

# MASTERS OF THE CLOTH

Indian Textiles Traded to Distant Shores



TAPI Collection • National Museum





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## Indian Textiles Traded to Distant Shores

TAPI Collection

Deepika Shah



This catalogue is published in conjunction with the exhibition  
"MASTERS OF THE CLOTH: Indian Textiles Traded to Distant  
Shores, TAPI Collection" at the National Museum, New Delhi.  
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*Cover: Patolu Ceremonial Cloth ( Cat. No. 12 )  
Gujarat, 18<sup>th</sup> century; traded to Indonesia  
TAPI 05.34*



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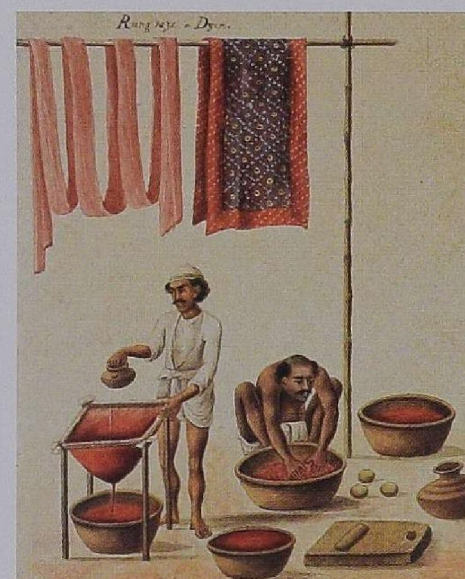
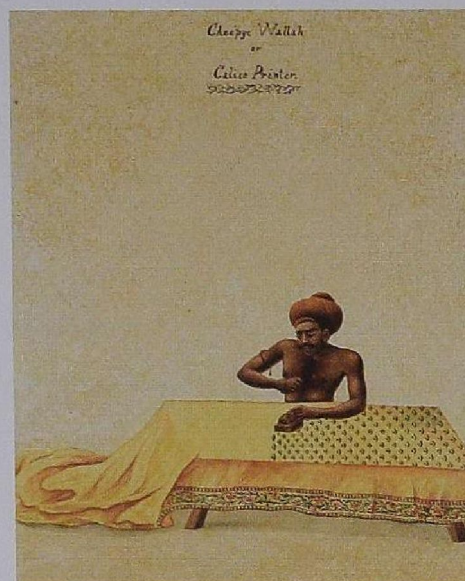
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*Right, top to bottom: Company School Paintings showing a block-printer, dyer and embroiderer at work, Patna, 19<sup>th</sup> century. TAPI Collection*





Dr. K.K. Chakravarty, IAS

Ph. D. (Harvard)

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## FROM THE DIRECTOR GENERAL

As studies by modern scholars succeed in piecing together a greater understanding of the dynamics of the Indian Ocean trading network in a pre-colonial, pre-industrialized world, an unassailable picture emerges, that the ancient world was no stranger to the virtues and varieties of Indian textiles.

From ports dotted along her twin coasts and from across perilous mountain passes, bales of cloth were regularly carried to far-flung and neighbouring markets in exchange for goods that were in demand in the home market: horses, gold, ivory, tin.

The National Museum, New Delhi, is pleased to host the exhibition "Masters Of The Cloth: Indian Textiles Traded To Distant Shores, TAPI Collection", bringing a selection of Indian cloths exported to the West as well as the East from as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Since it is the first time that actual examples will be on view, the show presents, so to speak, a glimpse of the stage on which the drama of Indian textiles was played out over the past 600 years.

We sincerely hope that this Exhibition will arouse interest in students of history, the textile arts, commerce, economics, cultural and social diffusion. The transmission of technology and artistic ideas in Indian trade textiles provide invaluable clues for further inquiry.

Along with my team at the National Museum I thank Praful and Shilpa Shah of the TAPI Collection, and the sponsors, Garden Silk Mills Ltd., for the opportunity to collaborate meaningfully to bring this unique exhibition to the capital. I do hope viewers will take advantage to come and view it in numbers.

Sincerely,

(K.K.Chakravarty)



## FOREWORD

The high tradition of Indian textiles with its long and glorious history made our country's fame reach other shores. From earliest times, textiles were a prized cargo.

To acquaint us with the splendour of India's textiles and assure future continuity, vanishing examples are being collected, preserved and researched in a handful of centers globally. Praful and Shilpa Shah have committed themselves to this task. Their dedication and effort in forming the TAPI Collection has made its presence felt in a short span of time.

Textile designs abound in Ajanta wall paintings. It is likely that some ceiling panels were based on actual cloth canopies. Ajanta style designs in their evolved forms can be seen in Indian textiles for export from the 12<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.

India's foreign trade and her textiles were deeply connected. Coupled with spices, textile was always one of her principal exports. The Romans lamented the heavy loss of their foreign exchange in favour of Indian trade. An interesting example of this is in the form of shiploads of coins, found buried on our western coast for which possibly there were no takers. Central Asian towns and Tibet were also markets for Indian textiles.

It is in the adaptation of motifs that we are struck with the creative genius of the early textile designs. Vegetal motifs, known mostly from manuscript illustrations and medieval architectural embellishments, appear in textile

block prints in rich abandon, (Cat. No. 1, TAPI 01. 335) as though breathing in the open atmosphere, without losing their intrinsic decorative character.

A rare example in the TAPI Collection found in Indonesia is reminiscent of the *Vasant Vilasa* painted scroll in the western Indian painting tradition. (Cat. No. 7, TAPI 01. 51 ). We find unprecedented artistry in the treatment of slender human figures and lavish background details, an enchanting atmosphere created by dense forestry with winding creepers and bending branches that leaves nothing as undecorated surface.

Active textile trade in this part of the medieval world linked these South-east Asian countries and helped migration of Indian culture to distant shores. Although such pieces are hardly known in India itself, these export cloths help us in recreating the glory of Indian textiles from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The TAPI collection and its founder architects have brought these historical textiles to our notice. We cannot thank them and the National Museum enough for creating awareness of our national heritage. Money alone cannot build such a collection, a veritable jewel casket. It is unqualified devotion and deep understanding that has evolved such a magnificent treasure house.

Rai Anand Krishna  
June 30, 2005.

*View of the port city of Masulipatam. 17<sup>th</sup> century Lithograph. TAPI Collection.*





## INTRODUCTION

Gazing at the trefoil motif on the robe of the famous Indus Valley bust of the "Priest-King", one wonders at the skill of our textile craftsmen 4000 years ago. Could the pattern have been set on a loom? Or embroidered, maybe? Painted with a dye like a *kalamkari*? Or is it an example of *rogan* applied with fingers on cloth, an art that still survives in the Banni region of Kutch today? We do not really know.

What we do know is that cotton textiles were India's contribution to the world, and one of her oldest exports. The complex chemistry of colour-fast dyeing was a proverbial Indian monopoly until the 17<sup>th</sup> century: "*Phaatay pun phitay nahin*" (Tear it may, but fade it won't). Regrettably, neither climate nor custom helped preserve early examples of such cloths in our country. Our rich and ancient textile heritage has to be gleaned - glimpsed but hazily - from accounts of foreign travellers or pieced together from frescoes, sculptures and paintings.

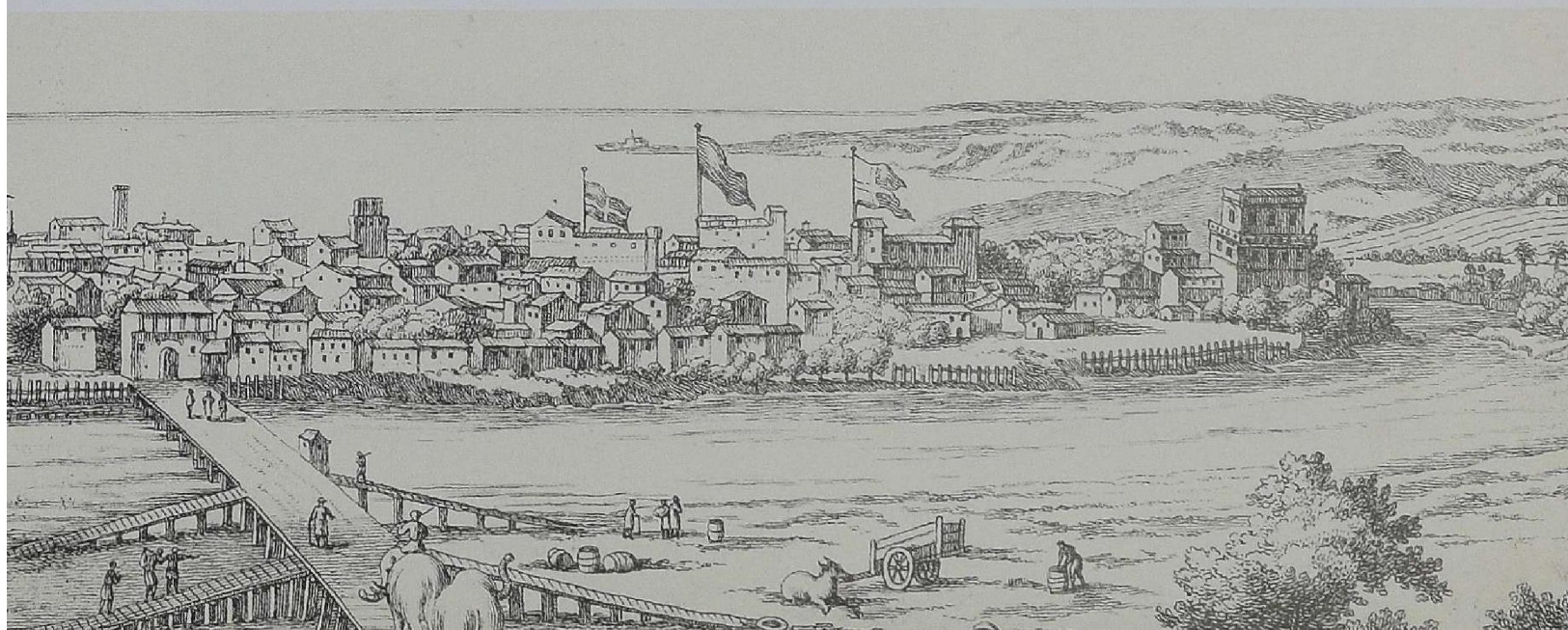
Fortunately, Indian textiles traded overseas centuries ago did survive in other lands. "Masters of the Cloth - Indian Textiles Traded to Distant Shores" is an attempt to present the story of cloths that journeyed beyond our shores, both east and west, to become part of

another culture, bearing witness to a past forgotten in its own homeland.

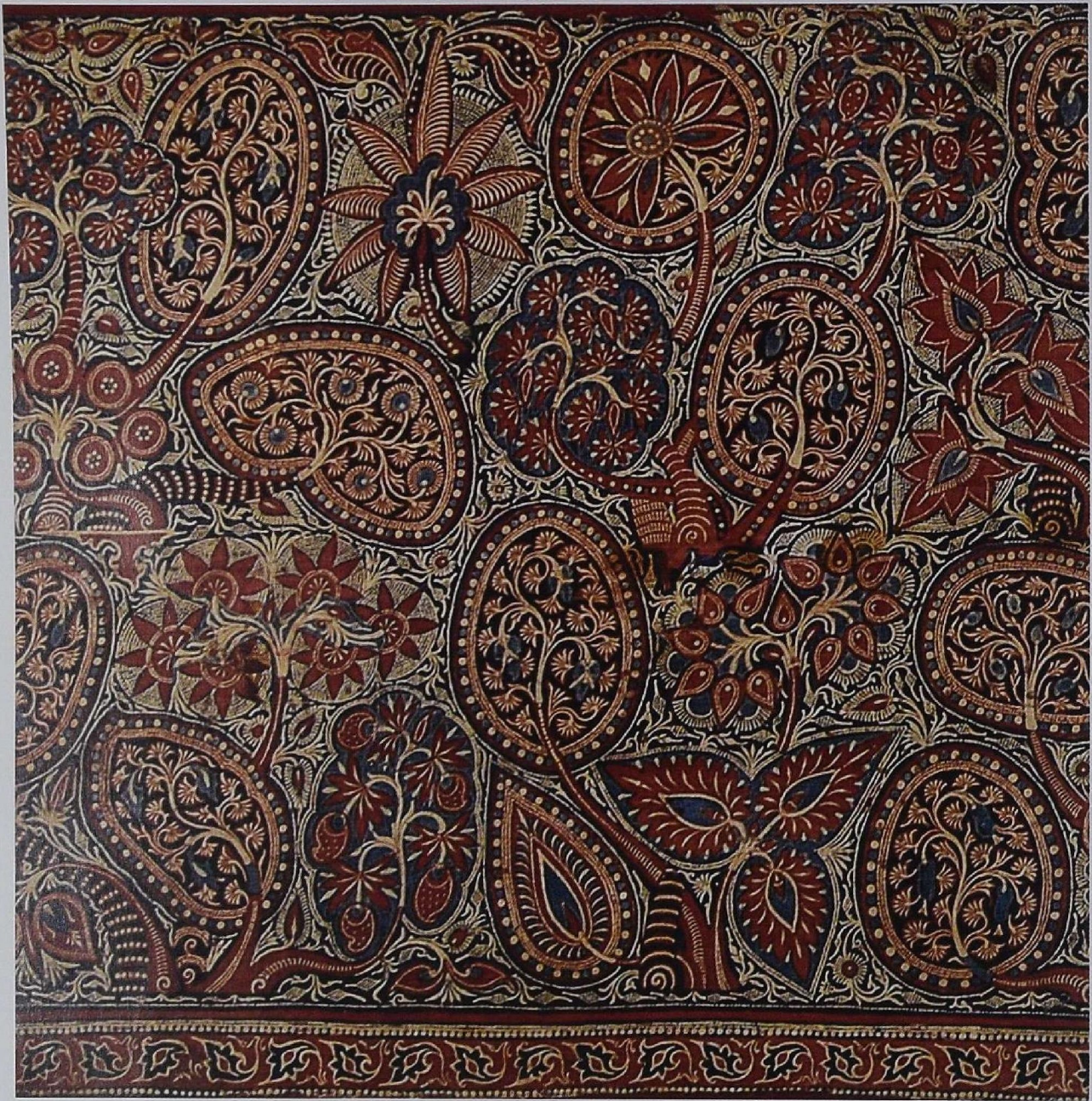
This exhibition of 'Trade Textiles' will bring to Indian viewers the surprising diversity and history of our patterned cloths, reflecting the ingenuity of our tradesmen, entrepreneurs, middle-men and most of all, our imaginative textile dyers, printers, weavers and embroiderers to respond to the needs of distant markets, each with their own preference and taste.

