Prayer Book in Bugis and Arabic
Java
19th century AD / 13th century AH
20 x 14 cm
1998.1.9

The Bugis script was once widespread in the Malay Archipelago but is now found mostly in southern Sulawesi, where its use is highly marginal. It is one of a number of regional writing forms derived from India which have been superseded by Latin and Arabic scripts.
The Champa people of southern Vietnam are among the least documented Muslim peoples of Southeast Asia. This prayer book is a rare example of a surviving work in both Arabic and Cham scripts.
Sermon of Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha
Malay Peninsula
20th century AD / 14th century AH
256 x 13.5 cm
1998.1.2618

In this unusual scroll, the words of the khatbah (sermon) of Eid Al-Fitr are written in red, whilst black has been for the sermon of Eid Al-Adha. Both are written in a variant of the Naskh script.
Sermon of Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha
Malay Peninsula
20th century AD / 14th century AH
256 x 13.5 cm
1998.1.2618

In this unusual scroll, the words of the khutbah (sermon) of Eid Al-Fitr are written in red, whilst black has been for the sermon of Eid Al-Adha. Both are written in a variant of the Nashk script.

Dalil al-Khairat Wa Shawariq al-Anwar
Malay Peninsula or Singapore
20th century AD / 14th century AH
16.5 x 12 cm
1998.1.2607

The Dalil al-Khairat Wa Shawariq al-Anwar (Guide to Goodness and Rising Light) belongs to a book of mystical Sufi prayers found in many different parts of the Muslim world.
Writing board
Malay Peninsula
Wood
20th century AD / 14th century AH
37 x 28 cm
1998.1.379

The tradition of writing on wooden boards that can then be reused is long established throughout the Islamic world. Derived from a time when paper was very scarce, it is a custom that continues to be observed. This example from the Malay Peninsula is more elaborate than those found in many countries.
13th century AH

The manuscript is on wooden boards that can then be read throughout the Islamic world. Derived from papyrus, it is a custom that is very scarce. This example from the Malay word is more valuable than those found in many countries.

Wood manuscript
Patani
Wood
20th century AD / 14th century AH
22 x 9 cm
1998.1.2775

Books made from wood are very rare, even in the heavily forested lands of Southeast Asia. This manuscript provides information on common ailments and diseases, along with treatments and herbal remedies.
Post Script

SEALS AND THEIR APPLICATIONS

Seals are symbols of power that have been used in countless locations throughout history. In the Malay Archipelago, the usage of seals has been mainly among rulers, members of royal families and the nobility. In the Malay language, seals are known as *cap mohor*; the first part of the word is believed to have originated from the Hindu word *chapp*, while *mohor* might be derived from the Persian word *mahor*. The two words mean "something sealed". ¹ Another possibility is that the word *mohor* comes from the word *mahor*, a kind of gold coin used in the era of the Mughal emperors Akbar and Jahangir (1556–1621). ²

Two types of seal were used in the Malay world: the seal ring and the seal stamp. In early Islam, the seal stamp was used by the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to authenticate letters sent within Arabia and to foreign powers. The seal was inscribed with the words “Muhammad Rasulullah” in Arabic. In the Malay world, seal stamps also have a long history. They were introduced into the region from India and China, and became part of the regalia of Malay rulers. In the Malay Peninsular state of Perak, the regalia includes a seal known as *cap hadilintar* or ‘the thunder’s seal’. Most of the Malay sultans had a royal writer who wrote their correspondence, to which the rulers would add their stamp seal as acknowledgment that a letter had been sent with his consent.

