



POWER CLOTHS OF THE COMMONWEALTH

Crafts Museum New Delhi India
26 September – 20 October 2010
Catalogue of Works



POWER CLOTHS OF THE COMMONWEALTH

Crafts Museum, New Delhi, India
25 September – 20 October 2010
Curators: Suzanne Davies and Jasleen Dhamija

Presented in partnership by RMIT Gallery,
and the Crafts Museum, New Delhi, India.

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Image Ceremonial cloth and sacred heirloom (Mira), detail,
Gujarat. Silk, natural dyes, double ikat. TAPI Collection.





सत्यमेव जयते

The Commonwealth Games 2010 will provide an unique opportunity to showcase vignettes of our cultural traditions to visitors from 74 countries. The exhibition of textiles from the Commonwealth countries, being organized by RMIT Gallery, Melbourne, and Crafts Museum, Government of India, titled *Power Cloths of the Commonwealth*, should be a captivating event.

Textile embodies the cultural ethos of a society, its ethnic identity and its creative expression. It is also an effective symbol of the philosophy and socio-political history of the society. The exhibition brings together the variety and wealth of creative expression that finds shape in a basic material need of humanity.

The exhibition will be inaugurated on Sunday 26 September 2010 at the Crafts Museum, New Delhi. The Government of India and the Government of Australia, State of Victoria and the High Commissions of many countries have contributed significantly to this exhibition.

I wish this special exhibition all success.

Sheila Dikshit

CHIEF MINISTER OF DELHI, INDIA



Victoria and India enjoy a longstanding relationship based on mutual respect and common interests, and supported by the presence of a large and vibrant Indian community in our state.

Victoria has built its fortune on our people – using their skills, knowledge and capabilities to establish dynamic and internationally-focused industries, supported by high levels of investment in science and technology, education and innovation.

Nearly one quarter of Victorians were born overseas and more than 43 per cent have a parent who was born overseas. Victorians come from more than 200 countries and speak over 230 languages and dialects. Victoria's thriving Indian community is nearly 300 000 strong and has been vital in creating personal, business and community connections between India and Victoria – connections that have led to cutting-edge collaborations in science and technology, exciting arts and cultural exchanges, and new investment and trade opportunities.

Power Cloths of the Commonwealth had its creative beginnings in the Cultural Programme for the Melbourne Commonwealth Games in 2006. It is a pleasure that the handover State of Victoria, through creative partnerships, is able to share in the spirit of the XIX Commonwealth Games, Delhi.

In partnership with our host the Crafts Museum, the Australian International Cultural Council, the Australia-India Council, RMIT University, we are delighted to present this contribution to the enjoyment and success of the XIX Commonwealth Games, Delhi.

John Brumby

PREMIER OF VICTORIA

Jacinta Allan

MINISTER FOR INDUSTRY & TRADE

POWER CLOTHS OF THE COMMONWEALTH

Textiles and power have many intriguing cultural and political connotations. Three distinctive but not mutually exclusive notions of power are at play, including power implied as a consequence of the political significance of the wearer: for example, the distinctive dress choices of major political figures such as Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Kwame Nkrumah, Nelson Mandela or Queen Victoria.

Of particular note, from a private collection in Edinburgh, Scotland and never before exhibited, is the *khadi* blanket gifted to Reginald Reynolds by Mahatma Gandhi at his ashram at Sabarmati in 1929. Reynolds was appointed by Gandhi to deliver the Ultimatum to the British Viceroy explaining the reasons for the revolt against British rule.

Power may also arise from the spiritual or mystical status of the garment or cloth. Such powers may be embodied in the configuration of particular forms/shapes/images such as in the shaman's wrapper from the Iban, Malaysia, or the head hunters' shawl.

Ritually powerful cloths are further represented by the spectacular Yoruba masquerade costumes, the *Egúngún* masks. The *Makishi* masquerade masks of Zambia also embody powerful ancestral spirits. There is a particular focus on ceremonial cloths used by indigenous communities from Canada, New Zealand and Australia including the possum skin cloak worn by South-Eastern Australian Aboriginal elders.

