



PHA TEEN JOK IN PASTORAL MAE CHAEM

Marc Honinckx



PHA TEEN JOK

Mae Cheam, an isolated valley in the north of Thailand, is a three-hour drive by car although only 135 km. from Chiang Mai. To get there from the northern capital we drove south to the Chan Thong District on a busy and uneventful highway. However, once we turned off onto highway 1009 west, the scenery changed completely. A narrow winding route took us through the mountainous Doi Inthanon National Park. A lush jungle, nearby waterfalls and hill tribe villages should not distract your attention from the road where local drivers seem keyed on improving their time performance to get wherever they are heading.

After a last bend, the wide Mae Cheam valley opened up under our eyes with its tender green rice paddy fields. This hidden valley protected by mountain ranges put an immediate spell on us. With hardly any visual pollution, Mae Chaem is a small town on a river by the same name flowing gently to the south.

PHA TEEN JOK

After arriving in the town of Mae Chaem we immediately headed to the nearby weaving hamlet of Thambon Thapa where old looms are found underneath some houses. Women from several households work together in a co-op weaving the unique pattern of textiles known as *teen jok*, a hand-woven pattern used to decorate traditional Thai hip-wraps. These textiles known as *pha teen jok* were traditionally woven for

Newsletter Contents

PHA TEEN JOK IN PASTORAL MAE CHAEM

Text and pictures - Marc Honinckx

Page 1 – 3

TRADITIONAL BURMESE JACKET

Text and pictures - Thweep Ake Rittinaphakorn

Page 4 – 6

THAI SILK - From Moth to Cloth

Text and pictures - Ruth Gerson

Page 6 – 9

JAVA BATIK – TWO INTERESTING EXAMPLES

Text and pictures - Earl Kessler

Page 10 – 11

SPRING IN JAPANESE AND KOREAN EMBROIDERY

Text and pictures - John Toomey

Page 12 – 15

WEAVING VILLAGES IN THE SACRED VALLEY OF PERU

Text and pictures - Gerri Forkner

Page 15 – 19

All that Glitters Is Not Gold – Malay Kelingkan Embroidery

Text and pictures - John Ang

Page 19 - 25



local use and considered to be a valuable family asset worn at all important events. The hip-wrap comprises three parts: the waistband, the main skirt and, and most remarkable the hem piece which will retain our attention.



To create the teen jok weavers traditionally used vibrant-coloured threads dominated by reds and yellows. The motifs are woven in discontinuous supplementary weft cotton or silk. Gold or silver threads are also incorporated in the woven weft. For an observer it is rather mind boggling to realize that skilled weavers are able to create sumptuous patterns without a plan or a sketch. Design and weaving take place at the same time.



Weavers use a quill or a pointed stick to pick out certain warp yarns. This makes the chunky, colorful designs “spring” from the textiles. All patterns are woven with the underside of the textile being visible to the weaver so that threads are kept neat and tight. Textiles and patterns being so tightly woven cannot be broken when the fabric is washed or rubbed. The motifs and patterns are visible on both sides of the cloth, and the edges always sewn with black or white threads only.



Such luxurious items have a price! Decades ago, an individual who was unable to weave a teen jok by herself had to pay about 50 baht per piece. Such luxurious items that took months to weave had a high price especially for an individual unable to weave one by herself. As a result these beautiful textiles came to be reserved for the rich elderly or outsiders. Over time, the younger generations lost interest in the teen jok.'

Another factor contributed to the near extinction of the teen jok tradition. Many Mae Cheam natives gave up their looms for opium farming in the late 1950's. Villagers enjoyed much easier and quicker incomes from opium instead of spending week after week crafting complex patterns on a loom. Teen jok was revived in the 1970s with the encouragements of the government to abandon opium farming. Under the patronage of His Majesty the King, modernization projects were implemented to save traditions by involving the population and especially students. Affordable Chinese silk was imported to make the textiles less costly. In addition to the traditional vibrant colours, softer ones were introduced, using pastels and earth-tone hues. These efforts were recognized in



October 2007, when the Mae Chaem Teen Jok Fabric received the Registration of Geographical Indication (GI), a first for a Thai textile (four more Thai textiles were granted the same recognition at later dates). A GI gives its owners the exclusive right to use the GI and enforce it in case of copying and unlawful use. In celebration of this unique weave each year in January or February a Teen Jok Festival is organized in Mae Chaem.



RURAL TEMPLES

Set in the rural countryside we were able to visit a number of varied and appealing Buddhist temples. Close to the weaving village, we discovered Wat Ban Tub with interesting *naga* sculptures. Its location in the middle of the rice fields offers a particularly picturesque and soothing environment.

Another small country temple is Wat Yang Luan built by the Karen in the 17th century. We were welcomed by a smiling old monk who invited us to discover behind the main Buddha image in the vihara, a carved stone structure, the Koo Prasart believed to be the gate to heaven.

Wat Puttha En to the north, built in the mid 19th century, is one of the few *bot nam* (water chapel). The *ubosot* on pillars is in the middle of a lotus pond.

It houses a sacred well and we could verify that villagers use it for their personal supply as they come on their motorcycles to fill containers with fresh water. Wat Pa Daed to the south is in an isolated area as it used to be a forest wat. Today the forest is gone and it is surrounded by rice fields, the 19th century viharn was beautifully restored in the 1980's. Rather well conserved 19th century murals are the work of a Thai Yai artist named Tam. Scenes show the birth of the Buddha including one depicting of what seems to be a local way of giving birth, with the woman hanging on to the branches of a tree while assisted by the mid-wife. Another local scene is that of a woman planting shoots of rice with her feet in the water.

PASTORAL MAE CHEAM

It appeared to us that life continues to flow rather gently and serenely in Mae Cheam. How could we forget to mention the groups of farmers we saw harvesting rice? They worked by hand, carrying the sheaves on their shoulders and then threshing them using a flail. As they labored using methods handed down through the generations, time seems to have stood still. We regretted our departure and the need to leave this charming pastoral scene. Next time we will plan a longer stay in this picturesque and welcoming northern valley.



Threshing Rice in Mae Chaem



ABOUT US

The Thai Textile Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to the study and appreciation of textiles, with particular emphasis on the textiles of Thailand and Southeast Asia. Based in Bangkok, the Thai Textile Society was founded in 2004 when Kathleen Florence Johnson, wife of U.S. Ambassador to Thailand Darryl Johnson, invited scholars, collectors, and other textile enthusiasts to establish a society dedicated to the study, appreciation, and preservation of the textile arts in the kingdom and the region. An avid weaver and textile collector, Mrs. Johnson envisioned the Society as a forum for textile lovers to exchange ideas and share information and resources. Since its inaugural meeting in May, 2004, the Society has organized regular lectures, trips, and other programs such as its popular Collector's Corner series. The TTS enjoys and appreciates support from the Siam Society and the James H.W. Thompson Foundation. It has also worked closely with the latter on programs such as the August 2005 Jim Thompson textile symposium. Membership in the Thai Textile Society has grown steadily, and our emailing list now reaches more than 400 people worldwide. Under the leadership of President Dr. Sathirakorn Pongpanich, the Society continues to host regular educational programs designed to promote appreciation of Asia's rich textile heritage.



