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Art and Expression

INTRODUCTION

ARTe: Art and Expression is a biannual book chapter, published under collaboration of Department of Fine Arts, Faculty of Art & Design, UiTM Perak Branch with Galeri Al-Biruni under the supervision of Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia. 'ARTe' is an amalgamation of english word 'Art', and malay word, specifically Perak slang 'Ate' which translate as conversation starter. 'ARTe' uses the concept of book chapter that platform art enthusiasts to express their inner-creativity in the form of literacy conjecture

VISION

Art and expression as aspiration towards stylistic and artistic practices

MISSION

- To enhance the culture of research and academic publication among academician and artist for international recognition
- To promote intellectual, cultural and knowledge sharing through artistic expression
- To celebrate the diversity and differences in arts practices thus creating and intellectual platform for artist to express their interest in art

PUBLICATION FREQUENCY

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CHAPTER 11

TEXTILE TECHNIQUE IN JEWELLERY MAKING – 'SOUMAK' TECHNIQUE

Rozita binti Shamsuddin

Abstract

Textile techniques are traditionally worked with fibres such as linen, cotton, and silk. However, they can also be applied to metal. There has been a recent increase in jewelers using textile techniques in their work, and many books provide a thorough and comprehensive introduction to all the materials and techniques to start in this exciting area of jewelry making. This crossover adaptability is especially evident with metals in the creation of jewelry and adornment. These methods provide an aesthetically rich yet simple way for a jewelry maker to engage with the material. Weaving is the interlacing together of two distinct and separate sets or 'sheets' of threads. Weaving is the interlacing of two sets of elements, one vertical and one horizontal. The two sets of threads lie at right angles to each other. One set is called the warp, and the other set, the horizontal, is called the weft. The two interlaced together to form the structure. In metal application, the vertical element – the warp – is a sheet that is cut into strips or wedges. The horizontal element – the weft – is multiple strands of thin wire twisted together. The pattern is a Plain Weave, in which the wire crosses over the sheet, then under the sheet, continuing over one warp, under one warp. Soumak is one of the weaving techniques in Textile. Soumak is a tapestry technique of weaving sturdy, decorative fabrics used for rugs, domestic bags, and bedding, with soumak fabrics used for bedding known as soumak mafrash. This technique involves wrapping colored weft threads over and under the warp threads, allowing you to work on vertical, horizontal, or diagonal sections at any one time. The beauty of soumak technique in jewelry making sophisticated, unusual, and endlessly appealing.

Keywords: Textile Technique, Soumak, Jewellery Making

11.0 Introduction to Soumak Weaving

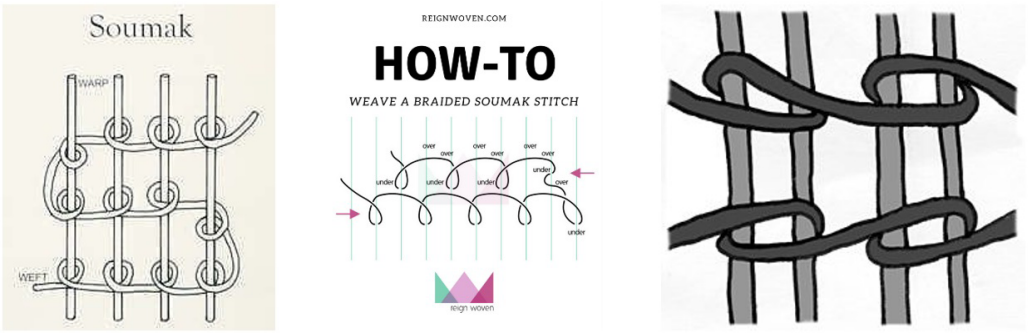

Figure 53: Soumak Weaving Technique

Soumak (also spelled Soumakh, Sumak, Sumac, or Soumac) is a tapestry technique of weaving sturdy, decorative fabrics used for rugs, domestic bags, and bedding, with soumak fabrics used for bedding known as soumak mafrash. Soumak is a type of flat weave, somewhat resembling kilim, but with a stronger and thicker weave, a smooth front face, and a ragged back, where kilim is smooth on both sides. Soumak lacks the slits characteristic of kilim, as it is usually woven with supplementary weft threads as continuous supports. The technique involves wrapping colored weft threads over and under the warp threads, adding strength and embroidery-like pattern (Thompson, 1988).

