OXFORD ASIAN TEXTILE GROUP

Newsletter No. 26 **October 2003**

Work by Naoko Yoshimoto exhibited in *Through the Surface,* a touring exhibition organized by the Surrey Institute of Art and Design. Partially deconstructed child's dress with threads from the dress placed at the bottom, the dress then printed by photo transfer. (See p. 29)

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

Members whose interests extend beyond the history or beauty of textiles or the pleasure of weaving, embroidering and making for themselves, must be as disappointed as I was in the outcome - or failure of any outcome - of last month's meeting of the World Trade Organization in Cancun.

After farmers, textile workers in the so-called Third World suffer most from the present imbalance of trade, and most of these live in Asia. If poor countries are to benefit from trade, they need to be able to sell their products to rich countries. And yet the countries of the developed West, especially the U.S.A. and E.U., while preaching the gospel of Free Trade to the developing countries - under threat of cutting off aid or loans - far from practising what they preach, impose punitive tariffs on their imports

Clothing, India's second largest export to the U.S.A. is subject to a 19% import duty there, whereas manufactured goods from such countries as France, Germany and Japan are taxed at between 0 and 1%.. A shirt made by a worker in Bangladesh attracts 15-20 times as much import duty when it enters the U.S.A. as does one made in Britain. America's 25,000 cotton farms receive more than $3bn a year in subsidies which, the International Cotton Advisory Committee claims, lowers world prices by about 25%. All this makes the U.S.A. out to be the Big Bad Wolf of world trade, but I am ashamed to say that Britain and the rest of the E.U. are not far behind.

Cancun provided a wonderful opportunity for the West to show generosity - and, indeed, in the long run self-interest - by taking the first steps towards replacing Free (and not so Free) trade with Fair Trade. This opportunity was not taken. I understand that if the developing countries could raise their share of trade by just 1% it would lift hundreds of millions of people out of extreme poverty; the resultant increased prosperity all round could only be good for the developed countries too. I remember some years ago a friend who spent most of his life working for F.A.O. in Bangladesh, after a particularly bad and long period of famine, when the media in the West were rejoicing in what they perceived as relief when the price of rice dropped dramatically, saying "It does not matter what the price of rice is if you have no money."

PROGRAMNE

Wednesday 26 November at 5A5 pm.
the Pauling Centre, 58 Banbury Road, Oxford

TEXTILES AND DRAGON-SNAKES

Tracing the Ernst Vatter Collection in Eastern Indonesia
by Ruth Barnes

A detective story of textiles, baskets and the power of old photographs
told with her usual wit and erudition by our Chairman,
Research Associate at the Ashmolean Museum.

Wednesday 11 February 2004 at 5.45 p.m.
at the Pauling Centre, 58 Banbury Road, Oxford

THE LINEN GODDESS

by Sheila Paine

Following the publication of her book of the same title,
a chance to relive with Sheila the excitements and rewards
of her textile travels

Refreshments will be served from 5.15 p.m. before both meetings.
Members free. Non-members welcome, £2

Further information from the programme secretaries:
Rosemary Lee (01491 873276; rosemary.lee@talk21.com) or
Fiona Sutcliffe (01491 872268; J.V.Sutcliffe@talk2l.com)

TEXTILES IN THE ECONOMIC BOTANY COLLECTIONS,
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

The Economic Botany Collections (EBC) at the Royal Botanic Gardens (RBG), Kew, were founded by the first official Director of the Gardens, Sir William Hooker, and are housed in the Sir Joseph Banks Building. Consisting of over 78,000 botanical samples and artefacts, the rationale for the Economic Botany Collections is as relevant to-day as it was in 1847: "to render great service, not only to the scientific botanist, but to the merchant, the manufacturer, the physician, the chemist, the druggist, the dyer, the carpenter and the cabinet-maker, and artisans of every description, who might here find the raw materials employed in their several professions correctly named" (RBG 1988).

Although a few individual items and categories of materials have been the subject of published research, the textile collection as a whole has not been fully investigated. Despite its size and diversify, and the inclusion of a significant number of textile items in the *Plants + People* exhibition in Museum No. 1, the textile collection remains a little known and under-used resource for the study of textiles.

This article documents some of the outcomes of a research project undertaken by the authors during 2001-2003 to obtain data on the textile collection that would expand and refine the available knowledge and understanding of it, and that could be used to explain and illustrate its uniqueness and diversity.

A Sir Joseph Banks Scholarship funded the project. The Scholarships were established to support the study of the EBC and to:

1. add to the non-botanical knowledge and understanding of them,

2. assess their standing and relationship with other collections,

3. contribute to their collection, curation and conservation,

4. explore the contribution they and similar collections can make to education and to the conservation of cultural and biological diversity, especially in developing countries.

The EBC of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, contains approximately 2505 plant-derived items classified as "material fibres". These include numerous specimens of raw and prepared fibres, a large number of yarn, ropes and fabric samples, and a moderately sized collection of textile artefacts. Ethnographic artefacts mingle with exploratory research into innovative fibre use in a categorization system based upon plant systematics (family, gnus, species). The collection is unique in that it provides a life cycle analysis for many fibres, from plant to fibre in various stages of processing through to the finished artefact. The geographic distributions for the items in the collection are wide, and many of the earliest acquired artefacts reflect the location of British colonies overseas in the nineteenth century. Items from

.Africa, Asia-Temperate, Asia-Tropical, Australasia, Europe, Central America, Pacific and Southern America are represented. The examples chosen to illustrate this article are from Asia.

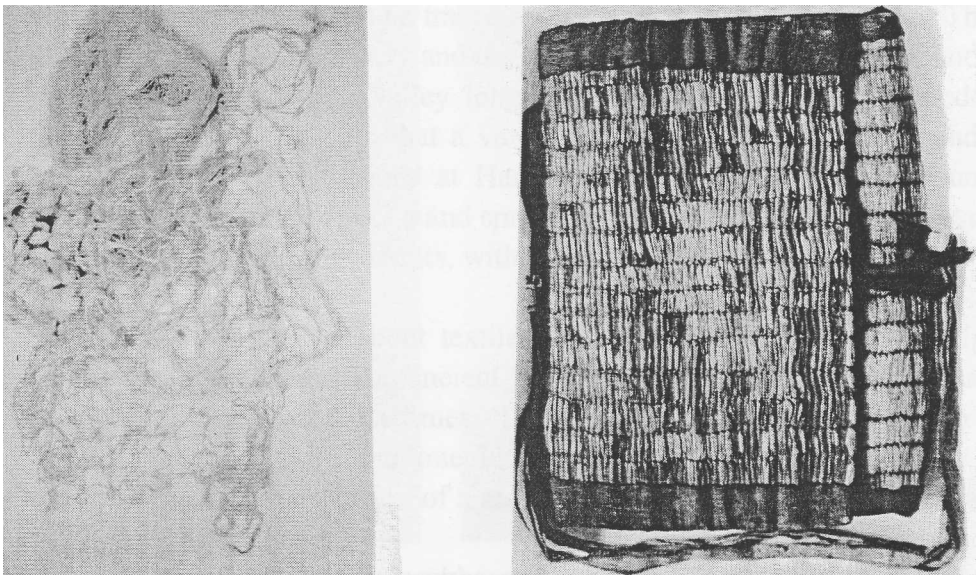

Fig. 1 (left) ASCLEPIADACEAE Calotropis procera, cat. no-$_1$1 49267, Floss, fibre & net, India 1915. Square mesh net structure made from spun and plied yarn. Fig.2 (right) TYPHACEAE Typha japonica, cat. no-.34555, bag made of the culms. Japan 1893. Twined structure with unspun weft. The simple fold-over bag is bound with a plain weave strip that has been stitched to the edges of the twined material and has been decorated with what appears to be a geometric design that may have been applied using a dye or a pigment.

The collection contains examples of all of the well-known plants from which textile fibres are extracted, e.g, cotton, flax, and specimens of lesser used plants, some of which are occasionally referred to in the textile literature. These include *Calatropis procera* from the family *Asclepiadaceae* (common name "giant milkweed" or "vegetable silk") (Fig. 1). The most commonly used plant parts, e.g.. stem, leaf, seed hairs, are represented, but also a small number of specimens made from less common sources, including *Typha japonica* from the family *Typhaceae* (common name "cattail"), derived from the culms (hollow or pithy stalk or stem of grasses or grass-like stems) (Fig. 2).

A wide variety of techniques used to construct textile fabrics can be found, including fabrics made directly from fibres, e.g. backcloth, fabrics made from yams without the aid of looms, e.g. looping, knotting, braiding, and both hand and machine loom-woven fabrics. The collection also includes a number of specimens of what might be termed "naturally occurring fabric structures", i.e. naturally occurring materials with textile-like properties and/or uses. Examples include *Luffa aegyptiaca* from the family *cucurbitaceae* (common name "luffa"(fig. 3)

The main categories of decorative techniques used to colour and embellish textiles e.g. dyeing, printing, embroidery - are also represented'; figure 4 illustrates a particularly fine woven length of kasuri dyed cloth.

