

# Cloths and the Way of Life among Melayu People in Pattani, Thailand in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century

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Received: November 18, 2014 Accepted: March 16, 2015 Online Published: May 16, 2015

doi:10.5539/ass.v11n13p158

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ass.v11n13p158>

## Abstract

The purpose of this research was to investigate Melayu people's way of life through the ways they utilized their cloths. The data of this qualitative research were collected from related documents and research reports, ancient cloths and clothing, and in-depth interviews with cloths owners and weavers.

The research found that in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Melayu people in Pattani Province used many types of clothing in their life. When women were at home, they wore plain cloths. They used checked cloths to cover the upper part of their body from the breasts down to the waist. When going out, they used Lima cloth and So Kae with a piece of Pla-nging cloth as a headscarf. For men, they wore a checked sarong as a lower garment, and wore no upper garment. However, when going out, they wore Puyo Potong. In addition, Melayu people used cloths in various religious rites, namely, the rite of putting a baby in a cradle, the Masoyawi rite, the Nikah rite, and the funeral rite. These types of cloths were related to the way of life of Melayu people from birth to death. They reflected the race, gender, age, social status, values, and beliefs in traditions that have been inherited.

**Keywords:** Pattani, Melayu people's way of life, Masoyawi rite, Nikah rite

## 1. Introduction

The Southern border provinces of Thailand were an area of significant civilization with a long history due to its unique location which was used as a trading port. Moreover, its richness in wild products was sought after by foreigners, and its internal waterways enhanced inter-communal communication (Ismil, 1997). All of these factors made the South of Thailand a major commercial center in Southeast Asia. Trade relations with other countries resulted in cross-cultural interaction between foreign newcomers and the local people (Hall, 1980). An example of the cultural interaction was shown in the cloths used by people in the Malay Peninsula. The people of Pattani, especially the Melayu used many and various kinds of cloths in their daily life, religious rites, and for their beliefs. The influences of foreign cultures such as Indian, Chinese, Indonesian, Khmer, and Arabic have enriched the cultures of the local Melayu people in Pattani and thus weaving patterns, designs, colors, and techniques employed by Melayu people differ from those used by Thais in other regions. The Melayu people's adaptation of the foreign cultures resulted in the uniqueness of their textiles. Regarding the mentioned differences, it could, then be said that this research aims to acquire new knowledge that has never been studied by any previous researchers of Thai cloths.

## 2. Research Objectives

To explore cloths used in Melayu people's lives in Pattani, Thailand in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

## 3. Research Methodology

This study is a survey and analytical research, in which information was analyzed using historical and experimental research methods. The research procedure was as follows:

The study areas consisted of Cha Bang Tiko Sub-district, Mueang District, Phiten Sub-district, Thung Yang Daeng District, A-ching Sub-district, Kotabaru Sub-district, and Raman District, all in Pattani Province. These areas were locations for palaces where rulers lived. When rulers died, their garments were distributed among their children, grandchildren and relatives who continue preserving them.

1) The informants were 30 people consisting of experts, owners of ancient cloths in Pattani Province.

2) Data from related documents, interviews, and different kinds of cloths used by Melayu people in Pattani were gathered.

3) Historical methods were implemented to analyze the gathered data.

#### 4. Scope of the Study

The researcher chose the concepts and beliefs in traditions in Na Thalang (1997), and modernization theory of Eisenstadt (1966) as instruments for describing phenomena in the use of cloths in Melayu people's way of life in Pattani in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which had changed, because the society at that time was still underdeveloped and changing or transforming to modern society. Modernization was a process of change that affected society, economy, and politics in Western Europe and North America from the 7<sup>th</sup> century to the 19<sup>th</sup> century and spread to countries in Asia (Eisenstadt, 1966). Underdeveloped countries could only be partially modernized, as a result, there were economic, social, and political inequalities. The process of modernization of underdeveloped countries had to go step by step in the same way as economic growth that could not pass over any step (Phonsi, 2002). Therefore, it can be said that modernization theory is the society's structural change to advancement using technologies. This study, therefore, employs this theory in describing changes of Melayu society in Pattani in the 18<sup>th</sup> century that was influenced by modernization in the Western world, and such modernization had caused changes that affected people as well.