Most Malay seal stamps are decorated with fine calligraphy in the Malay and Arabic languages. The ring seals also mostly belonged to royal families and the nobility. The size and shape of these seals were varied, with the majority being round or sometimes in the shape of floral petals or a sunburst. There might be four, six, eight, 12 or 16 decorative petals. ³ Most of the seals were used for official documents. They would start with a title of the sultan or sultanah in Arabic, usually a formula
as “al Muntasib Billahi Tengku Petra ibn Almarhum Sultan Ahmad or al Mutawwakil bial Mulk al Haqq al Muhib sultan Muhammad al Ma’rathin Ibn”. The usage of Arabic titles was exclusively for rulers. The nobility did not share this privilege. The title and the name of the sultan were engraved in calligraphic styles such as Thuluth. The vast majority of these seals were created in intaglio, producing a white inscription with a black or coloured background.

For the ring seals, the design and shape are simpler and smaller than for the stamp seals. They can be found in round, square and hexagonal shapes, and the calligraphy is simpler with less intricate decoration than on the stamps. The size is, of course, small enough to function as a ring. Most of the writing focuses on the name of the owner in Malay, without Arabic titles. The titles, awarded by the rulers, include Bendahara Muda, Orang Kaya Saudagar and Saudagar Syarif. Some of these were inherited through royal descent, such as Tengku and Engku. As decoration, Malay seals were embellished with the finest and most intricate designs, such as foliate scrolls and floral petals. Most of the decorative motifs engraved on Malay seals were also used by craftsmen of Malay metalwork.

The cap mohor were used in treaty documents and social correspondence, with the location of the seal differing between the official and the less official uses. Treaty documents between rulers and Dutch officials tend to feature the seal of the ruler placed at the top, with his counterpart’s seal stamped on the opposite side at the same level. Treaties between sultans and British officials were stamped together, side by side, at the right of the document. In all cases, these seals were important for showing that both parties had agreed on the content of a document. Malay seals do not come with written inscriptions only. They might include images of anything that represented the owner. One example would be the seal of Tuan Sayid Abdul Hamid Saripadi from Cambodia, which had an image of a statue holding swords in both hands. Whatever the contents of Malay seals, they have come to be viewed as among the most useful documentary evidence from Islamic Southeast Asia.
Left
Seal of Sultan Abu Bakar
Pahang
1932 AD / 1351 AH
6 x 11.5 cm
1998.1.3975

Engraved with the name “Sultan Abu Bakar Riayatuddin Muizzam Shah, Pahang, 16 Safar 1351 – 1932”

centre
Seal of Sultan Petra
Kelantan
1904 AD / 1322 AH
8.5 x 3.5cm
1998.1.3799

Engraved with the name “Al Muntasib Billahi Tengku Petra Ibn Almarhum Sultan Ahmad, Kelantan 1322”, this was the seal of the Sultan of Kelantan

Right
Seal of Sultan Muhammad III
Kelantan
1891 AD / 1308 AH
11.5 x 5.5 cm
1998.1.3796

The name “Sultan Muhammad Ibn Almarhum Sultan Ahmad 1308 / 1891” is engraved on the seal. The ruler’s other names were Tengku Long Kandar and Tengku Bendahara before he succeeded to the throne
Engku Biru's seal
Kelantan
1910 AD / 1328 AH
1.4 x 1.8 cm
1998.1.4255

A Jawi inscription on the seal contains the name of a princess
"Engku Biru binti Sultan Muhammad 1328 – the daughter of
Sultan Muhammad III"
The seal contains the name of a princess Sultan Muhammad 1328 – the daughter of I

Wooden seal
Kelantan
1936 AD / 1355 AH
6 x 11.5 cm
1998.1.4366

A wood seal with Arabic and Jawi inscription: “Nik Muhammad Amin bin Nik Mahal, 1355”
TEXTILES

Minangkabau women in songket
Textiles
VIRTUE FROM NECESSITY

Throughout the region, textiles have transcended their utilitarian role to become indicators of class and cultural identity. In traditional Southeast Asian communities, weaving was regarded as a vital skill; a young woman’s proficiency at this was often a pre-requisite to marriage, along with an ability to cook and sew. It was also a commercial enterprise. Those weavers recognised as the most skilled would benefit from the patronage of the courts, as fine textiles were and continue to be an integral part of royal display. The longstanding eminence of textiles has ensured that great care and skill have always been invested in their manufacture, while considerable value is placed on the finest creations.