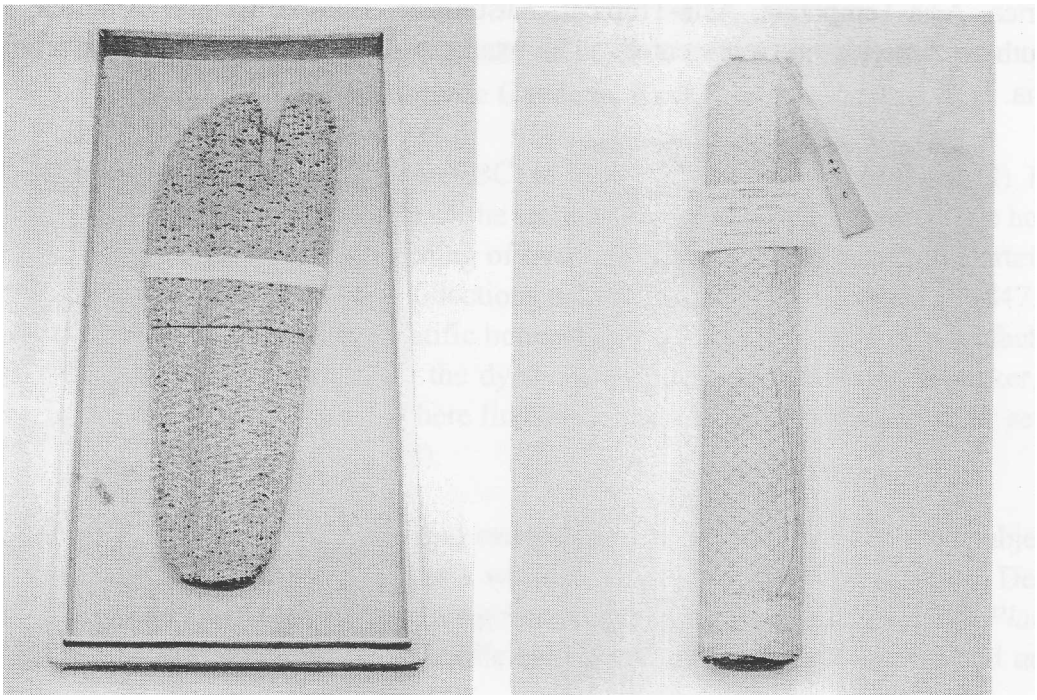

Fig. 3 (left) CUCURBITACEAE Luffa aegyptiaca, socks of vascular tissue (insoles?), Japan 1898. Natural mat of insole shaped raw fibres. A cut has been made between where the big toe would be placed, and the other toes. Sliced from the luffa fruit, the fibrous structure can be clearly seen. Fig. 4 (right) MORACEAE Broussonetia sp., Jofu fabric of mono fibre, Loochoo Islands. Len^{g}th of plain woven fabric stored on a roll and bound with paper strips. The cream coloured ground is decorated with reddish brown dyed areas using Kasuri dying technique. The warp and the weft yarnns are resist tied in bundles and then dyed before being woven, resulting in a double or compound ikat fabric.

As previously mentioned, the artefacts are ordered by plant genealogy, that is, by plant family, genus and species, relating to the particular artefact. The authors are currently working towards creating a classification system for recording information about the textile items including fibre source, part of plant used, and the textile structure represented. It is hoped that this will provide a short-cut to locating an item if the plant genealogy is not known. The conservation of the items in the collections is of primary importance, and recommendations will be set out in the research report regarding on-going care for textile items.

The *Plants + People* exhibition housed in the Museum No. I (opposite the palm house) showcases some 450 items, including textiles, from the collection, and is open to the public during garden opening times. The exhibits that are stored at the Sir Joseph Banks Building are not otherwise on view, though specialists wishing to see them may contact the Curator, Centre for Economic Botany, Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, Richmond. Surrey, TW9 3AE, for more information.

Janette Gibson
Alison Lister

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Alison Lister, B.A. Hons, Dip.Cons., textile conservator and educator, 1991-2000 lecturer at the Textile Conservation Centre, University of Southampton, currently working free-lance in the Bristol area. AlisonMLister@aol.com

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THE SARI: A SURVEY

ORIGIN

The origin of Indian textiles can be traced to the Indus Valley Civilization. The art of fine weaving of hand and loom embroidery and the complex processes of bleaching and dyeing were perfected by the people of the valley long before textile industry was modernized. References in ancient history indicate that a variety of costumes made of silk and cotton fabrics were used in India. Excavations at Harappa and Mohenjo Daro have unearthed household items like needles made of bone and spindles made of wood, amply suggesting that homespun cotton was used to make garments, with fragments found at the sites.

The first literary information about textiles in India can be found in the Rig Veda, which refers to the art of weaving, The ancient Indian epics - Ramayana and Mahabharata also speak of a variety of fabrics of those times. The Ramayana in particular refers to the rich styles worn by the aristocracy on the one hand and the simple clothes worn by the commoners and ascetics. The story speaks of a garment of considerable length and drapery.

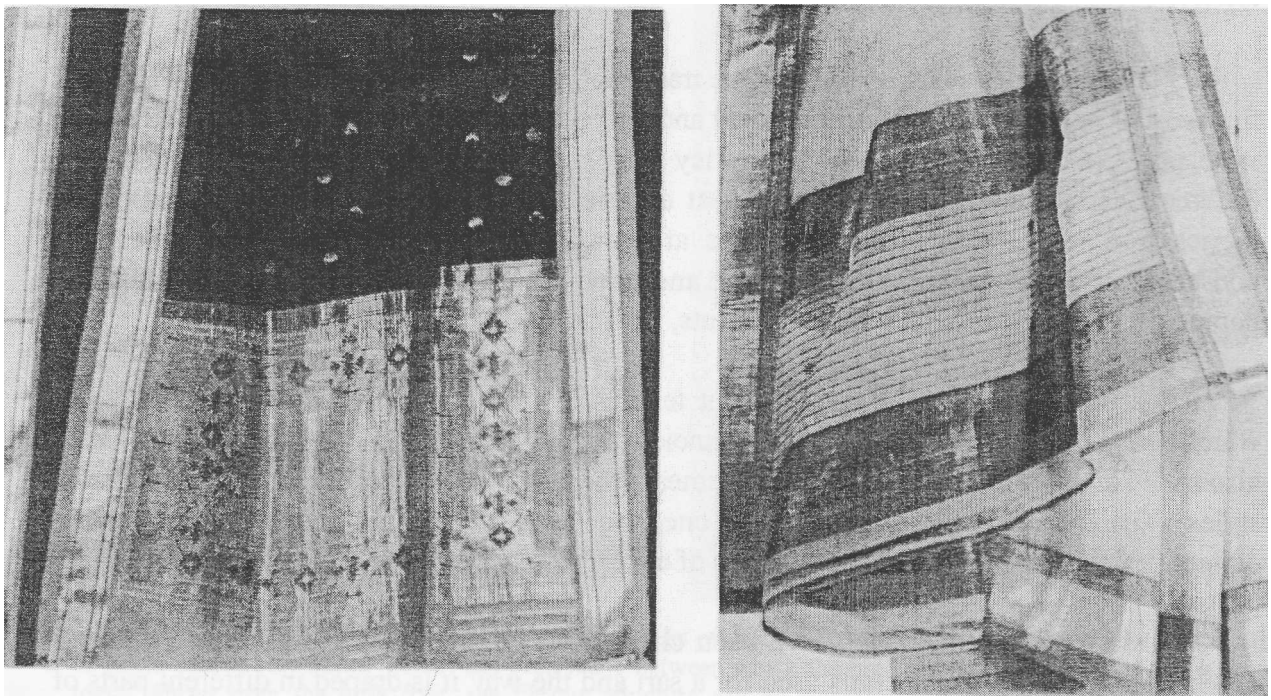
Over the centuries there have been changes. The diversity of the Indian people is reflected in a variety of materials used for a sari and the way it is draped in different parts of the country. Varying from the nine-yard length draping between the legs, to fashion flowing pants, to the traditional six-yard sari, however, is a classic and allows for generous pleating and draping around the body and over the shoulder, almost Grecian in its elegance.

"The sari," it is said, "was born on the loom of a fanciful weaver. He dreamt of Woman; the shimmer of her tears; the drape of her tumbling hair; the colours of her many moods; the softness of her touch. All these he wove together. He could not stop. He wove for many yards, and when he was done, the story goes, he sat back and smiled and smiled and smiled."

The past traditions of the textile and handlooms can still be seen among the motifs, patterns, designs and the old techniques of weaving still employed by the weavers. The magical combination of material and colour has led to the creation of a myriad of traditional sari styles.

PAITHANI - The Cultural Fabric

The art of weaving Paithani saris is 2,000 years old. The Rig Veda mentions a golden woven fabric and the Greek records talk of gorgeous paithani fabrics from the great ancient trading and industrial centre, Pratishan or Paithan in Maharashtra. Paithan is the modem name of the town on the river Godavari, 50 km from Aurangabad, which gave birth and name to the well-known saris, the Paithani saris. During the mediaeval period, the Marathas extended their patronage to textile activities. It is believed that Madhavrao Peshwa even asked for the supply of *asavali dupattas* in red, green, saffron, pomegranate and pink colours.



Paithani, left, and Chanderi, right.

The Nizam of Hyderabad was also a patron for the sari. His daughter-in-law, Nilofer, is believed to have introduced new motifs to the border and *pallav* (outer end of the sari), designs bringing in some Mughal influence.

Besides Paithan, the saris are woven in Yeola, known for the mango motif *pallavs,* and in Pune, Nasik and Malegaon in Maharashtra. The paithani sari has played a significant role in weaving together the cultural fabric of Maharashtra.

Paithani saris, gold embroidered *zari* sari with its wonderful designs and woven borders, generally come in "Kum-Kum" colours in combination with a contrasting colour. Paithani are generally decorated with the gold dor or coin motif. The yarn used is pure silk, and the *zari* or gold threads were drawn from pure gold in the olden days. Today silver is substituted for gold, thus making the paithanis more affordable to many people.

The traditional Paithani used to be a plain sari with a heavy *zari* border and ornamental *pallav,* To-day many saris have motifs like stars, circles, peacocks, flowers and paisleys. The basic weave of the paithani sari is the simple tabby weave. However, many designers have incorporated jacquard weaves in the sari. The paithani borders and *pallavs* are heavily adorned with these motifs: *tota-maina* (parrot), *bangdi-mor* (peacock with round design), *asavali* (flower and vine), *narli* (coconut). Old designs used two to three colours which were integrated in the sari in *dhup chaon* pattern, which, when translated, means light and shade.

CHANDERI - A Wisp of Fabric

It is said that Chanderi's former prosperity depended on its strategic position as a sort of base for armies moving south from the time of the Sultans of Delhi. To-day it is a well-preserved mediaeval town, in Madhya Pradesh, famed for the craft of sari weaving, with beautiful structures executed in the Bundelkhandi style. However, the documented history of Chanderi goes back to the early eleventh century, which is a kaleidoscope of movement and activity prompted by its strategic location. On the borders of Malwa and Bundelkhand, the town dominated the trade routes of central India, near to the main route to the ancient ports of Gujarat as well as to Malwa, Mewar, central India and the Deccan, thus making it a prized possession for the different invaders of Hindustan.

A fine muslin sari, also known as the *shallu,* was woven for the local aristocracy and Mughal court during the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century these fine saris were woven for the personal use of the Maharanis of Baroda, Gwalior, Nagpur and Indore.

Since the 1940s silk warps have been used in Chanderi muslins instead of cotton. the silk is of undyed, still-gummed, low denier variety that gives the cloth a crisp sheen while maintaining the off-white colouring typical of Chanderi fabrics. Although the traditional unbleached colouring is still popular, many Chanderi muslin are now in pastel and bright colours. Despite their transparency, these saris often had two endpieces, the inner being white silk strips and the outer (called a *tarz* in Chanderi) using *zari* and coloured threads. One characteristic of to-day's Chanderi muslins is that they have many *buti* in the field and in the endpiece, although they were only introduced in the late nineteenth century.