Significantly for *Power Cloths of the Commonwealth*, power also refers to the excellence of technique in making and/or the value of the materials used, sustained by embedded cultural communal values and deep cultural knowledge. Included here are cloths of high aesthetic value which were traded around the world. For example, the rare painted and printed *Kalamkari* created by Gujarati masters and generously lent by Shilpa and Praful Shah can be dated to 14th/16th Century, along with the large trade processional *patola* and Moghul Brocade hanging. Other exquisite examples of this category include a brocaded *Jama*, a brocaded *khilat* and breathtaking Kashmiri shawls which formed part of the tribute paid by Kashmir to Maharajah Ranjit Singh, lent by C.L. Bharany. And from the Mohatta Museum, Karachi, is the equally extraordinary *pugree* turban of a Baluchi Chief.

A further dimension is the imaginative and transformative power of celebration as performance and display, embodied in costumes for events and festivals unique to specific countries such as the *Carnevale* in Trinidad and Tobago.

Suzanne Davies and Jasleen Dhamija

ZAMBIA

Makishi Masquerade mask and costume
Wood, fibre worked in macramé
Mask: 138 x 34 cm
Body: 1.2 m

Makishi: Masks from Zambia

The tradition of the *Makishi* masquerade is original of the Luvale, Chokwe and the Mbunda people in the North Western provinces of Zambia, although the migration towards urban areas has contributed to the diffusion of *makishi* traditions beyond the region traditionally occupied by these tribes. *Makishi* has been recently declared Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.

The *Makishi* (singular: *Likishi*), through the mask and the costume, are the reincarnation of the ancestors who rise from the graveyards and come back from the spirit world among the living during important social and cultural events.

The ancestral spirits are central to the religious beliefs as guardians of the social order, and of traditional values, thus the *Makishi* embody the connection between the living and the dead and they ensure the stability and continuity of the society.

The *Makishi* are surrounded by secrecy and they instil sentiments of fear and respect. Each mask personifies a different character, some absolutely terrifying while others are more benevolent, caring or entertaining. Some masks have zoomorphic features with deep pedagogic value. New characters also find their way among more traditional masks following the dramatic events that have marked the recent history of the bordering countries of Angola and Congo or more simply the technical innovations of the modern world, like the airplane.

Traditional Chiefs decide when to call for the initiation ceremonies and the other annual events which require the authoritative presence of the ancestors.

The *Makishi* emerge from the underworld at the time of initiation ceremonies (*mukanda* for the boys and *wali* for the girls) to instruct the young people in traditional ways, techniques and beliefs. The *Makishi* surface also for the annual ceremony of the *Likumbi Lya Mize*.

These are the times when the origins and history of the tribe are recited in the form of epic poems by the royal soothsayer. The *Makishi* embody the mythical heroes and perform their legendary skills and deeds.

The masks are made of a wicker structure covered with tree-bark, although nowadays cloth is also common, moulding and depicting the distinctive features of each character. The mask is then plastered and painted or decorated with pieces of white paper and red cloth. These colours have symbolic meanings, the red being the blood of circumcision and menstruation, signifying suffering but also life. White stands for purity, black for death. Animal fur, bark fibres and natural dyes are used to decorate the *makishi* masks and costumes.

Distinctive of the *Chikuza*, the mask presented here, is the long, conical headgear. He is a fairly benign spirit who "acts as master of ceremonies during *mukanda* and supervises the work of circumcising the *tundanji* (young candidates)", "it favours fertility and hunting". *Chikuza* thus combines powerful functions and is most important. Among the *Luvale* tribe *Chikuza* also instructs the "youngsters in the intricacies of the *kuhunga* dance, which involves complex twisting motions of the legs that must coincide with the movements of the waist."

The facial features of this *likishi* "are highlighted with the use of red and white stripes over the forehead, eyes and mouth. The elaborate headgear includes a large protuberance that is said to portray the horns of a great antelope from the forest. This particular antelope has special meaning for the *Chokwe* for it was, and still is, associated with power and virility. *Chikuza*'s power is often transferred to small amulets that are worn by infertile women hoping to conceive or tied to hunter's rifles (old muzzle loaders) as good luck charms..."
The *makishi* perform with music and dance displaying a variety of styles including acrobatics to beautiful drum rhythms. The drummers have an orchestra of up to eight drums that are properly tuned and suited to each *likishi* dance.

— Paola Manfredi

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1. Ellert, Henrik. *The Magic of Makishi masks and traditions in Zambia*.
2. Mulenga Kapwepwe (ed.) *Ceremony! Celebrating Zambia's cultural heritage*. Lusaka.

