



## **Fiona Kerlogue**

**Fiona Kerlogue** was born in Sussex, England, and studied at Dartington College of Arts, the University of London and the University of Hull, where she received her doctorate in South-East Asian Studies (Anthropology). Her doctoral thesis was based on research undertaken in Sumatra. She is currently Curator of Asian Anthropology at the Horniman Museum in London. Recent publications include 'The Book of Batik' for Didier Millet and 'Arts of Southeast Asia' for the Thames and Hudson 'World of Art' series.

### **The Batik of Malay Sumatera**

*Fiona Kerlogue (UK)*

#### Abstract

In recent years batik has become associated so strongly with Javanese court culture that Malay traditions have come to be overlooked. However, the strong tradition of batik among the Malay community of Jambi, in East Sumatra, depart considerably from Javanese traditions. Where there are similarities with textiles from Java, it is those found in coastal communities which share common elements with Jambi textiles, and these are the places where Malay culture has been subsumed locally over the centuries.

Examining the materials used and methods, employed, clear differences from the traditions of the Javanese court can be seen. The patterns and motifs have more in common with those found in Malay songket and other Malay decorative art such as wood carving than with Javanese examples. The aesthetics and arrangement of the patterning also suggest influences from and shared perspectives with the Malay and the wider Islamic world, echoing historical links from the period of the Sumatran sultanates. Despite the differences there are many similarities; the relationship between court and country traditions has had a part to play in the pattern of differences which exist today.

In this paper the roots of the Sumatran batik tradition are considered in relation to historical sources, whether written, oral or material. The design structures, techniques and material used are described, compared and contrasted with those documented elsewhere in the Malay archipelago. Motifs of contemporary batik and a range of examples found in museum collections are examined in detail and their significance in the Malay cultural context discussed.

Finally an overview of the current significance of batik as an expression of cultural identity in Jambi is presented, revealing its important role in contemporary life.