Three types of Chanderi saris are traditionally woven. First, the lightest muslins, which were almost completely plain, with a narrow border of complementary-warp *zari* and an endpiece with a few narrow *zari* bands or one single, wider, band Second, the saris with broader borders woven in supplementary-warp *zari* with coloured supplementary-warp silk embellishments, woven into small repeat floral or geometrical designs. The third type called *do-chashmee* (two streams) is no longer made, but had wide borders with brightly coloured supplementary-warp silk in a satin weave upon which were supplementary bands of white geometric patterns; in some saris the borders were reversible.

MAHESHWARI - Lines of Elegance

The Maheshwari sari is believed to date back to the Mohenjo Daro era. Maheshwari saris are woven at Maheshwar, a glorious city in the dawn of Indian civilization when it was known as Mahismati, capital of King Kartvirajun. The temple town on the banks of the river Narmada finds mention in the epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata.

Maheshwar was revived to its ancient glory by Rani Ahilyabai Holkar of Indore around 250 years ago. She wanted some simple nine-yard saris to present to the Peshwa rulers *(de facto* rulers under the Marathas), and so she brought weavers from Surat and Malwa to Maheshwar specifically for that purpose.

Traditionally the Maheshwari borders have geometric motifs, as Ahilya Bai did not wear saris with floral motifs. However, the weaving of the once flourishing Maheshwari sari was a languishing craft by the 1950s. After Independence, along with royal patronage, tariff protection also vanished. In their heyday Maheshwari weavers got silk yam from China, *zari* from Surat and dyes from Germany. However, during World War II, yam and dyes became scarce and by the 1960s the number of Maheshwari weavers was reduced to less than three hundred.

Woven mostly in cotton, the typical Maheshwari sari has a plain body and sometimes stripes or checks in several variations, with a border woven in leaf or floral designs. It had the distinctive five stripes on the *pallav* running across its width, out of which three were coloured and two were white. The mat border designs have a wide range in leaf and floral patterns. Maheshwari has a reversible border, known as *bugdi*. But now a lot of experimentation with respect to the fabric and motifs has been done in Maheshwari saris, no doubt to increase its appeal in a market of changing and varied tastes.

The weavers have now been organized by the descendants of the Holkar dynasty to improve working conditions and ensure a better return on their craft: the beautiful saris whose grace and elegance is hard to match.

PATOLA - Queen of Silks

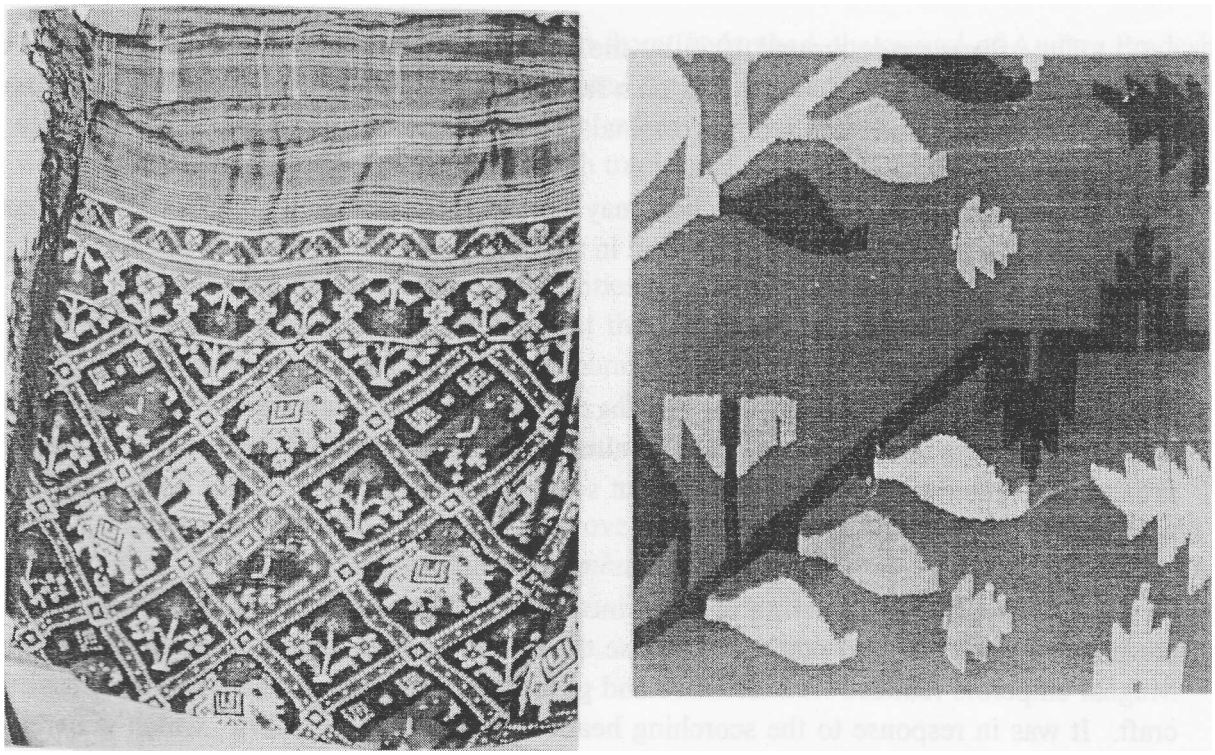
Many of the world's ancient cultures practised the single ikat craft, but the more complex double ikat exists only in Bali, Japan and India, where it is known as *patolu* (plural *patola).* Patan, the former capital of Gujarat, is a place famous for *patola* saris. The historic town of Patan, founded in A.D. 796, is situated on the banks of the river Saraswati, about 51 km from Mahesena and 130 km from Ahmedabad. Originally known as Anhil-Vad-Pattan, the town flourished during the Solanki dynasty in the eighth to eleventh centuries. Ravaged by time and plundered by Nahmud of Ghazni in A.D. 1024 for religion and riches, very little of the city's earlier glory remains.

The Salvi weavers are said to have arrived in Patan from Maharashtra and Karnataka in the twelfth century to make the most of the patronage of the Solanki Rajputs. According to folklore, as many as 700 Patola weavers accompanied Raja Kumarapala to the palace of Patan. After the fall of the Solanki dynasty, the Salvis found patronage in the affluent Gujarati merchant class, and *the patola* saris soon became an integral part of Gujarati traditions.

The Patan *patola* combines the art of tying and dyeing of the warp and weft threads and their weaving together, when each warp thread is carefully placed against the

corresponding colours of the weft. This is a speciality of Patan which produces very intricate patterns worked with great precision and clarity and the characteristic geometric delineation of the design, while maintaining the soft hazy outlines, a natural effect of the technique.

The *patola* of Patan is done in the double ikat style, which is perhaps the most complicated of all textile designs in the whole world. Both warp and weft threads are tied and deed according to the pattern of the sari. The result is both sides of the sari look exactly alike, and can be worn either way. The dyes used are made from vegetable extracts and other natural colours, which are so fast that there is a Gujarati saying that "the *patola* will tear but the colour will not fade".



Patola, left, and Jamdhana, right

BAILUCHARI - A Figured Silk Saris

Silk weaving of Baluchar continues to be an important landmark of Bengal's handloom tradition. Silks from south India and Banaras have by and large, overshadowed styles from other regions of India. However, one silk tradition that continues to fascinate, is that of Baluchar, a village situated on the banks of the Bhagirathi, fourteen miles from Berhampore town in Murshidabad district.

The tradition dates back to the seventh century A.D., and since then it has undergone several changes in style and technique. Murshidabad was a thriving trading centre in silks in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, catering to French, British and Dutch demand for the fabric.

The Baluchari tradition of weaving reached its pinnacle of excellence during the reign of Nawab Murshid Quli Khan, after whom the town is named, who extended patronage to the art. The Baluchari saris are inspired from Jamdanis of Dhaka. Their most distinctive feature is the use of human brocade figures to adorn the borders and pallu. The *pallav* has patterns that resemble miniature paintings. Depiction's of kings and noblemen seated on howdahs atop elephants and nautch girls in graceful postures were recurrent themes during this period. The intricately carved terracotta temples of Bishnapur provided ample inspiration for the weavers who reproduce whole epics on the pallu of the sari. The motifs were done entirely in silver *zari*. The ground colours range from sober beige to resplendent blues and reds with contrasting borders, all on fine mulberry silk without twist, creating a soft and heavy texture for brocades.

The efforts made around 1960 by the All India Handicrafts Board to reproduce two old Baluchari sari designs at Vishnapur on a Jacquard loom with 400 hooks failed, the product lacking the softness and vitality of the original.

While the present day Baluchan may not be so grand as its ancestor, it still has a unique appeal, making the wearer stand out in a crowd.

JAMDHANI - Woven Air

A tale runs that the Emperor Aurangzeb had a fit of rage when he one day saw his daughter, princess Zeb-un-Nissa, clad in almost nothing. On being severely rebuked, the princess explained that she had not one but seven *jamahs* (dresses) on her body. Such was the fineness of the hand-woven fabrics.

Jamdani literally means a cup of wine. They are manufactured in Dhaka, where they are referred to as "figured muslin" because the design is produced on a muslin fabric. The Mughal emperors realized its excellence and gave royal patronage to the development of this craft. It was in response to the scorching heat of the sun that this fabric, which is bereft of colour but very comfortable, was designed. White colour and its different tones are used in the production *of jamdanis.* The old undivided Bengal had an ancient textile tradition rooted above all in the skilled weaving of delicate muslin. The fine *mai-mais* and *jamdanis* of Dhaka were prized products.

The base fabric *for jamdanis* constitutes the unbleached cotton yams, and the design is woven or, as they say, "embroidered on the loom", using bleached cotton yams so that a light and dark effect is created The ancient Hindu literature has recognized five tones of white colour: the bright gold white, tooth-white, pure sandal white, the autumn cloud white and the autumn moon white.

Jamadani fabric weaving is also referred to as "brocading with cotton", where the design is produced using cotton yams. The Dacca *jamdani* is woven by hand on the old-fashioned Jala loom. In Bangladesh, weavers use fine Egyptian cotton, while the Indian weavers use only indigenous raw material. The single warp is usually ornamented with two

extra weft followed by ground weft. As regards the various designs, floral motifs and figured motifs in both geometrically abstract and stylized forms were found. The traditional motifs include *chameli* and *genda bootis, pan booti* and the *kalka motif The jamdanis* are often given different names depending on the kind of motif on the fabric, like *phulwari jamdani, jaaldar jamdani* and *panna hazara jamdani,* where floral sprays are arranged in such a way that they give the effect of a thousand glittering emeralds. In the past poets referred to these fabrics with such names as *shabnam* (evening dew), *maimais khas* (muslin reserved for kings) and *abrawan* (flowing water).

