



Between the Folds: Stories of Cloth, Lives, and Travels from Sumba

Jill Forshee

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Textiles have long been integral to the social life and cosmology of the people of East Sumba, Indonesia. In recent decades, the villagers have entered a larger world economy as their textiles have joined the commodity flow of an international "ethnic arts" market, stimulated by Indonesia's tourist trade. As the people of Sumba respond to an immensely expanded commerce in their cloth, tensions and ironies emerge between history and innovation in both cloth and lives. Using a narrative approach, Jill Forshee reveals "the human stuff that cloths enfold". She takes readers into diverse lives, including those of villagers travelling to Bali and tourists visiting Sumba, and follows their adventures along various routes over time. Through personal stories of those involved in the contemporary production and trade of local cloth, a vivid account emerges of the inner workings of a so-called "traditional" society and its arts responding inventively to decades of international collecting. These stories seek to expand anthropological concepts of the boundaries of regions and the certainties of cultures in ways that are tangible and immediate to the reader. They also illuminate conditions of artistic provenance.

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