



Indian Batik

Batik is a wax resist dyeing technique used to dye fabric. It is an ancient art form. Discoveries show it already existed in Egypt in the 4th century BC, where Batik cloths were used to wrap mummies.

Melted wax (usually a mixture of beeswax and paraffin wax) is applied to cloth before it is dipped in dye. The beeswax sticks to the fabric and the paraffin wax allows the cracking effect we see here in this Indian batik. Wherever the wax has seeped through the fabric, the dye will not be able to penetrate. Sometimes several colours are used, with a series of dyeing, drying and waxing steps which help create pictures.

Thin wax lines are made with a *canting*, which is a wooden-handled tool with a tiny metal cup at one end with a tiny spout (pictured below left). It is out of this spout that the wax seeps. After the last dyeing, the fabric is hung up to dry. Then it is dipped in a solvent to dissolve the wax, or ironed between paper towels or newspapers to absorb the wax.

