

RISD MUSEUM

In the Spirit of Miss Lucy: Recent Acquisitions in Asian Textiles, June 11, 2004-October 31, 2004

Lucy Truman Aldrich, the donor of this gallery and of many of the Museum's finest Asian textiles, began her collecting career in 1919 during her first trip to the Far East. Miss Lucy visited important dealers in Japan, and streams of Chinese merchants visited her in her borrowed house in Beijing. On each of four successive trips (to China, Indonesia, and India in 1920-21; to India, Japan, and China in 1922-23; India, Cambodia, Thailand, and Indonesia in 1924-25; and to Japan in 1929), she continued to purchase exquisite textiles. Most of the exhibitions on view in this gallery contain at least a few examples from Miss Lucy's former private collection, much of which was given to the Museum in 1935 and 1955.

In the spirit of Miss Lucy, an intrepid traveler who appreciated fine textile artistry, the Museum continues to add to its holdings with special attention to collecting examples from regions that she did not or could not visit. Also, Miss Lucy primarily collected textiles produced for the secular and religious elites: the luxury goods that have traditionally been valued as "high art." Today, the products of tribal cultures are considered of equal importance. This exhibition showcases a variety of clothing and textiles of superlative design and workmanship from regions of Burma, Vietnam, India, and Indonesia that were inaccessible - or even unknown - to tourists in Miss Lucy's day.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Indonesian; Minangkabau

Headdress, 1880-1920

Silk, metal threads; weft-faced compound weave, bobbin lace

Museum Purchase: Gift of Paula and Leonard Granoff and Helen M.

Danforth Acquisition Fund 2003.40.2

Minangkabau weavers devoted their skill and time to producing ceremonial textiles of vivid silk and metallic gold or silver yarns. Variations in the motifs, layout, and colors indicate not only which village the wearer is from, but also marital status, social standing, and number of children.



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Indonesian

Man's cloth, ca. 1975

Cotton, glass beads; plain weave, warp ikat

Museum Purchase: Gift of Paula and Leonard Granoff and Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2003.40.5

Traditionally among many of the cultural groups living in the Maluku (or Molucca) Islands, the motifs depicted in their weavings helped to tell a specific tale. Stories were transmitted with the help of these textiles. Over the past fifty years, however, most of the original meanings have been lost to the inhabitants of the islands.



Indonesian

Man's top, 1900-1950s

Cotton; plain weave, machine embroidered, resist-dyed

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund and Gift of Paula and Leonard Granoff 2003.40.8

Aceh, the northern tip of the island of Sumatra, has for centuries been an important point of trade contact between islanders and the outside world. This group of men's clothing is believed to be from this region. The pieces combine traditional clothing shapes with 20th century techniques such as embroidery work done with a sewing machine. Although the techniques are new, the patterns are distinctively Sumatran.



Indonesian

Man's jacket, ca. 1950

Cotton; plain weave, machine embroidery and appliqué

Museum Purchase: Gift of Paula and Leonard Granoff and Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2003.40.3



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Indonesian

Slendang (shoulder cloth), 1949

Cotton, glass beads; plain weave with supplementary weft patterning

Museum Purchase: Gift of Paula and Leonard Granoff and Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2003.40.6



Indonesian

Man's wrapper, ca. 1950

Cotton; plain weave with machine embroidery and appliqué

Museum Purchase: Gift of Paula and Leonard Granoff and Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2003.40.9



Indonesian; Kaur

Woman's jacket, early 1900s

Cotton, cowrie shells; plain weave with embroidery and appliqué

Museum Purchase: Gift of Paula and Leonard Granoff and Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2003.40.4



Until quite recently the Kaur people were isolated in a virtually inaccessible part of Sumatra. A network of roads has brought them into greater contact with contemporary Indonesian culture. To date little is known of the Kaur people's textile production, but it does

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seem to incorporate elements of the ancient animist belief system as well as the more recent overlay of Islamic culture.

Vietnamese; Ta Oi

Woman's dress, mid 1900s

Cotton, glass beads; plain weave with beadwork

Mary B. Jackson Fund 2001.3.15

Thousands of tiny white glass seed beads have been painstakingly woven into this cloth from the Ta Oi people in Vietnam's central highland region. Even after decades of war and western influences, garments such as these are still worn by Ta Oi women on ceremonial occasions, and the textiles remain highly valued within the community.



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Indonesian; Minangkabau

Shoulder cloth (selendang), used as headdress, 1950

Silk, metal threads; supplementary weft patterning, bobbin lace

Museum Purchase: Gift of Paula and Leonard Granoff and Helen M.

