Hands On Learning
with Reading Museum Service

BALI DANCE COSTUME G144

Bali is an island that belongs to Indonesia. Most of the country follows Islam, but in Bali over 90% of the population are Balinese Hindus. Religion is part of their daily life and is reflected in how people dress.



The men and women of Bali use dance and drama to explain their life. Stories are told of their Gods through colourful and well trained dancers.

This box contains a traditional Bali dancing costume. It is worn at festivals and shows for tourists. When these dances are performed they impress watchers with elaborate colours and clothing. Bali dancing is a way of telling stories that date back to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This outfit is for a girl but other dances involve boys dressing as warriors and monsters. They battle each other as good takes on evil.





The girls start to learn to dance from four years old. They learn to use their hands, feet and facial expressions to create the dramatic motions that illustrate the story.

Flower

This is a frangipani flower. In Indonesia it is known as kembang kamboja. It is a beautiful and sweet smelling flower. These are used to decorate headdresses. They are said to provide shelter to ghosts and demons in Southeast Asian culture.





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Headdress



Young Balinese girls dance wearing crowns made from leather. They are decorated with little mirrors and coloured stones that glint and reflect the bright light. This crown has a gold flower attached to it. The dancer usually has lots of flowers tucked into their crown.

There are different types of headdress for the dances all made in a similar way. Below you can see some of the variations. Which crown would you wear?







Badong



The badong is like a big necklace. It is made from leather and has been painted gold. Little mirrors have been cut to let the piece sparkle in the sun as the person moves. The slit is at the back of the neck.

Gelang kana



Bracelets, known as gelang kana, tightly encircle the upper arms and the ankles. Each wristband has been pierced to make the raised design. The marking of leather for the gelang kana, badong and crowns take the longest time to make. A great deal of care is needed to form the patterns and ensure they match.



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Anteng





The anteng is wrapped tightly around the top of the chest to keep the sabuk in place. It restricts the dancer's movement but without it her dress would fall down. The arms and shoulders are left uncovered.

Sabuk



The sabuk is similar to a corset. Look how long it is. It is wrapped around the stomach and up the body, like wrapping a mummy in bandages. The body is tightened and flattened, making the dancer appear slimmer.

Sabuk prada



The sabuk prada is a belt that keeps the sarong in place. Look how small the waist is. Do you think a child or an adult would wear this? The process of making costume from leather is similar to that used for making Balinese shadow puppets. A stencil is used to mark the area to be cut. Sharp tools can then cut out the intricate patterns. Colourful stones and small mirrors are added last.



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Sarong



Sarongs are popular in Africa, India and the Pacific Islands as well as Bali. In hot countries a sarong is a comfortable way of covering up. Both men and women wear it because it is very light.

There are two types of sarong. This is a single piece of material. It is worn by holding it behind their back and bringing the material in the left hand over to the right side and the right side over to the left. They then fold it down from the front so that it is secure. Another type has both ends stitched together. It is called a tubular sarong. Like a skirt, you pull it over your legs to the waist. Then the top is folded down so that it acts as a belt and stops it falling down.



Above: A canting needle doing a batik design

The sarong in this box was designed for a woman. Men usually wear one made from cotton and woven in a checked design known as a pelicat sarong. Women, however, have a cotton sarong in a style called batik.



Batik is the art of decorating a sarong by dyeing the material. Most are now produced using a machine but the original method is still used for better quality garments. Thin wax lines are drawn with a needle. The hot wax hardens so that when the cloth is dyed the parts covered with wax do not turn the new colour. The fabric is then hung to dry before being ironed between paper towels. Doing this absorbs the wax leaving the original cloth with a spectacular dyed pattern.

Fan



When would you use a fan? This one is for the dance routine, rather than keeping cool. Many of the dances include girls using fans as part of their show.

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The Legong dance begins with a maidservant miming the shaking of the dance curtain. She then picks up the two small fans on the ground in front of her and dances with these fans. Then she turns upstage to face the two legong dancers who perform together. The maidservant leaves the stage and the two legong begin to tell the story of Princess Langkesari and King Lasem. The princess is lost in the King's forests. While out hunting, he sees her and takes her home to become his wife. She refuses and he locks her in a tower. Her family go into battle against King Lasem. First they send a bird of ill omen to warn the King of his impending death. The audience see them fight but the death of the king is not shown on stage.