

ASIAN TEXTILES

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OATG events programme

Saturday 3 February 2018

2018 Annual General Meeting and Show & Tell

A short Annual General Meeting followed by refreshments and the Members' Show & Tell. Non-members are welcome. OATG members may bring up to three textiles each from 1pm for display. There will be tables and easel space available.

If you are not sure of the details of your textile, there is a good chance that other members will know something about it, so don't be shy and bring something if you are able. We are hoping that, as last year, there will be a wide and interesting range of textiles on show, although you will be welcome with or without a textile!

Location: Education Centre, Ashmolean Museum.

Time: 2 - 4 pm.

Thursday 10 May 2018

A journey through the Imperial wardrobe a talk by David Rosier

The lecture will provide an insight into the complex system of mandated Chinese Court Costume as well as dress accessories, that would have been worn by men and women on formal and semi-formal occasions (Regulated Court Costume) whilst at Court or positioned within Central or Provincial Government during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).

Consideration will be given to the history, nature, structure and iconography of formal Court Costume and the Insignia of Rank, worn by the Imperial Clan and the Civil and Military Officials. A display of Imperial Court Costume will be on show to support the talk.

Location: Pauling Centre, 58a Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6QS.

Time: 6 pm for a 6.15 pm start.

For more information and/or registration please contact: [oatg.events@gmail.com](mailto: oatg.events@gmail.com)

Tuesday 12 June 2018

Lecture at the Ashmolean Museum (this is not an OATG event).

Steven Cohen will give a lecture based on research undertaken as Beattie Fellow looking at material related to [The Historical Carpet Collection of the Maharajas of Amer](#).

Further details will be announced in due course.

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Front cover 19th-century Japanese hanging in the Horniman Museum. See 'A Japanese wall hanging from the Meiji period' page 9.

Taiwanese aboriginal woven fabrics and the British Museum

by Tsai Yu Shan

Introduction by Pamela Cross

The importance of museum collection online databases – an interesting outcome!

Tsai Yu Shan's article about her reproduction of a Taiwanese aboriginal textile, originally seen in the British Museum online collection database, demonstrates to me the importance and benefits of museums digitising and sharing their collection databases online in a user-friendly fashion. This is especially important for textile collections as their public display is fraught with conservation difficulties.

It is an expensive and time-heavy process creating and maintaining the database, especially the vital addition of photographs for each object. For textiles, especially woven ones, an image of the reverse is as important as images of its face – as was the case in this project. This is something that needs to be appreciated by museum staff when photographing objects.

If the museum is receptive to comments on items in the database, and makes this easy to provide, this is also helpful. The British Museum (BM) database is very good in this respect as it has an email link for comments on each data page, whilst remaining true to the original cataloguing, and also shows who made the comments.

Tsai Yu Shan

OATG members will be familiar with fellow OATG member, Tsai Yu Shan, from her two previous articles in *Asian Textiles* in February 2014 (AT57) and June 2015 (AT61). There is also a brief biography of her at the end of this article.

For this particular project AT61 is relevant as it described woven reproductions by Yu Shan in the National Taiwan Museum, Taipei, (NTM) 2015 exhibition *Vivid Ancestor Paintings: A Plains Aborigines Exhibition*. It was the catalogue from that exhibition which was the catalyst for the current chapter in Yu Shan's weaving career. She kindly sent me a copy (we have been digitally in touch since November 2009) and I was attracted by the illustrations. The CD which was incorporated had digital representations of Taiwan aboriginals carrying out daily tasks such as weaving.

I thought that the BM might appreciate a copy and, via Yu Shan, NTM gifted copies. In November 2015 I was in communication with Jessica Harrison-Hall, Head of China at the BM. She gave me some background on the museum's links with Taiwan, including the information that the BM held more than 100 textiles from Taiwan, including some from mountain tribes, and gave me an illustrative database reference. I accessed the database and was pleased to see several images of woven textiles which I shared with Yu Shan.

As she does not mention this in her article, I must add that Yu Shan has kindly donated to the BM her woven reproduction of As1910,1207.112.b. It has been gratefully accepted by the museum for its study collection, and will be linked to the original in the collection database. I am also hoping, in due course, for a photograph of the original and reproduction side-by-side.