In Southeast Asia, textiles embrace both religious and secular practice. They have evolved to become a vital element in ceremony, marking rites of passage such as births, circumcision, engagements, marriages and deaths. Formerly regarded as commodities that could easily be accepted in exchange and trade, they were also treasured as heirlooms. In some regional courts, textiles were equally important in establishing and re-affirming political allegiances and loyalties. The rulers of these courts were known to present dignitaries with gifts in the form of textiles and clothing known as perak lament or perak lament.

Luxuriant cloths also played a part as symbols of social status and prestige. While the masses would wear clothing made of affordable and durable fabric; the elite preferred high quality textiles which would set them apart. The aristocratic appetite for luxurious fabrics was in part satisfied by the import of textiles from other parts of the world. However, Indian textiles did not enjoy a monopoly in Southeast Asia. Thailand, Cambodia and Java were among the countries also actively...
Textiles

VIRTUE FROM NECESSITY

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involved in sending their own cloths to Melaka and elsewhere for sale.¹

Maritime trade

During the 15th and 16th centuries, the city-state of Melaka was one of the region’s most prosperous emporia. Its geographical location between the East and West made it a centre for international maritime trade. As Melaka’s prosperity grew, the town established itself as an imperial sultanate, eventually dominating nearly the entire Malay Peninsula and the east coast of Sumatra. This paramount position remained unchallenged throughout the 16th century, despite the Portuguese conquest of Melaka in 1511. The fall of Melaka to the Portuguese is often taken as a turning point in the history of Southeast Asia. Over the next century, Portuguese efforts were to be directed at securing control of trade in Indonesia. At the end of the 16th century, Dutch and British interests in the region gave rise to a series of voyages: those of James Lancaster in 1591; Cornelis de Houtman in 1595 and 1598; and Jacob van Neck in 1598; and Lancaster again in 1601.²

European navigators called the archipelago of over 17,000 islands, which make up modern Indonesia, the 'Spiceries' or the 'Spice Islands'. Indonesia was a long-established port, with the earliest evidence of trade being traced back to the 2nd century, when Indian traders first made contact with Java. The Dutch arrived in Indonesia in 1596, and within three decades had imposed exclusive control over the trade in spices and Indian textiles. The Dutch East India Company or Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC) began to attempt to exclude European competitors from the Indies, control the trade carried on by indigenous Asian traders, and establish its own commercial monopoly. In their efforts to control the trade in textiles, the VOC created a system based on licences and passes to ensure that all textiles which entered the local and regional market came through Batavia. By stamping cloths, the authorities monitored their movement and ensured the appropriate dues were collected. The presence of such stamps enables us to date these textiles to the 19th century, because the VOC was formally dissolved on 1st January 1800.³

Long before the arrival of the European powers, there was already extensive maritime trade within Southeast Asia, largely motivated by the supply and demand of a variety of luxury goods, including textiles. For centuries, India had been renowned as a centre for international commerce from which these commodities were traded. Traders from Gujarat and Bengal were especially well known for their enterprise, trading large quantities of Indian textiles and other commodities. The 14th century saw their rise to prominence in Southeast Asia, where they traded to procure profitable spices. As one example, these traders supplied Middle Eastern ports such as Egypt and Hormuz with products taken out of Melaka.

Not only did Indian merchants play a pivotal role in the economic structure of Southeast Asian maritime trade, they were also instrumental in introducing Islam to the region. Over the centuries, thousands of Indian Muslim traders, particularly from Gujarat and Bengal, were known to
have visited ports such as Melaka and Java seasonally, taking up residence in large numbers. As a result of the unceasing traffic of trade, Southeast Asian culture has been influenced by China, India and other parts of the Islamic world. Although primary ideas, techniques and materials were introduced from foreign lands, locally produced textiles often reflected local tastes and sensibilities, adapting foreign elements to enhance the quality and value of their own work.  