#### 5. Research Results

##### 5.1 Cloths and the Way of Life among Melayu People in Pattani, Thailand in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century

Cloths that are used in the way of life among Melayu people in Pattani were of various types such as Kara duwa, Kara tigo, Kara pah, So Kae, Plae Ka, A-chae, Selendang, Jawo, Samarinda, Pla-ning, Lima, etc. These cloths are long rectangular in shape (Fatima La-teh, interviewed on April 28, 2007). Melayu women in the 18<sup>th</sup> century wore three pieces of cloth. One was a piece of cloth wrapping around the upper part of the body covering the breast, another piece wrapping around the lower part of the body from the waist down to the ankles, and the other piece to cover the head, or a headscarf, especially when going out. The piece of cloth worn around the lower part of the body was either with checked or plaid patterns, and it could be Lima silk. Another piece worn around the upper part of the body was A-chae or Lima silk. The other piece, which is a headscarf, was usually with beautiful floral patterns, or Pla-ning. This type of women's dress was used by all women with an exception in the material, that is, cotton was used for women in general, and silk was used by wealthy women (See Figure 1).



Figure 1. A woman dressed, when at home, in Lima silk in an 18<sup>th</sup> century Pattani Melayu style (Photo taken by Assoc. Prof. Jureerat Buakaew on July 12, 1996)

For men, three pieces of cloths were used, too. They did not usually wear a shirt when at home but they wore a checked pattern piece of cloth around their lower part of the body by tying the two ends in front making a knot to fit their waist and leaving the rest hanging down between the legs. Another piece of cloth was used to tighten or secure the first piece of cloth around the waist. The other piece was to wear around the head as a head cloth. When going out, common men wore a shirt without a collar and a checkered pattern cloth around their lower part of the body (See Figure 2). For wealthy men, they wore a collarless shirt and a piece of cloth made of So Kae or Lima, and the clothing is called Pucho Potong (Chittima Raden-amad, interviewed on June, 20, 2007) and (Buakaew, 2009).



Figure 2. A Melayu man dressed in a traditional Pucho Potong, when going out, wearing a collarless short sleeve shirt, with a piece of Chin dye cloth (Tie-dye Chinese silk) around his waist to hold a Kris (dagger) in place, and a piece of Sata-ngae cloth on his head (a head cloth, which can be worn in several styles) (Photo taken by Assoc. Prof. Jureerat Buakaew on July 12, 1996)

### 5.2 Cloths in Pattani Melayu Rites in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century

Cloths used in many rites depict the way of life among Melayu people from the past to the present. These cloths latent with beliefs and faith are believed to bring happiness, to chase away severe diseases, to pass obstacles in life, and to provide auspiciousness for people who hold the rites such as Phithi Khuen Ple Dek (ceremony of putting a baby in a cradle), Phithi Masoyawi (circumcision ceremony), Nikah (wedding ceremony) and Phithi Sop (funeral ceremony).

#### 1) Phithi Khuen Ple Dek (ceremony of putting a baby in a cradle)

This ceremony is also called Kan Tham Khuan Duean (one-month old blessing). The ritual begins by bathing the baby and wrapping the baby with a piece of cloth passed down from the baby's ancestor. Then the father puts the baby in the cradle with Toh Imam as the master of the rite. It is believed that wrapping the baby with an ancestral piece of cloth, the ancestors can help protect the baby from all evils, and will make the baby healthy physically and mentally. The cradle is usually made with a thick piece of cloth with checked patterns that is woven by the family. Each of the two ends of the cloth is tied in a knot, then the knot is tied with a rope made of raw strings on the crossbeam of the room or a piece of bamboo stem put across the room. In the cradle, the bottom is laid with layers of thick cloth, as a cushion was not in use in the past. Sometimes, pieces of white or red cloth made with raw threads are used. For people in a high social class, different types of silk are used such as Chuan Tani or Lima, Kara Duwo, Kara Tigo, Kara Pah, etc. (Buakaew et al., 1996-2000) (See Figure 3).

