

## **Researching the Borneo Textile Collection at the Yale University Art Gallery (Indo-Pacific Department)**

### **Traude Gavin**

Senior Visiting Fellow

Department of Indo-Pacific Art, Yale University Art Gallery

The theme of my talk is historical perspective. First, I want to position my field research of the 1980s in Sarawak, East Malaysia, to present-day conditions on the ground. In practical terms I will compare Yale collection textiles of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to examples showing the same patterns made by Iban weavers over a hundred years later. Next, I want to explore the difficulties presented by Yale collection specimens from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century or earlier that were inspired by Indian trade textiles dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. These particular textiles ceased being made about a hundred years ago. The question is what information can be established with any kind of certainty after such a time lapse and what has to be left as unknowable.

**Traude Gavin** is an independent researcher and lecturer with a focus on the ritual textiles of Iban and Iban-related groups in Borneo. She received her Ph.D. in Southeast Asian Studies from the University of Hull in 1995, based on her field research in Sarawak between 1986 and 1993. She was guest curator of an exhibition of Iban textiles at the Fowler Museum of Cultural History in Los Angeles in 1996 and author of the accompanying catalogue, *The Women's Warpath*. Her Ph.D. dissertation *Iban Ritual Textiles* was published by KITLV, Leiden, in 2003 (co-published by Singapore University Press in 2004). Her recent field research was on textiles of Iban-related groups in Kalimantan, Indonesia, supported by a grant from the Association of South East Asian Studies in the UK (ASEASUK). She lives in the Welsh Borders and currently is on a Visiting Senior Fellowship in the Indo-Pacific Department at the Yale University Art Gallery, researching the department's collection of over 120 Borneo textiles.

**Wednesday, October 31**

**12:00 Noon**

**Room 203, Luce Hall, 34 Hillhouse Avenue**