TAIWANESE ABORIGINAL FABRICS AND THE BM

Donations by Formosan Government in 1910

I was interested to read Yu Shan's information about the likely history of the donation by the Formosan Government in 1910 of a large number of items in the BM's collection – which I had found curious. I had not heard of *The Japan-British Exhibition of 1910* which took place at White City, London. I commend readers to the Wikipedia entry https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japan%E2%80%93British_Exhibition (it is also possible to find several photos linked to the exhibition online as well as items from the catalogue.)

It seems that, at the end of the exhibition, over 200 boxes of exhibits were divided between thirty institutional recipients in the UK, which very probably included the BM.

Pamela Cross has had a life-long interest in textiles as a maker (clothes, patchwork and quilting) and, for the last three decades as a collector, mainly of clothing utilising traditional techniques from minority groups in Asia, concentrating on SW China, Thailand, Vietnam, Burma and Indonesia – especially the Batak from N Sumatra. Her professional career had an international focus in investment banking and then in higher education. In 2000 she created a tribal textile information website with a forum which she administers. She set up OATG's first website in 2004 and remains its web manager. She is now retired and has developed a passion for gardening and garden visiting. She joined the British Museum Friends Advisory Council in mid-2016.

My experience of studying the collection of the British Museum by Tsai Yu Shan

In 2015, when Pamela Cross told me that the British Museum had some of Taiwan's aborigines' daily living items in its collections, I was immediately interested. I browsed the British Museum's database collections site and discovered there were about 180 pieces of Taiwanese aboriginal textiles. Almost 40% were simple, straight-striped fabrics, but there were some different ethnic dresses, from the Atayal, Pingpu, Bunun, Rukai, and Paiwan. The clothing types included garments, leggings, embroidered bags, belts, capes, breast-cloths and woven bags.

From the collection's background information the largest group can be classified as belonging to the Atayal tribe. However, the most recent research shows that some of the artefacts labelled as Atayal tribe belong to the Truku tribe and the Sediq tribe. These two tribes were identified in 2004 and 2008 by the Taiwan government as Taiwanese aborigines of the twelfth tribe and the fourteenth tribe.

From the items' numbering can be seen the acquisition date. These Taiwanese aboriginal cultural relics have been donated by individuals and by the government. An early individual donor was Rev. William Campbell, in 1876, and items with the numbering of 1910 are marked: "donated by Formosa Government." From 1895 to 1945 Taiwan was under Japanese rule, so it seems it was the Japanese government that made the decision to donate them to the British Government. Whether this is related to the large *Japanese-British Exhibition* held in London in 1910 remains to be confirmed.

Among the Taiwanese aboriginal woven items, the most interesting to me are the distinctive classic fabrics, such as the Paiwan tribe's exquisite female mourning cape,

TAIWANESE ABORIGINAL FABRICS AND THE BM

the Pingpu's (Pazeh plains aborigines) male sleeveless garment, the Pingpu's (Xilaya plains aborigines) embroidered bags, the Sediq tribe's male cape with 'rice grain weave' and patterned leggings, and the Atayal tribe's chest-cloth.

Taiwan's aboriginal weaving patterns are mainly in straight and oblique lines, in a variety of permutations and combinations to create designs. If two ethnic groups lived adjacent to each other and the colour of the weave is the same, such as red, black (dark blue) and white ramie thread, then it is difficult to distinguish the tribe. For example, I have not seen in the Atayal tribe fabrics similar to those numbered As1910,1207.91 and As1910,1207.111. This sub-combination design of the cape looks like a tree design similar to Pingpu's (plains aborigines) embroidery patterns, so which tribe this kind of cape belongs to is still to be determined.



Tsai Yu Shan constructing the pattern of the fabric according to the image from the BM website.

When I started the research, I chose to study As1910,1207.111, an Atayal cape. I constructed the front pattern of the fabric according to the image on the website. I then wove it, but was not satisfied with the structure because I used white, blue and red wefts. Although the appearance of my reconstructed weave was similar to the original, both the front and the back had floating wefts, which does not create an elegant weave, so I made it a second time. This time I only used the blue and red wefts and solved the problem of the floating wefts on the reverse. Although the effect was satisfactory, I still could not tell whether my sample used the same weave as the original.

To find the answer, I needed Pamela's help to ask whether the British Museum would be willing to provide an image of the reverse of As1910,1207.111. I thought that my request was an imposition but, beyond my expectations, Pamela soon replied that she was willing to go to the British Museum to take some pictures for my research. I am very grateful for her enthusiasm and generosity.

