RISD
MUSEUM

Bandhani to Batik: Resist-Dyed Textiles from Asia, June 3, 2005-October 16, 2005

Cultures around the world and across time have developed methods of making patterns on dyed fabric by applying a substance that will resist the absorption of the colorant in certain areas. This exhibition explores the enormous range and versatility of resist-dyeing as exemplified in Asian textile masterworks.

Resists can be used on finished fabric or on the threads that will be woven into cloth after dyeing. Resist-dye techniques include drawing, stamping, or stenciling designs onto fabric using water-resistant starch pastes or wax; clamping folded fabric between shaped blocks or pads; or tightly wrapping, tying, or stitching with some impervious material around groups of threads or sections of cloth to protect them from contact with the dye. In all of these, the pattern is built up color by color during the dye process, requiring separate applications and removals of the resist medium for each color in the finished design.

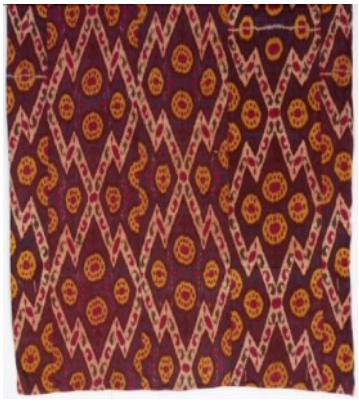
The cultures that use resist-dye techniques have distinctive names for each variant, some of which are now in common use around the world. Bandhani is an Indian term for tie-dyeing cloth after it is woven, a technique known as shibori in Japan and as plangi in Indonesia. Batik is the Indonesian word for drawing or stamping a wax-based resist onto woven cloth. *Ikat*, another Indonesian word, is the process of tie-dyeing groups of threads (warp, weft, or both) before weaving, called *kasuri* in Japan. The Indonesians use tritik to define stitched resists, while the Japanese have special words for clamped resists (*itajime*) and stenciled paste resists (*katazome*). Resist-dyeing in any of its forms is by definition an exacting and intricate process, and the textiles on display here testify to the ingenuity and skill of many anonymous textile artists throughout Asia.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Cambodian; Khmer
Ceremonial shawl, mid 1900s
Silk; twill weave, tie- and stitch-resist dyed
Gift of Mrs. Eliot A. Carter 1991.114.2

Khmer resist-dyed textiles are among the most brightly colored and intricately patterned in all of Southeast Asia. The hooked fret and stylized plant-motif border designs are typical of this kind of Khmer work and distinguish it from other Southeast Asian tie-dyed cloth.

RISD
MUSEUM



Central Asian
Hanging or cover, late 1800s-early 1900s
Silk, cotton; plain weave, warp ikat
Gift of Natasha B. Ford 1992.127.4

The oasis towns of Central Asia (Turkestan) sat along the trade route between China and the Middle East, attracting settlers of many different nationalities and religions. The warp ikat hangings and garments that became a specialty of these urban centers were the product of collaboration among several groups. Uzbek, Tadjik, Jewish, and Moslem craftsmen all played roles in the dyeing and weaving of these colorful and striking ikats.

Bhutanese; Tibetan
Hothra jalo kira (woman's dress), mid 1900s
Wool, cotton; plain weave, resist-dyed
Elizabeth T. and Dorothy N. Casey Fund 2001.1.4

The boldly striped woolen cloth from Tibet, called hothra jalo, is usually seen in northwestern Bhutan as part of an apron or tunic. This is a rare example of an everyday kira made from this imported fabric. Hothra jalo is woven in narrow strips and decorated with resist-dyed red and blue cruciform shapes after weaving. The fact that the stripes and crosses do not align perfectly across the kira adds visual interest to the design as it is seen flat, but would not be readily apparent when the textile is wrapped and belted around the body.

Hmong; Laotian
Ceremonial skirt, mid 1900s - late 1900s
Cotton; plain weave, wax resist-dyeing with appliqué and embroidery
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2002.11.6

The Hmong people of Southern China and the northern parts of Laos and Vietnam are traditionally divided into subgroups based on, among other things, the details of their clothing. One group, the Green (sometimes also called Blue) Hmong are perhaps best known for women's skirts with panels of dark blue and white patterning, hand drawn in wax and indigo-dyed, then embellished with brightly colored appliqué and embroidery.