UNITED KINGDOM

VR Gloves, 1897, as worn by Queen Victoria.
Pair of black gloves embroidered in chain stitch with VR for Victoria Regina and a crown, celebrating the monarch's Diamond Jubilee (60 year reign).
32.5 x 8.3cm
Collection: Meg Andrews, London.
www.meg-andrews.com

The British Empire reached its peak of power during the reign of Queen Victoria. The formation of the Commonwealth of Countries emerged out of the recognition of a common legacy after liberation. Many of the countries brought into the Empire during colonial expansion shared similar administrative infrastructure introduced by the British, such as a broad civil service and an education system based on the use of English. The principles binding member countries of the Commonwealth still alive today are a sense of common colonial history, governance based on democratic values, the desire for peace, liberty of the individual and equality of all races.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Carnival costume
Brian McFARLANE
Dimensions variable
Mixed media
Collection of the artist

SOUTH AFRICA

Madiba shirt worn by Nelson Mandela.
Desré BUIRSKI, South Africa.
Cotton, 80 x 80 cm.
Private collection

Zulu King's Head Dress.
South Africa. Made from
the fur of a doe. 30 x 20 x 12 cm.
On loan from the
South African High Commission

SRI LANKA

Traditional Sinhalese Sari.
The use of the traditional Sinhalese sari by the late Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike (1917-2000), the world's first female Prime Minister led to the revival of this traditional style of sari by Sri Lankan women many of whom had previously adopted western dress.

SIERRA LEONE

Shaman (Sierra Leone).
Photograph: Dave Tacon.
50 x 82 cm
RMIT Gallery Collection,
Melbourne, Australia

Wielding a sword in the battle against AIDS

Sierra Leone, along with other West African countries such as Benin and Senegal, is said to be one of the birthplaces of voodoo, which was taken to America and the West Indies by the unfortunate souls captured by slave traders.

According to the United Nations, Sierra Leone is the poorest nation in the world. It is struggling to recover from one of the most brutal conflicts of the 20th century. On top of grinding poverty and the scars of a ten-year war, the spectre of AIDS looms.

Apart from patriarchal traditions, one of the biggest stumbling blocks to curbing the spread of HIV is scepticism of Western medicine. Evil spirits have long been accepted as the cause of the many ailments that plague nations such as Sierra Leone, where sanitary conditions fall well short of basic needs.

In this environment Hassan Jalloh is a magic man and war hero. When the marauding rebel faction known as the RUF entered Sierra Leone from bordering Liberia, he took up a sword passed down from his great grandfather and helped to protect his people. He claims to have never fired a gun and preaches non-violence.

Mr Jalloh was rumoured to have been captured many times during the conflict, but managed to escape. Rather than kill him, the rebels wanted to harness his magical powers, including his mythologised imperviousness to bullets. He claims that when he was captured, he threw his sword in the air, where it waited for him until his escape.

Escapology is a major aspect of Mr Jolloh's magic show. He also summons loaves of bread and soccer balls out of thin air and presents them to his audience. With his troop of dancers – ex combatants from all factions and even former child combatants of the RUF – he travels through the isolated jungle communities of Sierra Leone's Eastern Province. His aim is to educate about the dangers of HIV/AIDS through song, dance, magic and the spoken word, and to demonstrate true reconciliation.

— Dave Tacon, Freetown, 25 March 2005

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Women's cloth – dance skirt.
Orokaiva People of oro Province,
Papua New Guinea.
Bark cloth painted with natural
plant dye, 176.6 x 108 cm.
Collection: Mr Harold Gallasch,
South Australia.

PAKISTAN

Brocaded Man's sash / turban cloth.
Late 19th century.
Kalat, Baluchistan, Pakistan.
Multi-coloured silk and gold
wrapped thread
Collection: Mohatta Palace Museum,
Karachi, Pakistan

This traditional *lungi* commissioned by
the ruling Baluchi chieftains of Kalat is
worn in a number of ways; tied around the
head, across the chest or fastened around
the waist. It is usually worn on ceremonial
occasions and presented as a gift to ack-
nowledge rank and authority within the
tribal hierarchy.