Like Kilim, Soumak is a flat woven tapestry rug-making technique. Its ancient origins are with weaving cultures in the Caucasus – from the Eastern Mediterranean and the adjacent areas of the Caucasus Mountains and Southwestern Turkmenistan. This technique involves wrapping colored weft threads over and under the warp threads, allowing you to work on vertical, horizontal, or diagonal sections at any one time.

The earliest design traditions of Soumak weaving are believed to have been made solely for use within the community and not for export, with woven images of shamanic and other clan-based ceremonies and rituals. Later productions of Soumak tapestry techniques came out of artists' images rather than cultural-backed representations for ceremonies and rituals, and have been used as beautifully figured practical items - such as rugs, bedding, bags, and saddlebags.

A technical description:

"The technique of making a soumak involves wrapping wefts over a certain number of warps (usually 4) before drawing them back under the last two warps. The process is repeated from selvage to selvage. The wefts are discontinuous; the weaver selects colored threads in turn and wraps each within the area which is to have that particular color.

Unlike the kilim, the back is left ragged, with all the loose ends of the differently-colored

weft threads visible, sometimes several inches long, providing extra thickness and warmth. Also unlike kilim, there are no slits where colors meet, as there is a supplementary or structural weft that supports the colored pattern weft.

Some late Soumaks made by the Kurds are, however, "weftless", lacking the structural weft support, and the stitches naturally overlap… Soumak is a type of flat weave, somewhat resembling but stronger and thicker than kilim, with a smooth front face and a ragged back, where kilim is smooth both sides. Soumak lacks the slits characteristic of kilim, as it is usually woven with supplementary weft threads as continuous supports." Soumak Wikipedia.

11.1 The Implementation of Soumak Technique in Jewellery Making

Soumak is a textile technique that is commonly found in the weaving of rugs in the Middle East. The technique has been around for a couple of thousand years and primarily has been used in cloth. Various techniques of weaving in gold and silver, soumak is the most successful method for creating or enhancing jewelry designs.

The beauty of Soumak in jewelry making enhanced sophisticated, unusual, and endlessly appealing. With this technique comes great durability that will last in even the most high-traffic areas. Fabrics and precious metals would seem to be total opposites, like hot and cold or yin and yang. However, despite their obvious differences in hardness, they do possess similar properties-specifically, both are pliable and elastic, and can be stretched and manipulated. And just as fabrics and fibers can be suitable for knitting, crocheting, weaving, or other textile applications, so too can metal sheet and wire be suitable for-well, knitting, crocheting, and weaving (Fisch, 2009).

This crossover adaptability is especially evident with metals in the creation of jewelry and adornments. In jewelry with metals, goldsmiths and silversmiths often apply techniques from weaving, sewing, and basketry, using sheet and wire in place of fabric and fiber to create intricate pieces that are lightweight and flexible. These methods provide an aesthetically rich yet simple way for a jewelry maker to engage with the material, (Maguire, 2001).

The process of weaving creates "fabric". That "fabric" transforms into ribbons and ruffles, spirals and loops, which become earrings, brooches, necklaces, and pendants. Soumak is actually an ancient tapestry method used in rug and bag making. ... In wirework, thicker wire is similar to the warp, and thinner wire, as wefts, is used to wrap around the warps (Fisch, 2000).

The technique of making a soumak involves wrapping wefts over a certain number of warps (usually 4) before drawing them back under the last two warps. The process is repeated from selvage to selvage (Cassin, 1998). When you think of fiber arts, materials like copper, silver, gold, and steel probably don't come to mind. But renowned artists and jewelers have transformed this unlikely combination into a striking movement that is limitless in its formal possibilities and capacity for beauty. Showcasing stunning work that blends jewelry, sculpture, and clothing, Textile Techniques in Metal is the first and only comprehensive book on the innovative intersection of the fiber and

metal arts.

This unique method of weaving offers great control when creating sculptural forms, like pods or other curvilinear forms. The control with how long or short you space the warp as you weave. The coiling around each wire as you weave, allows you to control that spacing. This is the shape as you weave, with more space between the wires when forming out, and less space between the wires when narrowing the shape.

The challenge is working with the tension and work-hardening of the single wire. It is a matter of experimenting, as each metal has its specific strength, and that strength will differ from one metal to the next. If you have never woven it before, craft wire would be most suggested for practice (much cost-effective). Pattern and form are up to each individual's imagination.