RISD
MUSEUM

Indian; Sindhi people
Odhani (woman's head-shawl), ca. 1920
Silk; plain weave, tied and stitched resists
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 22.088

Tie-dyeing techniques are well established on the subcontinent of India, particularly in northwestern India and in Pakistan. This example of a woman's odhani, a type of shawl or scarf worn draped from the head, contains areas of both tied and stitched resists. Needle holes are readily visible in the fine silk ground. The small spots of yellow, green, and blue dye along the borders were probably applied with a brush, rather than being dip-dyed.

Japanese
Woman's kimono, ca. 1820
Silk; satin damask, tie-dyed (shibori)
Gift of Dr. Horace Packard in memory of Mary Cooper Packard
25.137

For this kimono, the artist has chosen to layer the indigo tie-dyed fan and paulownia blossom over a woven fret pattern in the satin damask ground fabric. Light plays off the matte and shiny surfaces of the damask, broken up by the small tie-dyed dots to create a rich surface. Contrast the simple coloration and small scale of this design from the early 19th century with the example from about a hundred years later at left in this case.

Balinese
Head covering, early 1900s
Silk; plain weave, weft ikat
Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 31.199

Many Balinese weaving traditions have fallen victim to the pressures of 20th century life, including, for the most part, the fine weft-ikat work in silk seen here. This headcloth dates to the early part of the 20th century, perhaps even the late 19th century. The patterning and colors are related to both Indian and Malaysian examples also to be seen in this gallery.

RISD
MUSEUM

Indonesian; Sumbanese
Mantle (hinggi), 1900-38
Cotton; warp ikat
Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 38.201

The technique of warp ikat is the most widespread resist-dye method in Indonesia. Among many fine examples are the Sumbanese men's wrapping and shoulder cloths called hinggi. Hinggi for everyday wear are traditionally blue and white. This multicolor cloth, requiring more skill in the dyeing, was worn for ceremonial occasions.

Unique in Indonesia, the Sumbanese raise horses and are accomplished riders, therefore horses as a motif play an important part in Sumbanese textiles. The deer and lion motifs also seen here were originally reserved for use by the royal family.

Indian; Gujarati
Patolu fragment, late 1800s
Silk; plain weave, double ikat
Bequest of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 55.293

This well-loved, much-mended fragment of patolu attests to the considerable sacred and ceremonial status this fabric, with its tie-dyed warp and weft yarns, enjoys within both Indian and Indonesian society. The lively, sinuous, eight-lobed medallion pattern has long appealed to the Indonesian export market, influencing local ikat production. Indians of the brahmin caste (Hindus) living around the city of Surat also have shown a preference for this patolu style. The distinguishing end borders have been cut off, making it difficult now to determine which community used this piece of cloth.

Indian; Gujarati
Odhani (woman's head-shawl), late 1800s-early 1900s
Silk, metallic-wrapped thread; satin weave, tie-dyed (bandhani)
Bequest of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 55.309

Elephants, peacocks, and parrots hiding amidst mango trees join dancing women twirling their skirts around a central lotus medallion in this joyous bandhani wedding veil. Created with hundreds of painstakingly tie-dyed dots, these auspicious motifs merge with meticulous technical skill to embody the height of artistic and cultural achievement.

RISD
MUSEUM

Javanese
Dodot (hip wrapper), 1800s
Cotton; plain weave, wax-resist-dyed (batik)
Bequest of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 55.475

The two main centers of batik production in Central Java were Yogyakarta and Surakarta. Although the courts in both regions dressed in similar styles and patterns, the color combinations differed. The semen design seen here was a symbol of high status restricted to court use throughout Central Java. Dark brown and dark blue with white were the trademark colors of Yogyakarta. The dodot is a court style of hip wrapper, made of two widths of batik cloth seamed together.

Javanese; Indonesian
Slendang (woman's shoulder cloth), late 1800s
Silk; plain weave, batik
Bequest of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 55.488

These slendangs illustrate the difference between batik tulis, in which the wax resist is hand drawn on the fabric, and batik cap (or tjap), in which the wax is applied with copper stamps or blocks. Notice the fineness of the batik tulis work on the slendang with the greenish ground. The woven silk fabric is smooth and tightly woven. The silk fabric of the lighter-colored slendang, however, is wild silk (tussah), which is made of thicker, uneven yarns. Fine hand-drawn designs would be wasted on such a rough surface, so the batik cap was used.