TRADITIONAL BURMESE JACKET

Text and pictures

by Thweep Ake Rittinaphakorn



Of all the apparel ensembles of the Burmese, one interesting clothing item that is worth mentioning is the jacket/blouse. The style of such basic garment worn by both male and female commoners since Kongboun time (1752-1885) till now has been influenced by the form and pattern of the Chinese jacket/robe with the round collar and loose body pattern, either front opening or overlapping seams fastening on the side.

However, there is another type of jacket favored by the aristocratic class and royalties since the dynastic time, with clear photographic evidence depiction, dated to Kongboun period. Such jacket has a distinctive characteristic with the hip-length, tight body-hugging pattern that flares out at the end on both sides. This is known and called in Burmese as "Htaing Ma Thein Ingyi". Simply, this name translates as the jacket that requires no gathering up when sitting down. Such name is indicated by its hip-length pattern with flaring ends that turn upwards on the sides. During Kongbaung time,



court ladies daily dress ensembles comprised of the long front opening skirt (Htamein), a breast cloth, and a Htaing Ma The in jacket. This style of female courtier dress is the origin of the traditional bridal couture used till the present day.



(Htaing = to sit / Ma = no / Thein = collect or gather / Ingyi = shirt or jacket)

This kind of jacket found its popular use for theatrical performers both males and females. Male performers would wear this jacket with a long hip wrapping cloth known as “Taungshey Pahso.”



Another common use is for boys during their becoming novice ceremony and girls during their ears piercing ceremony. In both ceremonies, boys and girls are all dress up in royal-style costumes assuming them to be princes and princesses.



However, the characteristics of the male Htaing Ma Thein jacket and that of females have both interesting similarities, as well as differences, that are worth noting. The similarities lie in the small and tight fitting body patterns. Two pieces of the front seams are typically narrow, so when worn, they barely cover to midpoint of the breast on each side. The length of the jacket terminates midway at the hip level with meticulous patterning allowing it to flare out upwards and sideways. Interestingly, at the very end of the seams that flare at the bottom, sometimes rods of rattan or wire are inserted to provide an adjustable structure to increase the flaring effect when worn.

As for the differences, in female jackets the two front seams would not overlap. No buttoning is required. The jacket is simply worn open at the front. At the end of both frontal seams, two pendulous appendages of pieces of fabric are attached. They are known as “Kala Nok” (simply means “Breast of the Indians”). Originally, such a feature is believed to serve as a weight to prevent the jacket from being turned up easily when worn. However, they now serve more as a decorative feature.



Female

As for male jackets, the key differentiating point from those of females is the narrow rectangle lappet attached to one side of the frontal seam. When worn, this lappet would be well positioned covering the midpoint of wearer's breast. The top part of the lappet has a curvaceous cut to fit the collar of the wearer. There is a small string attached at the top corner of this lappet that would be tied to another string at the back of the collar area, simply to secure the lappet in place. Apart from this, no other buttoning is present. So, when worn, the pattern of the jacket would look as if it has a high cut on one side up to the breast level.



Male



THAI SILK - From Moth to Cloth

Text and pictures

by Ruth Gerson



Silk for sale in a shop in Pakthongchai village

Silk has been an item valued and admired by people for centuries. It is among the oldest fineries in the world, one that was so extensively traded that land routes from Asia to Europe were named after it. Known to originate in China, it is told that Empress Si Ling Chi was taking her tea under a mulberry tree when a cocoon fell into the warm liquid causing it to unravel into a fine fiber.

Recognizing and treasuring the uniqueness of silk, the Chinese jealously guarded it, punishing heavily anyone unauthorized who attempted to grow or export the silk. It was a matter of time before it was smuggled out of the country and found its way to India and from there to Thailand where silk has become a major commercial craft.

Although demands for Thai silk are great, most of this cloth is still woven by hand. It is a labor-intensive work, with great care given to every stage of its productions, from tending to the silk worms to growing plants for natural dyes, to threading the loom, and ultimately to weaving the cloth.

Let us observe the cycle of silk from the fluttering moth that nestles on the mulberry tree to the woven shimmering silk, where each natural step is overseen by humans. To control the quality of silk, large moths are

placed with branches of the mulberry tree within a clear, sectioned area. These *Bombyx mori* moths mate in a period that takes five to seven days, then attach themselves to the branches and lay 300-400 tiny white eggs each. Both male and female moths die shortly afterwards. Within ten to fourteen days small silk larvae emerge from these eggs and are placed in flat shallow trays lined with fresh mulberry leaves on which they will feed.



Moths lay eggs on stems of the plants

The larvae are black and measure only three millimeters in length. They are about to embark on a lengthy twenty-eight days of binging and fattening up, in which time they will amazingly grow to 10,000 times their original size, to become fat white caterpillars that are colloquially called silk worms. During that time they literally outgrow their skin, which they shed four times. It is a critical time for the silk worms' growers, as the worms can get easily sick at this stage. The trays, implements and workers are regularly disinfected and even the worms are dusted with disinfecting powder. The environment is carefully controlled by setting the right temperature, humidity and ventilation.



Silk worms feeding on leaves

The silk worms are fed three times a day – in the morning, noon and evening with the partly eaten leaves removed each time. The size and quality of the mulberry leaves are given according to the age of the silk worms. Young ones get new leaves that are soft and chopped finely while older worms get larger parts of older leaves. The worms are arranged carefully allowing enough space between them. At the end of this intense twenty-eight day diet the silk worms reach the approximate length of eight centimeters and measure about one and a half centimeter in width.

The silk worms are now ready to enter the next stage of their cycle, the chrysalis stage when the silk worms weave a cocoon around them then turn into pupa. They secrete two liquids from their mouths creating two threads that bond when exposed to the air. One filament is the silk thread and the other is a gummy substance called sericin that protects and adds firmness to the fine silk thread. The worm then starts a fourteen-day exercise session of winding the continuous filament around its body in a figure eight pattern. The caterpillar inside the cocoon that changes into pupa is shorter and stubbier than the silk worm. To maximize the space, many silk producers arrange the cocoons in spiraling circles on large flat trays that are both practical and visually pleasing.

When the cocoons are ready they are separated for different purposes. About two thirds are designated for silk production. They are placed in the sun so that the pupas would die. This is a necessary step because if

these were to develop into moths they would break out through the cocoon and destroy the continuous silk thread. The remaining third is allowed to develop into a full term *Bombyx mori* moth then mate and perpetuate the life cycle of the silk worms.