About a month later I received a USB drive mailed from Pamela. It contained four picture files – one pair of leggings, two capes and one long-sleeved garment that

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all appeared to have used a similar weaving technique. Pamela had taken many clear images, and provided the colours and the materials for each item, including the front and back of the garments, as well as the patterns, cloth edges, sizes, tassels and braids. This detailed information made my research easier and more accurate.

Right *The first test: the front and back both have floating wefts.*

Below *The back of the second test looks better and more solid.*



Left *Back of the original legging As1910,1207.112.a-b.* **Right** *Front of the original legging.*
Both photos © 2017 Trustees of the British Museum.

TAIWANESE ABORIGINAL FABRICS AND THE BM

From Pamela's four items, I chose one of the most fragile pairs of the Atayal tribe (perhaps the Sediq tribe) leggings to analyse. From the image of the back I could distinguish the structure and was happy to see that the cape of the one I had woven for the second time was almost correct. After analysing the pattern for the leggings, I tried another method of weaving and successfully reproduced a new legging fabric.



Left *The front side of the reproduction.*



Right *The back of the reproduction.*

Below *A detail from the back of the reproduction.*



TAIWANESE ABORIGINAL FABRICS AND THE BM

Description of the new woven legging

Type of weave: warp rib weave with two colour wefts

Warp density: 9/1 cm, weft density: 20/1cm (including two wefts)

Lattice of the pattern A: 33366

Lattice of the pattern B: 37599

Dimensions (red part): length 44cm, width 26cm

Braided thread: (including tassel) 120cm

Materials: Warp: white ramie; Wefts: red, 100% merino wool and dark blue 75% merino wool/20% polyamide/5% cashmere

Colours:

Pantone 12-000 TPX White Swan

Pantone 18-1664 TPX Fiery Red

Pantone 19-4010 TPX Total Eclipse

Weave analysis and reproduction: Tsai Yu Shan. Date: 2017/August

Tsai Yu Shan is a professor in the College of Textiles & Clothing at Fu Jen Catholic University in Taiwan, where she has worked since 1993. She graduated from the Chinese Cultural University in Taiwan with a BA in Fine Art and was in Paris for 14 years where she has an MA in Design (with highest honours) from l'École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs (ENSAD) and also studied for two years at l'Atelier Nationale d'Art Textile (ENSCI) before working as a textile designer at l'Atelier de Recherche Textile (ART) for five years, under the direction of Professor Geneviève Dupeux. In 1992 she received the prestigious Bishu Award for International Textile Design from the Fashion Foundation of Tokyo, Japan. In 1997, she won first prize for a card-weaving work in Taichung County Cultural Centre's Textile Craft Competition. She is the author of four books, the latest of which, *Recovering Lost Woven Treasures: Translation and Transformation* was published in 2012.

Professor Tsai began to analyse Taiwanese aboriginal textiles in 1997 when an Atayal student, Yuma Taru, brought some of the Atayal tribe's old woven fabrics to ask her if she would teach them to reproduce their traditional fabrics. Since then she has expanded the scope of the study and has now studied the 'classical dress' of thirteen tribes for which most of the technology is lost.



Left and above Photographs taken in the National Taiwan Museum stock room in 2016 during the recording of a television film of Tsai Yu Shan's reproductions that included pieces from the National Taiwan Museum's collection.