GADWAL - A Blend of Richness

Gadwal, a small town around 150 km from Hyderabad, the capital of Andhra Pradesh, is one of the centres where a typical, traditional Andhra sari is made. These saris are unusual, different and dignified. The body is cotton, while the border and *pallu* are silk. They are woven separately and attached later on. Rich traditional designs adorn both the border and the *pallu.*

It is believed that the brocading abilities of many of the weavers in Gadwal originate from Banaras, where a local Maharaja sent their ancestors to learn brocade weaving skills. The designs, however, do not show any Banaras influences but are strongly south-east Indian in structure and aesthetic quality. They are often regarded as "Puja" saris by local women who wear them for religious and festive occasions.

Gadwal saris were traditionally woven in the interlocked-weft technique (called *kupadam* or *tippadamu* here), often with *kumbam* (also called *kotakomma)* in the borders, and were known as a *kupadam* or a *kumbam* sari, The silk border was either tussar or mulberry, and the body was often of unbleached cotton, although it may contain coloured cotton or silk checks.

Traditional colours for these saris are earth shades of browns, greys and off-whites. However, brighter shades have been introduced for the north Indian buyer. A pure silk version of this sari also existed, usually woven in bright contrasting colours such as canary yellow or lime green.

KANJEEVARAM - Silken Splendour

No Indian bridal trousseau is complete without the *kanjeevaram* sari, characterized by gold-dipped silver thread that is woven onto brilliant silk. Kanchipuram is a famous historical village 650 kin from Madras, the capital of Tamilnadu. This town, with more than 150 years of weaving tradition, was, successively, the capital of the Pallavas, the Cholas and the Rayas of Vijayanagar. During the sixth and seventh centuries some of the best temples in the city were built by the Pallavas. To-day, apart from its temples, Kanchipuram, known as "the silk city", has a thriving handloom industry. The silk weavers of Kanchi settled more than 400

years ago. More than 5,000 families are engaged in the industry and their spectacular creations are marketed at a number of co-operative societies located all over the state.

Kanchipuram specializes in a heavy silk sari woven with tightly twisted three-ply high-denier threads using thick *zari* threads for supplementary-warp and -weft patterning. Interlocked-weft borders are common. *Kanjee* silk is thicker than almost all other silks and is therefore more expensive. The heavier the silk, the better the quality. Only mulberry silk, produced in Makataka and a few parts of Tamilnadu, is right for the classic Kanjeevaram, as it is known, for its texture, lustre, durability and finish.

Traditional motifs such as mango, elephant, peacock, diamond, lotus, pot, creeper, flower, parrot, hen and depiction of stories from mythology are very common in Kanchipuram saris: The saris in dazzling colours are available in numerous designs and variety.

The recent development in the design industry shows the introduction of computerized Jacquard borders in Kanjeevaram silk saris. Though the techniques and the materials are changing with the market demand; the motifs are still conventional and traditional in order to hold the custom and tradition of a Kanchipuram sari.

IN PARTING

Indian civilization has always placed a tremendous importance on unstitched fabrics like the sari and the dhoti, which are given sacred overtones. It has withstood the ravages of father time, seen through dynasties and battles of yore and has emerged, unscathed, in spite of having the hardest of trial. The etymology of the word sari is from the Sanskrit word "sati", which means "strip of cloth". This evolved into the Prakrit "sadi" and was later anglicized into "sari".

The belief was that such a fabric was pure, perhaps because in the distant past needles of bone were used for stitching. Even to the present day, while attending *pujas* or other sacred ceremonies, the men dress up in dhotis while women wear the sari. With the diverse Indian ethnicity and its global appeal the sari will remain timeless.

The saris mentioned above are just a few of the most exclusive woven ones. There are many more woven varieties in silk, cotton and other materials, along with embroidery and printing. Within each area, the saris represent the ethnic diversity. The varieties of saris is a clear indication of India's rich culture.

Pinal Martian Syal
Ashwini Vaidya-Gupte
Textile designers

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CARPETS AND TEXTILES IN FHE IRANIAN WORLD, c.1400-1700

A **Conference Report**

On the last weekend of August some 70 or 80 enthusiasts gathered in Oxford for what it is hoped will be only the first of many such conferences. It was organized by the Beattie Carpet Archive at the Ashmolean Museum and the Iran Heritage Foundation with the support of the British Academy, and was held in the Ashmolean Museum. Its aim was to help fill the gap that exists between historians of the social, economic and literary life of the Iranian world and scholars focused primarily on objects.

The conference was spread over two days with four sessions on the Saturday and three on the Sunday. Each session comprised two papers under an overall title, the sessions being divided by refreshment intervals during which participants talked nineteen to the dozen between themselves on what they had just heard. As you all know, I am particularly interested in the exchange of both goods and ideas throughout Asia and with other parts of the world, so I was delighted to find that "Iranian" was not too narrowly interpreted, but that the sessions included such titles as *Development and Export, Safavid Textiles Abroad, Cross Border Influences* and *Iran and Europe.*

I immediately warmed to the conference with the first session, *Early Sources of Design,*. Julia Bailey's *Carpets and "Kufesque"* argued convincingly that a particular design element in the border of some carpets was derived from kufi inscriptions associated with enthronement. First noticed in a fourteenth century manuscript, this "tall-short-tall" decoration was disseminated to later Anatolian and Timurid carpets as well as those from Safavid Iran, and was frequently elaborated in the short element with motifs including an interlace suggestive of the Celts. Yolande Crowe's paper which followed dealt with Chinese influences as evidenced by embroideries found in the tomb of a thirteenth century Chinese princess. So you see I was in my element!

In the second session Jon Thompson reappraised Timurid carpets and Walter Denny surveyed those of 15th century Anatolia and Tabriz and the so-called "design revolution". Due to the small number of Timurid carpets to survive, the principal source of information is miniature paintings, of which Jon showed many delightful slides, though as the conference went on some of the pictures occurred again and again, turning up like old friends. He considered the development of specific motifs and expounded what you might call the arrangements of designs: whether the comers of borders were "mitred" with the comer motif at 45^0 or not, and whether central motifs appeared to be laid on top of an overall pattern, or whether the latter was adjusted to surround it. Walter Denny denied that there was any division between Iranian and Anatolian in early times; he was more interested in where the design came from than where it was made. He also discussed court carpets.

Under the heading *Safavid Carpets: Development and Export,* Christine Klose followed on with *Traces of Timurid Carpets in Contemporary and Later Carpets from the Near East,* and Jessica Hallett went off on a new tack with a survey of Persian carpets in

Portugal. Christine covered two important groups of carpets, classified as "lattice carpets" and "cartouche carpets", and like Jon Thompson she had to rely mainly on Persian miniature paintings for her examples - in many cases the same ones as his. Jessica Hallett, who actually lives in Portugal, was not so dependent on paintings, but also had access to archival material and the more than 100 actual carpets that survive in Portuguese public collections. It seems that it was that country's discovery of sea routes into the Indian Ocean and opening up of direct trade with Asia that led to a dramatic increase in the number of Persian and Indian carpets being imported into Europe, especially Portugal itself Jessica felt this was a source that had been neglected and recommended it to researchers to enhance our understanding of the Persian and Indo-Persian carpet.

So far it had been carpets, carpets all the way, but the last session on Saturday turned our attention to other textiles in two fascinating ways, under the heading of *Safavid Textiles Abroad.* First, Katsuhiko Abe introduced us to the world of *Kire Tekagami,* Japanese textile albums (on which I hope he will contribute an article for a later number of this newsletter). Iranian textiles were among the exotic textiles that started to be collected as *objets d'art* in Japan more than a thousand years ago and assembled into what were in effect books of samples Safavid examples started to be brought into Japan by Portuguese traders in the sixteenth century and their choice and arrangement in the albums casts an interesting light on connoisseurship in seventeenth and eighteenth century Japan. The last talk, by Mary Anderson McWilliams, *A Persian Velvet for a Boston Brahmin,* told us more about Isabella Stewart Gardner, founder of the Gardner Museum in Boston, than of the one Safavid velvet panel to be seen among the old masters there, but was none the less enjoyable for that.

Many of the participants in the conference were accommodated just down Beaumont Street in Worcester College, which, despite its lack of hot water, was convenient and made a pleasant venue in which to continue networking. (Not that I did much networking myself in the evening. Instead I enjoyed *Hobson's Choice* at the Playhouse, a new version which sets this classic comedy in the present day Salford Asian community and Hari Hobson's dress shop and tailoring establishment - not entirely inappropriate!) Some of us also enjoyed strolling round the glorious gardens on Sunday morning. We shared the College with an American church group, which could lead to some startling and unexpected exchanges at the breakfast table, but they were all quite amicable and we returned to Ashmolean refreshed for the second day's papers.

These commenced with a session on *Cross Border Influences: the Indo-Persian Connexion,* opened by Steven Cohen on *Parallels Between the Manufacture of Luxury Textiles from fine, downy goat hair.* Although both Safavid Iranians and Mughal Indians used the short, fine underhair of certain goats for knotted pile carpets, twill tapestry shawls and felts, it was used in different ways at different times, and an elaboration of this was the meat of the talk. I was particularly interested in what he had to say about the felts, which I had never before noticed could be distinguished, often folded on top of other carpets, in miniature paintings. Willem Floor's *Import of Indian Textiles into Seventeenth Century Persia* was based wholly on an examination of archives (no slides!). His thesis was that many of the textiles used in Safavid Iran were not actually made there, and of those imported, most came from

India. His talk discussed the various centres of production that sent textiles to Persia, their relative importance, and what went where.

