Circumcision sash
Malay Archipelago
20th century AD / 14th century AH
130 x 13 cm
1998.14019

Circumcision ceremonies are important rites of passage for young men in many Muslim communities. Marking the transition from childhood to adulthood, they differ throughout Southeast Asia although retaining elements of adat (tradition) present in each community. The base of this sash is constructed out of tapah fibre. Half the length of the sash is covered in black cotton and the other half in a faded pinkish-orange cloth. The black cloth is adorned with couched gilt-paper wrapped thread in an organic foliate arrangement. There are also metal sequins, as well as mirror and gold paper pieces attached with red thread.
Analysis of a cotton panel from the Aqmar mosque, Baghdad, Iraq, 833-834 AH (1431-1432 AD). The panel features interlacing floral and geometric motifs, with the inscription in Kufic script reading 'الملياه العلامة' (al-milaha al-ulumah). The inscription is likely a date and a religious invocation.
Ceremonial bag with metal ornaments
West Sumatra
19th century AD / 13th century AH
50 x 38 cm
1998.1.4192

The chewing of betel quids is a common ceremonial and social practice throughout Southeast Asia, often offered to guests as a welcoming gesture. The Minangkabau people favoured carrying their betel quid ingredients in an uncang sirih (ceremonial bag). This example is couched with gold-wrapped thread in a floral and foliate motif. Metal ornaments known as sapi jangguik (literally bearded claws) accompany the sequinned bag; they are used as cleaning utensils. The rounded metal container known as salapah (also known as chelpa in the Malay Peninsula) is a box for carrying tobacco, which is a common accompaniment to the chewing of betel quid.
metal ornaments

18th century AH

Qa’id is a common ceremonial and social practice throughout Southeast Asia, often offered to gesture. The Minangkabau people favoured carrying their betel qa’id ingredients in an uncang (gourd). This example is couched with gold-tipped thread in a floral and foliate motif. Metal qipik janggak (literally beaded clasps) accompany the sequinned bag; they are used as cleaning metal container known as salapah (also known as chelupa in the Malay Peninsula) is a box for which is a common accompaniment to the chewing of betel qa’id.

Waistcoat
Malay Archipelago
20th century AD / 14th century AH
47 x 44 cm
1998.1.4036

A black cotton vest embroidered with the Qur’anic verse: “A help from Allah (against your enemies) and a near victory” (Chapter 61, Verse 13), as well as the name of the Prophet Muhammad on the right and left sides.
Embroidered cover
Indonesia
19th century AD / 13th century AH
48 x 45 cm
1998.1.4191

This velvet cover is embroidered with the first verse from the Surah Al Jinn (72:1). It may have served as a Qur'an cover as the verse refers to the act of Qur'an recitation: “Say: It has been revealed to me that a company of Jinns listened (to the Qur’an). They said: ‘we have really heard a wonderful recital!’ ” The cover is also adorned with couched gilt thread in a floral and foliate motif. It is further accentuated with metal sequins and a gilt lace trim.
Talismanic band
Malay Archipelago
19th century AD / 13th century AH
30.5 x 10.5 cm
1998.14164

This silk band is couched with gilt-wrapped yarn, silk threads and metal sequins to form a six-pointed star which is flanked by two square grids containing Arabic numerals. It includes the Qur’anic verse “A help from Allah (against your enemies) and a near victory” (Chapter 61, Verse 13), situated to the right of the six-pointed star. On its left is another verse “Allah is sufficient for me. None has the right to be worshipped but He. In Him I put my trust and He is the Lord of the Mighty Throne.” (Chapter 9, Verse 129)
IMPORTED TEXTILES

Imported goods were highly prized in Southeast Asia and played a large part in influencing the development of local crafts and court cultures. To satisfy local markets, a variety of cloths and materials were imported and traded, such as kain halus (velvet), kain bulu (wool felt), kain antelus, kinikha, ainul-basat, kain geransut, kain sanarenda and kain pelekat (Indian pulcat).

We know from historical writings that Indian textiles were of particular importance to international trade in Southeast Asia, even before the arrival of European powers. Prized for their fine weave, brilliant colours, beautiful designs and colourfast dyes, Indian textiles were also socially and culturally important. In addition to the eminent double-ikat silk patola from the Malabar Coast of India, the kain sembág from the Commandel Coast of the sub-continent also had considerable influence, largely concentrated in Sumatra. The design repertoire of the kain sembág is more varied than that of the patola. There are strong indications that both Indian cloths were made to cater to the intended Southeast Asian market by incorporating distinctively local motifs and designs.

The travels of Southeast Asian pilgrims to Mecca and other holy sites in the Middle East undoubtedly had great importance in spreading Islamic religious teachings, as well as social and cultural values. Pilgrims would also have purchased cloths considered exotic, such as silk damask, to bring home with them. Upon their return, these rare pieces of cloth would have been transformed into items of considerable significance. Imported goods also came directly from Middle Eastern sources; Turkish and Arab traders were especially frequent visitors to the region.
IMPORTED TEXTILES

were highly prized in Southeast Asia and played a large part in influencing the local crafts and court cultures. To satisfy local markets, a variety of cloths and sated and traded, such as kain balu (velvet), kain bulu (wool felt), kain antelas, kain genorus, kain samarinda and kain pelekat (Indian pilekat).

from historical writings that Indian textiles were of particular importance to in Southeast Asia, even before the arrival of European powers. Prized for their colours, beautiful designs and colourfast dyes, Indian textiles were also socially current. In addition to the eminent double-ikat silk patola from the Malabar Coast sembiji from the Coromandel Coast of the sub-continent also had considerable concentrated in Sumatra. The design repertoire of the kain sembiji is more varied stola. There are strong indications that both Indian cloths were made to cater to east Asian market by incorporating distinctively local motifs and designs.

of Southeast Asian pilgrims to Mecca and other holy sites in the Middle East great importance in spreading Islamic religious teachings, as well as social and prims would also have purchased cloths considered exotic, such as silk damask, to hem. Upon their return, these rare pieces of cloth would have been transformed iderable significance. Imported goods also came directly from Middle Eastern Arab traders were especially frequent visitors to the region.