Choga, Pakistan
Hand spun wool with embroidery
156 x 200 cm
Collection: Mr Sumant Dhamija,
Delhi, India

Choga, Pakistan
Hand spun wool with embroidery
138 x 210
Collection: Mr Sumant Dhamija,
Delhi, India

Robes of Honour, Chogas, Northern
Western Frontier Province (Undivided
India), Pakistan, end of 19th or early 20th
century. These robes of honour were
hand-woven with hand-spun wool and
hand-embroidery. They were used by the
local chieftains and royalty of the area.
On special occasions they were presented
to special visitors to honour them. This
Choga was presented by Sultan Murad
Khan, ruler of Ishakoman, Gilgit District
bordering Tajikistan and the Pamirs to
the late Ambassador, J.N. Dhamija, the
Political Officer in the area, in 1946. The
second Choga of hand-woven wool with
hand embroidery was presented by Shah
Wali Khan, famous for having defeated the
British Army at South Waziristan (Pakistan)
to late Ambassador, J.N. Dhamija.

NIGERIA

*Documentation of three performances
on DVD, 1992 and 1993*
1 *Performance of Classical Yoruba Dances
in the Aldrin's Palace December 1992*
Duration: 18 mins 35 sec
2 *Baba Lebe and Family perform
in Nike's Compound December 1992*
Duration: 13 mins 47 secs
3 *Baba Lebe's Aldrinjò perform for the Ataofa
of Osogbo in Front of his Palace December 1993*
Duration: 26 mins 58 secs
Courtesy of Ulli & Georgina Beier

Pelete bite or Men's wrapper.
Coromandel Coast; early 20th century
for the Kalabari people of West Africa.
Cotton, yarn-dyed and woven;
drawn-cut-thread pattern,
182 x 90 cm
TAPI Collection, Surat, India

Pelete bite were powerful ritual cloths used
by the Kalabari people inhabiting the Niger
Delta in south-eastern Nigeria. The basic
fabric is a yarn-dyed cotton cloth woven in
the Krishna District of Andhra Pradesh in
the Coromandel Coast and exported from
the colonial port of Fort St. George (present-
day Chennai) in Tamil Nadu to Nigeria.

The checked pattern known as Real Madras
Handkerchief (RMH) is painstakingly
transformed by the Kalabari women by
drawing the lighter colour threads from
sections of the weft and cutting them to
make patterns with a blade. This creates an
interesting colour variation, which is like
ikat. The resulting cloth came to be called
pelete bite or "our cloth", associated with their
distinct cultural identity as well as with the
mythological beings *Owamekaso* and *Ikasi* –
the Tortoise.

Garment & headpiece. Fabrics with mussels,
sequins & mixed media, c 180 x 190 cm x
30cm.
Haus der Völker / Gert Chesi Private
Collection,
Austria

Garment & headpiece. Fabrics decorated with
mussels, sequins & mixed media,
c 180 x 190cm x 30cm. Haus der Völker /
Gert Chesi. Private Collection, Austria

Garment & headpiece. Fabrics with
mussels, sequins and mixed media.
c 180 x 190 cm x 30cm. Haus der Völker /
Gert Chesi. Private Collection, Austria

Egúngún, the Ancestral Masquerades of the Yoruba People

The society of the living must maintain a
harmonious relationship with the powerful
world of the dead. It is the task of the *Egúngún*
society to maintain this relationship. When a
man has serious problems in his life – illness
or death in the family, failure of his crops
– the oracle priest may tell him that he has
neglected his ancestors. The man will then
make an *Egúngún* costume, that must cover
the entire body of the dancer. Sometimes
the dancer will carry a carved wooden mask.
Strips of brightly coloured textiles will
hang on the costume, that flare out when
the dancer turns. The head of the *Egúngún*
society will then assign a dancer who will
carry the mask.

Each *Egúngún* mask has its own annual
festival, when the mask dances through the
town, accompanied by a group of dancers.
The dancer will go into a trance, when he
will become the ancestor he represents. The
dances are extremely energetic. The dancer
may stand absolutely still one moment,
surrounded by his drummers. Then he will
suddenly burst forth with wild power, so
that the drummers must back away quickly.
Often a group of young women follow the
mask. They are descendants of the deceased
ancestors and pray that he will bless them so
that they may give birth to many children.