We are grateful to the National Museum, its Director General Dr. K.K. Chakravarty, and his enthusiastic team for the opportunity to present these few rare examples of trade textiles from India that survived on distant shores either by serendipity - like the 'Fustat' fragments of Egypt - or because they were treasured heirlooms carefully passed on from generation to generation, leaving, wherever they went, an indelible impact on indigenous textile traditions. We earnestly hope that people of our country, our young textile designers in particular and craftspeople may share some of the wonderment that we felt when we were first introduced to these magnificent specimens.

Praful & Shilpa Shah



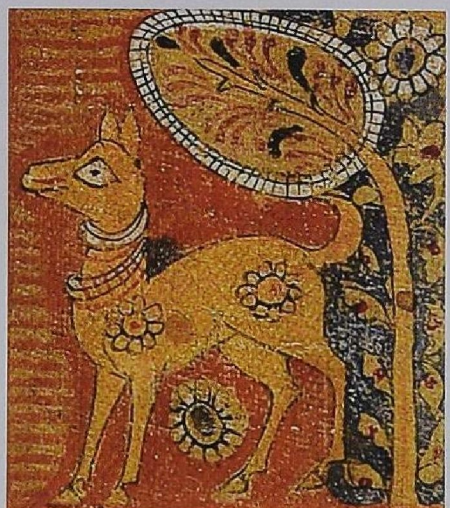




A



B



C



## I HEIRLOOM TEXTILE (*maa'*) \*

Gujarat; 14<sup>th</sup> century; traded to Sulawesi,  
Eastern Indonesia  
Cotton; painted, mordant- and resist-dyed,  
Warp 525 cm, weft 107cm  
TAPI 01.335

The flower design of such textiles is referred to as *daun bolu*, 'leaf of the sirih plant', (*Piper betle*) by the people of Toraja, Sulawesi. This is the finest of any *daun bolu* cloths so far published as the design is not block-printed but meticulously drawn by hand. Some elements of this floral design have direct parallels in the block-printed Indian fragments surviving in Egypt from the same time.

These cloths were used in house building rituals and for the harvest thanksgiving *merok* ceremony. The association of the colour red with life, strength and magical power made red textiles especially valued.

A, B & C The stylised trees depicted in these details from a Jain painted cloth scroll (*pat*) bear striking similarity to those seen in heirloom *daun bolu* cloths [1] of the Toraja people. Gujarat, 15<sup>th</sup> century. TAPI Collection.

D A *daun bolu* ceremonial cloth holds pride of place in a Toraja funerary ceremony in Rantepao, Sulawesi. TAPI Collection.



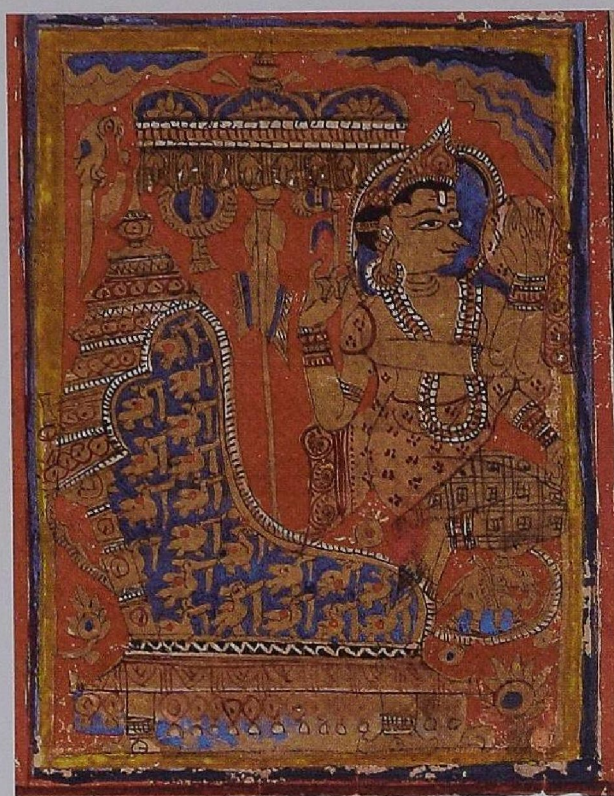
## MAGIC AND MEANING INDIAN TRADE CLOTHS TO THE EAST

Indian textiles were a favoured medium of exchange in the East, where the demand for cloth was insatiable. The textile trade eastwards is believed to have existed from at least the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.<sup>1</sup> Being a durable, portable commodity, textiles were conducive to long-distance travel. Cloth from Bengal, Gujarat and the Coromandel Coast (derived from *Cholamandalam* or 'land of the Cholas') of southeast India went to many Asian countries, notably Sri Lanka, Burma, Cambodia, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan and China. Some of the earliest surviving textiles of this thriving trade, dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, are included in the TAPI Collection. They come from Gujarat underlining the dominance of Western India in the age-old commerce of the Indian Ocean.

Well before the arrival of European travellers and merchants, the trade to the East was dominated by enterprising Arab and Indian merchants. By the sixteenth century, trade controls passed into the hands of the European trading companies, at first the Portuguese and later, the Dutch, English and French. The Europeans entered Asia's maritime commerce with the primary objective of procuring the much-coveted spices of the East. While European bullion was worth little in the economies of the East, Indian cloth commanded a high value and was in continuous demand. For European trading companies, commercial success in the Indian Ocean trade depended heavily on the barter and sale of Indian cloth.

In the East, Indian textiles were considered a form of storing wealth. They served as costumes for the nobility, as festive displays, gifts and as clothing and offerings during life-cycle rituals. Often, they were ascribed magical properties. Elevated to the status of heirlooms, they were carefully preserved and have, therefore, survived many centuries.





A Folio from a *Kalpasutra* manuscript featuring the *hamsa* pattern. Gujarat, 15<sup>th</sup> century. TAPI Collection.



2



3





B Stone frieze showing a row of *hamsa*. Gujarat, medieval period. TAPI Collection.

## 2 HEIRLOOM TEXTILE (*maa'*) \*

Gujarat; 13<sup>th</sup> century; traded to Sulawesi, Eastern Indonesia  
Cotton; block-printed resist, mordant-dyed  
Warp 404 cm, weft 102 cm  
TAPI 01.92

The radiocarbon dating of this *hamsa* or goose patterned cloth is the earliest of any so far recorded for the Indonesian markets taking it as far back as the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Several *hamsa* fragments have been found in Egypt as well, an evidence of Indian textile designs having a widespread distribution and acceptance.

## 3 HEIRLOOM TEXTILE (*maa'*)

Gujarat; mid-15<sup>th</sup> century, traded to Sulawesi, Eastern Indonesia  
Cotton; block-printed and applied mordant, resist- and mordant- dyed  
Warp 235 cm, weft 106 cm  
TAPI 01.27

Indian textiles depicting the *hamsa* or goose as their primary motif are evident as early as the Gupta period (c. 320-600 AD), as portrayed in the frescoes of Ajanta as well as described by Kalidasa, the famous 5<sup>th</sup> century playwright in his work, the *Raghuvamsa*.<sup>2</sup> The *hamsa* is also a recurrent motif in Jain manuscript paintings of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries [A]. *Hamsa* patterned textiles were traded both to Egypt and the East, but this particular version is rare. It bears a close resemblance to the row of geese decorating a medieval stone frieze from Gujarat [B] bringing to light the replay of motifs in various art forms.

## MAA'

### TREASURED HEIRLOOMS OF TORAJA

Old, imported textiles, especially from India, are known as *maa'* in Sulawesi, Indonesia, and are endowed with ceremonial importance and magical connotations. They are believed to have 'come from across the sea' in legendary times<sup>3</sup>. Ancestors have a looming presence in Toraja culture and funerary ceremonies are invested with great meaning. Creation myths describe deified ancestors in heaven being screened by a curtain of *maa'*<sup>4</sup>.

The Toraja hang these ceremonial textiles from tall, tree-shaped bamboo structures, during the course of their rituals, as talismans to avert evil spirits and officiating priests wear them as head cloths.<sup>5</sup> They are also used to drape the 'tongkonnan', the boat shaped home of the Toraja people. [C] These precious textiles are stored carefully to be passed on as family heirlooms across generations.

Due to the high price and scarcity of the imported variety from India, imitations were produced locally. Today, these share a similar significance as the Indian cloths in the social context of Sulawesi culture.



C Indian *maa'* textiles decorate Toraja homes in Rantepao, Sulawesi. TAPI Collection.



#### 4 HEIRLOOM TEXTILE (*maa'*)

Gujarat; c.15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century; traded to Sulawesi,  
Eastern Indonesia

Cotton; block-printed resist, mordant-dyed

Warp 224 cm, weft 88 cm

TAPI 03.68

This heirloom textile was used during funerary ceremonies by the Toraja people of Sulawesi. Its pattern of the four-petal flower interspersed with concentric circles is reminiscent of the floral designs on pottery of the Indus Valley civilization, especially the earthenware jars of Chanhru Daro, an Indus site located in present-day Pakistan [A]. The production centres of such textiles in Gujarat are situated in close proximity to the sites of Indus Valley towns and cities. This ceremonial cloth is a perfect example of how ancient designs and motifs became firmly rooted in the aesthetic traditions of the people and recurred in their art forms even after three thousand years.

A Storage Jar. Chanhru Daro (Pakistan), c.2700-2000 B.C., Mature Harappan Period. National Museum, New Delhi.





## 5 CEREMONIAL CLOTH

Western India or Deccan; 15<sup>th</sup> century; traded to eastern Indonesia or East Timor  
Cotton; block-printed, mordant- and resist-dyed  
Warp 466 cm, weft 77 cm  
TAPI 01.54

This textile is stylistically distinct from the rest of the Indian textiles traded to Indonesia and may have been part of an East Timorese heirloom collection. Descendants of princely families considered this type of cloth to be *lulik* meaning sacred and referred to them as *Lao Sarapika* or 'sacred cloth'.<sup>6</sup> In the Eastern Timor economic value system, where wealth was measured by the possession of water buffaloes, *Sarapika* textiles were worth 80 buffaloes while an ancient sword was worth 10 buffaloes and a local sarong only one buffalo.<sup>7</sup> *Sarapika* cloths were used as gifts during weddings and played an important ceremonial role especially in funerals.

This cloth has an ornate floral design in its borders and central field but a fascinating pictorial scene at one end draws a great deal of attention. It depicts a seated princely figure waited upon by an attendant with a flywhisk and entertained by musicians and a charming dancer. In the upper row is a horse rider, two swordsmen in a duel and an onlooker. The stylisation and facial attributes of the figures resemble that of the puppets of the Deccan<sup>8</sup> [B] and Western India.



B Leather puppet. Andhra Pradesh, late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century. TAPI Collection.



5 detail





## 6 HEIRLOOM TEXTILE (*basta*)

Gujarat; 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century; traded to Babar Islands,  
Southern Moluccas

Cotton; block-printed and mordant-dyed

Warp 472 cm, weft 85 cm

TAPI 03.101

In the Babar archipelago of the Southeast Moluccas, long, block-printed cotton textiles from India were referred to as *basta* and held great economic and ceremonial significance. An interesting feature here is the motif of traders repeated in alternate registers across the textile. Their distinctive costume and facial attributes identify them as an Arab merchant (left) conducting business with a Chinese counterpart (right).

Asian ports had become a meeting ground for traders from India, the Middle East, China and Europe, all vying for a share in the lucrative cloth-for-spice trade. The motif of traders highlights the cosmopolitan face of maritime commerce in the Indian Ocean and the key role of the enterprising merchant in its complex network of trade.



6



7



## 7 HEIRLOOM TEXTILE \*

Gujarat, c. 1500-1550; traded to Sulawesi,  
Eastern Indonesia

Cotton, painted, mordant- and resist-dyed

Warp 550 cm, weft 102 cm

TAPI 01.51

Most Gujarati cotton textiles for the Indonesian market were block-printed. This piece, however, is a rare example of a hand-painted cloth, where mordant and resist were applied with a brush before the textile was dyed.

We are looking at a festive entertainment scene, probably from a courtly context. A richly dressed couple at the centre of the cloth possibly represents a prince and his consort. On either side of the couple are five females; next to the prince are dancers, while on the consort's side there are four musicians and one additional dancer. The figures' movements are lively and highly expressive.

The figurative style and depiction of facial features is familiar from Jain manuscript paintings of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century, with the characteristic three-quarter profile including a protruding second eye. However, the attention given to details of dress and personal adornment is unusual. The half life-size figures are drawn with such care that it is possible to identify the rich variety of textile patterns, jewellery and coiffure.



7 detail







8

## 8 CEREMONIAL CLOTH *PATOLU*

Gujarat; 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century; traded to Indonesia

Silk; double-ikat

Warp 419 cm, weft 108 cm

TAPI 03.146

The triangular *tumpal* end borders, the black ground and the presence of tigers indicate that this *patolu* was intended for export to Southeast Asia. *Patola* featuring tigers and elephants were particularly favoured in Indonesia as ceremonial cloths. In the royal court of Surakarta in Central Java, *patola* of this design were given the utmost importance.