As most of Southeast Asia was Hindu prior to the arrival of Islam, Indian designs, motifs and symbolism were already an integral part of life in the region. The coming of Islam brought to a close the Hindu-Buddhist era in the Malay Peninsula and the Indonesian archipelago, apart from enclaves such as Bali. The propagation of Indian culture continued with the arrival of Indian Muslim traders to the region. Various techniques and materials employed in the production of traditional Southeast Asian textiles were primarily adapted from India, especially weaving, resist-dye and cloth painting techniques. India was also the first to introduce cotton to Southeast Asia. It is believed that traders from India first introduced materials and handicrafts made of cotton in Palembang during the 7th century. As it was easy to cultivate and in high demand, several types of cotton were eventually cultivated, although cotton is not native to this region. The eventual decrease in cotton production began during the 19th century when it was replaced by more profitable spice crops for export.

Dutch stamps give useful clues to the cloth trade

The Chinese are known to have been primarily responsible for introducing silk yarns, silk fabrics and porcelain to Southeast Asia. Chinese merchants brought these luxurious items into the region’s major ports, including Melaka, Banten, Batavia and Manila, to be traded throughout inland Southeast Asia, India, the Middle East and Europe. Chinese officials, emissaries and scholars also played a vital role, acting as intermediaries between the courts of Imperial China and Southeast Asia. Lavish gifts of silk, satin, damask and porcelain were presented to Southeast Asian courts, which in return would offer exotic goods such as rhinoceros horn, tortoiseshell, elephant tusks, aromatic woods, dyes and perfumes. This constant social and political interaction ensured that the artistic
such as Melaka and Java seasonally, taking up residence in large numbers. As a result, traffic of trade, Southeast Asian culture has been influenced by China, India and Islamic world. Although primary ideas, techniques and materials were introduced, locally produced textiles often reflected local tastes and sensibilities, adapting to enhance the quality and value of their own work.

Southeast Asia was Hindu prior to the arrival of Islam, Indian designs, motifs and ready an integral part of life in the region. The coming of Islam brought to a close era in the Malay Peninsula and the Indonesian archipelago, apart from enclaves propagation of Indian culture continued with the arrival of Indian Muslim traders. New techniques and materials employed in the production of traditional Southeast Asia primarily adapted from India, especially weaving, resist-dye and cloth painting was also the first to introduce cotton to Southeast Asia. It is believed that traders introduced materials and handicrafts made of cotton in Palembang during the 7th century, easy to cultivate and in high demand, several types of cotton were eventually grown. Cotton is not native to this region. The eventual decline in cotton production 19th century when it was replaced by more profitable spice crops for export.

Dutch stamps give useful clues to the cloth trade

Despite these harsh realities, the Europeans were responsible for introducing materials that have become a fundamental part of Southeast Asian textiles. As the factories of Europe steadily grew during the 19th century, Southeast Asia became a large potential market for their industrialised products. Finely woven commercial fabrics such as flannels, velvets, fine cottons and wool felt became popular base fabrics for appliqués, hangings and accessories. Gilt yarns, lace and especially beads were also lucrative commodities, widely employed in the ornamentation of local textiles. European factories also produced imitations of Southeast Asian and Indian textiles, effectively competing against the original articles in Southeast Asian and European markets. While tailored clothing was an obvious Western influence, so too were buttons holes which began to replace, although not completely eliminate, traditional fasteners. Textile design did not escape Western impressions either; the appearance of Romanised lettering in the form of messages and signatures was an indication of a cosmopolitan education. However, this did not replace the pre-eminence of Islamic calligraphy.
Beyond visual beauty