A Japanese wall hanging from the Meiji period

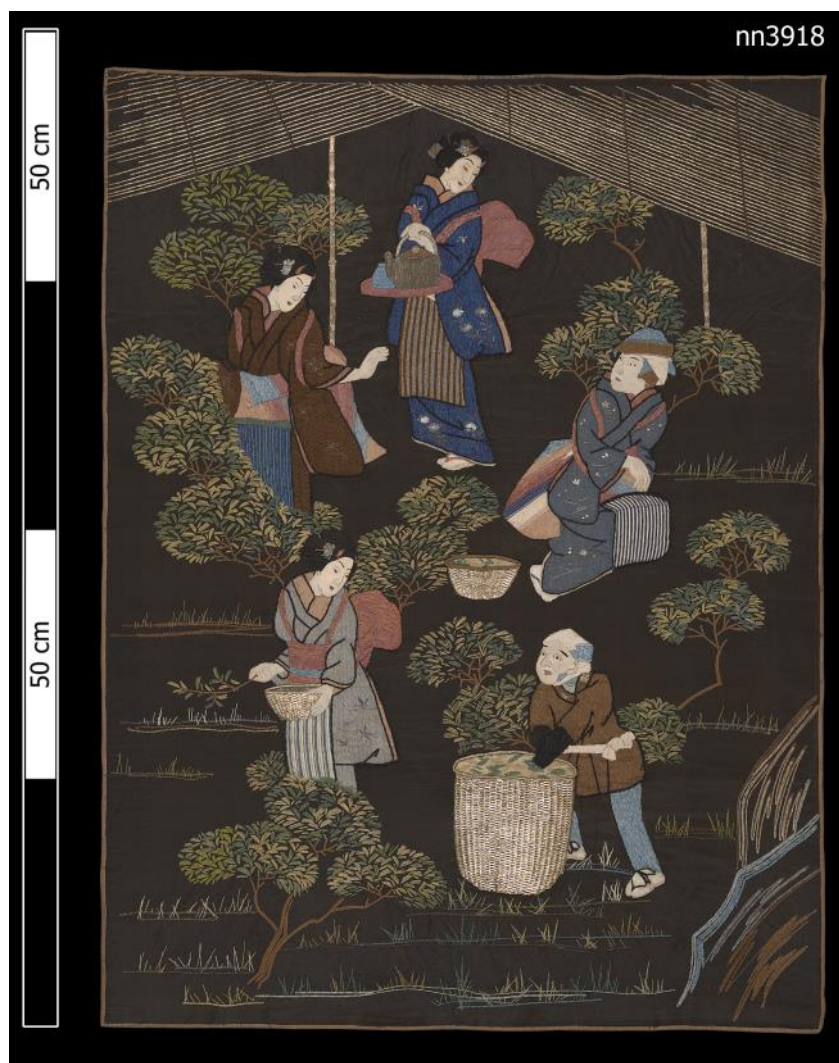
by Fiona Kerlogue

While exploring the stored collections of the Horniman Museum in preparation for the forthcoming redisplay of the permanent galleries, planned to open in June 2018, I came across several large embroidered Japanese wall hangings. Although there are references to a number of wall hangings from Japan in the Museum's first accessions register, compiled in 1898, many of the objects from that period have become separated from their museum number, so that it has not been possible to identify definitively which is which, or where they were obtained.

One in particular caught my eye, not for its quality, as it was by no means the finest among them, but because of the subject matter. Here, in the collection of Frederick Horniman, proprietor of what was once the largest tea company in the

world, is a scene of tea pickers at work. Frederick, as I like to call him, travelled to Japan in 1895, and an account of his visit was published in serial form in the local newspaper, *The Crystal Palace and Sydenham Examiner*.

For the last few years I have been working on a new display to focus on Frederick's vision of the world and how it was reflected in his original collections. Here was a striking piece, charming and bold at the same time, linking his passion for Japan (he was a founder member of the Japan Society), his connection with tea, his interest in manufacturing, and his active concern for the lives of working people.



19th-century Japanese hanging in the Horniman Museum with a ground fabric of black silk satin embroidered with a scene of tea picking and a woman carrying a tetsubin.

JAPANESE HANGING IN HORNIMAN'S NEW WORLD GALLERY



Marilyn Leader is an independent textile conservator; see www.conservationregister.com. She is shown here working on the Meiji hanging in preparation for its display in the new World Gallery at the Horniman Museum.

As it had been in storage since the end of the 19th century, the hanging was in a variable condition, with some dust and staining, creases and splits in the ground fabric, areas of loss to the binding, and pockets of loose embroidery where silk stitching threads had broken through deterioration. To be included in the new World Gallery, it would need conservation. I applied for a grant from the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation, who kindly agreed to fund the work.

The hanging is on a ground fabric of black silk satin, lined on the reverse with two lengths of cream cotton cloth printed in green and red. Onto this base is embroidered a scene in which three women wearing kimonos pick tea from tea bushes, while another woman carries a kettle of tea. A man in the foreground leans on a large basket. At the top, the outlines of a tea house are suggested.