Later, in the rite, beautifully decorated cradles have become popular. They are decorated with colorful modern fabrics, popped rice, and bunches of flowers. A kind of cradle similar to Ple Yuan (a hammock) is used with a square or rectangular wooden frame, each of the four corners is tied with a piece of rope. Three pieces of cloth, one in white, another red and the other green, are tied to the head and the end of the frame. Two pieces of transparent lace fabrics in different colors are used to cover the cradle. A square piece of beautiful color, good quality cloth is folded diagonally to make it triangular is tied on the beam of the cradle with the two ends hanging above the cradle. For a baby boy, the two hanging ends are with equal lengths but for a baby girl, one end is longer than the other is. At the corners of the cloth, valuable items such as a gold necklace or a copper

alloy belt are wrapped in, depending on the economic status of the parents (Rueangnarong, 1986).



Figure 3. Kara Duwo cloth woven with two heddles; brown, white, red and pink silk threads are used to weave into checkers. There is a Khid pattern along the Long Chuan pattern. Local weavers call this pattern of Khid “Kep Fan Takkataen”. The cloth is 87 cm. in width and 184 cm in length, and used to wrap a baby in Phithi Khuen Ple Dek (a ceremony of putting a baby in a cradle)

## 2) Masoyawi

Masoyawi or Sunat is a circumcision ceremony. Young boys who participate in this ceremony wear Lima cloths because it is believed that wearing an ancestral piece of cloth is auspicious for them (Salina Sakiyoh, interviewed on December 17, 2007). In the past, Pattani Melayu people held Sunat ceremonies for boys aged 7 to 15 years. It was considered an important ceremony to which many guests were invited to a party with many types of performing arts presented such as shadow puppets shows, Sila, Manorah, Li-ke Hulu, etc. On the ceremonial day, the boys who were going to participate in the ceremony wore around their waists an ancestral piece of Lima silk cloth aged around 100 years, a long sleeve shirt, and a long piece of Pla-ning cloth or ancient style Chinese silk over one shoulder hanging diagonally down to one side of the waist called Sabai Chiang. In addition, they wore an external vest made of beads, several gold necklaces to show the economic status, and a cap with a triangular shape, of which the front part was decorated with colorful beads similar to a head piece worn by Manorah dancers (See Figure 4) (Buakaew, 2014).



Figure 4. In this ancient style Masoyawi ceremony, the two boys in the ceremony wear an ancient Lima silk cloth around their waists and a Pla-ning shoulder cloth passed down from their ancestors. The cloths are about 100 years old. Their caps are decorated with beads. (Photo taken by Assoc. Prof. Jureerat Buakaew on October 21, 1996)



Figure 5. This red Pla-nging cloth made of Chinese silk with Swastika patterns in its texture is a tie-die cloth with Bungo and Bitae patterns on it, is 81 cm in width and 106 cm in length. Nowadays, it is used in important ceremonies. (Klin Thepsuwan, interviewed on March 14, 1998) (Photo taken by Asso. Prof. Jureerat Buakaew on July 12, 1998)

### 3) Nikah

The dresses used in Nikah or wedding ceremony of Pattani Melayu people in the past were different from today. In the past, there were a traditional ceremony and a religious ceremony in one wedding consisting of three steps: asking for the woman from her parents, engagement, and wedding. On the engagement day, the man did not go to the woman's home, but after the engagement ceremony, the woman went to the man's house bringing him either a sarong called Kaheng Plaekah (a sarong for men) or Kaheng Bateh Luepah (a floral patterned cloth) placed on a tray with the betel nuts that had been used in the engagement ceremony in return.