Pupa after cocoons have been boiled

The cocoons that were set aside for silk production are boiled in hot water. This process removes the gum substance from the silk filament and eventually separates the threads from the pupa inside. The cocoons, and therefore the silk that is unraveled from them, vary in color. Cocoons grown in Thailand, range from light to dark gold to a pale shade of green. Those imported from China are white in color and supplement the shortage of local cocoons. Anywhere between 500 – 1500 meters can be pulled out of one cocoon. The filaments however are so fine that several have to be put together to create a single thread. The pupa is not wasted either, it is eaten and is considered a great delicacy.

Although the silk from the white cocoons is smoother than that from the yellow ones, both kinds share similar characteristics. A cocoon is made of three distinct layers of silk. The outer layer is made of large threads that are shorter and more textured than the inner layers. The middle layer has finer and longer filaments while the inner layer is the best, with long smooth fibers. To achieve a uniform color the silk has to be bleached and washed. It is then dyed to the desired color. The dyeing

process has several steps, and it is important to wash the silk thoroughly between each step and stretch it so it will maintain its shape. In the past natural dyes made of leaves, bark and other parts of plants were used, although there is a current trend to return to these dyes. The reason that they were abandoned was that natural dyes were unstable and faded easily. Furthermore, their range of colors is limited. For vivid and alluring colors chemical dyes are used. These are stable and versatile allowing designers and weavers to experiment in new shades and innovative designs and produce a wide range of beautiful silks.



Dyeing the silk thread with natural dyes

When the dyeing process is done, the thread is wound unto spools or drums in preparation for the next step, which is weaving. Traditionally, Thai silk has been woven by women in rural areas. They weave during the seasons that they are not needed in the fields such as the rainy season and between harvests. The looms are generally set up under the house that stands on stilts, weaving. These are upright, hand operated looms that providing a perfect space for family activities, including are about one meter wide. In the past, the standard width of Thai silk was ninety-four centimeters.



However, much of the Thai silk is now woven in widths of one meter, and as of lately, up to one hundred and eighty centimeters wide. To achieve this width, the loom with the traditional hand thrown shuttle was modified to an automatic shuttle loom, called in Thai *kee kaduk*. The shuttle is hung high on the loom and pulled by a string to move it through the long threads of the warp. This new design of the loom came by necessity as it is not physically possible for a woman to hand throw a shuttle on a loom wider than one meter.



Loom fully threaded with silk yarn

There are various weights and qualities of silk cloth. Silk is so thin that to be able to weave it the filaments are spun into different thickness, from one to eight plies. Some of the silk has knobby imperfections resulting from the natural quality of the silk thread, while the weaver too leaves her imprint on her work, with tension and tightness varying from piece to piece. Certain innovations have appeared in this age-old craft. The accomplished weavers now weave a textured design into a solid piece of cloth, a technique that is also applied to multicolored, patterned silk. It has acquired the relatively new name of dupion silk, while it goes by other names as well. The texture is achieved by using various kinds of silk in one woven piece, that is, long and short strands; smooth and rough taken from yellow and white cocoons. There is also iridescent silk, an effect achieved by having the warp (vertical threads) and waft (horizontal threads) of different color silk threads. Technology, Research and Development has

been experimenting in the cultivation of a new species of silk moths called *Philosamia ricini* that are fed on leaves of the cassava and castor bean plants. With a similar history to that of the *Bombyx mori* the moths were imported from India and have a similar life cycle, but are larger in size. The silk thread produced is short and discontinued producing heavy weight silk that resembles cotton and linen.



Different cocoons yield different silk.

L. Thai silk cocoons R. Chinese silk cocoons

The silk industry remained almost unchanged for centuries, but is now undergoing changes caused by modernity the way many traditional crafts have. Most young women don't know how to weave and don't have the interest to learn. They are no longer satisfied to stay at home and carry out domestic chores as the lure of the city and its modern life is much too great. Fortunately, there are still villages where the tradition of silk weaving lives on, where mothers teach their daughters, and master weavers have apprentices to carry on this time old tradition.



JAVA BATIK – TWO INTERESTING EXAMPLES

By Earl Kessler

Javanese batiks have been studied extensively. What I would like to share are two interesting aspects of the Javanese batik trade. The first is the “sampler” sarong, one that I collected during my time well spent in Indonesia. It is based on the conversations with collectors and dealers I have met over the years, but few books venture into that uncharted territory. The “sampler” is an estimated 85-years old piece from Cirebon on the north coast of Java. As shown in the accompanying images, my “sampler” presents representative details of the patterns a buyer might choose from. In image #1 the example of an architectural design is identified in one of the squares, and the sarong in image #2 shows the finished product that expands the design to cover the entire surface of the textile.

The marketing of the sarong and the sarong patterns is a topic I have not seen discussed but remains an interesting area for future investigation. One assumes that the producers are those who are to wear the end product, but that is clearly not the case as discussed below with the Java Hokokai batik style that shows Japanese influence. Should there be information to clarify how the batik market operated it would be welcomed. While I have shown the “sampler” to experts and dealers who have confirmed its rareness, few if any can provide information of how the market worked, any cost issues or differences with the variety of colors the patterns could be produced in. So the utility of a “sampler” cloth made the ordering and manufacture a process one that could pick pattern and color for middlemen and individuals. The color palette of the “sampler” is constrained to one of tans and browns with highlights of green and rose. The temple design shown in one section of the sampler grows in the accompanying image below as the motif of the sarong. One familiar with Java batik design may recognize other motifs in the “sampler” and conclude that the finished item was the product of a complex set of relationships and decisions to make it.



Image #1- the Sampler



Image #2 - the Sarong



The other aspect of Javanese batik that I would call your attention to that is critical to understanding the shifts and influences in design and color is the influence of politics and war on the design, patterns and colors used in the production of batik. In the Dutch colonial period the north coast of Java produced batik that included a European Art Nouveau influence. The Japanese influence lasted from 1942-1945 during the World War II years. Arabs produced a style of batik called “Jlamprang” during that period - its characteristics were the Islamic colors of green and yellow and there were no images of animals.

Specifically, I refer to the Java Hokokai batik developed during the Japanese occupation and influenced by it. Hokokai reflects the political mandate of the Djawa Hokokai, the name of an organization, that held that Javanese cooperation was key to the prosperity of Asia perhaps through the Japanese war effort. I found the Java Hokokai to be an interesting representation of the cultural priorities, elements of design and color imposed on the batik process for the period of World War II. Hokokai batik are termed “Kain Panjang Pagi-Sore” or morning/evening pieces for the light and dark sections of the design that split light and dark sections by a diagonal divider. A Kain Panjang, also a Hokokai design is called “Kain Panjang” and is of a single background. Because of the scarcity of cotton material, every inch of the Hokokai was elaborately decorated with some estimates that a single coiled cloth could take up to a year to produce.