Egúngún masks may be centuries old.
Generations of dancers succeed each other
to carry the costume and to personify their
ancestor. They will constantly work on their
costume, adding new and brighter strips
of cloth or sometimes leather. Once a year,
during the king's *Egúngún* festival all the
masks in the town will come out at once.
There may be thirty or forty masks, each
with its own orchestra of drummers, with
the lead drummers on their talking drums
reciting the poetic names of the ancestors.
For many hours the masks will storm in
different directions across the open space in
front of the palace, while the music of the
different orchestras merges into a complex
pattern of cross rhythms.

Finally the *Egúngún* masks will spread out
across the town, dancing from compound
to compound, praying for the people and
blessing them.

— Ulli Beier

*Embroidered Hausa or Nupe,
Agabada/Boubou robe*, Nigeria.
Early 20th Century, 151 x 210 cm
Private collection of Mrs Amrita Malkani

The voluminous robe with deep sleeves
known as Agabada/Boubou is worn by
powerful and highly respected Muslim
men of Northern Nigeria. The patterns are
drawn by Koranic scholars and convey to
the knowledgeable the significance and
meaning of the embroidery, and to everyone
the power wielded by those who wear them.
Most of these robes have a sweeping spiral
at the back, which links it to the cabalistic
patterns.

Ritual Hausa Blanket,
Nigeria, Mid 20th Century
241 x 152 cm
Private collection of Mrs Amrita Malkani.

This typical woollen blanket is woven on
the vertical loom by Hausa men in northern
Nigeria. The patterns in black are woven
with extra weft and carry important motifs.
A popular motif is of two inverted triangles,
which symbolizes the stand for the Koran
used by the priests, teachers and students as
they recite from the holy text.

Àdìrè Eleko, Resist Worked Fabric,
Yoruba, Nigeria, Mid 20th Century.
Indigo dyed resist cotton cloth.
195 x 173 cm
Private collection of Mrs Amrita Malkani.

This ritual cotton cloth dyed in indigo is
prepared by Yoruba women. It is painted
with cassava paste as a resist and dyed
with natural indigo. A typical *Àdìrè Eleko*
is built up in squares. The painted starch
is created with the use of a quill on half of
the cloth, the other side is then folded over
and pressed down so that two sides adhere
together and the same pattern emerges
when dyed. The starch does not resist the
dye completely, and the effect is of the
resist area becoming light blue, while the
background is a darker blue. This design is
called the *Alakun*, sea goddess pattern.

Ruler's crown, Nigeria (Yoruba crown)
60 x 40 x 40 cm
Ray Hughes Collection, Sydney, Australia

MALAYSIA

Men's Sarong, c.1900, Trengannu,
Malaysia, *ikat* silk and *songket* with metallic
thread, 206 x 204 cm.
Collection: Powerhouse Museum,
Sydney, Australia

Royal Malay Songket

Songkets are a rich and luxurious fabric
demonstrating the social hierarchy of
Malay elite. The art was cultivated and used
almost exclusively by Malayan aristocracy
until its popularisation in the 1980s. It is
most likely songket weaving was brought
to the Malaysian Peninsular through
intermarriages between royal families –
a common practice used in the fifteenth
century to seal strategic alliances. Royal
women were able to bring with them their
personal weavers employed as entourages
from India and Arabia. Once stationed in
Malaysia, weavers were encouraged to draw
upon the influx of luxury goods reaching
the local trade port of Melaka during the
period. Fine silk, gold thread and brocade
became incorporated into fabric. European
colonisation across the region in the
sixteenth century introduced the frame loom
with Malay weavers adding to the loom a fine
comb, allowing warps to be passed through
and separated but kept evenly spaced. The
modified method made it was much easier to
set up a plain silk warp and create patterns
with gold weft thread woven between the
longitudinal silk threads of the background
cloth. Royal court weavers would produce
individualised motifs often designed by the
wearers themselves.

During the reign of Sultan Muhammad Shah
(1426–1446), the royal court controlled the
textile trade. A preference for 'Malay Attire'
was established amongst Malay royals and
elite by the Shah, who refused to emulate
foreign clothing. The symbolism of thread
colour signifying status and title has been in
use ever since. White gold thread signifies
the ruler, yellow is the colour of the crown
prince, and violet blue denotes the prime
minister. Black is the coloured used in court
representing commoners.