## PATOLA

### PRIZED AND PRESERVED

The silk *patolu*, highly regarded in India, was also one of the most prestigious textiles traded to Southeast Asia. It is woven using the double-ikat technique, in which the design is created by binding and resist-dyeing the warp and weft threads according to a pre-determined pattern, before they are set on the loom to be woven.

Mention of *patola* for export began appearing for the first time in the accounts of the Portuguese traveller Duarte Barbosa in 1516 A.D, who wrote about their trade to Malacca and Sumatra via ports of lower Burma. However, contemporary research argues that cloths termed 'patola' began to be exported to Southeast Asia and to the Malay Archipelago much earlier.

*Patola* became the most prized Indian trade cloths in Indonesia. They were attributed talismanic powers and cherished as sacred cloths and family heirlooms, and also served as indicators of class. The designs and motifs of the silk *patola* greatly influenced indigenous textile traditions.





9

### 9 CEREMONIAL CLOTH *PATOLU*

Gujarat; late 18<sup>th</sup> / 19<sup>th</sup> century; traded to Indonesia  
Silk; double-ikat  
Warp 453 cm, weft 99 cm  
TAPI 02.35

This *patolu* was reportedly the heirloom of the Raja of Prailiu, Tamo Umbu Ngjaka, in the East Sumba Island of Indonesia. Preserved in a special rattan container in the Raja's home for at least four generations, it was used exclusively for royal burial ceremonies. During a funerary ceremony, eight women would dance in a circle outside the Raja's home surrounded by this cloth holding them together and singing stories of the life of the deceased. They represented the eight directions of the wind and the eight points of the flower motif on the *patolu*.<sup>9</sup> This eight-rayed floral motif known as *chhabdi bhaat* (flowering basket) in Gujarat, and *jlamprang* in Indonesia, acquired a local name called *hunda*, meaning 'sovereign majesty'. The *tumpal* (triangular) cloth-ends that identify this piece as an item of export to Southeast Asia are called *peru aru* or 'bamboo shoots' in Prailiu.



10

### 10 HEIRLOOM TEXTILE (*maa'*)

Gujarat; c. late 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century; traded to Indonesia  
Cotton; block-printed, resist- and mordant-dyed  
Warp 268 cm, weft 101 cm  
TAPI 00.204

This cotton textile attempts to copy the *patola* pattern commonly referred to as *chhabdi bhaat* (flowering basket) in Gujarat.

*Patola* were highly valued throughout Indonesia. To meet the needs of the locals who could not afford expensive silk *patola* imported from India, printed cotton imitations were produced for trade to Indonesia. Even though these were created using the simpler technique of block-printing as opposed to the complex double-ikat weaving method of their silk prototypes, they were revered as ceremonial and heirloom textiles.





11

## 11 TROUSERS *PATOLU*

Gujarat; early 1900s; traded to central Java, Indonesia

Silk; double-ikat

Length 99 cm, waist 53.5 cm

TAPI 03.152

Silk *patola* trousers were used exclusively by the nobility in Indonesia, and each royal house had its own unique design. This pair of *patola* trousers is said to have belonged to the family of Sultan Hamengku Buwono VIII of Yogyakarta. A beautiful gold border at the hem of each leg embellishes the trousers. It is likely that the trousers were cut and stitched in Java.



12



## 12 CEREMONIAL CLOTH *PATOLU*

Gujarat; 18<sup>th</sup> century; traded to Indonesia

Silk, double-ikat

Warp 500 cm, weft 108 cm

TAPI 05.34

This *gaja* or elephant design *patolu* is amongst the most rare and prestigious of *patola* that went to Southeast Asia. Such *patola* represent the zenith of double-ikat dyeing and weaving skills and were often gifted to local rajas by Dutch officials in exchange for exclusive trading privileges.

The scene depicted on the *patolu* seems to be a royal hunt. The pairs of confronted elephants are covered with rich *patola* patterned palanquin blankets ('*jhool*') on which are mounted canopied howdahs seating a

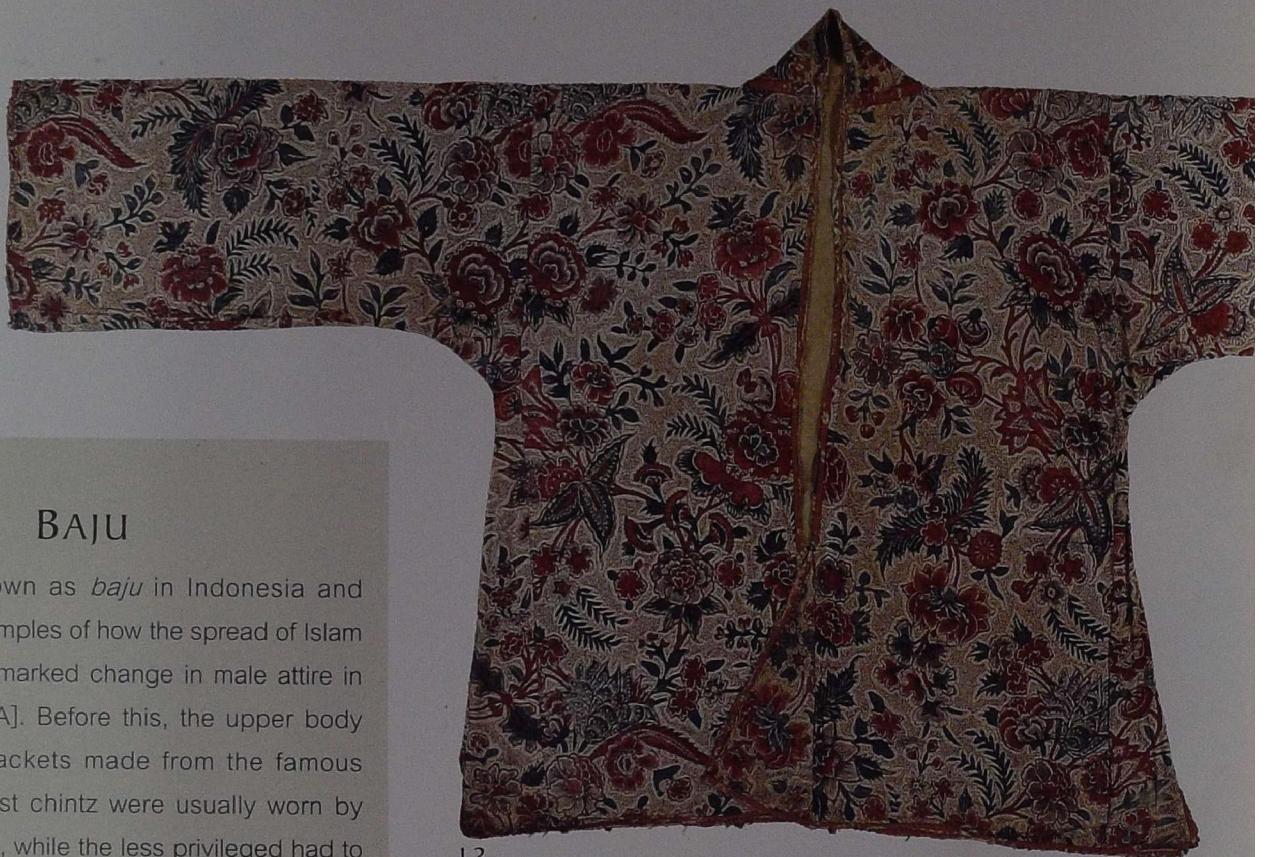
mahout, a nobleman and his whisk-bearing attendant. Set in the floriated background, are tigers, deer, peacocks and parrots alongwith foot soldiers, charioteers and some camel and horse riders. Subject matter of this type was reserved for royal taste and such a textile must have been used for ceremonial display. The elephant with its age-old symbolism of wealth, power, unchallenged authority and divinity (associated with the elephant-god Ganesha) was ideally suited to represent its royal patrons.





## BAJU

Jackets, known as *baju* in Indonesia and Malaysia, are examples of how the spread of Islam brought about a marked change in male attire in Southeast Asia [A]. Before this, the upper body was left bare. Jackets made from the famous Coromandel Coast chintz were usually worn by the upper classes, while the less privileged had to make do with short jackets made from local cloth. While the cloth for these garments was imported, they were tailored in Indonesia. The floral designs on these pieces are influenced by European taste.



13

### 13 JACKET (*baju*)

Coromandel Coast; late 18<sup>th</sup> century; fabric traded to Indonesia

Cotton; mordant- and resist-dyed

L 74 cm, sleeve 66 cm, W 71 cm

TAPI 02.197



14





#### 14 CEREMONIAL CLOTH \*

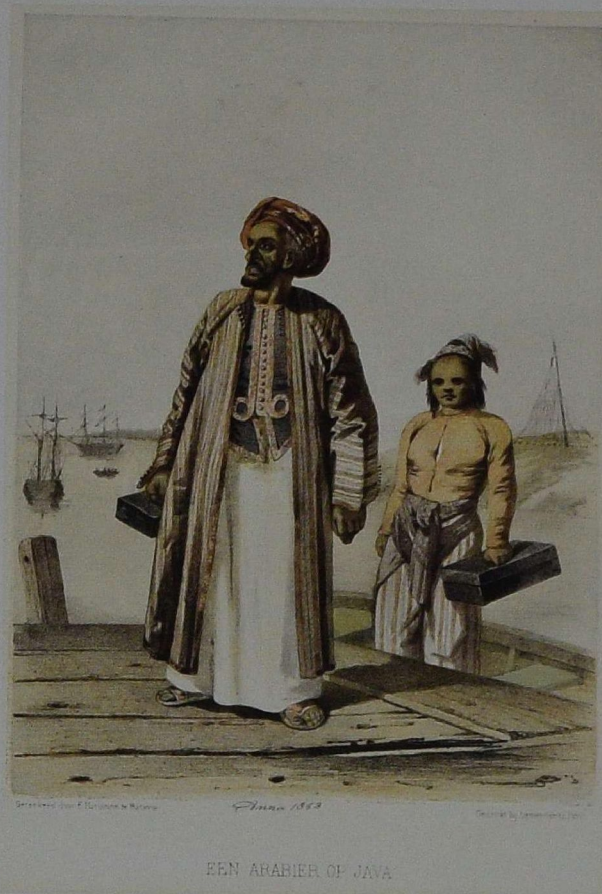
Coromandel Coast; 19<sup>th</sup> century; traded to southern Sumatra

Cotton; painted, mordant- and resist-dyed

Warp 409 cm, weft 136 cm

TAPI 00.168

This long ceremonial cloth represents a technical tour-de-force in the finest mordant and resist painting. Although the design involves a series of motifs in continuous repeat, there is no evidence of the use of block-printing. It shows that Coromandel textile production could achieve work of superb technical quality well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



A *An Arab in Java*. This lithograph shows a wealthy Arab merchant at the port of Batavia. The influences brought on by the Islamic robe led to the introduction of the *baju* in Indonesian and Malay costume. Based on drawing by Ernest Hardouin, printed by Lemerrier, Paris. 19<sup>th</sup> century. TAPI Collection.



#### 15 JACKET (*baju*)

Coromandel Coast; late 18<sup>th</sup> century; fabric traded to Indonesia

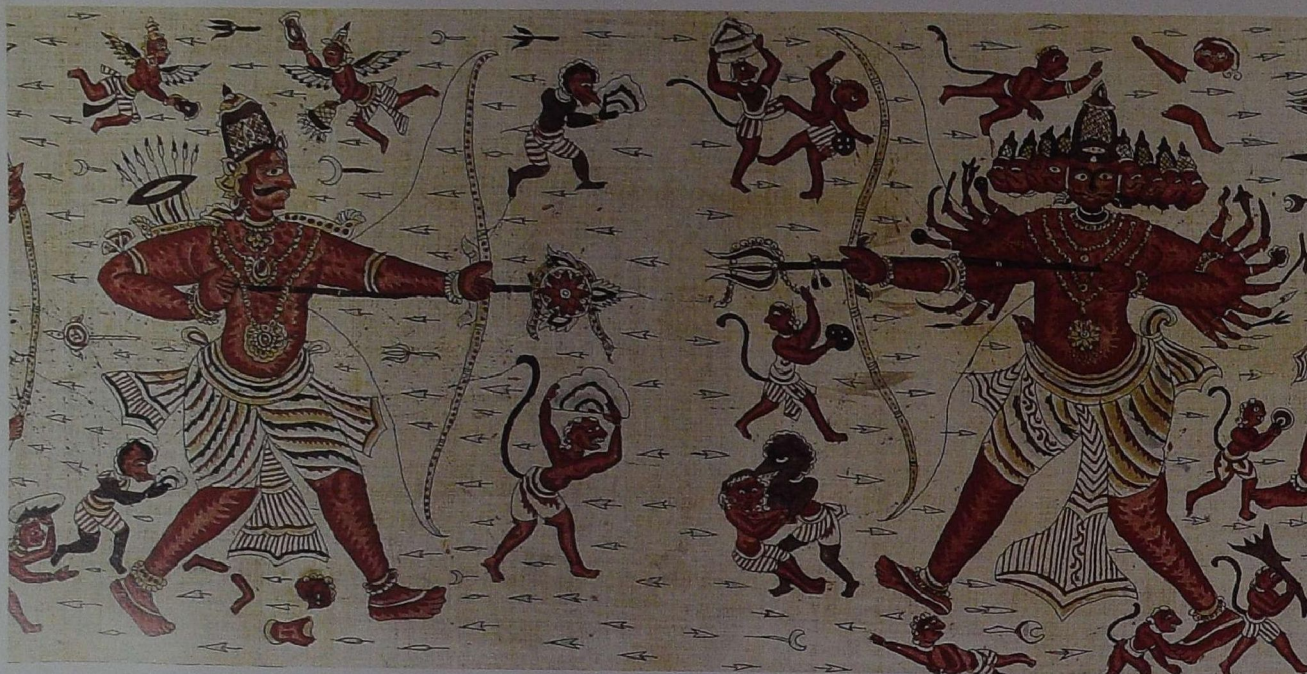
Cotton; mordant- and resist-dyed

L 119 cm, sleeve 79 cm, W 70 cm

TAPI 02.161

15





16 detail

# 16 CEREMONIAL CLOTH (*Ramayana*) \*

Coromandel Coast; late 18<sup>th</sup> century; traded to Indonesia  
Cotton; mordant-dyed, painted indigo and yellow  
Warp 496 cm, weft 99 cm  
TAPI 01.183

The influence of the Hindu epic, *Ramayana* is evident in the art, craft and textiles of the islands of Indonesia and this textile is a fine example of the cross cultural and religious exchange that took place between India and Indonesia. The violent battle between Prince Rama and the demon king Ravana is depicted in this textile.