The Java Hokokai batiks were not only made for a Japanese market. Chinese women were a market for the new designs that favored bright colors and motifs special to them. Inger McCabe Elliott in her book “Batik Fabled Cloth of Java” describes how, historically, the “overseas” Chinese influenced and traded in batik. “A seventeenth-century observer wrote ‘the Chinese drive here a considerable traffic being more industrious, mainly they are in merchandising and are great artists of thriftiness.’ They became entrepreneurs and middlemen, and their orders were big enough to cause batik making to become something of an industry, with factories spotted along the Java coast.” Chinese batik makers were the principal producers of Java Hokokai batiks and supported the bright color palette. In 2000

the Japan Foundation, in support of the Foundation for the Indonesian Archives Building in Jakarta, sponsored “Java Hokokai Batik: the Japanese Influence on Batik.” The catalogue for that exhibition is the principal source of the information for this short discussion. The production of Java Hokokai batik was located on the north coast of Java as the historic locus of trade and commerce in the region, especially the Pekalongan area, when an expanded supply addressed the increasing demand from Japan. These batiks set a trend in color and style, awarded by the Japanese to Indonesians for their support of the Japanese war effort. The catalogue presents the notion that Java Hokokai designs were influenced by the designs of Miyazaki Yuzen, a famous 17th century Japanese designer of fans. Hokokai design features a “susomoyo” - a border of flowers and butterflies concentrated in a corner of the batik that then spread across the sarong. Hokokai design usually includes butterflies, frequently appearing in pairs. While some propose the butterfly is of Japanese origins, others consider that the artisans producing them were mostly Chinese. For the Chinese, especially those living in Indonesia, butterflies play a special role in a beloved Chinese folk tale of lovers denied the opportunity to be together, who transform into butterflies. The butterfly is a dominant image. Flowers are also featured, especially cheery blossoms and chrysanthemums as well as contextual flora such as roses, lilies but rarely orchids. When a bird appears in a Hokokai design it is a peacock, the symbol of beauty and dignity in Japan.

The catalogue presents a future for the Hokokai batik. In the 1980s Iwan Tirta attempted to revive the Hokokai designs. Java Hokokai was no longer being produced because of its complex designs and production issues that made it economically unsustainable. Iwan Tirta introduced materials other than cotton that was the principal material during the war. His designs have revived interest in and the production of Java Hokokai for a younger generation of designers and enthusiasts. To find an old 1940s Java Hokokai on the market is difficult, and what one might find requires time to take in the detail and effort of its production.



SPRING IN JAPANESE AND KOREAN EMBROIDERY

By John Toomey



Koreans are proud to wear their embroidered Hanbok on the street more than the Japanese do their kimonos

The techniques of **Korean embroidery** have a long history dating from prehistoric times when people embellished their primitive clothes with stitching. Their needles were made of fish or other animal bone. But the preponderance of material evidence dates from as far back as the 14th century. In Japan this exacting and beautiful art form is used on screens, costumes, and domestic wares in both cultural traditions.

Chasu, the Korean word for embroidery, shares a Chinese root with the Japanese *shishu*, as one can hear in the similar sounds that make up these two-syllable compound words. Both Korean and Japanese languages make up compound words by sticking together two Chinese ideograms, though in pronunciation there will be some slight differences of sound. In Korea the word indicated not only embroidery, but also a method of cultivating beauty in every aspect of everyday life.

In Korea there are the four types of Chasu:

Pokshik embroidery on clothing

Kiyong chasu used in the king's palace

Kamsang (literally "Thanks") chasu samplers

Buddhist chasu used to drape Buddhist statuary and for various altar furnishings and hangings in temples.

Traditional embroidery has almost completely disappeared. Fortunately, the method and artistry found during the *Joseon* Dynasty has been restored.



Embroidered textiles for hair dressing and applique bodice decoration

The Chinese *Age of the Three Kingdoms* history of ancient China described the Korean people of *Buyeo* (an ancient Korean capital city) as wearing lustrous brocade silk clothes embroidered with a picture. The court officials wore hats decorated with golden flowers or birds, according to their civil or military rank. This practice later changed to an embroidered square worn on the chest to indicate ranks. In the *Goguryeo* chapter this same history book recorded that the officials of the 9th through 13th century *Goguryeo* court wore formal silk uniforms embroidered with gold and silver. In the later *Shilla* period when the Korean peninsula was united under one *Shilla* dynasty (started as one of three

states in the 8th century, ruled a united country from the 13th until 17th century) the common people had already begun using embroidery. The Shila Queen Jindeok embroidered a poem of peace she composed to commemorate her enthronement and sent it to the Emperor of Tang China (Korea had always been a tributary state of China).

Buddhist culture flourished so much and with it embroidery became so prevalent in ancient Korea that eventually embroidery on Buddhist images was forbidden for a time. The *Cheosuguk Mandala* is the oldest surviving intact work of Korean embroidery. It consists of two tapestries now hanging in the Chugu-ji temple in Japan. To make the mandala three Korean artisans drew a picture and skilled Korean women embroidered it as a two-panel mandala hanging. This was completed in 622 A.D and each panel measures about 2 meters in length.



Peacocks in flight embroidered on Japanese tall folding screen by Tanaka Rishichi 1893

During this early period various techniques were used to embroider many kinds of threads on twill brocade base cloth. But embroidery was becoming so popular and developed into such a dangerously evil extravagant luxury commodity that the government tried to ban embroidery many times. A royal crest was embroidered on the king's dragon robe and the Commander General wore a belt from which he suspended 10 cloths embroidered with the auspicious five-colored flower. In one royal progress (parade), the conducting officers of

every part of the parade wore embroidered uniforms and the flags, fans, and many other items were all embroidered. The horses were caparisoned with embroidered decorations, saddles, and reins, and the ministers' horses' harnesses were embroidered with silver threads on purple twill.

It quickly became common to use the motifs of the traditional *Shipjangsaeng* Ten Symbols of Longevity in embroidered pieces. These included noble and ancient motifs of strong towering mountains and pine trees, swift flowing streams (like life), mated deer, cranes (said to live for 1,000 years), ducks and tortoises (believed to live for 10,000 years, medicinal grasses and the magic *lingzhi* mushroom, all under both sun and moon simultaneously. Sometimes the old sage of the mountain is portrayed boiling water from the stream to make tea and piling tea cakes on a dish to offer to the gods of nature.

Very little of Joseon Dynasty (began 16th century) embroidery remains because it was reserved for the upper classes only. Traditional arts, especially handicrafts, have gradually declined in Korea. It has become difficult to find the old way of handicraft making. During the Japanese occupation (1910-45), Korean embroidery changed from realistic color schemes to gradations of colors. Traditional handicrafts almost disappeared after World War II when the tide of western culture rushed into Korea. In 1974, ten authors published *The Embroidery of Rhee Dynasty* based on the collection gathered from Buddhist temples in the countryside and from some private collections and showed these in an exhibition at the same time as the publication of the book. It was the first time that old works of Korean traditional embroidery were opened to public, thus helping to promote activities for preserving the art.

