the Shahada and the Basmallah. These are exceedingly difficult to produce, requiring intricately calculated designs, as do all other forms of ikat. The accuracy with which the inscriptions in linear banyat are executed not only bears witness to the artistic and technical skill of the women in the East Coast of the Malay Peninsula, but also to their proficiency in the reading and writing of Arabic calligraphy. These venerated woven cloths represent an expression of faith for both the weaver and the patron or consumer and are often used as hangings or worn only above the waistline as a shoulder cloth or head cloth.

The weaving technique of the single weft-ikat limar is thought to have been inspired by the introduction of the double-ikat patola, a princely cloth brought to the Malay world by Gujarati merchants from India. The exquisite patola was produced primarily in Patan, Gujarat and was esteemed by the traditional Malay courts, particularly in the Malay Peninsula, where it was known as āindai and in Java, where it was known as tapil āinde. It is known that the patola continued to be sent to Indonesia up to the 1930s.14

The ikat technique has been practised in so many different parts of the world at one time or another, it is impossible to say where it originated, and it is most probable that it evolved separately in several places independently. Long-standing ikat weaving traditions had existed very early in places such as Indonesia, India, China and Central/South America. Through the activity of trade and migration, ikat production expanded to other places that experienced cultural contact with either one or more of these early centres. Places such as Yemen, the Middle East and Southeast Asia, for example, came under the direct influence of Indian ikats. In West Africa and Europe, there exist ikat weaving traditions that are removed from direct Indian influence, but are derived from cultures that have experienced more direct contact with Indian traditions. In areas such as Central Asia, China, Japan, America and Madagascar, ikat weaving traditions are known to have evolved independently.
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Sarong
East Coast, Malay Peninsula
20th century AD / 14th century AH
108.5 x 105 cm
1998.1.4084

The limar is a single weft-ikat cloth principally produced in the East Coast states of Terengganu
and Kelantan on the Malay Peninsula. Weft-ikat cloths, which are usually woven of silk, are
synonymous with Southeast Asian court culture. The intricacy of the motifs and the harmonious
use of colour in this piece express the weaver’s creativity and dexterity.
Inscribed cloth
East Coast, Malay Peninsula
20th century AD / 14th century AH
237 x 79 cm
1998.1.4123

The presence of calligraphic inscriptions on kain timur herat and other Southeast Asian textiles indicates the impact of Islam on the weavers and consumers of textiles in the region. An inscribed cloth, especially one bearing the name of God or Qur’anic verses, is accorded the highest status. The main body of this example is adorned with the repeated names of Allah, expertly woven into interlocking geometric compartments.
CLOTHS OF GOLD

The term songket derives from the Malay word menyongket meaning, “to embroider with gold or silver threads”. The songket, however, is not an embroidered cloth; it is woven of precious silk threads with supplementary weft patterns of gold or silver yarns and has been described as belonging to the brocade family of textiles. The richness of the materials used to produce this ‘cloth of gold’, such as silk and gold threads, meant that traditionally only royalty and nobility could afford this luxurious fabric. With the introduction of synthetic yarns, songket became more affordable and its use widespread. The exclusivity of the songket is still evident today, as the cloth is only used during formal occasions such as weddings and official ceremonies. Traditionally, the songket is woven at a length of two-metres and can be fashioned into a sarong, shawl and head-cloth. The technique of weaving with floating supplementary-weft gold and silver threads is widely distributed throughout Southeast Asia. The regions best known for songket weaving are the East Coast states of Terengganu, Kelantan and Pahang, Malay Peninsula; Mukah and Kuching, Sarawak; Brunei; Riau; Aceh, Sumatra and Palembang. The songket cloths of Southeast Asia share many distinct features and yet display unique regional variations. Cloths similar to the songket are known by a variety of names such as; balapak basirek (Minangkabau), jong sanat (Brunei), sawek (Palembang), dombak (Bangkahulu) and jua pinggang (Aceh).