This textile has a hand-written inscription on its upper right corner, which may identify it with the Dutch East India Company.

# 17 COURT DRESS (*Dodot*)

Coromandel Coast; c. 18<sup>th</sup> century; traded to Java  
Cotton; mordant- and resist-dyed  
L 310 cm, W 218 cm  
TAPI 00.187

It is not certain if the wide-width, centre-joined *dodot* derives its name from 'do dhot' meaning 'two dhotis'<sup>10</sup>. *Dodot* were a part of Javanese court dress, reserved for the nobility. In Sumatra and Sulawesi, they took on a ceremonial significance as banners and hangings. The oval-shaped patchwork design, set amidst a floral background, comprises of a variety of cloth patterns that attest to the diversity of Indian textiles traded to Indonesia.



16









18 detail





## 18 HANGING

Southern India; mid-late 17<sup>th</sup> century; found in south Sulawesi

Cotton; mordant- and resist-dyed

Warp 259 cm, weft 107 cm

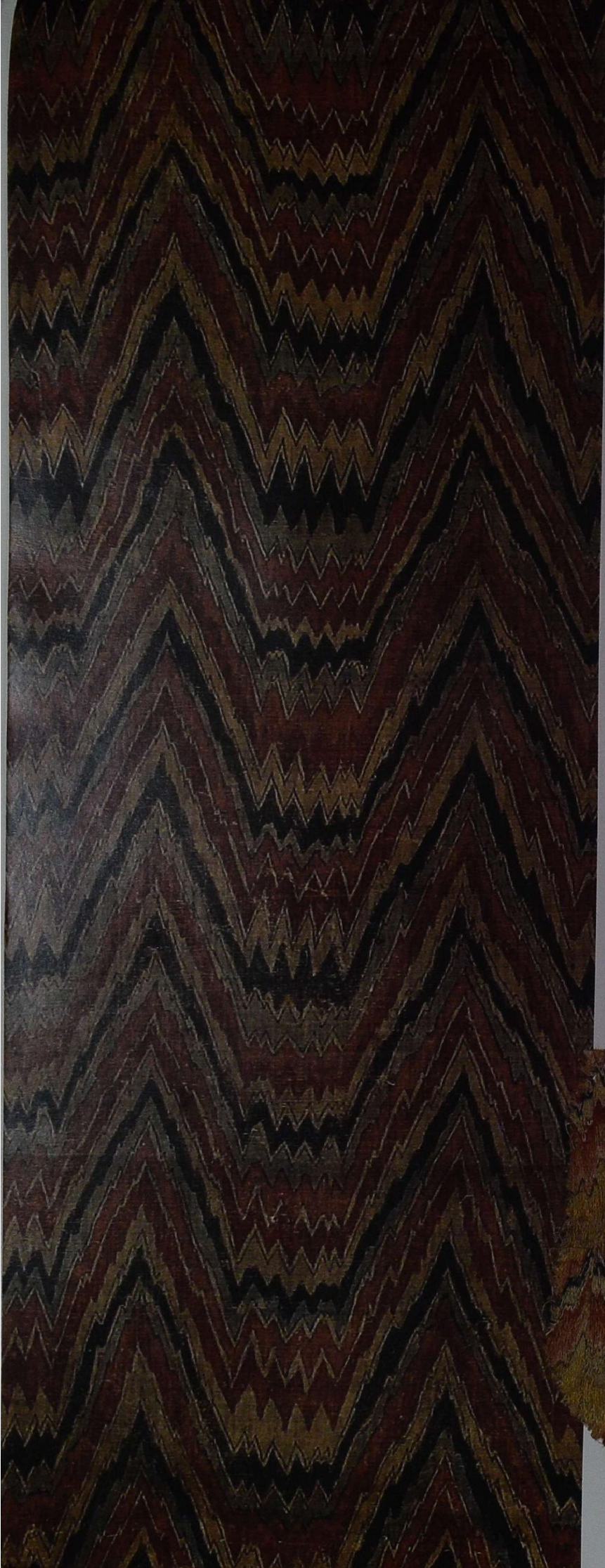
TAPI 02.41

This textile is unique in that large, early period cotton hangings of secular Hindu subject matter are rare and those made for trade even more so. In this royal ceremonial procession scene, the stylistic quality of the figures, the costumes and architectural details point to a Southern origin in the Kaveri River area, possibly the Kumbakonam region of Tanjore in the

last quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Deccani and Maratha turbans seen on some of the figures came into fashion since the area was under the control of the Sultan of Bijapur in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century and annexed by Shivaji's half-brother Ekoji in 1676.<sup>11</sup> The ink stamp of the United English East India Company (UEIC) on the back suggests that the textile may have been exported during the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.







## 19 CEREMONIAL CLOTH

Southern India; 18<sup>th</sup> century; traded to Sumatra  
Cotton; resist- and mordant-dyed  
Warp 284 cm, weft 108 cm  
TAPI 04.66

Cultural exchanges between the East and the West resulting from an integrated trade network between the two were inevitable. This led to a shared vocabulary of textile designs and no example illustrates this more clearly than this painted cotton cloth or *sarasa* as it is often referred to.

Made in the southern part of India for trade to Indonesia, it was patterned on the dramatic flamestitch design seen on *bergamo* [A] and *bargello* needlepoint textiles popular in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe. In Sumatra, it was reserved for wedding ceremonies where it was used as a floor spread.

A This textile fragment with its bold flame design was woven in Northern France in the 1700s and referred to in Europe as *bergamo* and *point de Hongrie*. TAPI Collection.







20

## 20 HEADCLOTH (*kepala*)

Coromandel Coast; early 19<sup>th</sup> century; traded to Java, Indonesia

Cotton; mordant- and resist-dyed

L 82 cm, W 84cm

TAPI 01.62

The term *kepala* denoting a headcloth in Indonesia is derived from the Sanskrit word '*kapala*' meaning head. A large, square cloth that was folded and wrapped round the head, it formed an important element of male attire in Indonesia and Malaysia, as observed by travellers in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. While Malays used the simple, checked patterns, the Javanese clearly favoured the resist-dyed variety<sup>12</sup>, such as the one featured. The eight-pointed star in the textile's centre and the four corner ornaments suggest an Islamic influence.



B *A Regent on the Island of Java*. This Javanese prince wears a European-style jacket teamed with a traditional skirt-cloth and *kepala* (head cloth). Lithograph after drawing by Ernest Hardouin, printed by Lemercier, Paris. 19<sup>th</sup> century. TAPI Collection.



## 21 CEREMONIAL CLOTH (*mata hari*)

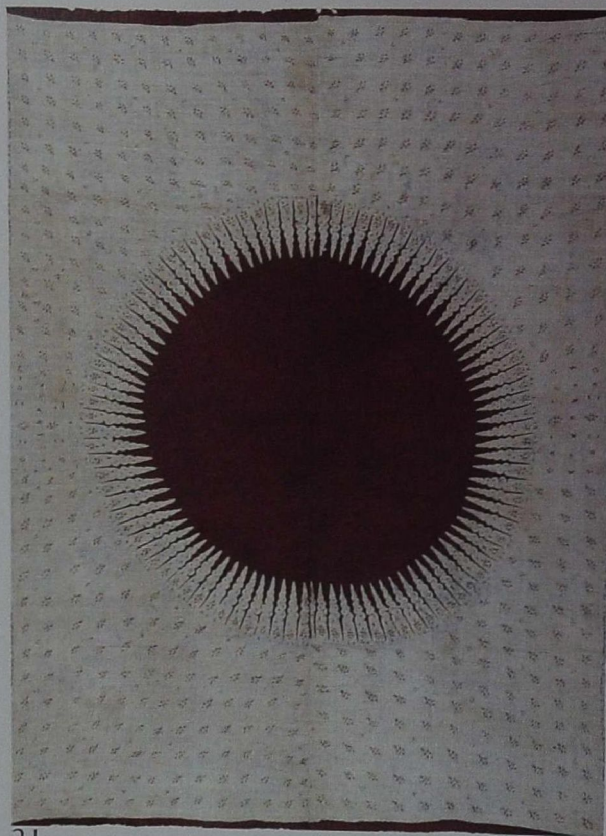
Coromandel Coast; 19<sup>th</sup> century; traded to Java or Sumatra

Cotton; printed, mordant and indigo-dyed

L 267 cm, W 194 cm

TAPI 01.29

This dramatic textile with its bold sun motif is referred to as *mata hari* meaning 'sun' or 'eye of the dawn' in Bahasa Indonesia and Malay. The sun's associations with power and protection would have attributed ceremonial value to such cloths in Java and Sumatra where they were popular.



21



22

## 22 PALAMPORE \*

Coromandel Coast; early 19<sup>th</sup> century; for the Indonesian or Sri Lankan market.

Cotton; drawn and painted mordants, painted dyes

Warp 232 cm, weft 131 cm

TAPI 00.188

This palampore design closely relates to chintzes for the Western market but its small size is associated with those for the Sri Lankan and Indonesian markets. The two stylized animals on the tree's fish-scale mound bear strong resemblance to the lions on the painted ceremonial cotton flags (*sinha kodiya*) of Sri Lanka and are not normally found on chintzes exported to the West.



### 23 CEREMONIAL BANNER

Coromandel Coast; c.1775; for the Sri Lankan Market  
Cotton; mordant- and resist-dyed  
L 156.5 cm, W 129.5 cm  
TAPI 03.130

Banners have been used in ancient Ceylon for religious and royal processions as well as in war. This banner is likely to be the peacock emblem flag of the Walapane province in Sri Lanka, known as *Monara Kodiya*. The peacock is the *vahana* or vehicle of the war god Kartikeya or Murugan, a popular deity in Sri Lanka.

The magnificent bird stands in a field of flowers with a writhing cobra in its beak. According to Hindu legend, the peacock absorbed the poison that was emitted

when the Sea of Milk was churned during the Creation of the universe. Thus the bird, immune to a serpent's venom is thought of as a protector. The defeat of the cobra by the peacock symbolizes the victory of good over evil.

Banners were made both in Sri Lanka and on the Coromandel Coast of India. However, the superior quality of mordant and resist dyeing points to an Indian origin.







A

## COURTED AND COVETED INDIAN CLOTHS IN THAILAND

The prolific trade in Indian cloth overseas included textiles designed exclusively for the Thai market. Written records of the Portuguese traveller Tomé Pires in the 16<sup>th</sup> century reveal that among the Indian textiles traded eastward were 'kling cloths in the fashion of Siam', 'kling' referring to the Kalinga region, the northern part of the Coromandel Coast. Textiles from Western India also made their way to Thailand but the Coromandel cloths were held in the highest esteem. Before European intervention, Arab and Indian merchants took Indian cloth to Tenasserim on the Burmese coast and then via inland transport to the Thai capital of Ayutthaya. Distinct market preferences for textiles from India had been well established. Thailand had a specific taste that had to be catered to and in 1616 we have the Dutch traders complaining how even Malay style textiles from Coromandel could not be sold in Thai markets.

Duarte Barbosa, a Portuguese traveller in the 16th century, informs us that Indian textiles were highly regarded in Thailand. In the Thai court, the finest Indian textiles assumed an important role as gifts of state and rules regarding their use in accordance to rank had to be strictly adhered to. They also served as clothing and items of decor.



## 24 FRAGMENT OF SKIRT LENGTH (*pha nung*)

Coromandel Coast; 18<sup>th</sup> century; traded to Thailand  
Cotton; painted, mordant- and resist-dyed  
L 131 cm, W 71 cm  
TAPI 01.200

Of the numerous uses assigned to Indian cottons in Thailand, an important one was as an item of dress. This fragment is probably part of a Thai skirt cloth or *pha nung* [A]. The presence of iconographic elements in its design, commonly found in other Thai art forms, such as *nagas* (serpent deities), celestial beings and flame motifs, characterizes such textiles as export cloths to Thailand.

A The *dvarapalas* or 'guardians of the door' in the Buddhisawan Chapel, Bangkok are depicted wearing *pha nung* or skirt-cloths distinctive of those made on the Coromandel Coast in India. Early Rattanakosin period (late 18<sup>th</sup>/ early 19<sup>th</sup> century). The National Museum, Bangkok.

B The fresco of Queen Mahamaya reclining on a *pha kiao* during her miraculous dream of the Buddha's conception reveals the prominence attached to Indian cloths traded to Thailand. Buddhisawan Chapel, Bangkok, 18<sup>th</sup> century. The National Museum, Bangkok.