Two European speakers filled session 6, *Iran and Europe*. First Beata Biedronska-Slota, from Poland, talked about Persian sashes preserved in Polish collections (see exhibition listings below p.31). She showed us some splendid portraits of eighteenth century Polish noblemen wearing Persian sashes in the style of a cummerbund, and it seems they were an essential part of aristocratic dress. There is nothing to suggest that there were ever any Persian weavers in Poland, but there is evidence that not all the sashes were made in Persia, and it turned out that some were made by Armenians in Istanbul and others by Frenchmen in Lyons, both specially for the Polish market. This reminded me of the way Kashmir shawls became copied in the West - notably at Paisley, Edinburgh and Norwich She was followed by Rene Bekius of the Netherlands, tracing the place of Armenian merchants in the textile trade of the Dutch East India Company

The final session, *Eastern Fashions and Western Taste,* was shared between two old friends and O.A.T.G. members, Patricia Baker and Jennifer Scarce. Patricia's *"Wrought of Gold or Silver ": Honorific Costumes in Seventeenth Century Iran,* in some ways followed on from the talk she gave to O.A.T.G. on *Seventeenth Century Travellers in Iran at* the A.G.M. in 1998 (see Newsletter no. 12, p. 11), in that she used portraits by European artists to illustrate the garments of both foreigners and Iranian nationals who had been honoured by the shah. Jennifer subtitled her talk "through a glass darkly" or "squeezing a quart into a pint pot"! What she was actually talking about was the identification of the textiles used in sixteenth century Safavid dress as evidenced by the surviving textiles themselves, contemporary manuscript illustration, and descriptions by Western travellers.

In his closing remarks, Jon Thompson said that the conference had arisen from the intentions of the May Beattie Bequest which established the carpet studies centre in the Ashmolean Museum (see O.A.T.G. newsletter no. 17, October 2000). He added that May Beattie and her husband were bacteriologists at the Pasteur Institute in Baghdad, where their house was burgled. This led to her going to the bazaar for replacement items, including rugs, and it was this that had sparked off her interest in carpets, an interest to which she devoted most of the rest of her life.

As May Beattie Fellow in Oxford, Jon wants to form an electronic database of all known carpets dating from before 1800 similar to the Beasley archive of Greek pots set up by the Ashmolean in which all museums of the world have co-operated. His preliminary efforts will go online shortly (see letter p20). Teaching has already started within the framework of Islamic studies, albeit for only one term a year at present, an activity which Jon hoped to expand. He also expressed the hope that this would be but the first of many conferences.

Phyllis Nye

REPORTS OF O.A.T.G. MEETINGS

Ottoman Embroideries: An Exploration of Motifs and Techniques

In June Marianne Ellis gave us a most illuminating introduction to Ottoman embroideries, a subject that she has been involved in for many years, both as an embroidery historian and as a practising embroiderer. Of course Marianne is well known to all OATG members as the author of *Embroideries and Samplers from Islamic Egypt,* where she introduced key pieces from the Newberry collection of medieval Islamic embroideries in the Ashmolean Museum, and more recently as co-author (with Jennifer Wearden) of a Victoria & Albert Museum publication on Ottoman embroidery (see newsletter no. 23, p.24). The latter book is particularly valuable for its discussion and diagrams of stitch techniques used by Turkish embroiderers, and it became clear from her lecture that the intricacies of stitch varieties and the pleasing visual solutions they produce are Marianne's particular delight.

She proved herself to be the perfect expert, able to explain the complex interlacing of threads with such clarity that we all could follow with ease — while we were listening to her discussions of laid and couched, double running and double darning stitches, and of the pulled thread techniques of Turkish embroideries, even the most intricate techniques became crystal-clear — at least for the duration of the lecture!

The cloths decorated with this fine embroidery were destined for a variety of purposes. Tailored garments such as trousers *(shalvar),* women's robes *(entari),* and chemise often had embroidered side panels or hemlines. Kerchiefs *(chevre),* sashes *(kushak)* and trouser girdles *(uchkur)* had stitched floral borders, and a variety of domestic furnishings, such as cushion and mirror covers, were typically embroidered. The elaborately wrapped turbans of Turkish gentlemen were kept on turban stands when not in use, and were covered with delicately embroidered cloths. Food dishes, domestic utensils and gifts were wrapped in cloths *(bohchas)* embroidered with stylised flowers, favourites of which were tulips and carnations.

Marianne used excellent slides to demonstrate her points, often with superb detail shots. Her examples came from many collections in Europe and the United States, but the finest no doubt she found in the Topkapi Museum in Istanbul. It was a great treat for us to be able to see close-up images of so many of these superb textiles. Marianne also brought several sample pieces from her own collection, for us to look at and handle.

Ruth Barnes

Edward Lane Discovers 19th Century Cairo

On 12 July a small group of us met in the *An Englishman's Travels in Egypt* exhibition at the Ashmolean (see newsletter no. 24, p. 22) to hear Jason Thompson talk on Edward Lane, the subject of the exhibition. Thompson is currently writing a biography of Lane and was able to illuminate aspects of his character and working methods.

Richard Lane was related to Gainsborough and many of the sketches show his artistic talent. He often prepared initial outlines using an easily portable device comprising lenses and a prism. The artist, using one eye only, could adjust the lens to frame the required scene and then draw the refracted image on paper. There are some scenes which include a self-portrait of Lane attired in Turkish dress. The exhibition includes a set of garments including matching trousers and jacket such as he would have worn. Egypt was under Ottoman rule and so if his speech or manners were not quite right it was assumed that he was an Ottoman Turk and allowances were made.

The group included the Ashmolean textile conservators Sue Stanton and Flora Nuttgens who had prepared the garments for exhibition. They told us that while humidification treatment and some strengthening of worn parts had been necessary, the real challenge was in display. The very full trousers needed to look as though they could be worn and only part of the large cummerbund could be shown. Propriety required that the drawers worn underneath be displayed neatly folded. Also on view was a striped jacket which appears to be very similar to the one Lane is wearing in the portrait by his brother reproduced on the front of newsletter no. 24.

Our informal meeting allowed discussion of his life style and motivation, the reliability of his informants and changes in his approach to his work. Most of his later years were spent working on the Arabic-English Lexicon from his home in Worthing. With the help of Jason, who is currently living and working in Cairo, we were transported back to the city of a 19th century obsessive Orientalist. We await the biography.

Fiona Sutcliffe and Jo Rose

The Gigi Crocker Jones Collection of Omani Textiles

Two years ago Mrs Gigi Crocker Jones offered her entire collection of textiles and artefacts from Oman to Dr Ruth Barnes for the Ashmolean Museum. She went to see Gigi, assuming the collection would be mostly camel trappings. What she found was a remarkable and beautifully catalogued collection. With much regret Ruth realized that the material was too ethnographical for the Ashmolean but would be perfect for the Pitt Rivers Museum.

Birgitta Speake and Julia Nicholson, of the Pitt Rivers, spent four days in Islington with Gigi sorting the remarkable and obviously much loved collection. Gigi realized she was dying from terminal cancer and so wanted to make sure that her treasures went to a permanent home. Fortunately the Pitt Rivers was given a grant from the Omani Society thus enabling them to employ Rachel John to catalogue and prepare for exhibition all the material in a very short time.

It was Rachel together with Julia Nicholson who showed about twenty members of the O.A.T.G. the collection on 23 September. Julia first told us something of its background.

Apparently Gigi first visited and fell in love with Oman during a trip to Lamu in 1970. Her main interest was weaving and she found the local techniques fascinating. She was asked to help with a teaching project in Khaburah which was a great success. She then went on in 1980 and 1990 to work on United Nations projects which focused on the economics of work for women. During these years she collected and recorded the local crafts.

Rachel had very kindly arranged for the Group to study samples of sheep, camel and goat wood and pieces of weaving showing the different finishes. There were also various types of cotton thread plus dyes traditionally made from madder and murex and various chemical dyes. She also explained that there were three groups of weavers - shepherds and nomads who used ground looms, and villagers who used pit looms.

In the study room we saw wonderful examples of the collection, including a padded camel bag, camel blankets and racing camel trappings. There were also braids, a black and white woven grass basket and a dowry bag in pick-up weave with very old symbols. Julia also showed us an example of a "key switch", which was decorated with brightly coloured tassels, showing perfectly the camel trapping origins. Demonstrating Gigi's thoroughness, there was also a half-finished switch so that one could understand how they were made. In a lighter vein Julia asked the group to guess the purpose of several items, one of which being a bag which looked just like a doll's hammock. After many wild guesses we were told that it was a camel's udder protector to prevent the calf from feeding!

The whole afternoon passed far too quickly, and when Veronica Johnston gave the vote of thanks to our hosts she said it had been a very emotional afternoon for her. She had been a close friend of Gigi for many years and knew that she would have been so pleased that the collection was in such safe hands and so beautifully exhibited where it would be seen and loved.

Julia Noble

LETTERS TO FILE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Beattie Archive Goes Online

Your readers will be interested to know that the May Beattie Carpet Archive's new website is now online and can be accessed through the Ashmolean Museum's site at http://beattie.ashmol.ox.ac.uk

Access to the database is restricted at present, but material will be made available, in batches, as and when it is ready. Ultimately this will provide access to over 32,000 images of carpets and textiles from May Beattie's archive, as well as her entire collection of technical analyses.

Please have a look and let us know what you think. All comments, suggestions and corrections gratefully accepted! The website will be constantly updated, so do check it from time to time and see what has changed.

I shall have left the post of Project Manager of the Beattie Archive by the time this newsletter appears, so until new staff are appointed, please send your comments or inquiries impersonally to the Beattie Archive, Department of Eastern Art at the Ashmolean Museum, or by e-mail to beattie.archive@ashmus.ox.ac.uk

Emma Dick

Dear Editor;

Tribal Textiles Website

I am a member of O.A.T.G. living in Canterbury, Kent. I enjoy the newsletter and find it informative. I have managed to get to one O.A.T.G. meeting in Oxford and another at the Hali fair in London last year.

I am a collector of textiles, especially the tribal textiles of South-east Asia and south-west China. Over the last three years I have developed quite a large website devoted to sharing tribal textiles reference material (photos, bibliographies, etc.) with other enthusiasts. Our tribaltextiles.info forum has recently been upgraded and may be accessed at http//www.tribaltextiles.info/community. We have members in France, Thailand, U.K. and U.S.A., as well as guests from other countries.