Throughout the history of Southeast Asia, textiles have been of central importance. They are mentioned in Malay literary epics and romances such as the _bakasudar_, as well as Malay poetry and prose in the form of _pantun_, _sokak_, _syair_, _peribahasa_, _ungkapan_ and _gurindam_. From locally made cloths such as the _songket_, _lunar_, _maislil_, _telepuk_, _genus_ and _pelangi_, to imported Indian textiles such as the _aramanaka_, _pelekat_, _senbagi_, and _patola_; the exquisite beauty of textiles worn within the Malay courts were perhaps never fully expressed in mere words. A _gurindam_ from _Hikayat penghair lara Seri Rama Melaju dari Penak_ illustrates an attempt to describe the colours of a traditional cloth:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Tiga kali sehari berubah warna,} & \quad \text{Changes its colour thrice a day} \\
\text{Pas-pas warna cahun,} & \quad \text{The colour of dew at dawn} \\
\text{Tengah hari warna lembayung,} & \quad \text{The colour of violets at noon} \\
\text{Petang-petang warna minyak.} & \quad \text{And the colour of oil at dusk}
\end{align*}
\]

Beyond visual aesthetics, beauty also lies in the way that textiles are worn and used to reflect cultural beliefs. Malay culture is imbued with _adat resam_ (social traditions) which quietly govern the way of life. With the arrival of Islam, the Malays incorporated expressions of their faith in the way they dress. Textiles not only acquired a third dimension when worn on the body; they can also reflect religious belief, which is a factor in the formation of cultural identity. As Islam outlines the principles of appropriate and modest dressing, it can be said that its teachings have enhanced and refined the traditional Malay disposition towards humility (_rendah diri_) and politeness (_sopan santun_). The following Qur’anic verses exemplify the Islamic guidelines for which men and women should be attired:

Surah an-Nur (Chapter 24, Verse 30-31):

“Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that will make for greater purity for them; and Allah is well acquainted with all that they do. And say to the faithful women to lower their gazes, and to guard their private parts, and not to display their beauty except what is apparent of it, and to extend their head coverings (khimars) to cover their bosoms, and not to display their beauty except to their husbands, or their fathers, or their husband’s fathers, or their sons, or their husband’s sons, or their brothers, or their brothers’ sons, or their sisters’ sons, or their womenfolk, or what their right hands rule (slaves), or the followers from the men who do not feel sexual desire, or the small children to whom the nakedness of women is not apparent, and not to strike their feet (on the ground) so as to make known what they hide of their adornments. And turn in repentance to God together, O you the faithful, in order that you are successful.”
Beauty

History of Southeast Asia, textiles have been of central importance. They are literary epics and romances such as the *hikayat*, as well as Malay poetry and prose *sun, seleka, syair, peribahasa, ungkapan* and *gurindam*. From locally made cloths such as *pasu*, *nasturi, tehepek, gurin* and *pelangi*, to imported Indian textiles such as the *sama renda, l patola*; the exquisite beauty of textiles worn within the Malay courts were perhaps said in mere words. A *gurindam* from *Hikayat penglipur lanu seri Rama Melayu dari* attempt to describe the colours of a traditional cloth:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colour</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hari benih warna</td>
<td>Changes its colour thrice a day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>air embiun</td>
<td>The colour of dew at dawn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>warna lembayung</td>
<td>The colour of violets at noon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ng waran minyak</td>
<td>And the colour of oil at dusk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ethics, beauty also lies in the way that textiles are worn and used to reflect cultural use is imbued with *adat resam* (social traditions) which quietly govern the way al of Islam, the Malays incorporated expressions of their faith in the way they dress. acquires a third dimension when worn on the body; they can also reflect religious factor in the formation of cultural identity. As Islam outlines the principles of modest dress, it can be said that its teachings have enhanced and refined the disposition towards humility (*rendah diri*) and politeness (*sepan santun*). The verses exemplify the Islamic guidelines for which men and women should be

Surah al-Ahzab (Chapter 33, Verse 59):

"O Prophet! Say to your wives and your daughters and the women of the faithful to draw their outer garments (jilbab) close around them; that is better that they will be recognised and not annoyed. And God is ever Forgiving, Gentle."