Gold also makes a bold impression in telepuk - cloths that have been printed or hand drawn with air emas or perada (gold leaf or gold dust). While the name telepuk is commonly used in the Malay Peninsula, it is also known as kain perada in Java. The technique of decorating cloth with air emas is believed to have been introduced into the Malay world between the 17th and 18th centuries. There are two means of producing telepuk cloth; the first method is block printing and the second is hand drawing. In block printing, Arabic gum is dissolved in boiling water and then applied to the wrist of the crafts person. A clean stamp is then pressed against the wrist covered in gum and applied to the surface of the cloth. Air emas is then applied to the stamped cloth and once the gum has dried, the excess air emas is briskly brushed away with the hands. The production of hand drawn telepuk cloth is very similar, although instead of using a stamp, the crafts person would use a brush to apply the dissolved Arabic gum to the surface of the cloth in order to create the desired design. The name telepuk also refers to the floral motif inspired by the water lily (nymphaea selatia) also known in Malay as tenat or seroja. The telepuk cloth can be fashioned into sarongs, shawls, stoles and headgear and is reserved for significant occasions such as weddings. The cloth also requires special care as it will deteriorate rapidly if washed or mishandled.
CLOTHS OF GOLD

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makes a bold impression in telupuk - cloths that have been printed or hand drawn emas (gold leaf or gold dust). While the name telupuk is commonly used in the t is also known as kain peruda in Java. The technique of decorating cloth with air emas has been introduced into the Malay world between the 17th and 18th centuries. The process of producing telupuk cloth; the first method is block printing and the second is screen printing. Arabic gum is dissolved in boiling water and then applied to the cloth. A clean stamp is then pressed against the wrist covered in gum and applied to the cloth. Air emas is then applied to the stamped cloth and once the gum has dried, s is briskly brushed away with the hands. The production of hand drawn telupuk is, although instead of using a stamp, the craftsperson would use a brush to apply the color to the surface of the cloth in order to create the desired design. The name telupuk is inspired by the water lily (nymphaea sepiata) also known in Malay. The telupuk cloth can be fashioned into sarongs, shawls, stoles and headgear and is worn on important occasions such as weddings. The cloth also requires special care as it will be washed or mishandled.

Shawl
Sumatra
20th century AD / 14th century AH
298 x 70 cm
1998.1478

The songket is a cloth that plays a central role in Sumatran culture. Provinces such as Bukit Tinggi and Kota Gadang of West Sumatra are renowned for fine works using this lavish technique. This red songket shawl has vertical stripes, which indicate that it may have been folded and worn on the shoulder.
Songket
Pagar Ruyong, Sumatra
19th century AD / 13th century AH
182.5 x 89.5 cm
1998.1.4179

Once the preserve of royalty and aristocrats, 'cloths of gold' such as the songket still hold pride of place in many Southeast Asian cultures. Cloths such as this are very often worn folded over one shoulder. The stiffness of the fabric helps it to drape across the body. This example is heavily woven in gilt thread with several diamond-shaped compartments comprising silver thread. The warps in the ground fabric are formatted in a red and black gingham, characteristic of weavings from Kota Gadang, in Sumatra, and the adjacent areas.
Satong (detail)
Selangor, Malay Peninsula
20th century AD / 14th century AH
208.5 x 122.5 cm
2005.4.1

Songket is a proud legacy of the East Coast states of Terengganu and Kelantan. However, the state of Selangor is also renowned for producing fine songkets. The main design feature of this songket satong is the series of confronting and interlocking pucuk rebung (bamboo shoot) motifs placed in the kepala kain (central panel) of the cloth. The main body of the cloth is adorned with a compact arrangement of stylised four-petalled flowers.
A humble cotton batik cloth can be transformed into a valued work by means of decorating the surface of the cloth with block-printed or hand-drawn air emas (literally meaning gold water, but refers to gold dust or gold leaf). A cloth treated in this manner is known as kain teluk in the Malay Peninsula and kain perana in Java and Bali. On the example here, air emas has been used extensively, outlining the designs in detail and complementing the beige and browns of the batik.
WOVEN PLAIDS