Pamela A. Cross

MUSEUMS ROUND-UP

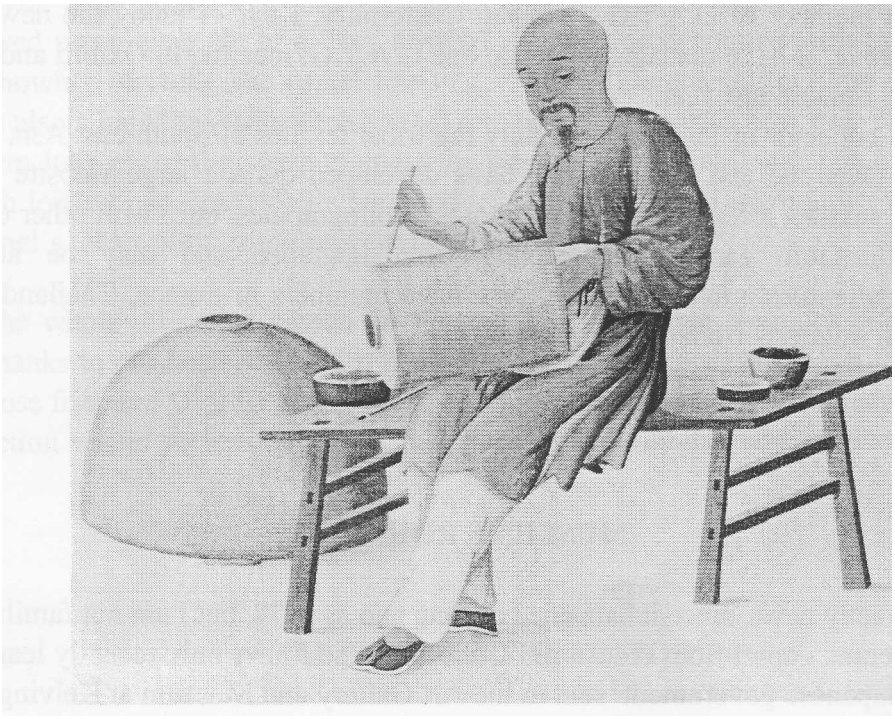
Not exactly news, since it happened as long ago as 1878, but I am not familiar with the Glasgow museums - apart from the Burrell Collection - so I have only recently learned that in that year the Japanese government sent to the Art Gallery and Museum at Kelvingrove "over 1,150 specimens representing every art and craft known in Japan at that date" in exchange for manufactures and paintings from Glasgow and the west of Scotland. There are textiles in the collection, including clothes worn by *daimyo,* which are apparently very well documented. Don't, however, dash off to Glasgow in the hope of seeing them, for the museum closed on 29 June and is not to reopen until 2006.

The reason for the closure is "to create an art gallery and museum ready for the challenges of the twenty-first century". The Victorian building will undergo a £25.5m refurbishment including the provision of new displays and improving visitor facilities. Work could not begin, however, until the entire contents of the building had been removed. Staff apparently started packing as far back as 2001, and finished last month. Six to seven hundred metres of bubblewrap have been used as well as 1.5 miles of tape to seal the boxes. It makes

wrapping Christmas presents seem a doddle!

Round about the time Kelvingrove will be looking forward to reopening, the Ashmolean is expecting to close for a comparable period for an even more drastic and expensive makeover - if they can raise the £46 million necessary. Whether textiles are to be given more space and consideration than hitherto remains to be seen.

Meanwhile the Museum's Department of Eastern Art has recently acquired a bound volume comprising 60 Chinese watercolours and the English manuscript of George Henry Mason's *Costumes of China* together with a printed copy of the same book, published in London in 1800. According to Shelagh Vainker, the Curator of Chinese Art, although the book contains many forms of Chinese dress, they are mainly secondary to the subjects of the watercolours, which mostly illustrate trades and pastimes. The printed images are stipple engravings with applied watercolour and are in general very close to the original watercolours.



Lantern painter from *The Costumes of China* recently acquired by the Ashmolean Museum

In the Ashmolean, too, work has been proceeding apace on a database for the Museum's Coptic textiles, of which there are 683 pieces (see Helen Whitehouse's article, O.A.T.G. newsletter no. 12, February 1999). The database was started in the summer of 2002 by a Parisian postgraduate, Cecile Giroire, who served a two month internship in the Department of Antiquities, and writes in *The Ashmolean* magazine, "The aim of such a record is to gather the maximum information about each textile and record it in a standard format, using an 'entry form' type of document. Before creating the document, we selected a random sample of fragments to ascertain their main characteristics, and to define the fields of the form. . . . After this preliminary work, we created an entry-form with thirty-six fields: five for administrative and collecting data ... ; twenty seven for material and technical data ... ; three

for description, comments and bibliography; and one field for the storage/display information." About 160 textiles were registered on the database during Cecile's internship, and succeeding interns have continued the work. At the same time, digital photographs have been taken of each piece to complement the written information.

On a similar theme, the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra is believed to hold one of the richest public collections of Indonesian textiles in the world, but you no longer have to contemplate the expense of a trip down-under in order to see them. With the assistance of the Australia-Indonesia Institute, all 1200 items are now accessible online. Every textile has been studio photographed in colour and digitized. The accompanying text includes catalogue and other information, and searches can be made in many ways. The website -http //nga.gov.au/Indonesian Textiles - will be continually updated to include new acquisitions and research developments.

The Gallery has recently had the opportunity to acquire, at a cost of Aus$6.5m, 400 more rare and ancient Indonesian textiles from the collection of Robert J. Holmgren and Anita E. Sperms. The acquisition includes ship cloths with different maritime scenes from Lampung, South Sumatra; intricate batik textiles filled with mythical and exotic creatures from the Sino-Indonesian communities on the north Java coast; sombre Balinese sacred *geringsing,* masterpieces of the complex double ikat technique; and startling painted bark headcloths from the remote mountains of central Sulawesi. In addition to the sale, Robert Holmgren and Anita Sperms have generously agreed to lend the Gallery forty historical textiles that were traded from India to the Indonesian archipelago during the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries.

The collection was assembled over 30 years and constitutes the life work of the two New York based collectors. Since the 1970s, major exhibitions of Indonesian art or textiles in Europe have invariably included outstanding loans from the collection. Mr Holmgren said, "When we decided to secure a permanent home for a substantial part of our precious Indonesian textile collection, we sought a public institution which shared our vision of these woven treasures. Beyond the sheer aesthetic pleasure they arouse, the textiles provide unique windows into South-East Asian art history, into an encyclopaedic richness and variety of visual imagery. The National Gallery's commitment to the collection and display of textiles as one of the region's greatest and most varied art forms meshes exactly with our collecting philosophy." Did I say the Canberra collection of Indonesian textiles was "one of the richest in the world"? You can cross out the "one of"; this acquisition makes it undoubtedly the richest. Perhaps you had better start saving your pennies for that Australian trip after all!

Any of you contemplating a visit to Thailand will be pleased to hear that the Kamthieng House Ethnological Museum in Bangkok has reopened after two years refurbishment. The house is itself of ethnological interest, being a teak house of traditional northern Thai pattern built on stilts and dating from the mid-19th century. Its collections are of artefacts associated with the rural way of life in traditional agricultural communities, including many handwoven and embroidered textiles. Clearly a "must" for any O.A.T.G. visitors to Bangkok.

The V.& A. has recently acquired "a stunning 1930s modernist" Chinese carpet, about which I hope Verity Wilson will be writing in the next newsletter - so don't let your subscription lapse if you do not want to miss it.

Editor

BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS

Patkas in the Calico Museum

B. N. Goswatny, . (with a technical essay by Rathul Jain)
Indian Costumes II, Patkas: a costume accessory in the collection of the Calico Museum of Textiles (2002),
(Volume VI, Historic Textiles of India at the Calico Museum, Ahmedabad India). Pp.256, 76 illustrations, 62 in colour, price Rupees 2.500
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The Calico Museum in Ahmedabad, India has a long history of producing excellent publications on textiles and costume; *Indian Costumes II Patkas,* continues that tradition. The author Dr. B. N. Goswamy is a distinguished scholar of Indian paintings and also the author of *Indian Costumes in the Calico Museum of Textiles* (1993), a seminal work of scholarship.

This publication is the latest volume (VI) of the excellent on-going series *Historic Textiles of India at the Calico Museum Ahmedabad.* It follows a well-established format, which divides the publication into two parts; the first section, written by Dr. B. N. Goswamy places the patkas into an historical context. It also acts as an illustrated catalogue of one of the many collections in the Calico Museum of Textiles.

The second section or 'Supplement' is a technical overview by Rahul Jain, which focuses on patkas from the Mughal period.

The 'Calico' as it is often fondly referred to has, like many major museums, a number of collections, which go to make up its textile archives. The collection of patkas is possibly

the most extensive one of its kind; there are sixty-two of them and each one is described and illustrated in full colour in this book. However, the publication serves many other purposes besides cataloguing the collection. The history of the patka as a costume accessory, 'that long and elegant strip of textile which adorned nearly every noble waist in India once', provides a detailed context for the collection. Illustrations of Indian art in the form of sculpture and paintings are included to indicate how the form and function of the patka has developed over centuries; its changing social role, as well as its function as a sash, girdle or belt, is dealt with in detail and line drawings show the innumerable ways that it could be worn. Different sources of information are pooled and the result is a wealth of detail, which contributes to our understanding of Indian costume as a whole.

Many histories of textiles, particularly those dealing with complex cloths, can give valuable insight to the reader if the techniques involved in their production can also be included. This is not just for the benefit of practitioners, but also for the historian or anthropologist, who can gain a much fuller understanding of the textile from detailed technical surveys. Rahul Jain is a trained economist who has developed a special interest in the history and practice of weaving pattern; he is the author of many publications on the hand-woven textiles of India. His technical essay in this publication is an analysis of the many different and complex techniques involved in the production of patkas in the Moghul period. Two earlier articles; one by Milton Sonday and Nabuko Katijani on the Moghul sash, along with an article by John Irwin *A Note on The Indian Sashes of King Gustavus Adolphus,* are reproduced in this volume as an appendix. The result of the combined expertise of such heavyweight authors provides the most detailed and scholarly account of the parka that it is possible to produce.

Each patka is beautifully photographed and reproduced as a full page (A4) to show fine features; even single threads are evident. The colour plates are of the same high standard that we have come to expect from the Calico. Each shows a detail of a patka, usually the end panel, which typically has stems or sprays of flowers of a larger scale than the motifs in the rest of the piece. A drawing of the complete piece placed opposite each plate describes the overall design in great detail; this generally follows the same format; essentially a long field, narrow side borders and broad end panels Fringes of silk and /or gold are often attached to the end panels. The size, material, pattern, colouring and condition of each piece is discussed alongside the drawing; this is a logical format that is very reader friendly.

Parkas are luxury items from the late 17th century through to the 19th century; as one might expect there is a lavish use of silk, gold and silver and other costly materials, the range of designs is wide and there in general rich colour combinations are preferred.