On the wedding day, a procession of the groom and his elderly relatives, called Khan Mak (betel nut bowl) procession, go to the bride's house. The head betel nut bowl (Hua Khan Mak), which is the one leading the procession is the small brass bowl containing money wrapped with a handkerchief or an ancestral cloth carried by the groom. In the field survey in Pattani for this study, it was found that in the past a Mat Mee handkerchief woven in Luk Kaew Patterns or grass flowers patterns was used. For wealthy people, a piece of cloth woven with golden threads was used, such as the one at Raman Palace. After the religious ceremony is finished, bad fortune was chased away and the bride and groom were given a shower by an elderly woman to wash away flaws. After the shower, the groom wears a piece of cloth called Kaheng Luepah around his waist while the bride wears Batik cloth by wrapping it around her chest (U-thaiphan, 1989). In the present days, some rituals have been omitted but what still remains is a wedding ceremony according the religion.



Figure 6. A brown So Kae cloth with floral patterns woven with silver threads (Cheminoh Yuso, interviewed on September 10, 1997. In the past, this piece of cloth was used in a Nikah ceremony. (Photo taken by Assoc. Prof. Jureerat Buakaew on September 10, 1997)

### 4) Funeral ceremony

When a Melayu person dies, the house owner or relatives will hurry to the mosque to play a drum to tell other relatives and friends the news. When relatives and friends hear the drum, they come to the funeral ceremony

from the beginning, which is giving a bath to the body, wrapping the body to burying the body. A bath is given to the body of a person who dies normally or dies in defense of the country and religion. However, a bath is not given to a person who is killed such as by a fire, animal bites or a person who has been killed for several days. Nevertheless, in some areas such as in Pattani, even when a small piece of a body part is found, a bath is given. The person who gives a bath to the body must be a close relative. However, in Pattani, other people may join in giving a bath such as Toh Imam, Koteb, a midwife, and other knowledgeable people. After being given a bath, the body is dried with a piece of clean cloth, dressed, and the deceased's hair is combed. The host gives something in return to the person who sits carrying the body while a bath is given. Usually, the return is in cash, 10 baht or more placed in a plate wrapped with a piece of cloth. In some areas, desserts and some articles are put on the place as well (Culture of Thai Muslims in Southern Border Provinces: A Funeral Ceremony, n. d., a video).

The cloths used to wrap the body are mostly white even though other colors are allowed. The cloths do not have to be new but must be clean. If no cloth is available, a curtain, or even leaves or dry grass can be used as well (Worawit Baru, interviewed on March 20, 1999). The body is wrapped from head to toe in three layers, and cotton wool, perfumery and sandalwood are used. The persons who wrap up the body are Toh Imam, Koteb, a midwife or a knowledgeable person. The body is laid on three layers of cloth; face up with the two hands on the abdomen. Then, relatives come to see the body for the last time. After that, cotton wool is used to cover the face, foldable joints such as the elbows and knees, etc. Then, the body is wrapped. On each layer of cloth, perfumery is sprinkled. According to Islamic principles, expensive cloths should not be used so that it is not a waste.

For a body of a man, three pieces of cloth are used. One is used to cover from the navel to the knees; another from the neck to the ankles; and the other to cover the whole body. For a body of a woman, five pieces of clothing are used: a blouse, a sarong, a headscarf, and two pieces of white cloth to wrap the whole body. After the body is wrapped, three pieces of cloth are used to tie the wrapping. One is used to tie the wrapping cloths above the head, another in the middle of the body, and the other at the end of the feet. The wrapped body is laid on a litter or in a coffin that is laid out with a mat, a piece of cloth, or a cushion. Then the wrapped body is covered with silk or other types of fabric.

From the field data collection, it was found that most of the sheets used to cover the body are those passed down from ancestors, and some of them are family's sheets. Some families still use Lima silk while others use fabrics from abroad, especially from Saudi Arabia where their relatives have been to the Hajj and brought them back. The sheets, large enough to cover the whole body, are mostly made of synthetic material and the texture is inserted with glittering threads, and is with geometric patterns on them. In addition, some sheets are embroidered with a statement from the Quran such as "Returning to Allah", or "There is no God but Allah and Prophet Muhammad", while others specify the names of the four Khalifas who were successors of Allah, namely Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali, and they specify the almighty power of Allah, as well (Worawit Baru, interviewed on November 1, 1999). Some people use velvet while others use thin carpets depending on what they have or what they can borrow from neighbors. A piece of new cloth is tied to each corner of the litter for carrying the deceased, and then is presented to each of the four people who carry it.