After the Korean War a German Catholic nun Sister Coretta worked with the many unwed mothers that were a result of the war, sharing all their hardships and deprivations and caring for them and their babies. She taught her girls to improve their lives by making and selling embroidery. In Korea, Sr. Coretta used to display her girls' embroideries in front of the US Army Base's Commissary/Px in Seoul for sale to the US soldiers' families.



Iris by Sr. Coretta girls. Authors' collection

Japanese embroidery (*nihon shishu* in Japanese) is a collection of embroidery techniques that originated more than 1600 years ago. In the early stages of Japanese arts, when Japan depended heavily on the received arts of the continental Chinese Empire, brought to Japan by Buddhist monks who travelled to China for studies, embroidery was strictly the provenance of Buddhist temples, used in their altar furnishings and decorating items used during religious ceremonies. Over time, as *shishu* developed its own unique Japanese qualities and characteristics, it assumed a more aesthetic role. Over time, as *shishu* developed its own unique Japanese qualities and characteristics, it took on a more artistic purpose. According to historians, from the early Heian Period (about a8th through 11th century) Japanese embroidery was primarily used for decorating the costumes of the Ladies of the Imperial Court. During these early stages, *shishu* was available only to the highest ranks of society who could afford such costly work. This exquisite cultural heritage passed down by past generations is now available to all and continues to develop new creative expressions.

The late master embroiderer Iwao Saito said that the skilled hands of the embroiderer, which have a deep relationship with the heart, produce gorgeous works. The embroidery reflects not only the state of the inner heart, but also the creator's **WAY** of life (in the sense that Zen arts are a *Way* to enlightenment, requiring professional dedication). The way he or she selects colors and uses the various techniques reveals the individual style or *way*. An aimless and superficial life

cannot create work that will touch people's hearts. One must develop skillfulness to do that, just as in Zen "Skillful means" (a term indicating regular Zen meditational practice to develop skills) is essential. Any of the Zen "Ways" can lead to enlightenment, in a similar way that sitting meditation can.

Examples of some of these Zen arts are *Sado* (the Way of Tea) *Kendo* (a martial arts Way of the Sword), *Shodo* (the Way of Calligraphy), *Judo*, *Kado* (the Way of flower arrangement). Practitioners of these arts can attain height levels of quality by integrating techniques with the spiritual concept of "the way." Traditional Japanese Embroidery became *Nuido* (*nui* means sewing), The Way of Embroidery, a connection between the heart and the techniques.

The TTS Newsletter staff hope you enjoy these examples of old and current samples of the art of embroidery of both cultures, expressing the joys of spring with flowers, and the energy of life in animals and nature's landscapes, as seen through the "eyes" of so many special "needles".



Long sleeve of young brides' kimono Chinese phoenix, peony and plum blossom motifs. Authors' collection



Korean embroidered chest of drawers topped by Wedding ducks wrapped in embroidered cloth for presenting to the new couple

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Please request Guidelines for Submission of articles at: bkk.tts@gmail.com

Attention: Ruth Gerson

WEAVING VILLAGES IN THE SACRED VALLEY OF PERU

By Gerri Forkner



Nilda and her mother

Ancient Peruvian weaving techniques are being revived and preserved by Nilda Callanaupa Alvarez. Descended from a long line of weavers, Nilda was the first in her family to attend high school. She went on to college at a time when few women in her country aspired to higher education. Nilda earned a degree from the National University of San Antonio Abad in Cusco. With the help of ethnobotanists Edward and Christine Franquemont from the USA, Nilda was able to obtain a grant to study historical textiles in Berkeley, California. She was one of the key founders of the Center for Traditional Textiles of Cusco (CTTC) started in 1996. The CTTC now supports ten villages. The purpose of the center is to recover textile traditions and empower weavers.

In November 2015, I went on a tour that took us to five of the ten villages Nilda works with. Each village is in the mountainous area of the Sacred Valley of Peru and accessible from Cusco. Nilda works with a village encouraging both men and women to do all the processes, reviving traditional techniques and

introducing new ones in several instances. She works with them to update tools and methods that work best for the products they make. Villagers meet weekly to work together and share meals in the village's weaving center. They wear their traditional dress to these gatherings and are once again proud to wear these labor-intensive garments. Each village has a distinctive hat style as well as unique weaving specialty. The weaving groups elect officers and encourage youth groups who also elect officers. During the week the people work in their individual homes. Nilda buys everything they make until their skills improve enough to market the work through the shop in Cusco. As a village becomes more prosperous the people build a central meeting area for the weekly meetings. Villagers also take turns traveling to Cusco to spend the week demonstrating their techniques to the public at the CTTC shop.



Reciprocity is important in Peruvian culture and we always brought food or coca leaves as gifts to the villagers. Nilda cautioned us not to give gifts to the children so they would learn to earn money from their skills and not expect gifts from tourists. Each villager greeted us with handshakes as we entered their compound. After demonstrations of their village's styles of weaving and knitting, the villagers brought out their work. We selected pieces for purchase and took them to a central person who identified the weaver then collected the money. This organized bookkeeping system is used to insure fairness for individual villagers.



Dyeing the yarn

Nilda was raised in the village of Chinchero. She has worked with the villagers there to revive the natural dyeing traditions. They have developed processes that work for today's needs using the traditional natural dyes found in Peru. For example, the cost for dyeing purple is prohibitive so yarns are first dyed with cochineal then copper sulfate is added to obtain a dark purple. Reds come from cochineal, a beetle that lives on cactus, blues from indigo, and yellows and greens from various flowers, leaves, and jungle vines. Many tourist groups visit the Chinchero village to watch the dyeing process and learn more about how the textiles are made. As in all the villages we visited, the Chinchero weavers were adding a separate decorative trim around the edges of their woven pieces. A narrow band is woven on a backstrap loom with each row being stitched to the base piece as the weft is passed through the warp.



Natural Dye Colors in Chinchero

Weavers with wider backstrap looms were seated in the center area. Women in Chahautyiri traditionally do the fiber preparation, weave smaller pieces, and finish the textiles. The men weave larger pieces using supplementary warp technique with dark red colors predominating. Supplementary warp technique, a less intuitive process, has a lighter background color and darker colors that float on the face of the fabric. The front and back of the fabric are different. Complementary warp technique, which produces a pattern that is the same on both sides but with opposite colors, is a logical and versatile technique woven here and the other villages.



Chahautyiri

When Nilda began working with the Accha Alta community, people were weaving with gaudy synthetic yarns. The amount of work was the same, but the textiles were sold at market for much lower prices. Now the villagers are weaving with wool and alpaca yarns and dyed with natural dyes. One technique that sets this village apart is bobble knitting. We saw several men rapidly finger crocheting long lengths of small bobbles evenly spaced along crocheted yarn. The bobble yarns in multiple colors are then carried along with the base knitting yarns and the bobbles inserted at regular intervals resulting in a highly textured and unique product.