Shawl
Gujarat, India
19th - 20th century AD / 13th - 14th
century AH
373 x 100 cm
2004.13.51

Patola cloths were highly prized in Southeast Asia, primarily for their fine weave, beautiful designs and colourfast dyes. Produced principally in Patan, Gujarat, they were introduced into the region by Indian merchants from the Malabar Coast. Also known in Java as tapib cindai, and in the Malay Peninsula as kain cindai, they became heirlooms, tributes, and an integral part of royat attire. This delicate patola is adorned predominantly with a motif favoured by the Javanese courts, known in Javanese as bursang (eight-pointed star).
Waistcoat
Ottoman/Malay Archipelago
18th century AD / 12th century AH
46 x 39 cm
1998.1.4156

Early kisors were made of silk lampas with calligraphic chevrons. In the case of this waistcoat, the fabric was woven with chevrons which include the Shahada and a Qur’anic verse relating to the qibla. Lampas cloth was also frequently used as a cenotaph cover and as talismanic garments. Southeast Asian pilgrims visiting the Holy Land would have needed considerable wealth or influence to acquire a cloth such as this. Upon their return, the lampas would have been made into a revered item of clothing.
19th century AH

Made of silk lampas with calligraphic chevrons. In the case of this one, it was woven with chevrons which include the Shahada and a Qur'anic verse. Lampas cloth was also frequently used as a censetaph cover and the Southeast Asian pilgrims visiting the Holy Land would have brought it with them, possibly to acquire a cloth such as this. Upon their return, it would have been made into a revered item of clothing.

Ceremonial cloth
Coromandel Coast, India
19th - 20th century AD / 13th - 14th century AH
262 x 110 cm
2005.9.34

In Sumatra, the kain sembagi were accorded the status of sacred heirlooms. These special cloths were not meant for everyday use. They were usually worn as shoulder or skirt cloths in dances and theatrical performances. Made on the Coromandel Coast of India, and destined for Sumatran markets, the cotton cloth was block printed, painted, mordant dyed and resist dyed. This piece has been further embellished with peradu air emas (gold leaf).
Calligraphic cloth
Batu Bara, Sumatra
20th century AD / 14th century AH
235 x 107 cm
1998.1.4033

Inspired by the appearance of resist-dyed batiks, the production of this cloth could be attributed to the Middle East. It was most likely exported to Sumatra. The inscriptions are printed in black and then hand-painted in blue, yellow and red dyes. Oval medallions in the centre of the cloth bear the following inscription in Arabic: "May Allah have His blessings on Muhammad the Messenger of Allah". A prominent interlacing inscription in Thuluth script records the Shahada – "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is His Messenger". Repeated along the borders are the following inscriptions in Arabic: "and may Allah have His peace and blessings on the Prophet Muhammad, his family and his companions". Some inscriptions also appear as mirror images.
The arrival of Islam in Southeast Asia had a profound effect on jewellery as on the region's other art forms. There were changes in decoration, style and usage, following the principles embodied in the new religion. For example, talismanic disc medallions which had once been filled with divine and human imagery took on more stylised vegetal decorative motifs and employed the use of magic squares. Granulation and filigree, techniques native to the Hellenistic world that had flowered in Arabia, were probably introduced into Southeast Asia. The indigenous techniques of repoussé and chasing, along with the use of beaten and moulded jewellery, were the primary techniques to undergo a renaissance in the region. Stained gold, a process native to the Malay Peninsula and rooted in animistic beliefs, was used throughout the region in Islamic times. This 'red gold' effect was obtained by staining with *morinda citrifolia* and might owe its popularity to the association of red with the realm of the warrior. In addition to its intrinsic value, gold was also thought to possess magical powers.

Maritime trade furthered the transfer of styles, motifs and techniques through the region. Archeological evidence supports the view that Malay traders had contact with Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms from India to Vietnam. Although Buddhist and Hindu and elements continued to exert their influence, by the mid-15th century, Melaka was officially an Islamic domain. Sultan Muhammed Shah (1488-1511) instituted sumptuary laws prohibiting the use of gold and silver for those outside the royal court and the nobility.¹

For the most part, jewellery of the Malay world was primarily practical in nature, working as clothing accessories in the form of brooches (*kerongtang*) and large leaf-shaped buckles (*pengaling*). For
Jewellery

ACCOUTREMENTS AS ART

In Southeast Asia, the influence of the region's ancient religious practices has left a lasting impact on jewellery design. For example, the use of amulets and talismans, which date back to early periods, continues to this day. The Malaysian craft of infusing traditional motifs with modern elements demonstrates the region's ability to adapt and evolve while preserving its heritage.

In Malaysia, the use of gold and silver in jewellery has been a prominent feature since ancient times. The intricate designs often reflect the region's rich cultural history, with motifs such as the lotus flower, the tree of life, and the serpent. These elements not only add aesthetic value but also symbolize various aspects of nature and spiritual beliefs.

The use of precious metals like gold and silver in jewelry is not limited to ornamental purposes but also holds significant cultural and religious importance. In many societies, gold jewelry is often associated with wealth and status, while silver jewelry is seen as more practical and everyday.

Throughout the region, the use of gold and silver in jewelry has evolved over time, incorporating new techniques and designs while maintaining a connection to traditional art. This fusion of old and new methods has resulted in a rich and diverse jewelry culture that continues to inspire and evolve.