Danforth Acquisition Fund 2003.40.1

It is thought that the Minangkabau came to Indonesia many centuries ago from mainland Southeast Asia. The geometric and stylized floral designs of their traditional textiles certainly reflect the textile arts of the Malaysian, Khmer, and Tai peoples.



Vietnamese; Co-Tu

Man's loincloth, ca. 1960

Cotton, acrylic, glass beads; plain weave with supplementary weft patterning and beadwork

Mary B. Jackson Fund 2001.3.13

Traditional forms often incorporate new materials. The fringes on the ends of this loincloth from the Co Tu people of the Vietnamese central highlands are made from acrylic yarns, a fiber not available in the region until the late 1960s or 70s. The beads, here of white glass, would originally have been handmade locally of lead or wood. Today the Co Tu use plastic beads imported from China to ornament their ceremonial textiles.



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Burmese; Laytu Chin

Woman's blouse, mid 1900s

Cotton, silk; compound twill weave with supplementary weft patterning

Mary B. Jackson Fund 2001.3.5

Only in the past five years have weavings by the Laytu people begun to be identified with their creators. They originally inhabited remote mountainous lands in the southern part of the Chin state and northern Arakan state, but have been displaced over the past few decades. As a result, more knowledge about their traditional culture has emerged, but at the same time those traditions have suffered.



Burmese

Woman's hip wrapper, mid 1900s

Silk; compound twill weave with supplementary weft patterning

Mary B. Jackson Fund 2001.3.8

Like most of the tribes or sub-groups of the Chin people (also called the Zo), the Haka are accomplished weavers. The sophisticated colors and intricate geometric patterning seen here are also reflected in men's garments among the Haka. In contemporary Haka society such garments are worn primarily for ceremonies and rituals.



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Burmese; Khami Chin

Woman's breastcloth, mid 1900s

Cotton, silk; compound weave with supplementary weft patterning

Mary B. Jackson Fund 2001.3.1

Khami weavers' use of color and pattern is not only technically superb but breathtakingly beautiful. The Khami, who live in a low-lying region among the rivers of northwestern Burma, have been less isolated over the past fifty years than many other cultures in the region. As a result, although many girls still learn to weave from their mothers, they no longer rely on village production for daily use. Instead, traditional garments are worn on a very few ceremonial occasions through the year - such as births or weddings.



Burmese; Khami Chin

Man's loincloth, mid 1900s

Cotton, silk; compound weave with supplementary weft patterning

Mary B. Jackson Fund 2001.3.2



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Burmese; Laytu Chin

Woman's blouse, mid 1900s

Cotton, silk; compound twill weave with supplementary weft patterning

Mary B. Jackson Fund 2001.3.6

Only in the past five years have weavings by the Laytu people begun to be identified with their creators. They originally inhabited remote mountainous lands in the southern part of the Chin state and northern Arakan state, but have been displaced over the past few decades. As a result, more knowledge about their traditional culture has emerged, but at the same time those traditions have suffered.



Burmese

Woman's blouse, mid 1900s

Silk; compound twill weave with supplementary weft patterning

Mary B. Jackson Fund 2001.3.7

Like most of the tribes or sub-groups of the Chin people (also called the Zo), the Haka are accomplished weavers. The sophisticated colors and intricate geometric patterning seen here are also reflected in men's garments among the Haka. In contemporary Haka society such garments are worn primarily for ceremonies and rituals.



Angami Naga; Indian

Woman's wrapper or shawl, mid 1900s

Cotton, silk; plain weave with supplementary weft patterning

Mary B. Jackson Fund 2001.3.12

Each small black and red block on this white cloth is uniquely patterned with motifs and symbols that are recognizably different from clan to clan. These textiles are woven specifically for wear on certain ceremonial occasions, and even today have an important place in the cultural life of the Angami Naga.

The hill country of Nagaland in the far northeast of India has changed significantly over the past hundred years, and is now far more accessible to visitors than ever in the past. Naga peoples also live over the border in Burma.



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Indonesian; Kaur

Woman's jacket, early 1900s

Cotton, cowrie shells; plain weave with embroidery and appliqué

Museum Purchase: Gift of Paula and Leonard Granoff and Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2003.40.10



Until quite recently the Kaur people were isolated in a virtually inaccessible part of Sumatra. A network of roads has brought them into greater contact with contemporary Indonesian culture. To date little is known of the Kaur people's textile production, but it does seem to incorporate elements of the ancient animist belief system as well as the more recent overlay of Islamic culture.