Weaving village of Chahautyiri

Yarns, mainly alpaca, for the weavings were spun on drop spindles. When two spindles are full they are pushed into the ground and a single ball of yarn wound from the two spindles. The ball of yarn is then spun opposite to the original twist direction, resulting in a two-ply yarn. The warps in back strap weavings must be very strong to undergo the tension required to obtain a good open shed and withstand the beating required to pack the weft into place so extra twist is added for a stronger yarn



Men in Accha Alta making bobble yarn and knitting

Several men demonstrated how the warp was wound. Two polls were hammered into the ground at a distance the length of the desired warp. A ball of yarn was thrown between men at either side of the polls creating

a figure eight. Each individual yarn was secured in place at the poll by a separate thread to keep the warp in the correct order. The community of Accha Alta is the most isolated of the villages we visited. When we arrived at Accha Alta, women were taking the petals off flowers to be used in a blessing ceremony for fertility and health of the alpaca heard (normally done in February but done for us as an educational experience). Small cups of ceremonial drink were nearby an ancient bundle containing sacred objects and textiles as old as one hundred years. The bundle is thought to be living and breathing when opened. Many families keep sacred bundles in their homes bringing them out for special ceremonies. The blessing ceremony included chewing coca leaves, prayers influenced by both Christianity and ancient Peruvian customs, and drinking chicha from a communal bowl. Two alpaca were selected for the blessing ceremony. The animals were painted with orange stripes. We placed the flower petals on their backs along and sprinkled them with holy water.



Two alpaca in the sacred ceremony

The villagers of Sallac use both warp ikat and embroidery for decorative stripes in place of the supplementary and complementary pick up techniques we saw in other villages. One villager remembered the ikat wrapping technique and helped to revive it. The warp sections were stretched tightly and wrapped tightly with yarn in pattern sections to resist the dye. Without a pickup stripe the weaving proceeds faster, but doing the embroidery stripe is a time consuming process. We watched as one woman was placing the heddle string into the warp. One continuous string is used so careful counting is needed to be sure each

alternate thread is chosen for the plain weave structure as any mistakes would be carried throughout the length of the weaving.



Old warp ikat technique

Villagers in Pitumarca weave both the ancient technique of scaffold weaving and European influenced pictorial tapestries. Archeological evidence of scaffold weaving has only been found in the Peruvian areas. A scaffold weaving changes warp colors along the length of the warp. Each change raises the difficulty of the weaving. As with other weaving processes, a method for winding this complicated warp has been developed to facilitate the process. A rod and string are placed in a frame the size of the warp at the locations of each warp change. While we watched, three women working in unison wrapped yarns around the rods crossing them in correct order. Once the warp is wound the rods are removed and the warps held in place by the strings while the weaving progresses.



Scaffold weaving

In each village we visited, we saw young children growing up watching and participating in the weaving and fiber traditions of their villages. In November 2017 there will be a Tinkuy in Cusco. From the website a Tinkuy, "is a celebration of the textile art as expressed in dozens of cultures from almost every continent. The word 'tinkuy' means 'gathering' in Quechua, the indigenous language spoken by many people in the Andes. As its name implies, Tinkuy gathers together textile artists and enthusiasts from across the globe to honor the wealth and diversity of their fiber traditions." With the inclusion of the next generation and celebrations such as the Tinkuy, it appears that ancient Peruvian weaving traditions will be preserved for some time to come.



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ALL THAT GLITTERS IS NOT GOLD –

Malay *Kelingkan* Embroidery

By John Ang



What is *Kelingkan*?

Among the various types of Malay textiles the one that really catches my eye is *kelingkan*. This is not just because it is bright and glittery but because it is also often very beautiful.

Kelingkan, is one of many types of embroidery found on Malay textiles. It can therefore be considered a sub-category of *sulam* (Malay word for embroidery), one of around ten major techniques of Malay textiles. It is the name given to a double-sided embroidery using flat silver or gold-plated silver ribbon, about 1 mm wide.

I was unaware of the existence of this kind of embroidery until I purchased my first piece two years ago. The fastidious dexterity in workmanship and beautiful luxuriant glitter of this form of embroidery grew on me. Finally I ended up with a sizable collection of a good variety of different types in terms of style and uses. Looking over the collection I found that they formed one of the most interesting groups of textiles among the many types of Malay cloth.

Origins of *Kelingkan*

Till today it is still obscure when this type of embroidery found its way into the repertoire of Malay textiles. So

far written evidence of the early existence of this embroidery in the Malay world has not yet been found. We, however, know for certain that by the 19th century it was popular among the aristocrats and wealthy Malays, as seen in the numerous old photographs and paintings depicting Malay women wearing them mostly as head shawls. Some believe the emergence of *kelingkan* in the Malay world was as early as the 15th century together with the widespread propagation of Islam in Southeast Asia. The reason for this is because it is related if not similar to many of the Middle Eastern embroidery techniques such as Egyptian *assuit* or *tulle-bi-tell*, Turkish Anatolian *tel musabak*, *tel kirma* and *tel sarma*. Even the laced edging on some of these cloths with *kelingkan* embroidery is similar the Turkish Ottoman style *ohya*, a form of crochet lace border.

It is well known that when Malays go on their Haj they often receive or purchase souvenirs in the Middle East as fond memories and also proof of their pilgrimage. Among these souvenirs one of the most popular is embroidered shawls, many from Egypt, Syria and Turkey. This is because shawls are useable, light weight and easy to pack and carry. Later these shawls inevitably inspired the Malays to produce their own using the same embroidery techniques.

Another possible origin is India. This could have been through Indian Muslim traders who are known to have brought have brought different types of Indian embroideries to trade with the Malays. One Indian embroidery technique that is very similar to *kelingkan* is *kamdani*, produced and used in many parts of India but originally from Lucknow in Uttra Pradesh, a Muslim area in north India.

Areas of Production and Terminology

The areas that produced *kelingkan* are spread over an extensive area of the Malay maritime empire. In Malaysia they are known to have been produced in Kelantan, Terengganu, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Kuching (Sarawak) and in Indonesia in Daik Lingga, Deli, Palembang, Sambas, Pontianak, Ketapang and Sumbawa. However, the few areas remaining that are known to be still actively producing *kelingkan* are now only in Kelantan, Diak Lingga, Palmbang, Kuching and Sambas.

According to University of Malaya Professors, Suhana Sarkawi's and Norhayati Ab. Rahman's joint research paper, "Kelingkan Embroidery Track-Mapping in Malaysia and Indonesia," different areas use either the same or different names for *kelingkan*. For example in Kelantan it is called *tudung kelingkam* or *kelubung kelenkang*; in Terengganu, *tudung kelingkan*; in Selangor, *tudung kelingkan* and *terekat terkam*; in Daik Lingga *tudung manto*; in West Kalimantan, *tudung kalengkang* and in Palembang, *tudung kelingkan*.

One Aspect Technique and Materials Used. of *kelingkan* embroidery that had always intrigued me is its technique. I always wondered how the embroidery could have been created on both sides without the presence of any knots. The other aspect was the content of the silver ribbon. Although I knew it was not real silver I had no idea what it was made of.