Although the pieces mainly have woven brocaded patterns, embroidered versions are also well represented. Two embroideries of undyed tusser silk have a subtle aesthetic of natural golden tones and textures; a direct contrast to the mainly extravagant and colourful woven designs that are otherwise much in evidence. A number of fine wool weaves associated with shawl-making, from Kashmir and fine stencilled and block printed cotton versions are also included in the collection.

This beautiful book serves almost as a substitute for a visit to the Calico Museum at Ahmedabad, but not quite. It is so seductive that you will want to catch a plane to see them for yourself as soon as possible.

Brenda King

Natural Dyes and Textiles

Harold Bohmer, *Koekboya (Natural Dyes and Textiles: a Colour Journey from Turkey to India and Beyond),* Ganderkesse, Germany, Rembot-Verlag. 2002. ISBN 3 9367 1301 4 (Translated into English)

Dr Harold Bohmer sets out to share his appreciation of natural dyes and colour in our lives in his book *Koekboya* - the word means root-dye in Turkish, but is generally used to indicate all kinds of natural dyes. Based at Marmara University, Istanbul, Bohmer works on the Research Project on Natural Dyes to propagate the use of natural dyes by village-based co-operatives producing wool pile carpets and flat-weaves using local Turkish motifs, for international export. The book is intended to be a source of practical information for textile collectors, curators and others interested in natural dyes.

Knowledge of natural dyes has declined in Turkey - as elsewhere - since the development and introduction of synthetic dyes in the late nineteenth century Commencing research while working as a science teacher in Turkey, Bohmer worked to collect, document and reproduce dyes obtained using plants. The book includes a section explaining how the human eye perceives colour (including how men and women perceive it differently), a brief history of synthetic dyes, and perceptions of colour harmonies based on Goethe's research.

The book is divided into sections commencing with Turkish dye plants, continuing with overseas dye plants and dye insects. There follows a brief discussion of other uses of dye plants, the common names of synthetic dyestuffs, and recipes for all the dyestuffs included in the book. The plant section includes the plant's Latin name, the plant family, the chemical composition of the dye, a cultural history of the plant and its use as appropriate.. A recommendation on the dye's use is based on toxicity, light-fastness and, on occasion, cost. Thought is also given to the side effects of the dye process in terms of human health and pollution.

Images for each dye plant include the plant, colour of the dye, its spectral analysis and occasionally a textile using a specific dye. In some sections, notably the use of indigo, photographs show the complete dye process. One photograph shows the author next to *Rubio davisiana* halfway up a limestone cliff. The image accompanying the text is consistently on the relevant page throughout and accurately captioned. The work ends with a thorough bibliography of references used throughout.

This thorough book raises only one query: at the beginning Bohmer mentions the effect of artificial light sources on naturally-dyed fibres, explaining that madder red, a warm red in sunlight becomes "more brown than red" in artificial light. In this sentence he reveals the only omission the book could be said to have, that is a sample for comparison of the colour obtained from each dye-plant under artificial light.

Valerie Wilson Trower
(abridged from the Textile Society of Hong Kong Newsletter)

Shorter Notices

Murray Eiland III, *Starting to Collect Antique Oriental Rugs,* Antique Collectors' Club, 2003, ISBN 185149 406 5, 24 x 19.5 c.m., 192 pp, 170 col. & 8 b/w illus., £12.50

One of a series *Starting to Collect...,* this volume tells the new collector where to buy, what to look for, how to care for, how to identify dyes and designs in rugs from Persia, Turkey, the Caucasus, Afghanistan, China and India, and complements his text with examples from Europe and Africa. He also includes chapters on flatwoven and modem rugs, as well as a full glossary of terms, a bibliography and maps.

Parviz Nemati, *The Splendour ofAntique Rugs and Tapestries,* The Antique Collectors' Club, 2003, ISBN 185149 3816, 33 x 24.5 .cm., 410 pp, 300 col. plates & maps, £25.

The author believes tapestries and handmade carpets to be the most expressive of works of art and provides a history of them. The techniques and materials used are discussed, and there are also chapters on each of the major types. The book covers both Oriental and European rugs, and European tapestries of the 15th to 19th centuries.

Sheila Paine, *The Linen Goddess,* Pallas Athene, 2003, ISBN 1 873429 87 8, 21x14 cm, 223 pp, 49 colour illus., text figures, pb. £14.99

The connexion with Asia in Sheila Paine's latest travel book is by only a slender thread, as she pursues her quest for the "Afghan" amulet from the Red Sea through north-east Africa and the Balkans. As ever, a good read.

Mary Schoeser, *World Textiles: A Concise History,* Thames & Hudson, 2003, ISBN 0-500-20369-5, 21xl5cm, 224 pp, 210 col. & b/w illus, pb, £7.95

"A chronological survey of textiles around the world from prehistory to the present day, exploring how they are made, what they are made from, how they function in society, and the ways in which they are used and given meaning ... an invaluable introduction to this vast and fascinating subject" - or so the blurb says. In reality, the attempt to cram so much information into such a small space leads to a degree of compression that makes a large part of it read like a catalogue, and a lack of explanations reduces its usefulness as an introduction.

Paeviz Tanavoh, *Persian Flatweaves,* The Antique Collectors' Club, 2002, ISBN 185149 335 2, 27.9 x 21.6 cm, 300 pp, 300 col. illus., £45.

This is the first comprehensive survey of Persian flatweaves, especially floor covers, and thus fills a gap in the oriental carpet and textile literature. The book is divided into two

parts, the first dealing with the cultural background of the subject, drawing on literary sources as well as surviving examples; the second dealing with the different types of flat weave and the uses to which they were put.

A New Textile Magazine

Had I not been living in a state of chaos, I would have mentioned this new publication in the last newsletter. Please forgive me. In the meantime, some of you will probably have discovered it for yourselves, and for the rest, I have no doubt you will he able to get hold of the two back numbers already published if you want to.

Like the O.A.T.G. newsletter, *Textile: The Journal of Cloth and Culture,* appears three times a year. It aims to bring together "research in textiles in an innovative and distinctive forum for all those who share a multifaceted view of textiles within an expanded field" and to provide "a platform for points of departure between art and craft; gender and identity; cloth, body and architecture; labour and technology; techno-design and practice -all situated within the broader contexts of material and visual culture".

The first issue, which was published in March, begins with a letter from the Editors, Penina Barnett and Janis Jeffries of Goldsmiths' College, London, and Doran Ross of the Fowler Museum, U.C.L.A., California, in which they discuss the policy and philosophy of the journal. The international advisory board includes some very distinguished textile scholars, including our own Susan Conway.

Each issue contains somewhat over 100 24x17 cm pages with three columns of text and plenty of high quality matt colour illustrations: a comfortable size and attractive format. Whether any significance can be read into the fact that the cover of the first issue appears to feature leopard-skin and of the second a shaggier fur, I am not sure!

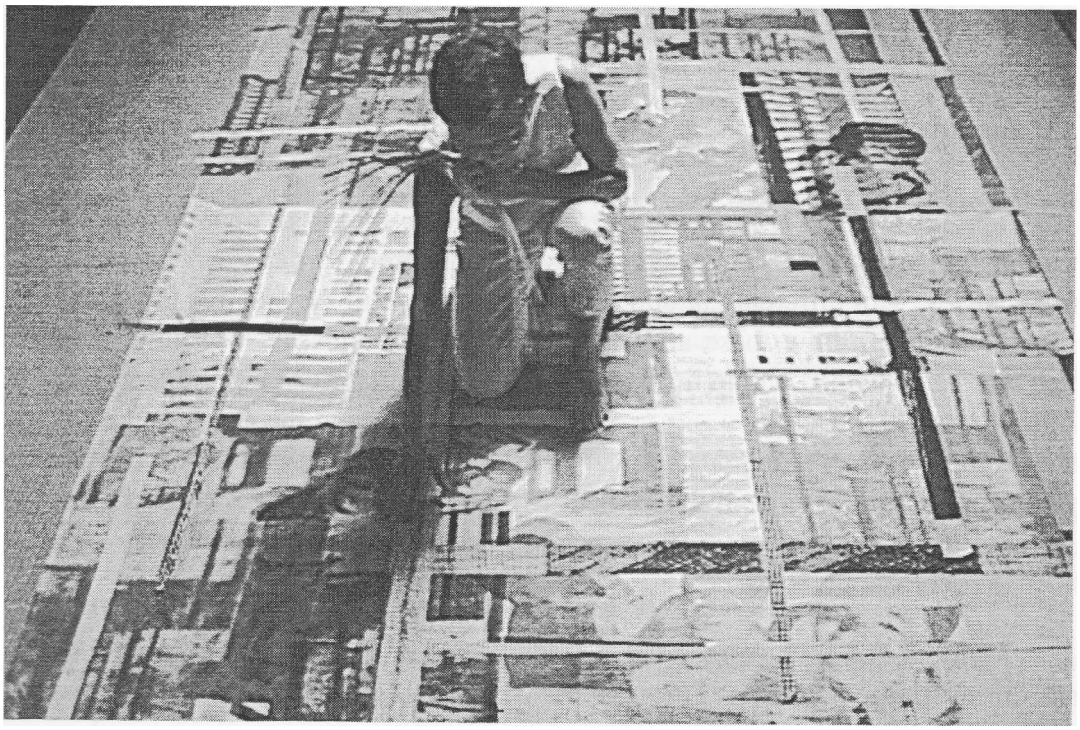
As for the content: the first issue contains articles on fetishism-, the work of Mildred Constantine; the significance of spots, dots, blotches and patches; and - more relevant to our interests - floral culture and the East India calico trade with England c.1600-1800. The second issue is stronger on Asia with articles on the work of the contemporary Indian textile sculptor Mrinalini Mukherjee (some of you may remember her stunning exhibition at M.O.M.A. in Oxford in 1994) and cinematic connexions, including the Chinese film *Ju Dou,* set in a dyeing works, which I hope you also saw. In addition there is a fascinating article on computer images and weaving, and one on the 16-metre embroidery worked by embroiderers throughout Australia for the Great Hall of the Parliament House in Canberra. Both numbers also have book and exhibition reviews.

Textile is published by Berg Publishers c/o Turpin Distribution (Customer Service Dept), Blackhorse Road, Letchworth, Herts, SG6 1HN, tel. 01462 672555, www.bergpublishers.com, at £40 ($65) per annum. The third issue is due out next month.