In accordance with their appreciation of the Islamic faith, the Malays have developed a set of *pantang lanang* or prohibitions concerning the appropriate ways of dress. Among the *pantang lanang* are that: clothing should not reveal *aurat* (parts of the body that should not be exposed according to Islam); clothing should not be transparent; and neither should it be too form-fitting. These guidelines may have been transmitted verbally through the ages and have come to be accepted as common knowledge within the Muslim Malay community.

The sarong

In Islam, a man’s clothes must not bear any resemblance to a woman’s. Adornments considered feminine, such as silk and gold, are prohibited for men as they are the preserve of women. There is, however, an item of clothing which, although simple in form, truly transcends barriers – the sarong. This is a garment worn by both men and women throughout Southeast Asia and Oceania. Generally worn on the lower part of the body, the sarong can be made of any type of cloth: silk, cotton or synthetic. Measuring around four to five metres, it can be worn unsewn, or sewn at one end in the form of a tube. The term sarong conjures up images of a cloth tucked or tied around the waist to make a skirt, which can be of various lengths, terminating anywhere from between the knees to the ankles. The imagery may appear casual, but the unassuming sarong is an integral element of the traditional dress and social culture of Southeast Asia. Although the ways of dress of the peoples in the region are highly varied, the sarong is the one garment which unifies their style.
In the Malay Peninsula and many other parts of the archipelago, the way the sarong is worn substantiates the Malays' adherence to the Islamic code of dressing. Aesthetically, the borders and head of the kain sarung are always adjusted to show off the fine patterns to advantage. More than just a tubular skirt, the kain sarung is worn in a myriad of imaginative ways. These are examples of how the Malays wear the sarong:

Kain kemban (bodice wrap). Prior to the arrival of Islam, women would wear the kain kemban in public. After the arrival of Islam, the kain kemban has only been worn in private, usually for bathing.

Kain kerudung, kain selubung or kain tudung (shroud). This refers to a sarong worn loosely about the head and upper body. Its purpose is to shield the wearer's head and face from the sun or from prying eyes.

Kain dagang luar. This is a sarong worn loosely around the hips with the folds of the cloth held firmly in place with one hand. The way the sarong is worn ensures it can be easily pulled up to function as a kain kerudung.

Kain selempang or selepang. As another means of adorning oneself, a sarong slung over one shoulder and draped diagonally across the body is popular with both Malay men and women. For the latter, it is also another way of placing the cloth on the body within easy reach when not in use as a kain kerudung. The kain selempang can also take the place of a weapon.

Kain mantul. Upon reaching their destination, Malay women would neatly fold the sarong, which had earlier functioned as a kain kerudung, and place it upon a shoulder to keep their hands free in order to greet the host or other guests.

Kain selendang (shawl). Unsewn lengths of sarong, otherwise known as kain panjang or kain lepas, can be worn as shawls.

Kain destar (male headgear). Sarongs can also be cleverly folded and fashioned into headgear.

Kain samping. Describes a sarong worn by men over the baju Melayu (shirt and trousers). The way a kain samping is worn often indicates a man's marital and social status in Malay society. A bachelor's kain samping would hang just above the knee; a married man's kain samping would end just below the knee; while a kain samping, which ends around the ankles, signifies a pious man. Perhaps unique to the Malays of the Peninsula, the way the kepala kain (central panel or head of the
insula and many other parts of the archipelago, the way the sarong is worn in Malaya’s adherence to the Islamic code of dressing. Aesthetically, the borders and selubung are always adjusted to show off the fine patterns to advantage. More than just a sarong worn in a myriad of imaginative ways. These are examples of how he sarong:

ice wrap. Prior to the arrival of Islam, women would wear the kain kemban in its traditional form. The kain kemban has only been worn in private, usually for bathing.

n selubung or kain tudung (shroud). This refers to a sarong worn loosely about the head. Its purpose is to shield the wearer’s head and face from the sun or from prying eyes. His is a sarong worn loosely around the hips with the folds of the cloth held firmly in hand. The way the sarong is worn ensures it can be easily pulled up to function as a selupang. As another means of adorning oneself, a sarong slung over one shoulder casually across the body is popular with both Malay men and women. For the latter, wear it over the body within easy reach when not in use as a kain slempang can also take the place of a weapon.