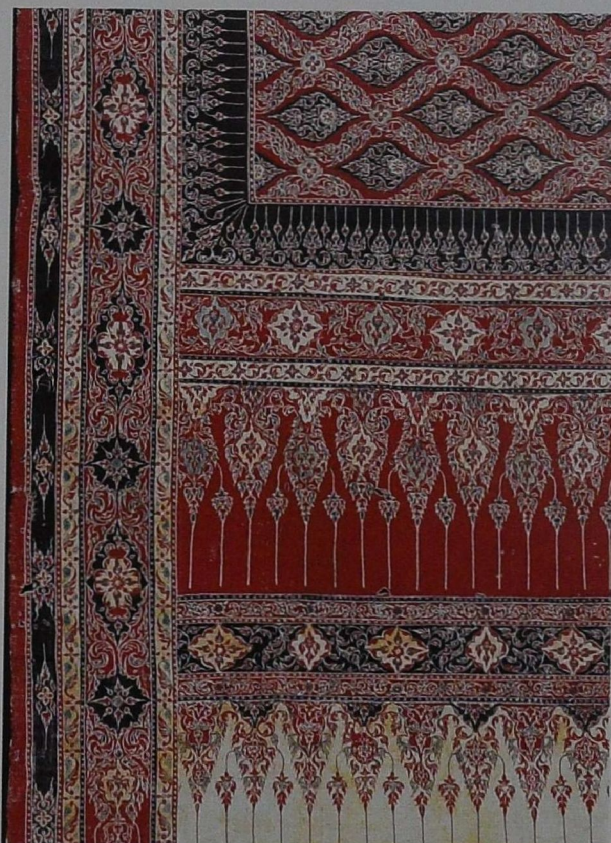
B

## 25 HANGING OR FLOOR COVER (*pha kiao*)\*

Coromandel coast; 18<sup>th</sup> century; traded to Thailand  
Cotton; painted, mordant- and resist-dyed  
Warp 238 cm, weft 111 cm  
TAPI 00.186

Of the painted cottons made on the Coromandel Coast for export to Thailand, those of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in particular exhibit a great intricacy of design. Textiles of this period, such as the one featured, demonstrate the mastery achieved in the *kalamkari* technique at the time.

The central field of the textile is filled with a lattice pattern of lozenges of a flame motif that was typically used in the art of Thailand, especially in the Bangkok court setting from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The flames emerge from a single rosette, a reference to the Buddhist sacred wheel, the *chakra*. This textile was probably used as a floor cover or ceremonial hanging (*pha kiao*).



25



## HISTORIC BEGINNINGS

### INDIAN TEXTILES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Trade in Indian cotton can be traced as far back as c. 2300 B.C., when the cities of the Indus Valley civilization established maritime contact with Mesopotamia. Cotton is believed to have been one of the staple exports of the Indus. Trade links between Gujarat's premier port Cambay and the Arabian Peninsula were long established. The Roman conquest of Egypt brought the Mediterranean into direct trade contact with India and the ports along the Red Sea rose to prominence in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. A major entr pot was Fustat, near present day Cairo in Egypt, which has now become synonymous with the earliest surviving Indian textiles in the world. Excavated from waste disposal sites and graves, dry conditions helped preserve these block-printed cotton fragments from Gujarat dated from the 9<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Gujarati and Arab merchants were active players in the vast yet integrated Indian Ocean trade that covered markets as diverse and far apart as Egypt and Indonesia, which explains why many patterns on the Fustat fragments were also found on textiles traded to Southeast Asia around that time.

Religion provided an impetus to commerce as the annual Haj pilgrimage to Mecca by Gujarati Muslims created a major market for Indian cloth and accounted for the growth and prosperity of the Red sea ports of Jedda, Aden and Mocha. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, with the rise of Iran under Safavid rule, the ports along the Persian Gulf rose in commercial importance. Surat took over from Cambay as the principal port for the West coast trade while Masulipatam on the Coromandel Coast intensified its production of chintz hangings and prayer mats specifically for the Persian market, a trade that continued until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Indian textiles in the Middle East had a utilitarian function as costume and household furnishings. Though they never gained the significance of ceremonial and heirloom cloths as in Southeast Asia, their use was nevertheless widespread.



26



27



## 26 PANEL OF A HANGING

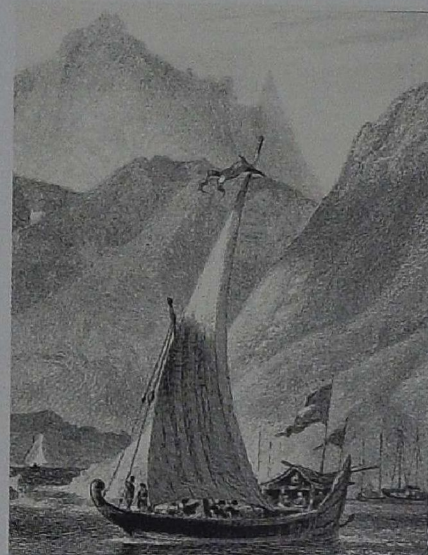
Gujarat, 15<sup>th</sup> century; traded to Fustat, Egypt  
Cotton; block-printed, mordant- and resist-dyed  
Warp 86 cm, weft 48 cm  
TAPI 04.25

This fragile textile belonged to R. Pfister, the world-renowned scholar and archaeologist of Indian textiles in Egypt. Its format suggests its use as a hanging or canopy. It is composed of a large roundel with a quatrefoil centre amidst a dense field of rosettes that are reminiscent of *jalīs*, the pierced stone screens of Ahmedabad in the 15<sup>th</sup> century underlining the remarkable link between textile design and architectural ornamentation in medieval Gujarat. The border surrounding the central field comprises of an eight-pointed star interspersed by cartouches containing a design resembling an Arabic script that may have been used simply for its decorative effect. The end borders, consisting of a row of *mihhrabs* with floral ornaments, remind us of the *torana* (door hanging) used during festive occasions in Gujarat till this day.

## 27 BORDER FRAGMENT

Gujarat; 15<sup>th</sup> century; traded to Fustat, Egypt  
Cotton; block-printed, mordant- and resist-dyed  
Warp 86 cm, weft 19 cm  
TAPI 04.26

All that remains of this indigo textile is its charming border of alternating roundels and medallions. It has been stamped with resist using printing blocks before being immersed in an indigo dye. The central field of meandering floral vines of which little survives may have been hand drawn. This textile too, comes from the collection of R. Pfister.



B *Near Muscat*. An Indo-Arab dhow carrying cargo to the Persian Gulf. Drawing by W. Daniell. TAPI Collection.





## 28 PRAYER CLOTH (*jainamaz*) \*

Masulipatam, Andhra Pradesh; mid-19<sup>th</sup> century;  
probably for the Iranian market  
Cotton; block-printed, painted mordant and red dye;  
resist-dyed indigo  
Warp 149 cm, weft 92 cm  
TAPI 98.1697

Prayer mats (*jainamaz*) and door-curtains (*purdah*) were made in large numbers in Masulipatam in Andhra Pradesh. They were done in the *kalamkari* technique, which literally means 'pen work' where a bamboo pen or *kalam* is used to freely draw the design on the cloth. These textiles were used by the local Muslim community and were also exported in significant quantities to Iran from the 18<sup>th</sup> century until the 1920's. The design recalls mosque architecture with its dome and central *mihrab* (prayer arch).



28



29

## 29 GILDED CHINTZ HANGING

Masulipatam, Andhra Pradesh; 19<sup>th</sup> century; for the Iranian market  
Cotton; block-printed; mordant- and resist dyed; gold leaf applied  
Warp 331 cm, weft 157 cm  
TAPI 05.30

Bearing an inscription dated Hijri year 1310 (1889), this textile is one of a pair of identical *kalamkari* hangings made for the Persian market. What distinguishes these door-sized hangings is the application of gold on the outline of their design and the lion and sun royal coat of arms of the Qajar dynasty flanking the arch, suggesting their use as court hangings. Under Qajar rule (1795-1925), Persian trade with India flourished after a period of political instability and economic disruption in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The reduction in India's textile exports to Europe with the onset of the Industrial Revolution, boosted the textile trade to Iran.

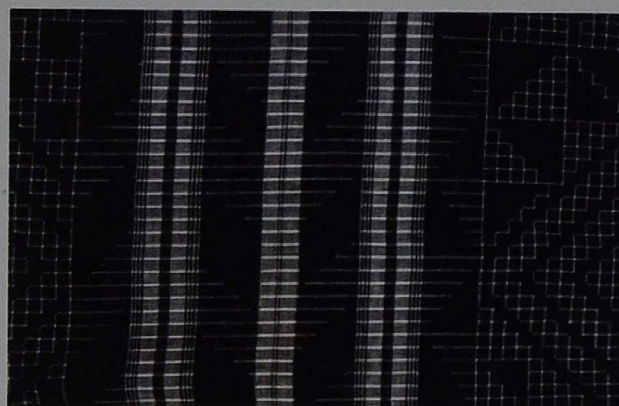


## GUINEA CLOTHS

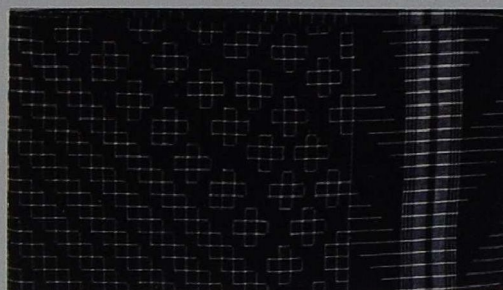
### THE INDIAN TEXTILE TRADE TO WEST AFRICA

In the early 1900s, Talbot, a colonial officer stationed in Southern Nigeria related an incident in 1916 about the division of property of a late Abonnema chief, where his successor was most anxious to obtain, above all things, a piece of cloth discoloured by age. As soon as it was taken from the box, he stood up and said, "I should like to have that piece for my share of the house property, because it is the one with which I covered the faces of my ancestors at the Nduein Alali (ancestor screen)".<sup>13</sup> This cloth of great significance to him was a piece of 'madras cloth' made in India, some 6500 km away. Indian madras cloths or RMHK (Real Madras Handkerchief) as they were referred to, were hand-woven cotton plaid, checked or striped textiles.

In the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, Portuguese navigators undertook expeditions to West Africa and became the pioneers of the transatlantic slave trade. Their success attracted rivals and by the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Dutch, British and French had tapped into this trade network. Surviving account books and business records of the trade to Africa reveal that Indian cloth made up a large part of the trade goods, an essential commodity in the exchange for slaves, ivory, copper and silver. In the 1770s, French and British sales of Indian cloth in West Africa came to about 185,000 pounds sterling per year. The Europeans referred to this popular Indian Madras cloth as '*Guinea cloth*' as it was the cloth commonly traded to areas of West Africa known to them as the Guinea Coast. In Southern Nigeria, where they held pride of place, they were called *george*, probably after Fort St. George, the port used by the Madras manufacturers in the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>14</sup>



30 a



30 b



A Women wearing cut-thread madras wrapper sets. Buguma, West Africa, 1991. Courtesy Joanne Eicher

### 30 WOMAN'S WRAPPER SET

Coromandel Coast; early 20<sup>th</sup> century; for the Kalabari (West Africa)

Cotton; yarn-dyed and woven

a. Warp 197 cm, weft 126 cm; TAPI 05.16

b. Warp 198 cm, weft 85 cm; TAPI 05.15

Used throughout their course of life, every Kalabari individual owns atleast one wrapper of Indian madras. The basic ensemble for women includes an imported lace or eyelet blouse worn with an "up and down" wrapper combination called *bite sara* [A]. The bottom wrapper reaches from waist to ankle and the top one placed over it starts at the waist to below the knee. Women wrap their bodies to emphasize girth of the abdomen and suggest fecundity.<sup>15</sup>





A Female mourners dressed in Indian madras wrapper sets participate in a family parade as part of funerary celebrations. Nigeria, 1983. Courtesy Joanne Eicher



B Women mourners, some dressed in madras wrappers, in a funeral room also decorated with Indian madras. Nigeria. Courtesy Joanne Eicher



C A corpse lying in state on a funeral bed, dressed in an Indian madras gown called *ebu*. Buguma, West Africa, 1988. Courtesy Joanne Eicher

## INJIRI

### EMBLEM OF KALABARI IDENTITY

The Kalabari who inhabited the Niger Delta in south-eastern Nigeria called Indian madras 'our cloth' as it was most closely associated with their cultural identity.<sup>16</sup> As riverine people, the Kalabari took on the role of intermediaries in the slave trade in the late 1400s with European traders in exchange for foreign made cloth particularly from India, among other goods. They called Indian madras *injiri*, after the local pronunciation of 'India' or derived from 'Injaram', the commercial agency of the East India Company located on the Godavari river on India's eastern coast that may have supplied these cloths.<sup>17</sup> Kalabari women would take precious Indian madras cloth and superimpose on them openwork patterns by painstakingly removing select threads to create a plethora of patterns. This cut-thread cloth was called *pelete bite* and was an item to be treasured and handed down through the family across generations.

Designated specifically by the *am'oru'*, the community deities, as the textile to be worn by the Kalabari and considered the mythological gift of the Goddess Owamekaso<sup>18</sup>, *injiri* dominated the rituals of the people. A visible measure of wealth, a signifier of rank and status, it played a critical role in several life-cycle events, birth, marriage, motherhood, and death. It was the most cherished material gift that could be presented to a newborn at birth, and the most essential element for an appropriate funerary celebration. Not only was *injiri* worn by the deceased [C] and the mourners [A] but also used to elaborately decorate the rooms and bed on which the deceased would be placed [B]. Stored in large boxes or under the bed, it was to be removed only on special occasions by the senior most woman of the household acting as custodian of these prized heirlooms. Till as recent as the 1980s, Indian madras was mandatory as traditional garb. To meet its demand, it was shipped to Benin and smuggled into Nigeria where it was bought at premium prices.





D Kalabari man wearing a wrapper made from Indian madras cloth. Courtesy Joanne Eicher.