Editor

EXHIBITIONS

Through the Surface



The project ***Through the Surface*** has had two phases, distinct but interlinked. Phase one took place between February and September 2003. During these months seven young textile artists, four from the UK and three from Japan, travelled to their opposite country to work with seven established textile artists. The period together was between eight and twelve weeks, spent in varying degrees of intensity. The object of the exercise was for all participants to produce work as a result of the experience, in some cases a collaborative work and in other cases separate pieces (see newsletter no.25, June 2003, p.18).

Phase two will be the exhibition of that resulting work, which will open at the end of January 2004 as a regional collaboration between the originating organisation, The Surrey Institute of Art and Design, and Hove Museum and Art Gallery, with a site sensitive work at Fabrica Brighton. The exhibition will then tour the UK during 2004 and Japan in 2005.

The genesis of ***Through the Surface*** lies in my two previous projects *Revelation* and *Textural Space* (See newsletter no. 18, February 2001, p. 230. The former was an exhibition of mainly UK based textile artists which was shown in Japan, the latter an exhibition of Japanese textile artists which toured the UK as part of *Japan 2001.* The logical next step seemed to be a collaborative venture between textile artists from the two countries. Rather than pairing like with like, I felt that more interesting outcomes may be achieved by creating working relationships between artists from different textile disciples, for example a weaver and a knitter, or a felt maker and a printer, I thought that the pairing of sensibilities and sensitivities be more important than similar skill bases. I was also concerned to develop relationships

between early career artists and those who had been working for some time. The areas of collaboration have been based in:

- links between textiles, science and technology;
- the impact of new materials and processes on the re-evaluation of traditional practice;
- textiles as architectural intervention;
- the use of materials that act as interface between interior design and fashion.

The format of ***Through the Surface*** has been one of an ongoing workshop with the intention to investigate the ways in which different groups of people, in different circumstances, with different cultural influences, engage in the creative processes. It has been an exploration into how these artists have moved from idea to outcome, the summary of which will be contained within the exhibition ***Through the Surface,*** in the artists' journals as published on the website, and the exhibition catalogue. What has emerged is a fascinating documentary of the creative processes of these artists and one of the most important features of this project will be its potential use by educational institutions wishing to investigate strategies for research development and the interplay of ideas as they influence eventual outcomes.

Many issues have emerged as a result of the project and we hope to discuss some of them during the symposium ***Through the Surface: Cultural Differences and the Creative Processes*** to be held at The Surrey Institute of Art and Design on February 6th.

As I write, the artists have all finished their time working together and are now creating the work for the exhibition. This work will range from the most intimate to the monumental, while the collaborative element may be reflected in work which is an overt response or, as in the case of Junichi Arai and Tim Parry Williams, the collaboration is hidden within the construction of the cloth. All the artists have taken real risks with their own processes as they have reached out to find those meeting points and differences which will be reflected in the final outcomes.

Lesley Millar, Project Director, ***Through the Surface***

Through the Surface is originated through The Surrey Institute of Art and Design University College and will be shown on the following dates:

Split site: James Hockey and Foyer Gallery- Farnham- 27 January to 20 March 2004, and Hove Museum and Art Gallery 30 January to 20 March, with site sensitive work at Fabrica,Brighton March to June

It will be shown subsequently in Norwich, Halifax and Nottingham at dates and venues to be listed in forthcoming newsletters.

For further information, including booking form for the symposium, or details of other events supporting the exhibition, please visit www.throughthesurface.surrart.ac.uk or phone RosSearle on 01252 392741

Another U.K Exhibition

Dressing the Dynasties - November 8 & 9 at the Green Room, South Molton Lane, Mayfair, a gallery exhibition of antique Chinese silk costume, brocade, sewing tools and items of costume adornment by Jocelyn Chatterton, author of *Chinese Silks and Sewing Tools.* Tel. 0207 629 1971

Overseas Exhibitions

Afghanistan - at the Museum of Ethnology, Neue Burg, Vienna, until 1 December. Focussing on items of everyday use from all periods, the highlights of this exhibition are a fully equipped tent of the Pashtun nomads from S.E. Afghanistan, and a completely furnished yurt from west central Afghanistan. In addition the artefacts include ornamental knotwork, embroidered garments and woven articles made of leaves of the Maza palm. Tel. 0043 1 534 30-0

Luxury Textiles East and West - at the Los Angeles county Museum of Art, Los Angeles, California, until 15 August 2004. This exhibition celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Museum's Costume and Textile Department with many items from around the world dating from the 14th to the 20th century. Tel.

Following Fashion Through the Ages - at the National Museum, Krakov, Poland, started 25 September for three or four month. Exhibits include 22 Polish costumes and more than 100 from the rest of Europe. The Polish exhibits show oriental influences and include sashes such as Beata Biedroeska-Slota discussed at the Ashmolean carpet conference (see above, p.17). Tel. (+48) 12 29 55 578

Lighter than Air - at Denver Art Museum, Denver, Colorado, until 30 November.

Indigo: The Blue and White Embroideries of Sichuan, at the Gold Museum, Ballarat, Victoria, Australia, mid-December - 29 February 2004

Central Asian Ikats, Staatliches Museum fur Volderkunde, Munich, until January 2004

Cambodian Textiles, Fukuoka Art Museum, Fukuoka, Japan, 4 October to 7 November,. Including silk ikat, tie-dyed and tapestry textiles, this claims to be the first fully comprehensive exhibition of Cambodian textiles to have been held anywhere in the world. Weaving demonstrations by members of the Khmer Institute of Traditional Textiles will be held in the exhibition three times a day. (www.fukuoka-art-museum.jp)

Last Chance to See -

Puppet Worlds - at the Horniman Museum (Tel. 020 8699 1872) ends 2 November

Textiles from Western India - at Galerie Handwerk, Munchen, Germany (tel. 0049 89-5119296) ends 15 November

Contemporary Japanese Textiles - at the V.& A. (tel. 020 7942 2000) ends December

The Art of Resist Dyeing - at the Textile Museum, Washington, D.C. (Tel. 001 202 667-0441), ends 5 January 2004

LECTURES AND EVENTS

Automne Asiatique - 3 October to 15 November in Paris with 15 galleries staging thematic shows or exhibitions. Myrna Myers, I1 Rue de Beaune, will present pt 1 of an exhibition, with catalogue by John Vollmer, on *Silks for Thrones and Altars.* The only other textiles appear to be part of a Japanese bestiary being presented by Bernard and Sylvia Captier

Asian Art in London - 6-14 November. As usual, this event is made up of exhibitions, auctions, lectures, open evenings and receptions. A guidebook is available (tel. 020 7499 2215) listing all exhibitions and the programme of events, most of which are open to the public. Around fifty dealers are participating, among

whom textiles will be shown by the Asian Art Gallery, Brandt Oriental Art, John Eskanazi, Francesca Galloway, Joss Graham, Theresa McCulloch, Simon Ray, Gordon Reece, Rossi and Rossi, Samina Inc, Jonathan Tucker & Antonia Tozer, and Linda Wrigglesworth the latter focussing on the use of colour in antique Chinese, Tibetan and Korean costumes and textiles. She also has a special exhibition, *Viewing Flowers from Afar: Colour in Chinese Textile Art,* in which there will be a gallery talk by Gary Dickinson on Saturday 8 November at 10 a.m. Joss Graham is showing *Narrative Cloth: From the Epic to the Everyday* and has a special evening opening on Friday 6 November, 5-9 p.m.

Telling a Yarn - 7 November and 5 December, 11 - 11.30 a.m. at Leeds Industrial Museum, storytelling sessions with spinning and weaving tales from around the world. Tel. 0113 263 7861

Batik Painting Workshops - (1) for 8 to 13-year-olds, Friday 31 October, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m (2) for adults, Saturdays 15 and 22 November, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Both at the Museum of Domestic Design and Architecture, Middlesex University, Cat Hill, Barnet. Tel. 020 8411 5244

Batik Course - 5 Saturdays, starting 8 November, at the Horniman Museum.. Children aged 8+ with accompanying adults, are invited to have fun making their own batik, inspired by textiles from around the world, under the guidance of Ugandan artist Diana Okene. 11 a.m. - 1 p.m., 17.50 per person per session. Numbers limited. Tel. 020 8699 1872

Silks and Stories - 15 November, 2 & 3 p.m. Family event at the Museum in Dockland, West India Quay, London: the sari and the dhoti, try them on and hear stories about them. Tel. 0870 444 3855

A Coat of Many Colours: **Europe in Middle Eastern Dress -** talk by Jennifer Scarce to the Bristol Society for the Arts of Asia at Bristol University Department of Religious Studies, 3-5 Woodland Road, Bristol, Wednesday 19 November at 7 p.m. Visitors £3. Tel. 0117 9223 599

Oriental Rug & Textile Group in Scotland - meetings in the lecture theatre at Daniel Stewart's College, Queensferry Road, Edinburgh, on the following Wednesdays at 7 p.m.:

November 12 - *Words and Pictures: the Printed Material that* has *Shaped the World of Oriental Rugs and Textiles,* by Gavin Strachan, ORTGS Chairman
January 14 - *Textiles of Borneo,* by Dr Elizabeth Keeping, University of Edinburgh
February 11 - *Bugs in Rugs,* by Helen Spencer, National Museums of Scotland

Further information about meetings and membership can be obtained from Margaret Campbell, 4 Dovecot Loan, Edinburgh, EH14 2LT, tel. 0131 443 3687, e-mail: mjmc@macunliniited.net

Asian Textile Tours, 2004 - Two popular O.A.T.G. members are conducting textile tours in Asia again next year. Gina Corrigan is leading one to the Miao country, 25 May to 11 June, and a tour entitled *Tibetan festivals, Monasteries, Landscapes, Nomadic Life and Textiles,* 21 July to 13 August. Sheila Paine offers *Textiles, Embroideries and Silk Route Cities* in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, 5 to 21 September. Further information on all tours can be obtained from Steppes East, tel: 01285 651010, www.steppeseast.co.uk

O.A.T.G. SUBSCRIPTIONS NOW OVERDUE

Members are reminded that subscriptions are due on or before 1 October. Rates remain at 110 for individuals and £15 for two or more people living at the same address and sharing a newsletter. For those of you who have not yet renewed, this is the last newsletter you will receive. If you want to continue to receive it and enjoy all the other benefits of membership, send your cheque to the Membership Secretary, Joyce Seaman, at 5 Park Town, Oxford, OX2 6SN, or better still, ask her to send you a banker's order form and save yourselves the annual burden on your memory.

The O.A.T.G. newsletter is published three times a year
with deadlines on the first Monday in February, June and October

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE - MONDAY 3 FEBRUARY 2004

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