In order to preserve the original lustre and
quality of the songket, a large cowry shell is
used to polish the cloth before gold thread
is woven into the piece. Sachets of cloves
wrapped in tissue paper and slipped between
folds is a time-honoured technique used to
keep away insects. The practice imbues the
songket with an aromatic scent.

Pua Kumbha, Head Hunters' Blanket,
Iban, Sarawak, Malaysia, 20th Century. Cotton
ikat. 220 x 106.5 cm
Collection: Edric Ong, Malaysia.

Cotton *ikat* head hunters' cloth woven by
experienced women weavers on the back strap
loom. This was the powerful cloth used by
women to receive the hunted heads from the
returning warriors. The women have a rich
repertoire of motifs with symbolic significance
and they dream the design of the cloth that
they have to weave. It is this dream that they
create by tying the pattern directly onto the
warp thread and dye in the multiple colours.

Shaman's wrapper, Iban, Sarawak, Malaysia.
Cotton *ikat* tie-dyed on the warp and woven
on a back-strap loom by Iban women.
235 x 50.5cm. Collection: Edric Ong, Malaysia.

The cotton *ikat* shaman's cloth has the
powerful pattern tie-dyed on the warp and
woven on a back-strap loom by Iban women.
The women originally spun the thread, dyed
it with vegetable dyes after tying & dyeing the
threads to create the pattern. This powerful
wrapper represents the power of the Naga, the
snake God.

Iban People, Borneo, Malaysia

With a population estimated at 550,000 the
Iban live largely in Sarawak. They are the
largest of Malaysia's indigenous peoples and,
in an earlier era, were feared as headhunters.
They were mistakenly named 'Sea Dayak'
by the British who came into contact with
them in the 1840s, at which time many were
involved in coastal piracy with the Malays.

The Iban refer to themselves by the name
of the longhouse village or river where
they reside. They have no cover term for
all Iban. The common Iban settlement is a
single longhouse composed of four to fifty
independent family units that are called *bilek*
families. The *bilek* family is small, ranging
from three to fourteen members. The *bilek*
family is the status-conferring group and as
such children are named after grandparents,
thus providing continuity with ancestors and
identification with the kin group. Among the
status-conscious Iban, these names provide
links with their illustrious forebears.

*King's costume: The Persalinan baju melayu
songket* worn by His Majesty Sultan Haji
Ahmad Shah Al-Musta'in Billah ibni
Al-Marhum Sultan Abu Bakar Ri'ayatuddin
Al-Mu'adzam Shah for royal ceremonies.
Songket with *jong sarat* pattern and *potong
wajik* motif in the royal colour (purple).
Collection of the Royal Sultan Abu Bakar
Museum of Pahang, Malaysia.

GHANA

Kente cloth as worn by President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana. Handwoven cotton, 340 x 211 cm. Private collection

Kente cloth as worn by President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana. Handwoven cotton, 312 x 203 cm. Private collection

Asafo flag
Cotton appliqué. 104.5 x 158.5 cm
Collection: Ray Hughes Gallery, Sydney, Australia

Asafo flag
Cotton appliqué. 151.5 x 86.5 cm
Collection: Ray Hughes Gallery, Sydney, Australia

Asafo Company No 1 of Gomoa Efutu area in Ghana, *We are ready for you whichever way you come*
Dated prior to independence in 1957
Cotton. 102 x 155 cm
Collection: Nubuki Foundation, Ghana

Asafo Company No 1 of Gomoa Efutu area in Ghana, *We are fierce like the double tailed beast*
Dated prior to independence in 1957
Cotton / polyester. 138 x 92 cm
Collection: Nubuki Foundation, Ghana

The asafo is a political-military institution of the Akan, Ghana. Even though the Akan societies did not have a standing army the asafo was a well established social and political organisation based on martial principles. Every able-bodied person belonged to an asafo group. Every child automatically belonged to his or her father's company. Internal sub-divisions within an individual company included the main fighting body, the scouts, reserves, and the minstrel unit whose main job was to sing patriotic and war songs to boost the morale of the military.

Asafo flags are popular among the Fantse of the coastal area. Symbols on the flag are appliquéd and occasionally embroidered. An Asafo flag will either display the Union Jack or the Ghanaian flag. A flag bearing the Union Jack indicates the flag was made during the time of British colonial rule in Ghana. A flag bearing the Ghanaian flag indicates it was made after 1957 when Ghana gained independence. The asafo flag with its symbols and colours often represents important historical occasions in the life of the company or unpleasant past events such as wars, deaths and defeats.