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b), Unsewn lengths of sarong, otherwise known as kain panjang or kain lepas, can be used as readgear. Sarongs can also be cleverly folded and fashioned into headgear.

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the Malays of the Peninsula, the way the kepala kain (central panel or head of the cloth) of a kain sarung is arranged and placed on the body can also be a clear indication of marital and social status.

i) Kepala kain worn to the left – widowed
ii) Kepala kain to the right – an important person
iii) Kepala kain to the front – virgin
iv) Kepala kain to the back – married

Comfortably worn in the tropics, the indispensable sarong is versatile and can be put to practical use in a variety of ways. These include:

i) Bataan (swing)
ii) Kendong (child carrier)
iii) Selimut (blanket)

Colour

Colour is of cultural importance and is valued for more than just aesthetics. As in many other cultures, the Malays imbue colours with meaning, symbolism and spirituality. Colour traditionally has two meanings – social and symbolic. Socially, colour is used to indicate status such as royalty and nobility, as well as having connotations that include purity, bravery, kinship, fertility, happiness, peace and life itself. Symbolically, colour represents parts of the human body, reflecting a primary role in traditional medicine. Although this section examines the intrinsic meaning of colour, the skillfulness of the Malays in dyeing yarns and cloth should not be overlooked. Not only do they expertly utilise colour to emphasize the richness of materials such as dyes and precious metallic and silk yarns, they also carefully select colours to achieve harmony, balance and contrast in the design of their cloths, attuned in their fondness for bold and vibrant colours. The table below shows the social and symbolic meaning of colour in Malay culture:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COLOUR</th>
<th>SOCIAL MEANING</th>
<th>SYMBOLIC MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>Purity, the king</td>
<td>Bone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Nobility, power and sovereignty</td>
<td>Flesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Bravery, blood ties and kinship</td>
<td>Blood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Strength, good and evil</td>
<td>Skin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Fertility and life</td>
<td>Nervous system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>Happiness, peace and life</td>
<td>Veins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Traditional motifs

Traditionally, most Southeast Asian Muslims lived in rural villages and settlements in close proximity to nature. Surrounded by rainforests, rivers, mountains, valleys, the sky and the sea, they understood their environment. Nature was an important aspect of their livelihood, as it provided them with food, raw materials and medicine. Through generations of observation and creative imagination, craftsmen were inspired by their surroundings. Fruits, flowers, plants, insects, birds and animals, as well as the landscape and the sky, were re-created in motifs which adorned cloths and other art forms. Although nature in general has influenced the Malays, plant life is their most influential source of inspiration. Most traditional motifs are based on plants, which were favoured due to their unique forms and easy attainability, as well as for their importance as a source of food and medicine. Floral motifs, for example, were inspired by flowers found in the garden. These flowers with sweet fragrances are believed to possess medicinal properties and are often used in mandi bunga (literally flower bath), a ritualistic bath which is believed to revitalise and rejuvenate the mind, body and spirit. Fragrant spices, such as the bunga lawang (star anise) and bunga cengkeh (clove), were valued for their culinary and medicinal properties as well as making useful motifs.