The word tenun literally means ‘weave’ in Malay, while the kain tenun, refers specifically to the plaids woven by the Malays. Usually woven of either silk or cotton, kain tenun generally feature chequered patterns, horizontal stripes or vertical stripes. Their most distinguishable feature of the kain tenun is the relationship and harmony between the colours of the warps and wefts. Kain tenun can be embellished further with supplementary gold weft in a design known as pola bunga berterbuh, where isolated flower heads are enclosed within the square grids of the cloth. An example of Malay plaid or tenun is the corak Muar (Muar pattern), which is a simple check pattern of broad squares in muted shades. One of the simplest ways to recognise a corak Muar is by measuring the size of the squares to the span between the tips of stretched thumb and little finger (a measurement known in Malay as sejengkal). The Muar pattern can be identified if the size of the square is found to be larger than a sejengkal. The pattern is named after the town of Muar situated in the southern state of Johor in the Malay Peninsula, although it is woven in Terengganu. Another example of tenun is the kain Pahang or Pahang cloth, which has smaller squares and is also named after a state in the Malay Peninsula. A hardy cloth known as kain mastuti is a tenun made of raw silk. Well known for being waterproof, it is a costly material as conveyed in the following saying “Jual sutera beli mastuti” which roughly translates to “Sell your silk to purchase mastuti”. The kain Bugis or Bugis cloth is another popular plaid, made principally by the Bugis people of Sulawesi. It features an intricate network of small squares and colours, and is usually woven with a green or red background and is at times adorned with designs in gold and silver threads. The fineness of this cloth is eternally recorded in this pantun:

- Kain balda kain Makasar
- Halus tidak dapat diterun
- Laut muda snogai bersarak
- Hias tidak dapat diminum

Cloths of velvet and cloths from Makasar,
So fine are they, that they are impossible to weave,
Seas of honey and rivers of nectar,
One cannot quench one’s thirst with them.
WOVEN PLAIDS

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kain Makasar

dapat ditemui

Cloths of velvet and cloths from Makasar,

dapat diminum

So fine are they, that they are impossible to weave,
sungai bersakar

Seas of honey and rivers of nectar,
don’t quench one’s thirst with them.

Sarong

Indonesia

20th century AD / 14th century AH

110 x 91 cm

1998.1.4057

A silk sarong with a purple ground adorned with horizontal and vertical bands in white; forming alternating chequered patterns. Woven with an interlocking geometric motif, the uneven edges show that some of the silk yarns were tied and dyed prior to weaving to achieve the distinctive flat look.
Sarong

Indonesia

20th century AD / 14th century AH

108.5 x 68 cm

1998.1.4024

Throughout Southeast Asia, the sarong is worn by both men and women. Although it is a garment that transcends social boundaries, sarongs woven or decorated with precious materials such as silk, gold yarns and gold leaf have generally been worn only by the wealthy or reserved for ceremonial occasions. This silk that sarong is predominately yellow and woven with horizontal bands containing geometric designs in white and red and dark brown.
In Asia, the sarong is worn by both men and women. Although it is a garment that transcends age, sex or class, it is still considered to be a symbol of wealth and power. The sarong is usually made of silk or cotton and is decorated with intricate designs. The Sarong on display is from the Malay Peninsula and is made of silk. It is 182 cm x 102 cm and dates from the 14th century AD/20th century AH.

The Sarong, literally meaning to weave in Malay, also refers specifically to woven plaids. Usually woven of either silk or cotton, the most distinctive feature of these cloths is the relationship and harmony between the colours of the warp and weft. This sarong is embellished with supplementary gold threads in a motif known as tampak kesemak (corolla of the persimmon).