### 31 MEN'S WRAPPERS

Coromandel Coast; early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century; for the Kalabari (West Africa)

Cotton; yarn-dyed and woven

- a. Warp 177 cm, weft 90 cm; TAPI 05.17
- b. Warp 173 cm, weft 89 cm; TAPI 05.20
- c. Warp 182 cm, weft 90 cm; TAPI 05.18
- d. Warp 169 cm, weft 87 cm; TAPI 05.19
- e. Warp 188 cm, weft 87 cm; TAPI 05.21

Men wear an Indian madras wrapper, normally about two yards long, with a shirt-like garment known as a *woko* [D]. The wrapper and *woko* worn by men give an impression of linearity and imply social stature and power.<sup>19</sup>

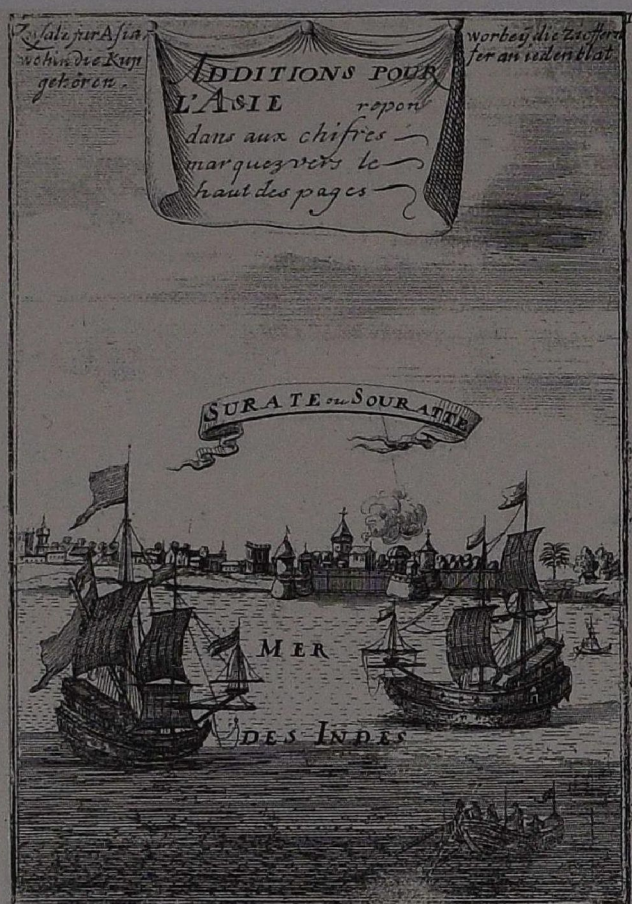


## DESIGNS ON THE WORLD

### THE TEXTILE TRADE TO THE WEST

The *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, a mid-first century A.D. Greek text, informs us of the existence of trade in Indian cloth to the West. Rome imported vast quantities of Indian textiles. While the wealthy splurged on fine muslins, cotton cloth was put to varied uses, including the uniforms of Caesar's soldiers, tents and awnings.<sup>20</sup> Commerce was in the hands of Indian, Arab, Jewish and Armenian merchants until the arrival of the Portuguese on Indian shores in 1498, who, in their quest for spices, became the first Europeans to establish direct trade contact with India. Thereafter, other European trading companies, equally eager to secure a foothold in the lucrative spice trade with the East, began to procure Indian textiles solely as a medium of exchange. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, however, there was a growing interest in Europe for Indian cloth. At first they were imported in small quantities, viewed simply as novelties from the exotic East. It did not take long for Company merchants to recognize their commercial potential and Indian textiles became profitable items of trade to the West.

The beautiful embroidered quilts of Bengal commissioned by the Portuguese in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, were among the earliest textiles to be produced specifically for a Western market. It was however, the 'craze' for the brilliant colourfast Indian cottons that gripped European markets from the 1680s right through the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Indian textiles also travelled to the distant shores of the New World and found an eager market in the American colonies. Gujarat was the source of exquisite embroideries and block-prints while the Coromandel Coast of south-east India supplied the renowned painted and dyed cottons. Kashmir shawls were introduced to Europe in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Despite their exorbitant cost, they were in great demand by those who could afford them, and remained in fashion for nearly a hundred years.



*Surat.* A French Engraving of European ships at Surat, the primary port in Western India's textile trade through the 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. TAPI Collection.





### 32 EMBROIDERED PANEL

Satgaon, Bengal; early 17<sup>th</sup> century; for the Portuguese market

Tussar silk embroidery on cotton

L 210.7 cm, W 63.3 cm

TAPI 05.28

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to establish trade links with India and in 1536, they established trading posts in Bengal at Satgaon, north of present-day Kolkata. Impressed with the embroidery of the local *kantha* textiles, they commissioned embroidered coverlets or quilts known as *colcha* for export to their homeland. Worked in monochrome yellow tussar silk thread on cotton cloth, they were decorated with both Indian motifs and Portuguese imagery drawn from European prints, Greek mythology and Biblical stories. Besides Portugal, these bedcovers gained popularity in other European countries. Records show that three Bengal quilts were sent to Catherine of Austria in 1558<sup>21</sup> and in London in 1618, they commanded the steep price of 20 pounds.<sup>22</sup> The expulsion of the

Portuguese by Mughal forces from the Hughli region in 1632, brought an end to this trade.<sup>23</sup>

This panel probably formed part of a border of a large bedcover. Depicted in its upper register is a maritime scene of fish, mythical sea creatures, winged mermaids and a Portuguese galleon. In the middle register is a double-headed eagle, often found on export cloths from Bengal. The lower register illustrates a hunt with animals, huntsmen and horse riders and in its centre, a delightful row of *hamsa* or geese enhances the liveliness of this animated piece. Though seen in collections abroad, hardly any examples of these wonderful 'Bengalla quilts' are to be found in India.





## THE CRAZE FOR CHINTZ

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the term 'chintz' was used by English traders to refer to cotton dress materials and furnishing fabrics, painted and printed in India, using techniques of mordant and resist dyeing, made for the European market. The word 'chintz' is derived from the Sanskrit word *chitra*, meaning 'variegated', via Gujarati *chhint* meaning 'spotted cloth.' The Portuguese called it *pintado*, derived from the word *pinta* meaning a spot or fleck. The Dutch referred to them as *sits* and the French as *toiles peintes*.

Europe, in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, witnessed 'a craze' for Indian chintz. Accustomed to linen, heavy woollens and expensive silks, Europeans found cotton offered many benefits. It was light, comfortable and affordable. Its greatest appeal, however, lay in its brilliant, fast colours that did not bleed or fade when washed. The superior dyeing skills of the Indians and their knowledge of mordants (a fixing agent that combines with the dye and cloth to make it colourfast) were virtually unknown to the Europeans. The demand for chintz climbed unprecedented heights, threatening the wool and silk industries in England and France. Laws forbidding their import were enacted but largely ignored and chintz continued to be smuggled in.

Chintz developed for Western markets were specifically designed for European taste, often based on 'musters' sent out to Indian artists to copy. Used initially as bed hangings and then as curtains, bedcovers, quilts and other household furnishings, chintz made its foray into high fashion in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, and was worn by both men and women. Chintz was produced widely in India but the finest quality is associated predominantly with the Coromandel Coast, principally Masulipatam, Negapatam and Pulicat.



33

### 33 QUILTED CHINTZ BED-COVER \*

Coromandel Coast; first quarter of 18<sup>th</sup> century; for the Western market

Cotton, mordant- and resist-dyed; stuffed with cotton waste, quilted

Warp 309 cm, weft 208 cm

TAPI 00.167

Quilted chintz bed-covers are rarer than unquilted palampores (hangings). This one is an exceptional example in perfect condition. It demonstrates a fineness of drawing, masterful dyeing and expert quilting.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, bed hangings and quilts formed an important part of the trade in Indian painted cottons to Europe. Quilts were often made to match palampores (which hung behind the head of the bed), valances and other items of bed furniture.

By the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, when this quilt was made, they had generally fallen out of favour which may explain the unused appearance of this piece.





33 detail

## PALAMPORE THE ENCHANTING AND THE EXOTIC

The word 'palampore' derived from *palang-posh*, meaning 'bed-cover' is used to describe a large cotton chintz cloth. It often displayed the 'tree of life' design which typically shows a tree with a serpentine trunk arising out of a rocky mound bearing branches laden with exotic fruit, flowers and foliage. The origin of the palampore has been attributed to Indo-Persian antecedents, its design inspired by Chinese elements and later by European motifs.

Palampores became an essential item of furnishing in the aristocratic mansions of Holland, France and Britain in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Those traded to the East were absorbed into the world of exotic cloths and acquired ritualistic and magical value.



Dutch dolls in regional costume. Hindeloopen, in the Northern Dutch province of Friesland had a distinct costume tradition of 'sits' or Indian chintz, which continued until the 1880s. The long overdress or '*wentke*' is a reproduction of original chintz patterns while the inner garment and bonnet replicate Madras plaids also imported by the Dutch United East India Company (VOC) in large quantities from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. TAPI Collection.

## 34 BORDER FRAGMENT FROM A PALAMPORE \*

Coromandel coast; mid-18<sup>th</sup> century; for the Western market

Cotton; painted, mordant and resist-dyed

Warp 22cm, weft 144 cm

TAPI 01.248

This is an example of a fully hand drawn and painted textile. In the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, borders on export chintz cloths were popularly decorated with rows of European figures rendered in an eclectic fashion. This row of figures was part of the lower border of a large hanging and may have later been cut down for use as a skirt.









### 35 PALAMPORE

Coromandel Coast; early 18<sup>th</sup> century; for the Dutch market

Cotton; printed, mordant- and resist-dyed

Warp 370 cm, weft 265 cm

TAPI 04.145

This palampore with its large, central medallion, four corner arches and wide border has a repeat pattern of a landscape of pine trees, rocks, ponds and birds bearing a distinct Japanese flavour. The design owes its inspiration to *bingata* textiles, the famous painted and stenciled-dyed cottons from Okinawa<sup>24</sup> with their characteristic pine and crane motifs, symbols of longevity in Japanese folklore. This textile was, however, intended for export to Europe, most likely the Dutch market.

The Dutch were the most prolific of the European traders in Japan. From the early 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards, they enjoyed a monopoly on Japan's trade with India. This palampore was printed and dyed on the Coromandel Coast of India, possibly in the textile production areas of Pulicat or Negapatam under Dutch control. It reflects the growing interest in Japanese-inspired designs in Europe before its development into the 19<sup>th</sup> century trend in the arts referred to as *japonisme* or *japonaiserie*.







36

### 36 GILDED CHINTZ PALAMPORE

Coromandel Coast; late 18<sup>th</sup> century; for the Western market.

Cotton; mordant and resist-dyed; gold leaf applied  
Warp 320 cm, weft 273 cm  
TAPI 02.30

This palampore is an exquisite example of the amalgamation of three cultures into one textile, namely Indian, Chinese and European. The centrally positioned angular flowering tree, the plump quails at the base of the tree and the songbirds perched on its branches are strongly based on Chinese elements while the floral swags demonstrate European taste. The most salient feature is the lavish addition of gold leaf applied on top of its painted design.



36 detail



37

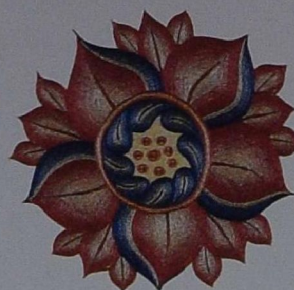
### 37 EMBROIDERED PALAMPORE \*

Gujarat; c.1730-40; for the Western (probably Dutch) market

Cotton; embroidered in chain stitch in silk thread  
Warp 265 cm, weft 216 cm  
TAPI 00.108

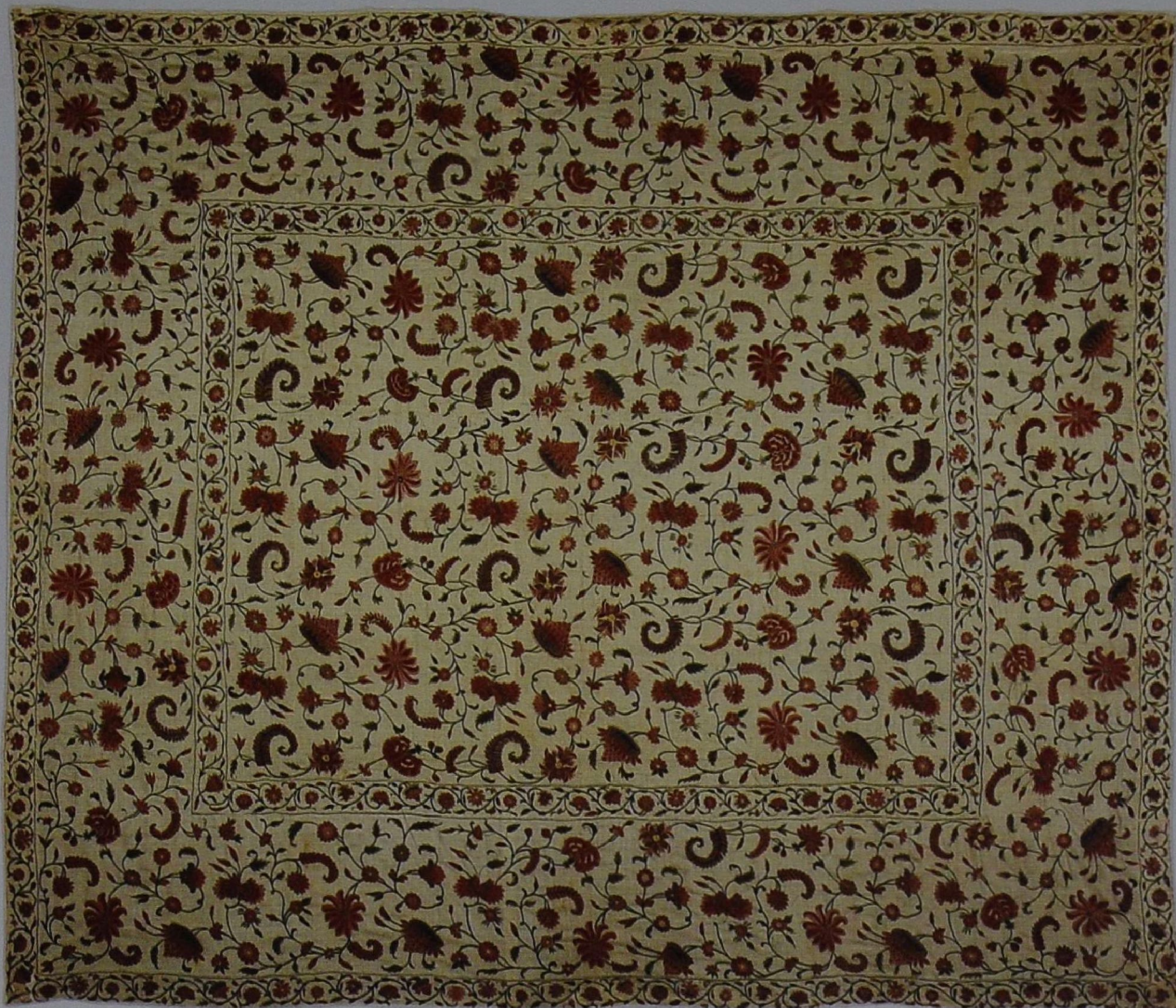
Embroidered textiles were an important item of trade to Europe although exported on a smaller scale than painted cotton textiles. They were known as 'worked chintz' as many were based on painted cottons. The deep colours of the embroidery, the abundance of tulips and flower vases based on 18<sup>th</sup> century Dutch flower paintings suggest the palampore was made for the Dutch market.