11.2 Fabrication Process of Making Soumak Jewellery

Textile techniques in general, and soumak weaving in particular, offer the opportunity to work in new ways with familiar forms of sheet and wire. In the process of mastering these techniques, one can explore color, pattern, texture, structure, and scale. Design concepts are a contemporary look and the element of design is a geometric shape. Even though weaving is a traditional technique but with a suitable design approach, there will be weave jewelry with an innovative design and pattern.

Metal is a new material in weaving, which has the potential to be marketed as a new approach in jewelry. Based on early study weaving or textile technique is one of a favourite's techniques was applied in jewelry making. Name like Arline Fisch, Barbara Berks, and Hanne Behrens are popular artists using this technique in creating jewelry. Some of the artists applied weaving as their artwork in painting or sculpture-like Suzzanne Donazetti and John Searles.

11.2.1 Design Process

The design process begins with the development of the idea using soumak textile techniques. The development of ideas is based on the possibility of the technique that can do with the metal application. Geometrical shapes are suitable designs created to apply the soumak technique. Round and square created with the combination of gemstones to make a jewelry product which is a brooch design. The syntactic cubic zirconia was used to enhance the beauty of the soumak technique in the product.

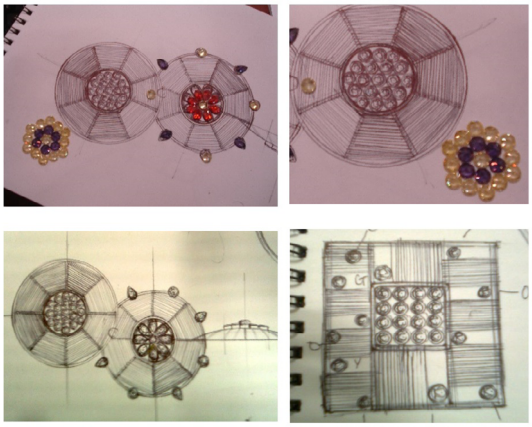

Figure 54: Sample of brooch designs to make a jewelry product

11.2.2 Final Design Selection

The final design is selected based on the possibility of the design to make using Soumak technique. The only geometrical design will produce into brooch product.

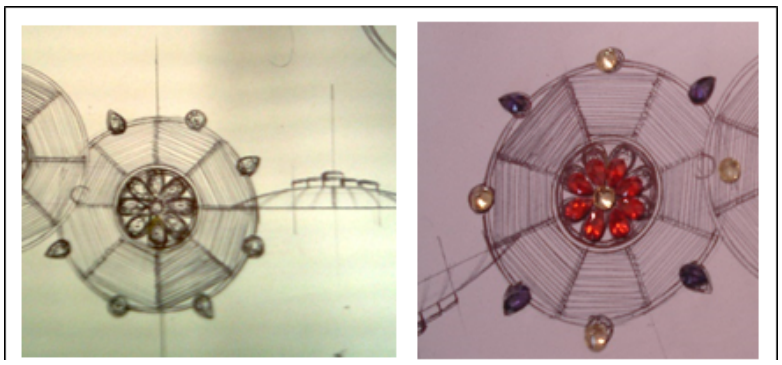

Figure 55: Sample 1 brooch design making in geometric form using weaving (soumak) technique.

11.2.3 Fabrication Process

The next process of doing weaving jewelry using the soumak technique is the fabrication or assembly process. In this stage, the soumak technique will be the main technique used to fabricate the final design of the brooch. The material used is 925 silver wire with 2 sizes of wire. Warp, the vertical wire is 1.5mm, and the weft, the horizontal line is 0.5mm. The structure of the shape will be made to weave the wire into a warped line. The process continues with the wire till the end of the structure. The step-by-step process refers to the picture below from no 1.3.3.1 – 1.3.3.6 with an explanation about the process.

11.2.3.1 Material Selection

The main material used is 925 Silver wire that will be wrapped into weft wire to form the selected design. The design is a geometrical design like round and square. The end product will be set with syntactic cubic zirconia gemstones like citrine, amethyst, tourmaline, and peridot. The combination of 2 materials will enhance the jewelry product that can be accepted by jewelry customers. The gemstones are set with different settings like bezel setting, claw setting, and bead setting.

Figure 56: Two different sizes of wire are ready to weave. The size of warp is 1.5mm and the size of weft is 0.5mm, one vertical (the warp) and one horizontal (the weft).

