Hands On Learning
with Reading Museum Service

PAKISTAN G142



Pakistan's culture was influenced by invasions from Moghal and Afghan empires. They brought Islam to the region as well as clothing and cuisine.

People from Pakistan have moved throughout the world. It has meant their culture is now common in places such as Britain. In large cities in Pakistan like Islamabad and Karachi, people wear clothing similar to that of Britain. Even so there are still large numbers who wear traditional costume.



The objects in this box make a traditional dress called a shalwar kameez. Women and men in South Asia have worn it for over 2,000 years. The outfit is believed to originate from Central Asia. In the twelfth century a series of raids and invasions established Islamic rule over northern India and Pakistan. Fashion followed rule, and the shalwar suit became favoured throughout the area. It has remained popular because it is loose fitting. Anyone can wear one no matter what size they are. People in western countries are increasingly wearing the outfit, including celebrities!



Shalwar



A shalwar is a pair of trousers. They are loose at the top but narrow at the bottom. Feel how smooth the shalwar is. A drawstring ties the trousers at the waist. This is called the nara. It acts like the strings worn on a pair of shorts or tracksuit bottoms.



On the ends of the nara are small copper pieces dated 1935 and 1936. They are inscribed like medals but it is not clear what they celebrate. The picture is of King George V. He was the Emperor of India until his death in 1936. The other side says 'mark India'. Pakistan, India and Bangladesh were all known as the British Raj. They were under British control until 1947. When independence was granted Pakistan split away from the rest of India.

Reading Borough Council
Heritage Lottery Fund

Hands On Learning
with Reading Museum Service

PAKISTAN G142

Kameez



The kameez is similar to a long shirt or tunic. The stitching, known as chaak, goes down the sides but stops at the waist. This lets air flow, making it a comfortable garment to wear in a hot climate.

Look closely at the embroidery. The thread is of gold colour so this kameez would probably be worn on special occasions. The material is very thin, making it light and cool to wear. Men traditionally have a simple white or light coloured dress. Women prefer various colours and intricate designs to look stylish and fashionable.

Shoes



There are two traditional types of shoe in Pakistan. One is called a mojari and the other a juttis. This is a juttis because of the flatness of the front and the covering at the back. The mojari has a curled toe and no back. Both are easy to remove. This is practical for Muslims. When entering a mosque to pray footwear needs to be taken off. Imagine if you had to keep untying your shoes when you went to pray. It's much easier to simply slip the shoe off.



The foot is considered an area of great beauty. A shoe is a way of decorating the foot. It is extravagantly covered in golden threads and beads. When would you put on a shoe like this? It would not be worn to shop in the local market but at special occasions. A lady wanting to show her status and best clothing.