The exquisite chain stitch embroidery is clearly the work of the professional *Mochi* embroiderers of Gujarat.



37 detail





38

### 38 EMBROIDERED FLOORSREAD

Gujarat, 18<sup>th</sup> Century; for the Western market  
Cotton; embroidered in chain stitch in silk thread  
Warp 270 cm, weft 228.5 cm  
TAPI 04.42

Embroidered textiles were considered lucrative trade goods and in the 17<sup>th</sup> century they featured among the principal exports of Gujarat to Europe. Used primarily for bedroom furnishing like quilts and bed-hangings, their use spread gradually to other interiors of the home like the parlour or informal living areas in the form of table carpets, curtains and floor spreads. The fine chain stitch embroidery on this floorspread is an example of the skills of the *Mochi* workers of Gujarat, who according to Alexander Hamilton, an 18<sup>th</sup> century observer, 'embroider the best of any people of India, and perhaps the world'.



38 detail





39, 40, 41

### 39 PETTICOAT

Coromandel Coast; mid-18<sup>th</sup> century; for the Dutch market

Cotton; mordant- and resist-dyed

H 95cm x single hem 156 cm

TAPI 05.12

Chintz petticoats worn with jackets became part of the informal daywear of the elite across Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The glowing colours and the comfort of Indian cotton made them desirable as clothing and



their insatiable demand is reflected in the official correspondence of the directors of the East India Company and the Council of Fort St. George (Madras), "The greatest ladies will now wear [chintzes] for upper Garments as well as for petticoats. They can never make, nor you send us, too many of them." In Holland, by 1683, costumes made from Indian cottons were considered 'the ware of gentlewomen'. Unlike France and England, no ban was imposed on the import of chintz into Holland, as a result of which more Dutch costumes have survived.

This petticoat has a repeating design of vertical patterned stripes entwined with meandering vines of exotic blossoms and interspersed with floral bouquets. Such patterns of bands and undulating tendrils were popular in European arts and crafts in the mid-eighteenth century, often found on woven and printed textiles, wallpaper, furniture and porcelain.<sup>25</sup> It was not uncommon for the Dutch United East India Company to send patterns popular in Europe to be copied on Indian chintzes for the Western market.

#### 40 WOMAN'S JACKET

Coromandel Coast; c. 1785-90; for the French market  
Cotton; mordant- and resist-dyed  
H 62 cm, sleeve 56 cm, W 77 cm  
TAPI 05.13

This charming ladies' jacket or caraco is made from Indian cotton cloth resist-dyed green and painted with red flower bouquets. Often yardage with floral repeat patterns such as this was commissioned for tailoring costumes. In the 1780s, light, delicate flower patterns as seen on the jacket were more in vogue than the large, bold, crowded floral designs that were fancied earlier.

*Toiles peintes* or 'painted cottons' from India had met with such enormous commercial success that France, in order to safeguard its domestic wool and silk industries, imposed a ban in 1686 on their import, production and use. This however, did not deter the fashionable French who defied the law and continued

to wear Indian chintz despite the risk of being arrested or having it stripped off their back in public. The prohibition, having failed, was finally revoked in 1759. At the time this jacket was made, several cotton printing centres had already sprung up in France to compete with the expensive Indian originals but their exotic appeal and radiant colours continued to make them desirable.

#### 41 MUSLIN SCARF

Bengal; 18<sup>th</sup> century; for the Western market  
Cotton  
Warp 183 cm, weft 78 cm  
TAPI 05.11

Muslins exported from Bengal, especially from Dhaka, were the finest and most expensive of the white cotton fabrics traded overseas. They represented the largest volume in the Indo-European textile trade of the ancient and medieval periods. The Western world came to know of this legendary 'woven air' during Alexander's invasion of India in 327 BC. In the reign of Emperor Nero (54-68 A.D.), huge imports of luxury goods from India, the incredible muslins in particular, caused Pliny to complain that India was draining the coffers of Rome by 50 million sesterces annually. So fine, light and diaphanous were these muslins that Emperor Tiberius prohibited Roman women from wearing them.<sup>26</sup> Tavernier, a 17<sup>th</sup> century French traveler in India wrote of the muslin yarn being so extraordinary that one pound could be spun into a 250 mile length.<sup>27</sup>

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, there was an overwhelming demand in England for muslins from India. Considered fashionable wear, muslin cost upto 30 shillings a yard, the same price as silk. In the early 1800s, many young fashionable women perished from the so called 'muslin disease', afflicted with pneumonia after wearing sheer muslin gowns in cold weather. Muslin scarves, such as this one, were daytime accessories, worn by women, around the neck to cover the low-cut neckline of their close fitted bodice or jacket.





42

## 42 BARBER CLOTH

Southern India; 18<sup>th</sup> century; found in Connecticut, U.S.A.

Cotton; mordant- and resist-dyed, embroidered  
Warp 132 cm, weft 117 cm  
TAPI 04.69

This unstitched barber cloth is a cotton chintz resist-dyed in blue with floral vines running along its edges and neckline. Bouquets adorn its four corners, while random sprays of flowers fill the ground. In the centre, a tree-of-life motif is rendered upside down so the wearer could see it when the barber cloth was worn. The design has been highlighted with embroidery using silver thread in a chain stitch.

Indigo dyed and embroidered barber cloths or *barbier-tuch*, as they were called, were mentioned as articles from India in the papers of the Swedish East India Company.<sup>28</sup> The textile on display has three stamps of the East India Company on it and may have made its way from India via Britain to the U.S.A where it was bought by a family of American settlers in New Canaan, Connecticut. Barber cloths, though items of daily usage, were often carefully preserved especially those luxuriously made. This one remained in a pristine condition as it was not tailored for use.





### 43 PALAMPORE FRAGMENT

Coromandel Coast; 18<sup>th</sup> century; for the Western market; found in Palu, Indonesia  
Cotton; resist- and mordant-dyed  
Warp 348 cm, weft 87 cm  
TAPI 02.43

This *chinoiserie* (derived from the French word 'chinois' meaning Chinese) chintz fragment, was once part of a large hanging made for export to Europe. It demonstrates the paramount skill achieved by Indian artisans in their ability to faithfully reproduce unfamiliar patterns of a foreign culture onto cloth.

The hanging has a circular lotus medallion containing an anthropomorphic lion akin to the one found on the Dutch royal coat of arms. Seated in a bamboo grove, a lady, most likely a courtesan, is depicted using a mirror to adjust flowers in her hair. Below her, is a row of gun-toting Dutchmen with their prancing dogs and a lakeside pavilion with noblemen at leisure.

43





## THE LURE OF THE *KASHMIRS* THE SHAWL TRADE TO EUROPE

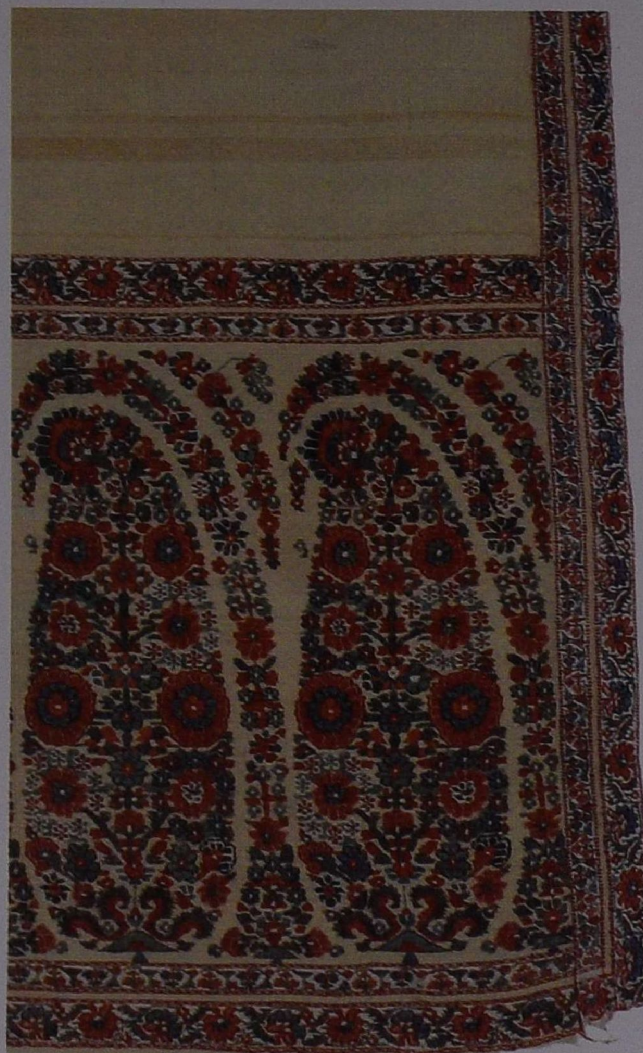
Kashmir shawls are considered one of the Indian subcontinent's most unique textiles. The delicacy and beauty of their designs, the lightness of their materials and the skill and imagination of their creators made them prized possessions.

Introduced in Britain in the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Kashmir shawl became popular among those who could afford it. Queen Victoria owned a fair number for her personal use and for presenting as gifts. By the turn of the century, the shawl had become a rage in France. The price of *kashmirs* in France in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century varied from 1,700 to 3,000 francs each; but no lady of fashion was content with merely one or two. Empress Josephine, as records tell us, possessed about sixty shawls, some costing around 8,000-12,000 francs, an exorbitant price in those days.<sup>29</sup> The demand for shawls far exceeded their supply and the Kashmiri weavers had to alter their production methods to keep up with the orders.

The immense popularity of the Indian shawl prompted European manufacturers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to produce imitations in France, as well as in Norwich, Edinburgh and Paisley in Scotland.



A *Madame Rivière*, Ingres, 1805. Oil on canvas. Musée du Louvre, Paris.



44

### 44 SHAWL

Kashmir; c. 1800s; traded to Europe  
Pashmina  
Warp 323 cm, weft 138 cm  
TAPI 04.23

This shawl is an excellent example of the type coveted by fashionable ladies in France in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The simple, high-waisted, décolleté (low-necked), white muslin dresses, that were in vogue at the time, were perfectly complemented by beautiful shawls with plain centres and end borders of delicate floral repeats. Paintings by French artists like Ingres [A] and Gros demonstrate the popularity of Kashmir shawls of this type in France.





45

#### 45 SQUARE SHAWL

Kashmir, 19<sup>th</sup> century; traded to Europe (probably France)

Pashmina

Warp 161 cm, weft 158 cm

TAPI 98.1816

In this square yellow lady's shawl, the plain central field is surrounded by narrow and wide borders, the latter comprising of floral butis in the Mughal style interspersed with tiny birds, identified as the *mynah* bird of Northern India, locally known as 'Hura'.<sup>30</sup>

This shawl was probably made for export to France keeping in mind the current fashion trends in Paris in the early 1800s. It was to be draped across the shoulders like a cape with the decorated borders hanging down the back [B]. It was for this reason that square 'turnover' shawls had borders in an L-shape format, quite unlike the conventional *palledar* shawl, which had patterned borders on each end and a rectangular central field.



B An illustration of a woman wearing a square shawl according to the latest fashion trends in Paris.