After almost two years of collecting I still could not find the answers to my questions. Eventually, my curiosity got the better of me and I decided to learn more by going to Diak Lingga, an island that is part of the Riau islands, east of Sumatra and south of Singapore, formerly a center of the Malay empire from 1699 to 1824. This involved a two-and-a half hour boat ride from Singapore to Tanjung Pinang on Bintang island, an over-night stay there and another five-and-a-half hour boat ride to Daik Lingga, a trip not recommend for the faint hearted and those prone to seasickness.

In Daik, I discovered Rumah Halimah, a small community building that provides women with a large and comfortable space to gather and do their *kelingkan* embroidery without distraction. Their completed products are displayed for sale at the community shop in the same building. Upon entering the building I saw five women sitting on the floor in a large room doing their embroidery over raised stretched frames. According to them they were all working on commissioned pieces. For most of these embroiderer *kelingkan* is not a familiar word to them. What they embroider are locally called *tudung manto* or wedding shawls.





Photo 1 -Woman at Rumah Halimah embroidering a *tudung manto*.



Photo2--Woman embroiderers at Rumah Halimah community building busy at work on their *tudung mantos*, Diak Lingga

After 10 minutes of carefully observing them work, I realized that this kind of embroidery is more tedious and time consuming then difficult. From what I saw, it seemed that all one had to do was to follow the drawn lines on the transparent gauze cloth and pass the needle in and out of the cloth along those lines. Perhaps I am wrong, but I believe that with a little training, some practice and lots of patience and if willing, one could easily become a *kelingkan* embroiderer.

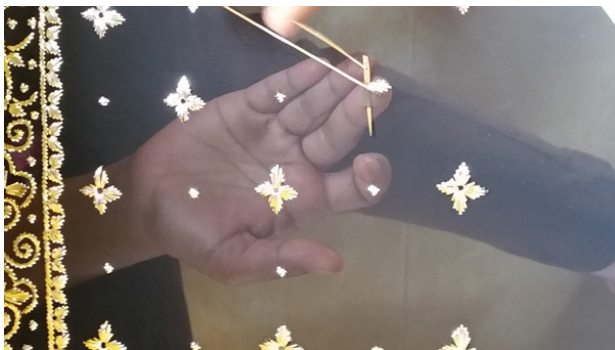


Photo 3-Daik embroiderer embroidering along drawn lines on the cloth.



Photo 4-Detail showing drawn lines used as guide lines for the embroiderer

With regards to the materials used, the cloth used in Daik was transparent gauze and the metal ribbon I finally discovered was not silver or gilt silver but actually *lametta*. The examples used in Daik were imported to Singapore from India and then imported again to Daik Lingga. I heard that one can purchase it in some of the textile shops along Arab Street or Jalan Sultan in Kampong Gelam in Singapore.



Photo 5-Paper for wrapping *lametta* made in India and exported to Singapore



Photo 6 - Example of gold colored *lametta* from India

Lametta is actually made of PVC and coated with a metallic colored film which is exactly the same as tinsel which we use to decorate our Christmas trees. Tinsel is a material that was discovered in the 1960s when aluminum and lead ribbons used for decorating Christmas trees became obsolete due to being fire hazardous. In the old days in the Middle East and India, textiles with this kind of metal embroidery were generally known to have been reserved for the wealthy. This may be due to the fact that early embroideries of this technique were very expensive as real hammered gold and silver ribbons were used. It was later, perhaps due to widespread popularity of such embroidery, the lower price and lighter weight, that most of the metal ribbons were replaced by *lametta*.



Photo 7-Large *kelingkan* needle with two holes at its head



Photo 8-Tucking-in the *lametta* ribbon resulting in no visible loose ends or knots

The needles employed for *kelingkan* are bigger than most regular embroidery needles. Each needle has two holes at their head. The two holes allow, for one end of the *lametta* ribbon to pass in one hole, go under and come out and up the other hole. This keeps the ribbon

in place and prevents it from slipping off without having to tie a knot, thus facilitating its smooth passage through the gauze for the entire embroidery. (Photo 7) To complete each pattern the ends are simply tucked-in under the existing ribbon that was embroidered on the cloth. (Photo 8) Because of this method and the fact that the needle head has no knots, this double-sided embroidery can be accomplished looking smooth, flat and neat without any knots or bumps.

Once the embroidery is completed the embroiderer will use her palms to support the textile from the bottom and on the top use the back of a cowry to rub and flatten the embroidered ribbons so as to create a consistent flatness throughout the whole shawl.



Photo 9-Cowry shell is used to flatten any bumps in the embroidery



Photo 10-Embroiderer and writer at Rumah Hamilah showing off her beautiful completed *tudung manto*.

Although the shiny ribbon used for *kelingkan* embroidery is not as expensive as before the embroideries still command a high price as *kelingkan* shawls cannot be machine embroidered. Each piece is individually handmade and to complete a large shawl



with lots of beautiful embroidered patterns three to four months is required. The price for one new medium size head shawl in Diak is around USD100 to USD150.

Uses of *Kelingkan*

In the many Malay wedding photographs I have seen I often notice that the bride and bridesmaid use black *kelingkan* head shawls. This confirms what my Palembang friend told me, that it is a tradition in his home town for women who are unmarried or getting married to use black *kelingkan* shawls. (Photo 12)

Also for women who have completed their Haj, white *kelingkan* shawls are generally used. (Photo 13)



Photo 11-Unmarried bridesmaid and bride in Diak wearing black *kelingkan* shawls.- Photo, courtesy of Pak Syed Abd. Hamid, Daik Lingga



Photo 12-1940s white cotton *kelingkan* head shawl from Palembang

Besides the different colors of embroidered head shawls, commonly called *tujung kelingkan*, used at different occasions for different purposes, there are also many other uses and forms of *kelingkan*.