CANADA

Wealth of the Tsimshian, 1999
William WHITE
Merino wool, beaver fur. 36.4 x 26 cm
Made for traditional purposes and in use by the White family until it was presented to the head chief of their tribe chief Marvin Wesley (Chief La'as) of the Git-wil-gyoots, Canada. Private collection, Canada.
Chilkat blankets were woven using mountain goat wool and cedar bark, a specialty of the Chilkat tribe, whose territory ran across the mouth of the Chilkat River in southeast Alaska. Traditionally, only the powerful could make or own a prized Chilkat Blanket, the completion of one taking a full year of hard work. Men provided goat hides for wool, designed the pattern, and made the pattern board and loom. Chilkat women gathered cedar bark and prepared the yarn to weave the blanket.

Woven using a method unique to native Americans, the blanket took form on a "warp weighted" or "single bar" loom, consisting of two standing poles and a cross bar. The warp threads, suspended from a strip of moose hide, were hung from the cross bar. Long ends of the thread were tied into bundles, sometimes weighted with stones, giving tension to the working portion of the yam. The weaver usually sat or kneeled in front of the loom while weaving. Blankets were woven entirely with the fingers in a process termed twinning. No other device was used. Two or more wefts were twisted around a single warp of yam. When the blanket was completed, a fringe was filled out by adding lengths of warp yam and braids around the borders.

Men designed the pattern and painted the abstract figures on a wooden "pattern board," producing a highly stylised art, often represented clan symbols and natural forms in an abstract geometric pattern. Animals were portrayed as if sliced down the centre and laid out flat. As the blanket was two-sided, only half the pattern was painted in life-size dimensions. The blanket pattern could be interpreted in a variety of ways, however only the man who designed the blanket knew the true legend.

Traditional dyes for the wool yarn were yellow, derived from a lichen called wolf moss; dark brown, produced by boiling wool in urine and hemlock bark; and a greenish-blue made by boiling wool in copper and urine. By the 1890's, commercial dyes and yarns were also used. The warp was never dyed.

Cedar Cloak Vancouver Island.
Cedar bark, 48.5 x 43 x 4.5 cm
On loan Courtesy of Museum Victoria

Haida dance apron 2002.
Leather, felt, mother of pearl, buttons, feathers, beads, 97 x 70 cm.
Collection: High Commission of Canada, Canberra, Australia

BANGLADESH

Kantha,
Bangladesh, early 20th Century.
Quilted, embroidered wrap, cotton.
Collection: Crafts Museum, Delhi, India.

Kanthas are traditionally made from recycled cotton garments such as dhotis and saris quilted together using a running stitch. The coloured threads from the borders of the original garments are used by women to embroider. The designs express their beliefs, hopes and dreams. Kantha can be used variously as wraps, throws, quilts, bed covers, and scarves, though they were originally intended for new born babies. The old cloths were taken from those who had lived righteous and long lives, in order to preserve their aura and pass it onto the children.

Jamdani Nilambari Daccai Sari, Bangladesh, early 20th Century.
Collection: Crafts Museum, Delhi, India.

A finely woven cotton sari has patterns woven in non-continuous weft in white and zari (gold) thread. Nilambari meaning the blue sky is associated with Krishna and has multilayered meanings. The sari is usually worn during the time of Durga Puja, the biggest festival of the year for Bengali Hindus.

Jamdani Konia Kalga Pattern Sari, Bangladesh, Early 20th Century.
Collection: Crafts Museum, New Delhi, India.

Finely woven Jamdani Saris were greatly valued throughout India. This sari has a delicately inlaid design of a white *buti* on white background with a black corner, *konia*, design known as the *Kalka*. This is an important motif of deep symbolic significance. It resembles a mango, it could also be a plume or a tree of life. This handspun hand-woven superfine cotton cloth was called by the Romans, *nebula venti*, woven winds, and was exported throughout the world. This particular sari was in great demand and worn on special occasions.

Baluchar Brocaded Silk Sari, Bangladesh, late 18th/early 19th Century. This sari depicts colonial rulers, most likely the British, in the outer border of the *pallu*, riding on elephants and horses in a show of power. In the inner border, there are depictions of *rajās* with their *wazirs*, smoking hookah in the traditional manner. The central design is the traditional, mango *kalka*. Collection: Crafts Museum, Delhi, India.

