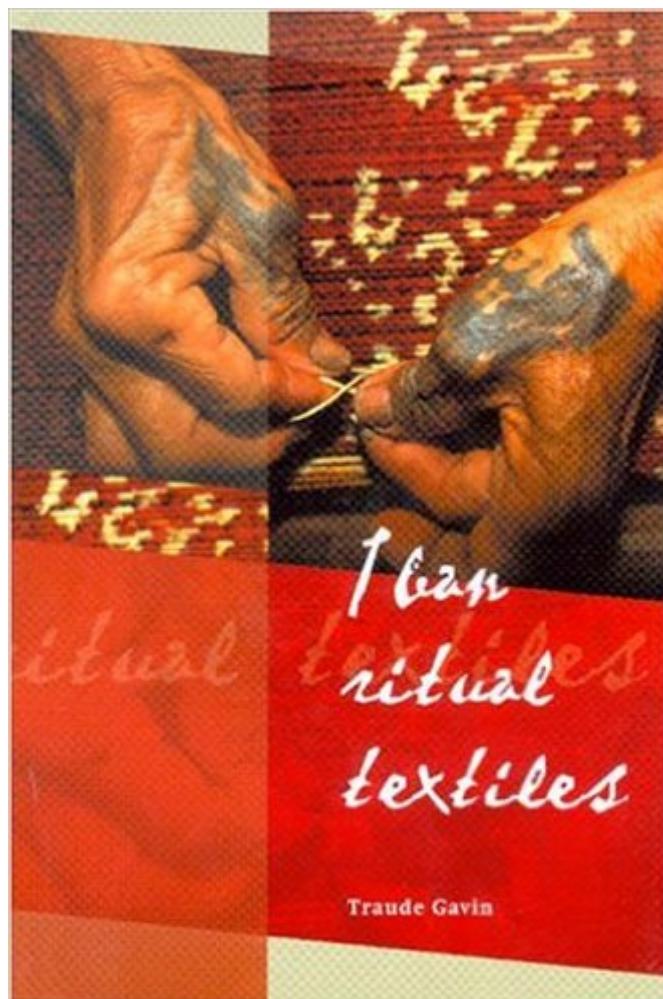


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Iban Ritual Fabrics



Synopsis

Iban ritual textiles draws on years of fieldwork and the author's documentation of hundreds of Iban cloths. Topics include the ritual functions of Iban ikat-patterned fabrics, the technical aspects of producing such cloths, as well as the dynamics of the complex of weaving (the power and efficacy of cloth patterns, dreams and charms) that can be subject to human interpretation and regulation. The main focus, however, is on the cloth patterns themselves and on the names assigned to them. Here the author challenges some long held misconceptions, in particular the notion of designs as a primitive form of language. From this novel perspective, the role of weavers as technicians is set off against the power of patterns as an index for a weaver's relative rank. The study moves on to examine the association of female prestige and weaving with the parallel structure of male status and headhunting. Findings further are discussed in the context of both former and more recent intellectual frameworks. Iban ritual textiles is the first in-depth study of Iban ikat-patterned cloth based on extensive field research and should be of interest to anthropologists, art historians and scholars with an interest in the textile traditions of Southeast Asia.

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