house repairs. It should also be pointed out that some decorated objects in wood have been sold in recent years, including a candlestick that once furnished the ceremonial house.
22. See Rogers 1985: 174, fig. 31.
23. The *pahikung* decorative technique is the speciality of Pau (Umalulu). As the *rajas* of Rindi often married women from Pau, it is therefore no surprise that this technique was also mastered in Rindi.
24. For a full analysis of these transformations, see Forshee 1999 and 2001.
25. Forth 1981: 94–8; Rodgers 1985: 174–5.
26. An antique spinning wheel with two anthropomorphic figures from the treasure of Tamu Rambu Yuliana is currently part of an American collection. It was previously used by the princesses of Rindi to spin cotton to make the fabrics that would later be given to their future husbands. This object was sold to an Indonesian antique dealer in the 1980s and an illustration of it appears in Breguet 2002: 15.
27. Forth 1981: 61.
28. Forth 1981: 182.
29. A detailed description of funeral rites in Rindi appears in Forth 1981: 171–213.
30. These are called *rohu banggi* by Adams 1969: 88 and Forth 1981: 171, but *rohu banggi* by Warming and Gaworski 1981. The *rohu banggi* strip wrapped around the body of the deceased is shorter than that worn by the *papanggang* during the funeral ceremony. The former can measure up to twelve meters. In the past, these woven non-ikat strips were used to protect the bodies of horsemen during warrior incursions and, more particularly, that of the *kaboran* or leader of the warriors, on whom it would confer invulnerability (Adams 1969: 154). However, a new trend has appeared since the 1930s that consists of partially or fully ikating these long strips. For a description of the most famous of these, which belonged to the family of the *raja* of Tabundung, see Warming and Gaworski 1981: 79 and for an illustration, see Yoshimoto 1996: 83, fig. 145. Geirnaert 1989: 76 discusses the origins of these ikat strips and concludes that it is principally a result of the tourist trade. This opinion, however, should be tempered by the indisputable ritual authenticity of certain fabrics of this type, as examined by the author.
31. The literature contains several written forms of this noun: *papangga*, *pahapanggangu*, and *papanggangu*. Forth 1981: 496, who uses the form *papanggangu*, gives the following definition, “the specially dressed guardian of a noble body.”
32. Forth 1981: 197, notes that in Rindi, they can be either slaves of a noble clan or freedmen of inferior rank; for princely funerals, however, it is always slaves who are used.
33. Forth 1981: 459, writes that, according to collective memory, during the burial of the last governmental *raja* in the 1960s, his horse also fell into a trance.
34. See the description of the *kawarungu* ritual in Forth 1981: 196–7. He states that this provisional structure built on the tomb and in which the *papanggang* must reside previously lasted for around fifteen days. However, following the burial of the last *raja* of Rindi, Forth 1981: 459 notes that this structure remained in place for several years.
35. See the description of *banjalku wai mata* ceremonies in Forth 1981: 185–7, and the *pahili mbola* ceremonies in Forth 1981: 189–90.
36. A *hinggi* from the Tillmann collection, conserved at the Tropen Museum in Amsterdam (Inv. 1172-1101), acquired before 1940, and thus before the work of Tamu Rambu Yuliana, also displays this *pagi-sore* type of design.
37. Rodgers 1985: 54, fig. 50 and p. 171, fig. 126.
38. Rodgers 1985: 171.
39. Umbu Charma is a member of the lineage of the house of Uma Andungu, and one of the only Rindi nobles who speaks English proficiently, due to his many years among Bali antique dealers. He is an endearing character despite his mercantile tendencies, an excellent source of information for the rituals and traditions of his domain, and a photographer of numerous ceremonies in the domain of Rindi. To the author he has become a key informant and a friend. I wish to thank him for his assistance, without which this article could never have been written. His ambiguous personality, navigating between the traditional world of

Sumba and the commercial modernity of Bali, in a similar manner to other members of the domain of Rindi, is described in Forshee 2001: 85–107.