Javanese; Indonesian
Slendang (woman's shoulder cloth), late 1800s
Silk; plain weave, batik
Bequest of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 55.490

These slendangs illustrate the difference between batik tulis, in which the wax resist is hand drawn on the fabric, and batik cap (or tjap), in which the wax is applied with copper stamps or blocks. Notice the fineness of the batik tulis work on the slendang with the greenish ground. The woven silk fabric is smooth and tightly woven. The silk fabric of the lighter-colored slendang, however, is wild silk (tussah), which is made of thicker, uneven yarns. Fine hand-drawn designs would be wasted on such a rough surface, so the batik cap was used.

RISD
MUSEUM

Malaysian
Sarong, 1800s
Silk, metallic-wrapped yarns; twill weave, weft ikat, supplementary weft patterning
Bequest of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich 55.497.1

This sarong, a rare survival of a Kelantan-made ikat, is patterned with incredible precision by the ikat process and further embellished with supplementary metallic yarns woven into complex patterns in the center of the cloth. These sarongs were undoubtedly made for and worn by local nobility. The use of a twill weave in the ikat section of the sarong suggests that the makers were either Khmer or that they learned the technique from Khmer artisans.

Japanese
Man's kimono, 1929
Silk; plain weave, kasuri (double ikat)
Gift of Mrs. Torrey Allen 67.084.1

Both the warp and the weft yarns have been tie-dyed for this man's kimono. The limited palette and repeat pattern of small geometric shapes seen here are typical of the way this technique is used in garments for men in Japan. Notice the intentionally irregular or feathered edges in the tie-dyed motifs, in contrast to the clean edges of the double-ikat patolu sari fragment in the case at left.

Indonesian; Sumbanese
Sarong, early 1900s
Cotton; plain weave, warp ikat
Walter H. Kimball Fund 80.221.1

The island of origin of this sarong is something of a mystery. The vendor believed that the sarong came from Savu, but the bands of lettering reads Peberiwai Kacamatan, which is a district on the nearby island of Sumba. The use of color and the floral patterning between the lettering are more commonly associated with Savu. The horse and rider motif, while more common on Sumba, is also known on Savu. Both islands have long traditions of textile art using the warp-ikat technique.

RISD
MUSEUM

Indonesian
Selimut (man's shoulder cloth), early 1900s
Cotton; plain weave, warp ikat
Walter H. Kimball Fund 80.221.2

Men on the small island of Roti wear these weavings folded over one shoulder. When this piece was originally woven, the combination of designs in the cloth was meant to establish the wearer's origin and background. Each village had specific designs associated with it, passed down from one generation of women weavers to the next. Over the past decades this practice has eroded.

Japanese
Woman's underkimono, early 1900s
Silk: plain weave, tie-dyed (shibori); and satin damask, stenciled and drawn paste resist-dyed (yuzen)
Gift of Mrs. David Underdown in memory of her mother, Mrs. H. Ingerholt 82.177.3

The striking, large-scale, bulls-eye motifs are tie-dyed onto the plain thin silk that forms the upper portion of this garment. This wonderful fabric would never have been seen except by the wearer. This is an underkimono, originally part of a matching set. The outer kimono would have been made of the yuzen-dyed parasol-patterned fabric used for the lower part of the body of the underkimono and around its collar and sleeve openings. Yuzen combines both hand-drawn and stenciled paste resists with the application of dyes by painting, allowing for varied and subtle color effects.

Cambodian; Thai; Khmer
Shoulder cloth, late 1800s
Silk; twill weave, weft ikat
Gift of Mrs. Barbara Deering Danielson 82.308.40

This cloth illustrates some of the difficulties in identifying certain Southeast Asian materials. The patterning points to Thai court influence, while the twill weave indicates a probable Khmer origin. It may have been woven for a small Khmer court, or made in the Thai taste for sale outside the Khmer community; however, the design is fairly simple for court use, and the yellow-and-red color scheme is unusual.