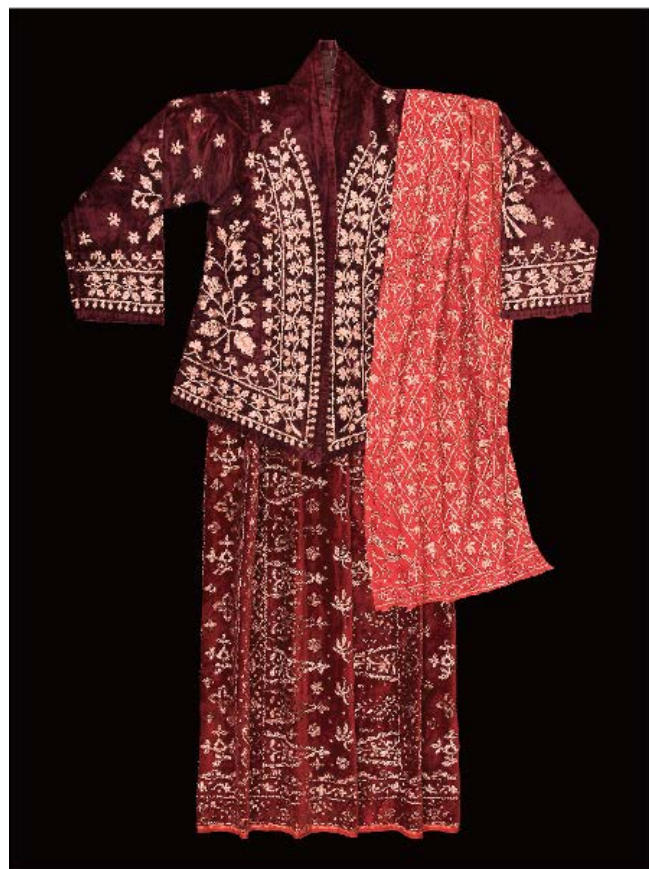


Photo 13-Set of 1940s velvet *baju kurung* (woman's upper garment) and *sarong* adorned with *kelingkan* embroidery from Sambas. With 1940s *tudung kelingkan*, head shawl, red cotton with *kelingkan* embroidery from Sumbawa.



Photo 14-Detail of red head shawl with *kelingkan* embroidery



Photo 15-1920-30s kemben, woman's breast wrapper, Japanese habotai silk with *kelingkan* embroidery on tie-dye colors. West Kalimantan, Indonesia



Photo 16-1940s Kain Pelamin, pair of black velvet curtains for the wedding dais, Pontianak, West Kalimantan, Indonesia

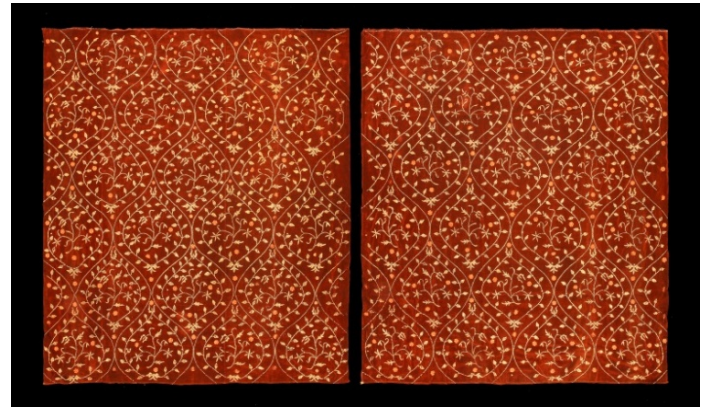


Photo 17-1940s Kain Pelamin, pair of purple velvet curtains for the wedding dais, Pontianak, West Kalimantan, Indonesia

For example from West Kalimantan there are complete velvet attires such as the kebaya pendek (woman's short open blouse) with matching sarongs embroidered completely with *kelingkan* from Sambas. (Photo 13) and from Pontianak, Mempawah and Ketapang, we find *kelingkan* on a tie-dye Japanese *habotai* silk breast wrapper and two pairs of velvet *pelamin* or wedding dais curtains. (Photos 16 and 17)

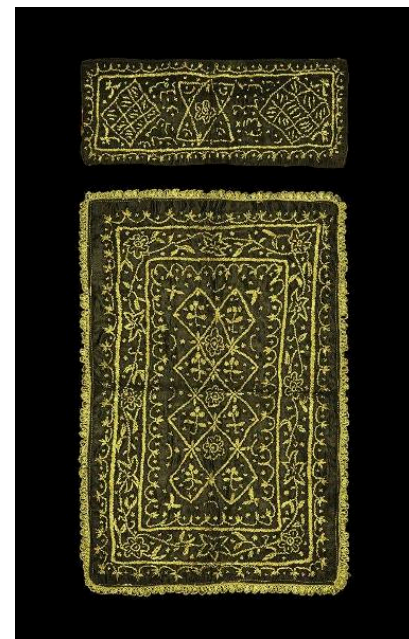


PHOTO 18-1940-50s *Singkep*, ceremonial coverings for baby's body and face during cukur jambul or first hair cutting ceremony, black silk with *kelingkan* embroidery of talismantic Islamic patterns surrounded by floral borders from Palembang, South Sumatra, Indonesia

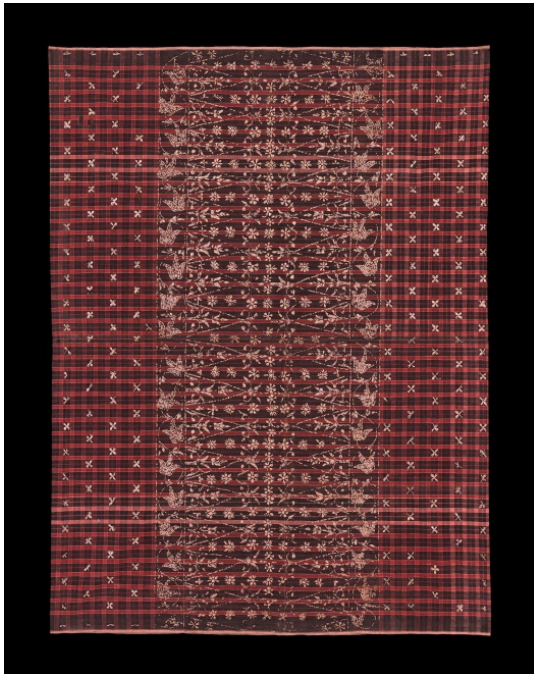


Photo 19-1930-40s *Kre Alang*, man's tube skirt, silk and cotton with *kelingkan* embroidery from Sumbawa, Indonesia

In Palembang I found a set of two small pieces of cloth with Arabic inscriptions and Islamic talismantic diagrams. Such cloths come as a set and are called *singkep*. They are used to cover a baby's body and face during his or her first hair cutting ceremony called *cukur jambul*. This traditional Malay ceremony usually occurs around 40 days after the baby is born.



PHOTO 20-1930-40s *Salampe*, man's shawl with tapestry weave and *kelingkan* embroidery. Sumbawa, Indonesia.



PHOTO 21-Sambolo Mbojo, man's head cloth, silk and cotton with *kelingkan* embroidery. Bima, Sumbawa, Indonesia

From Sumbawa, besides the beautiful sarongs called *kre alang* (Photo 19) from Bima in north west Sumbawa, there are also man's shawls or waist bands called *salampe* (Photo 20) and head scarves called *Sambolo Mbojo*,. (Photo 21)

Conclusion

Studying just a sub-category of a main technique (*sulam* or embroidery) of Malay textiles is like opening a small window to see the extensive culture, tradition, history, trade and religion of the Malay world. And although all that glitters is not gold in *kelingkan* textiles, through this article it is hoped that we can see and appreciate the golden heart of the Malay woman in her sense of beauty, elegance, patience and dexterity expressed in her exquisite hand embroidered *kelingkan* cloths.



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