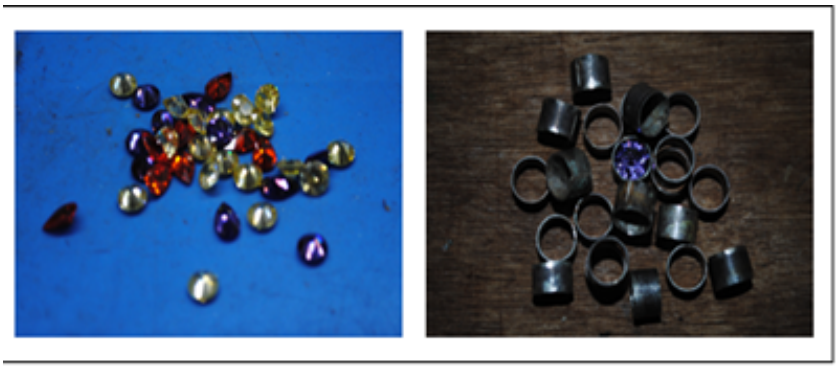

Figure 57: Different stones like amethyst, citrine, peridot, cubic zirconia are set in a variety of stone settings like a bead, claw, bezel, and bezel setting

11.2.3.2 Alloying Process

Pure silver will alloy to get a 925 silver metal to make a wire. The process to make a 925 silver from pure silver is an alloying process. After the alloying process, the material will be molded in the ingot to get a rod or bar metal. The silver metal will be formed into wire using a wire drawing tool. 2 different sizes of wire will be produced to make a soumak technique.

Figure 58: Silver is the main material to make a jewelry product because it's cheap and easy to get. Silver will alloy with copper to get sterling silver to make a wire.

Figure 59: Silver melts with acetylene gas to get a small rod or bar

Figure 59: Silver bar inside a groove will be pulled to make a small wire Drawing the plate is a machine to make a wire to get a suitable size for weaving purposes. The requirement size for weaving is 0.5mm.

11.2.3.3 Stone Setting Process

The stone setting process is the last process of doing jewelry products using the soumak technique. Different types of settings will be applied to set a variety of gemstones. Claw, bezel, and bead are a setting used to set the gemstones.

Figure 60: The first step to make a bezel setting for round shape amethyst. The size will be measured following the size of the stone. A small plate will be bending to get a round shape and will be joined with solder.

Figure 61: All the gemstones are ready to join with the main jewelry product.

11.2.3.4 Soldering Process

The stone setting will be soldered into jewelry products to enhance the design of the soumak weaving. Different sizes and cuts are selected to combine with the main product to make the jewelry design interesting.

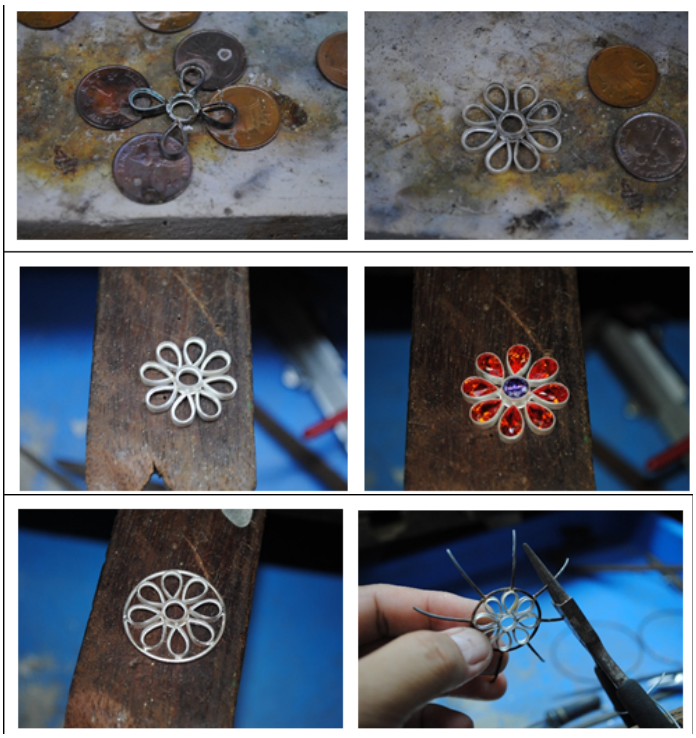

Figure 62: The stone setting are joined to set the stone to follow the final design

11.2.3.5 Soumak Weaving Process

This is the main process of the implementation of soumak weaving in jewelry products. The process continues with the coiling or arrangement of wires to the warp (vertical line). The wires will be weaved to the main product till the end of the vertical line. The coiling should be as close as you can to cover the whole of the vertical line.