Figure 7. A cloth, used to cover a dead body, embroidered with Kalimah Syahadah (Photo taken by Assoc. Prof. Jureerat Buakaew on August 12, 1996)

It can be said that in the past there were many types of local Pattani cloth such as Kara Duwo, Kara Tigo, Kara Pah, So Kae, Plaekah, A-cha, Selendang, Jawo, Lima, etc. Pattani merchants were middlemen who took fabrics

to sell in many places. Some fabrics were made locally while others were imported from China, Indonesia, and Malaysia, which geographically connected to the Southern border provinces. Business and migration of natives as well as kinship and religion have simply resulted in mixture of cultures in the same way as the blending of patterns and colors in cloth weaving as well as the use of the cloths.

## 6. Discussion

Pattani Melayu people in the 18<sup>th</sup> century used cloths to wear in their daily life and in performing rituals to make them happy and to give them encouragement in their living. Hiranto (1983) states that rituals refer to practice of cultural standards related to signs of things in different occasions or delicate social behaviors designated by tradition, law or social regulations that express symbols or values or beliefs. Rituals are patterns of ceremony, and most ceremonies are related to religion and the use of symbols to show meanings or importance of something to induce respect from individuals. These statements correspond to the concept of beliefs in traditions by Na Thalang (1997) who claims that beliefs are important for living and are influential to society because they dictate behaviors of people in the society. When individuals have a belief in something, they behave in such a way that responds to the belief. According to Prapapitayakorn et al. (1987), a belief is what people in a society have practiced from generation to generation, and considered it a regulation or method that they should carry on. Atthakorn (1977) states that a belief results in rituals that have been passed down and practiced and eventually the rituals have become traditions. Hence, rituals in many traditions are still practiced continuously and result in unity, love, and warmth connecting people in society to live together peacefully and happily.

When Thailand began to have free trade with the West, fabrics made by machines in factories from abroad were imported to the country and in the Southern part. These kinds of fabrics were cheaper than those local hand-woven fabrics, and were in many styles and bright colors that meet the taste of Southerners. Consequently, local hand-woven fabrics have become less popular. Nartsupha & Prasartset (1984) claim that the Bowring Treat in 1855 resulted in more fabrics from abroad in Thailand because they were cheaper as they were made from factories with lower production costs in addition to many varieties of styles and colors that were modern. On the contrary, local hand-woven fabrics were with higher production costs because the threads had to be imported from abroad. Therefore, local fabrics could not compete with imported ones, and at the same time, more people preferred fabrics imported from the West. Finally, production of local hand-woven fabrics had to be stopped. This is in congruence with Eisenstadt (1966)'s Modernization Theory that claims the underdeveloped society is transforming to modern society; modernization is a process of change that affects society, economy, and politics. For these reasons, the use of cloths in the way of life among Melayu people have changed in accordance with the economic condition and modernization that came with technologies from the Western world that made the popularity of local hand-woven fabrics deteriorating. However, local people still preserve their ethnic traditions even though they have to adapt to the change that has taken place in the society.

## 7. Conclusion

Cloths that Pattani Melayu people used in their daily life and in their traditions reflect the prosperity of Pattani in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when it was a center for sea trading in Southeast Asia. Interactions with other lands resulted in the mixture of knowledge in weaving making Pattani hand-woven fabrics uniquely beautiful and outstanding from hand-woven fabrics from other regions. Aesthetical patterns on fabrics is wisdom of cloth-weaving, which is a cultural heritage, that reflects clearer pictures of Pattani ancestors' society and beliefs while the use of cloths in their way of life is a symbol of the identity of their ethnicity, status, gender, and economic as well as their rituals that are valuable and worthwhile to preserve. However, technological advancement that have entered the Southern part, especially factory-woven fabrics that are cheaper has weakened the culture of using hand-woven fabrics from society. Eventually, Pattani hand-woven cloths will no longer able to resist social influence and will gradually disappear.

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## Appendix

### Interviewees

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