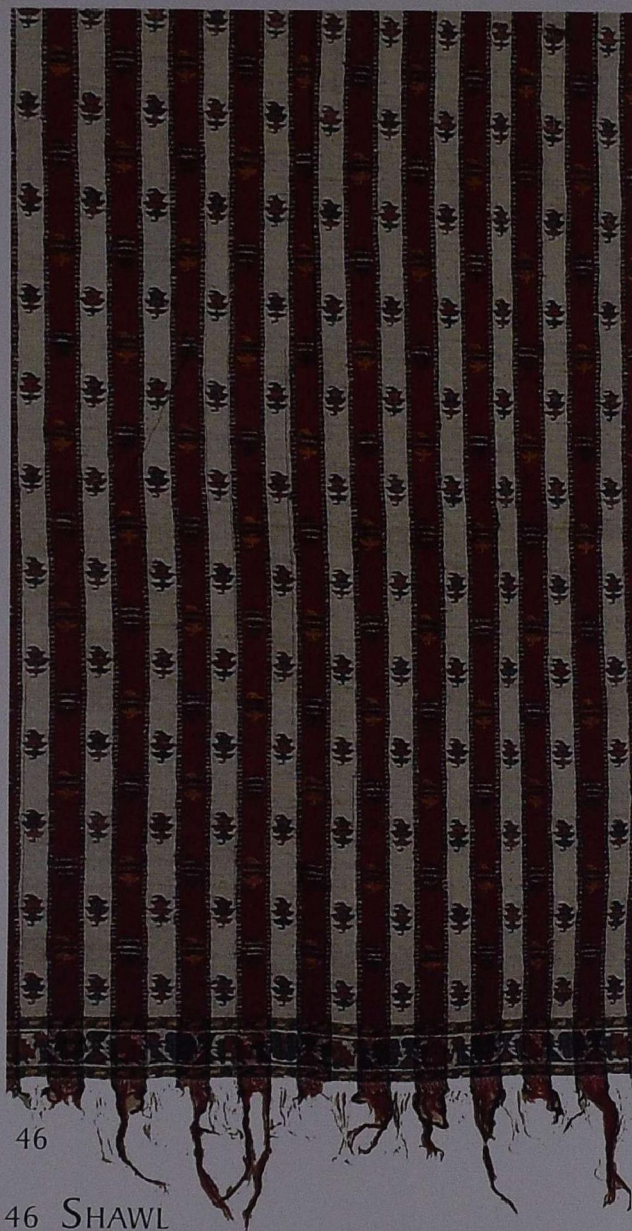




A Reproduction of a 19<sup>th</sup> century miniature painting of a Qajar nobleman. TAPI Collection.



B *Madame Panckoucke*, Ingres, 1811. Oil on canvas. Musée du Louvre, Paris.



46

#### 46 SHAWL

Kashmir; late 18<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> century; traded to Europe or Persia

Pashmina

Warp 257 cm, weft 127 cm

TAPI 98.1548

Striped shawls such as this example are commonly known in the shawl trade in Srinagar, as *khatraaz*, a word most probably derived from the Arabic *khatt* meaning a line as in the line of a script.<sup>31</sup> They represent a type highly popular in Persia and Turkey in the 19<sup>th</sup> century where they were usually used as fabric from which robes, vests or coat linings were made for the upper classes [A]. Striped shawls were also admired by European ladies in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as evident in Ingres' portrait of Madame Panckoucke in 1811 [B].

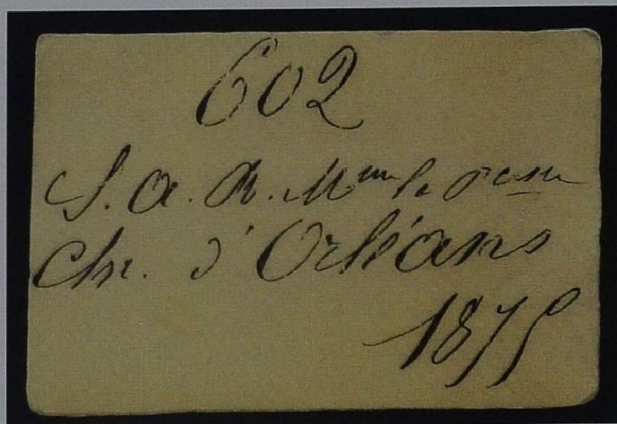


#### 47 SHAWL

Kashmir, c. 1840-1860; traded to France  
Pashmina, or possibly a mixture of Pashmina and local  
goat hair  
Warp 324.5 cm, weft 136 cm  
TAPI 97.1419

This long shawl belonged to a princess of the Royal  
House of Orleans, France in 1879, as the original tag  
attached to the shawl suggests [C]. The shawl however,  
is likely to be older than the date on the owner's tag<sup>32</sup>.

The design of the shawl approaches the highest level  
of technical complexity ever attempted by the shawl  
weavers of Kashmir.<sup>33</sup> A few decades after the  
production of this piece, it was no longer economical  
for Kashmiri weavers to weave such complicated  
textiles.<sup>34</sup>



C



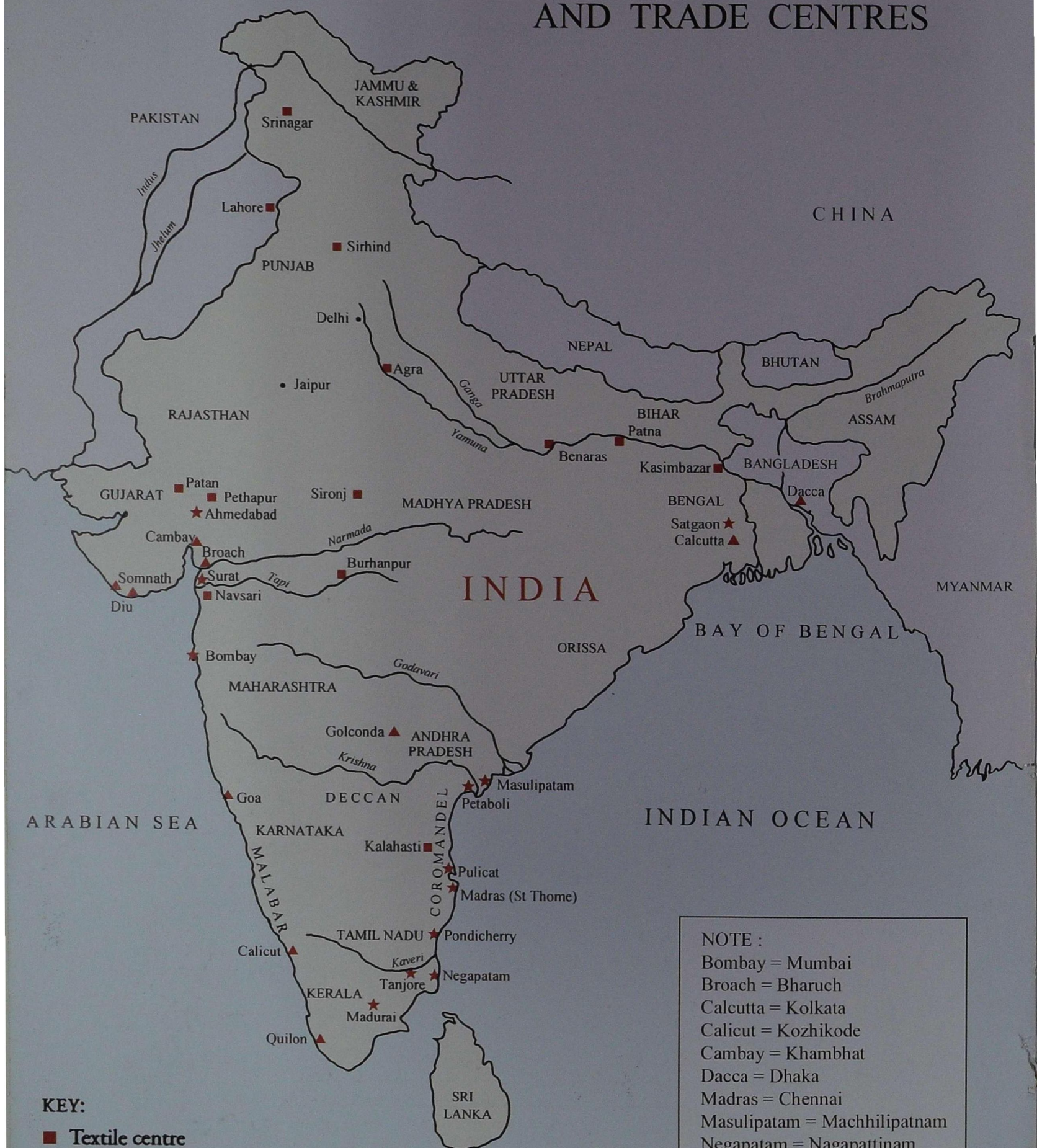
47







# MAJOR TEXTILE PRODUCTION AND TRADE CENTRES



## KEY:

- Textile centre
- ▲ Trade centre
- ★ Textile and trade centre

## NOTE :

- Bombay = Mumbai
- Broach = Bharuch
- Calcutta = Kolkata
- Calicut = Kozhikode
- Cambay = Khambhat
- Dacca = Dhaka
- Madras = Chennai
- Masulipatam = Machhilipatnam
- Negapatam = Nagapattinam
- Quilon = Kollam
- Tanjore = Thanjavur



## NOTES

The information for the textiles marked \* is drawn from the book "Trade, Temple & Court: Indian Textiles from the Tapi Collection" for which I am indebted to authors, Ruth Barnes, Steven Cohen and Rosemary Crill.

- 1 Guy, 1998: 55.
- 2 Guy, 1998: 52.
- 3 Guy, 1998: 86.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Majlis, Brigitte Khan, 2003.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Correspondence, S. Johnston, Bali.
- 10 Suggestion, Pradyumna Tana, Como.
- 11 Personal communication, Jagdish Mittal, Hyderabad.
- 12 Guy, 1998: 86.
- 13 Eicher and Erekosima, 1997: 415.
- 14 Eicher and Erekosima, 1996: 77.
- 15 Daly, Eicher and Erekosima, 1986: 51.
- 16 Eicher and Erekosima, 1996: 77
- 17 Ibid : 76.
- 18 Tortore, 2001: 11.
- 19 Daly, Eicher and Erekosima, 1986: 51.
- 20 Burnard 1994: 9.
- 21 Jackson & Jaffer 2004: 39.
- 22 Barnes, Cohen and Crill, 2002: 90.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Irwin, 1970:105.
- 25 Hartkamp-Jonxis, 1994: 66.
- 26 Burnard, 1994: 31.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Information, Ebeltje Hartkamp-Jonxis, Amsterdam.
- 29 Levi-Strauss, 1986:19.
- 30 Ames, 1997: 308.
- 31 Barnes, Cohen and Crill, 2002:138.
- 32 Comment, Frank Ames, New York.
- 33 Barnes, Cohen and Crill, 2002:144.
- 34 Ibid.

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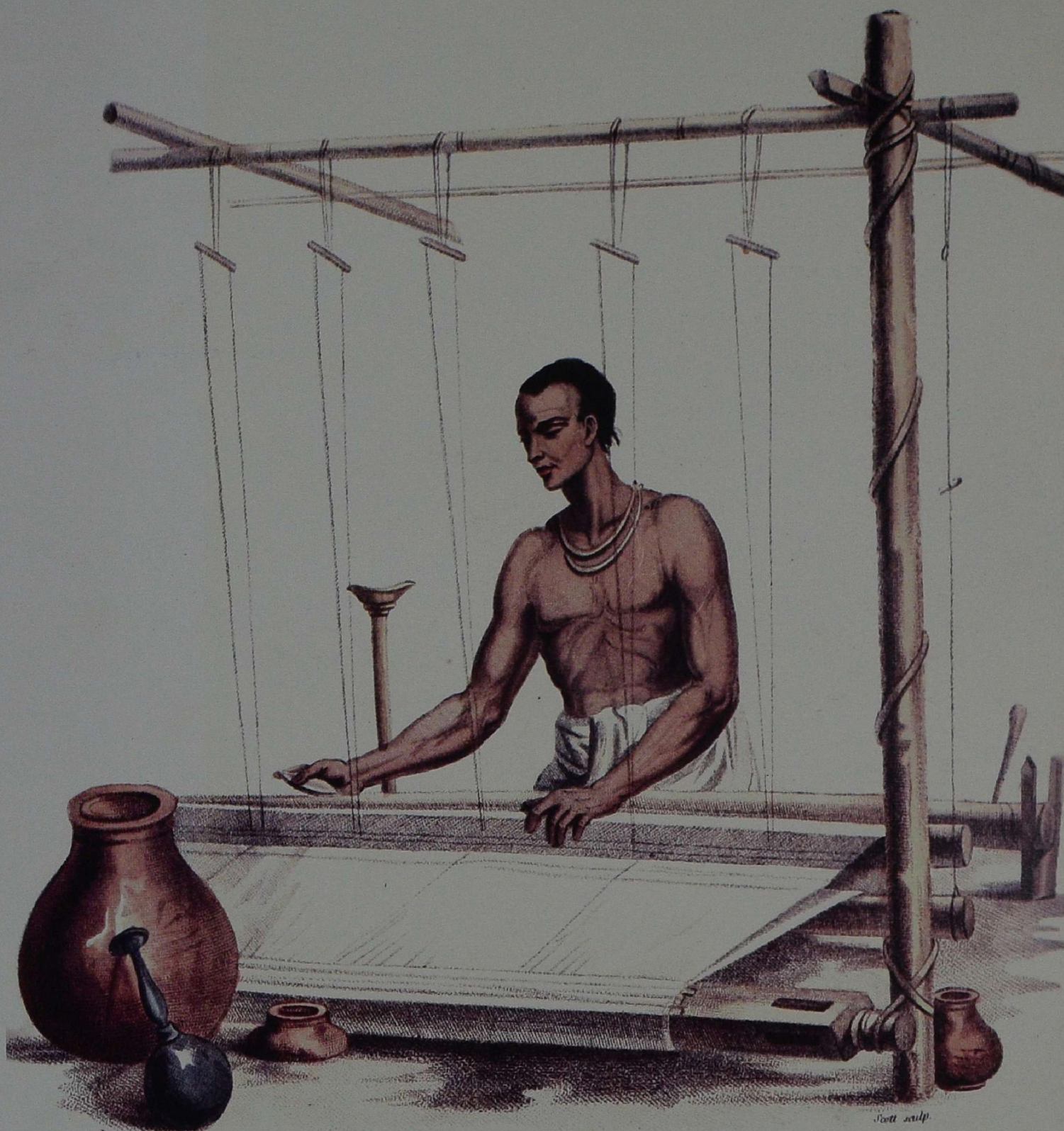
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*Inside Cover: 'Tauntee or Weaver' making muslin.  
B.Solvyns. 1804. TAPI Collection*





*Bat. Solyma pinc. Calcutta.*

*Scott sculp.*





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