Baluchar Brocaded Silk Sari, Bangladesh, late 18th/early 19th Century.
Collection: Crafts Museum, Delhi, India.
These silk brocaded saris carried pictorial patterns on the large pattern – cross border. The saris depict the Portuguese merchants and soldiers, who were the earliest settlers in Bengal. The saris have a central motif of curvilinear *kalka* pattern with pictorial scenes surrounding it. They depict soldiers marching, merchants seated in carriages and even in boats.

AUSTRALIA

Mat or skirt, marrabadj
Modjeh grass, 205.5 x 144.5 x 16 cm
Made by women of East Alligator River, Western Arnhem Land, Australia.
On loan courtesy of Museum Victoria, Melbourne, Australia.

Made from grass called *modjeh* (*Eleocharis spp.*) that grows on the plains of western Arnhem Land. Nine skirts like this one survive and were made by women of western Arnhem Land. They used them to wrap them around themselves and for sitting on. Colour is evident with pink still visible on the fringe.

Warramirri baby 1935
D.F. THOMSON, Australia
Photograph, 54 x 43.5 cm
Courtesy of Mrs D.M. Thomson and Museum Victoria

Skirt Nganmarra 1935
D.F. THOMSON, Australia
Photograph, 43.5 x 54 cm
Courtesy of Mrs D.M. Thomson and Museum Victoria

Skirts Nganmarra 1935
D.F. THOMSON, Australia
Photograph, 54 x 43.5 cm
Courtesy of Mrs D.M. Thomson and Museum Victoria

Mr Colten – age 90 – 'Bandowick'
Goulburne (Goulburn) Tribe.
The oldest Aboriginal in the Colony, 1866
Carl WALTER
Alubumen silver photograph,
44 x 54 cm
Courtesy of the State Library of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia

Ankerre Akhganentye (Emu Dreaming), 1988
Emily KAME NGWARRAY
Silk batik, 132.5 x 332 cm
The Janet Holmes à Court Collection, Perth, Australia

This batik is by the famous desert artist, Emily Kame Ngwarreye. In 1980, the Aboriginal women of Utopia had their first exhibition of textiles in Alice Springs. The works commonly featured a variety of bush foods as well as powerful representations of women's ritual life such as the distinctive body designs. The work here relates to the artist's country, Allalagara.

Kangaroo Tooth Necklace (Women's)
Maree CLARKE
140 x 80 cm
On loan courtesy of Museum Victoria, Melbourne, Australia
Kangaroo Tooth Necklace (Men's)
Maree CLARKE
88 x 8.5 cm
Collection of the artist

Koorrookee meerreeng (grandmother's country)
Vicky COUZENS
possum skins, waxed linen thread, ochre and pokerwork designs.
175 X 128
Collection of the artist

Ngatuk, Possum Skin Cloak (Wamba Wamba Language) 2004
Ngarra KATYA, Murray & Alister THORPE, Ngatuk, South East Australia
Etching and burning on twenty-eight sown possum skins.
203 x 112 cm
Collection of Mr John So, Former Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Australia

No work for a white man 2005
Kay LAWRENCE
Length: 90 cm waistband width: 45 cm / width at bottom of legs 60cm Depth 2 – 4 cm
Mother of pearl buttons, old cream blanket, cotton thread, cotton tapes
Collection of the artist

Cinnamon and roses
Sara LINDSAY, Australia
Mixed media construction, woven tapestry
Cinnamon sticks, rose petals, linen, lace, muslin (dyed with tea and turmeric), cotton, silk, 38 x 449 cm.
Collection of the artist

Tomato Dreaming
Jean PWERLE
Batik on silk, 235 x 117 cm
The Janet Holmes à Court Collection, Perth, Australia

Emu feather skirt, 2010
Marlene SCERRI
Emu feathers tied with sinews or European string, 132.5 x 30 cm
Collection: RMIT Gallery, Melbourne, Australia

Made of bunches of emu feathers tied with sinews or European string. The apron was worn by women in the Melbourne area during dancing. Shorter ones were worn by young women, while the longer ones provided a level of modesty required by married women. Emu feather aprons were being made in the 1860s in western Victoria for men to wear in ceremonies and the tradition continues today.