Muslim craftsmen and consumers throughout the region were aware of the Islamic antipathy towards using figural life forms as motifs. In the Malay Peninsula, this led to the creation of motifs named only by the anatomical parts of an animal, including the tail, the elbow and the tooth. Traditional designs can be regarded as a reminder to look to nature to comprehend God’s limitless resources. An awareness of the beauty of His creations is reflected in the portrayal of elements of nature. Court artisans strove to create innovative new designs for their patrons, introducing new patterns and motifs to produce outstanding works of craftsmanship.
Southeast Asian Muslims lived in rural villages and settlements in close proximity to rainforests, rivers, mountains, valleys, the sky and the sea, they understood Nature was an important aspect of their livelihood, as it provided them with food, medicine. Through generations of observation and creative imagination, craftsmen would incorporate their surroundings. Fruits, flowers, plants, insects, birds and animals, as well as the sky, were re-created in motifs which adorned clothes and other art forms. Although these motifs are based on plants, which were favoured due to their unique forms and easy availability, they are also a source of wealth and medicine. Florals motifs, for example, are based on flowers found in the garden. These flowers with sweet fragrances are used as medicinal properties and are often used in mandi bunga (literally flower bath), a ritual believed to revitalise and rejuvenate the mind, body and spirit. Fragrant bunga lawang (star anise) and bunga cengkeh (clove), were valued for their culinary properties as well as making useful motifs.

Islamic craftsmen and consumers throughout the region were aware of the Islamic antipathy to life forms as motifs. In the Malay Peninsula, this led to the creation of motifs that are anatomical parts of an animal, including the tail, the elbow and the tooth. This can be regarded as a reminder to look to nature to comprehend God's limitless generosity. The beauty of His creations is reflected in the portrayal of elements of nature, which gave rise to create innovative designs for their patrons, introducing new motifs to produce outstanding works of craftsmanship.

Southeast Asia is known for its beautifully woven, resist-dyed and embroidered traditional cloths. Although these textiles bear distinguishable similarities in technique, design and production, they often have regional and cultural variances, which allow the textiles to be differentiated from one another. The Malays use the word kain to refer to textiles in general and the sarung (sarong) in particular. One does not merely pakai kain or 'wear clothes', but one ikat kain, 'ties clothes' (round oneself). Woven and resist-dyed cloths can be further embellished to elevate their value. There are several methods of adding value to a cloth. Among the most important of these is genos (callandering) - the process of rubbing beeswax onto the surface of a cloth using a cowrie shell. The resulting cloth has a polished sheen and is known in the Malay Peninsula as kain genos.

The harmonious marriage of iridescent colours in Malay textiles is perhaps best seen in examples of finely woven kain linan. The single weft-ikat cloth, also known as kain lemar or kain linan, is principally produced in the states of Terengganu and Kelantan on the East Coast of the Malay Peninsula. These cloths are now associated with the Sultanate of Terengganu, in the past they were also part of royal ceremonial costume in the Riau and Linggaarchipelagos, which lie between the Malacca Peninsula and southern Sumatra.

Other weft-ikat cloths similar to the kain linan can be found in various parts of Southeast Asia, such as: Bangka Island; Riau; Palembang of southern Sumatera; Gresik in east Java and the island of Lombok. The technique is also popular among the self-professed Muslims of the Maranao and Mangindanaos of the Philippines, as well as among the Makassarese and Buginese of Sulawesi. The Hindu Balinese are known for their high-quality weft-ikat fabrics called gersing, as are the predominantly Christian inhabitants of Gorontalo in north Sulawesi.

Woven only in silk, the kain limar is at times further embellished with the occasional supplementary gold weft – producing a magnificent cloth known as linan bersongket. This cloth was exclusively commissioned by royalty and was produced by weaving workshops up to the early years of the 20th century. The handsome linan was not merely the preserve of court society, it was also quite literally fit for a queen. The sole former female ruler of Kelantan, Cik Siti Wan Kembang (r. 1610 – 1677) was known to dress in sarongs, shawls, bodice-wraps and waist clothes consisting of lengths of linan and songket which had not been seen. Perhaps emulating Cik Siti Wan Kembang’s good taste, the linan was highly favoured among the ladies of the court and incorporated in the attire of Melayun dancers of Kelantan.

Another magnificent example of the linan is the linan berayat, referring specifically to linan bearing calligraphic inscriptions such as the names of Allah, the name of the Prophet Muhammad,