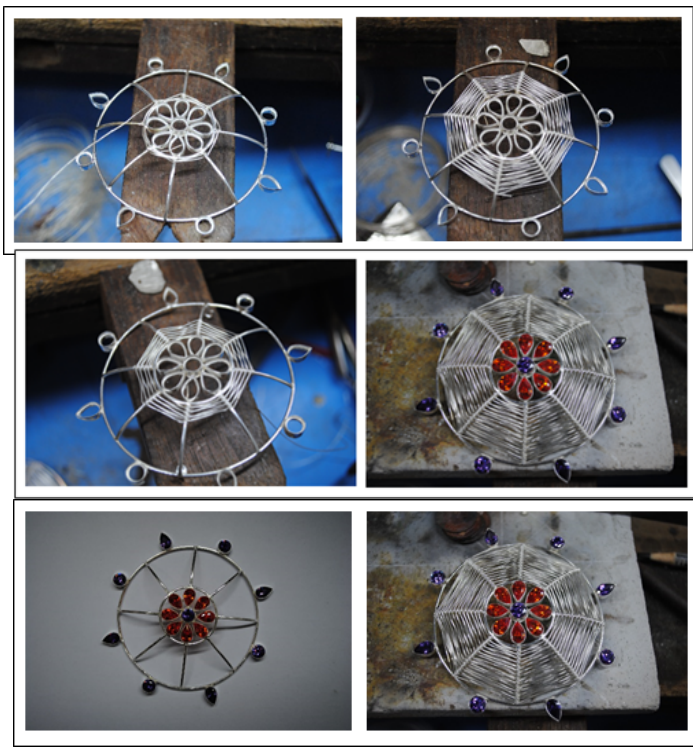

Figure 63: Step by step process Soumak technique. A full frame will be weaved with a small wire to cover the whole empty space with the metal.

11.2.3.6 Finished Product 'Soumak Brooch'

The finished product of the weaving jewelry will be set with synthetic cubic zirconia gemstones. The setting used is Bezel and Claw setting. The cubic zirconia cut and style is pear, marquise, and round brilliant cut. The combination of these gemstones will enhance the beauty of the brooch design.

Figure 64: Brooch with weaving/soumak technique design

11.3 Discussion - Product of Jewellery Using Textile Technique (Soumak)

The collection of jewelry design using the Soumak technique is called Weaved Jewelry. Different designs of the brooch are created and produced using the textile technique (Soumak technique). The exploration of this technique in jewelry enhances the possibility of other techniques to be used in the jewelry-making technique. The Weaved Jewellery is a contemporary look, simple and elegant.

The exploration gave an insight into the potential of weaving techniques as jewelry that could be promoted in today's marketplace. The representation of the traditional art and its revitalization would only have been possible through the strong commitment, dedication, and new invention. The new material for weaving possibly could promote the traditional technique with a new approach.

Figure 65: Variety of designs of Silver Brooch jewelry using Soumak technique

Figure 66: Sample product of Soumak Jewelry (Necklace and Pendant)

11.4 Conclusion

The exploration of the weaving technique on metal application successfully fulfills the objective of this research. Weaving is not only applied on yarn, pandanus leaves, or mengkuang leaves but also could be applied on metal. The specific criteria of metal used are the key to the success besides the suitable weaving technique. The most important criteria of metal are the suitable thickness that could form design using a weaving technique. The creation is a never-ending story, so with this new invention, there is a lot of design development that could be explored not only in terms of the technique but also in terms of material used. Weaved jewelry could be one of the saleable items in the market with the proper marketing strategy. Not only for the local market but also could be exported to the international level. So, in the future weaved jewelry is possible to have it in gold, white gold, silver, gold, or silver plated and also platinum. The important thing is to create a very good and nice weaving pattern that could attract consumers to buy. Besides that weaved jewelry also could be mixed with other materials or stone-like diamonds, sapphires, rubies, or emerald. Semi-precious stone also could be used as an alternative stone with a very reasonable price range.

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