**40.** The following video shoots were conducted in 2003: 18 October by Lini Moertiono; 1 November by Nicolas Millet; 8 November by the author; and 20 November by Patrick Olivier and the author. The author wishes to thank them for their work and patience throughout difficult filming conditions.

**41.** This funeral ceremony was filmed by Janet Hoskins and Laura Scheerer Whitney and made into a documentary entitled, *Funeral of the Raja of Kapunduk, East Sumba, Indonesia, 1988*.

**42.** In Sumba, betel quid is presented in a basket and consists of betel fruits (*Piper betle L.*) of oblong shape, evocative of the phallus, and areca nuts (*Areca catechu L.*) of round shape, evocative of the female sex; and lime powder added to complete the quid. Adult men carry a betel bag (*kalumbut*) and adult women carry a betel basket (*mbula hapa*). It is essential to carry these objects when leaving one's residence or during formal occasions. These objects complement the mandatory bearing of the *kabiala* sword for men and the *kahidi yutu* knife for women.

**43.** Her husband, Umu Makapaki (died 1992), was a man of influence in Rindi by virtue of being head of the Uma Andungu noble household and the second cousin of the former *raja*, Umu Hapu Hambandina. On the different branches of the Ana Mburungu clan, see Forth 1981: 85–107. Umu Makapaki's funeral took place in 1995 and was filmed by a German team under the direction of Astrid Dermutz, who presented it as a documentary entitled, *Sumba: Erinnerungen an den rituellen Tod*.

**44.** These large funerals (Kanatang and Rindi) happened to take place during the Indonesian 2003 electoral campaign. The renewal of the parliamentary authorities of the *kecamatan* (electorate) of East Sumba gave rise to an aggressive and closely fought electoral campaign in which the princely families played major roles. Their meetings during these funerals, concurrent with the run-up to elections, allowed former alliances to be consolidated and new ones to be forged.

**45.** According to Kapita, cited in Adams 1969: 160, there are four types of songs at funerals:

- The story of the origin of the *marapu* ancestors
- The genealogy of the deceased person
- The life story of the deceased person
- The story of the journey of the dead in the afterlife.

**46.** Over and above those invited in the frame of traditional relations of kinship, alliance, and power, the clan also had to invite administrative authorities and current political personalities. A complicated example was the *bupati* (regent) of East Sumba, a distant cousin, who was not invited to the ritual ceremony. He was not allowed to participate for complex family reasons, but was present as a spectator. The clan's business associates were also invited and accounted for the notable presence of public figures from Waingapu of Chinese and Arab descent, including two antique dealers conducting business in Bali, Kinga Laurens and Filemon Kowehe. Also attending were Indonesian guests, including a team from the RCTI Television that produced a documentary of the funeral, and several journalists and photographers. There were also about a dozen foreign visitors, among whom were the presenters of the Threads of Life Foundation, Jean Howe, and William Ingram, historian Jean Couteau,

antique dealer from Singapore Georgia Kan, and international expert on Indonesian art Thomas Murray.

**47.** If the deceased was a man, this fabric would be a *hinggi*.

**48.** Forth 1981: 183.

**49.** For the interested reader, Forth provides a thorough description of all the various funeral rites (1981: 171–213).

**50.** Forth provides a map of the route taken by the souls of the dead until their return to the upper level of the clan's traditional household (1981: 204).

**51.** Expenses were estimated to have been in the region of US \$30,000, not including the exchange of ritual gifts and the immobilization of the precious objects left in the tomb.

**52.** Betke and Ritonga 2002, 2004.

**53.** Examples of this production can be found on the website of the Threads of Life Foundation: <http://www.threadsoflife.com>

**54.** On this subject, see the commentary by Rodgers 1986: 175.

**55.** Copies of these fabrics continue to be produced in the family workshop.