JAPANESE HANGING IN HORNIMAN'S NEW WORLD GALLERY

The hanging displays one of the most distinctive aspects of Meiji Japanese embroidery – the way a variety of materials and stitches is used to create texture. Probably the most striking is the structure of the baskets, in which gold-coloured metal-wrapped threads echo precisely the structure of a basket. Pairs of these strands have been woven over and under vertical strips of wood beneath. This technique is not a common feature of Japanese embroidery; indeed many of the effects have been created with unusual and inventive methods.



Above One of the baskets on the hanging in which gold-coloured metal-wrapped threads are woven over and under strips of wood as in basketry. This technique is not a common feature in Japanese embroidery.

Like the baskets, each of the five human figures is constructed separately, and stitched to the hanging as appliqué. The flesh elements, such as the faces and hands, are made of pieces of cream crêpe silk, slightly padded to suggest the contours; single lines of purple stitching indicate the noses and eye sockets while the eyebrows are stitched in thick stripes of black thread. The eyes appear to be of mica or cellulose. Each woman has in her hair at least one ornament made of paper, probably suggesting a comb.



Right This figure has been constructed separately and stitched to the hanging as appliqué. The face is of cream crêpe silk, slightly padded to suggest the contours. The eyes are of mica or cellulose. Single lines of stitching indicate the nose and eye sockets while the eyebrows are in thick black thread.

Some of the costume elements have been knitted as a separate panel and the panel applied to the ground cloth, with the edges of each item of clothing outlined in black. For the aprons, which are in a variety of stripes and colours, the direction of the stitching runs vertically. For the waist bands, or obi, the direction of the yarns varies. Two have elaborate bows in which the directions of the threads suggest the way it has been tied. For all of the women, their kimono has additional decorative embellishments, finely stitched but simple embroidered floral sprays or blossoms in a mixture of metal or silk threads. The man, who is in a simple peasant costume, is wearing *waraji*, humble straw sandals. The upper cords, indicated in black, have been threaded through brown loops in the side of the sole, echoing the structure of a real pair of *waraji*.

JAPANESE HANGING IN HORNIMAN'S NEW WORLD GALLERY

Perhaps the detail most indicative of the embroiderer's skill in suggesting texture is in the working of the tea kettle, or *tetsubin*, a vessel used for heating water to make tea. *Tetsubin* are usually made of cast iron, but the outer surface is very often textured in some way, whether with ribbing, ripples, scales, bumps or some other effect. The lid and handle tend to differ, the lid sometimes made of contrasting smooth copper or bronze, the handle perhaps designed to suggest the structure of bamboo.

Here the embroiderer has indicated these contrasting textures and materials in her own selection of materials, the direction in which they are applied, and the method of stitching them to the base fabric. The body of the kettle is formed by vertical strips of metal-wrapped thread laid side by side, creating a dark silvery grey effect. The lid is of light brown yarns, possibly wool, stitched at irregular intervals to make a bumpier texture. The handle is of more lustrous metal-wrapped material, the threads laid diagonally across the padding, to suggest a rounded section. The knob and rim of the lid echo these materials.



Right *Tetsubin are usually made of cast iron, but the outer surface is often textured and the lid sometimes of a different metal, reflected here in the embroidery. The body has vertical strips of metal-wrapped thread, the lid light brown yarns, and the roundness of the handle is suggested by diagonally-stitched metal-wrapped thread over padding.*

One more conventional technique appears in the outline of the tea house. The pillars are suggested by four pairs of vertical couched threads, of gilded paper wrapped around a silk core, laid closely together in *komadori ikkai* style. Above these, rows of double strips are spaced diagonally at intervals, meeting at a peak in the middle to indicate the tea house roof.

The embroiderer has made frequent use of plied yarns, for example in the shoots of grass at the bottom of the picture, which rise from lengths, mostly double, of various colours, primarily blue, brown, green or pink, sometimes plied. The foliage of the tea bushes is also of plied silk yarns in shades of green, in groups of three to six short parallel lengths, each group laid in a different direction, leaving the background black, evoking the different directions of the ends of the sprays of leaves.

It has not been possible to discover whether Frederick Horniman obtained this hanging in Japan or in Britain, although the very relevant subject matter suggests that he may have commissioned it. Wherever it came from, it echoes his concern for the everyday lives of ordinary people, his fascination with materials and techniques, and his respect for fine workmanship.

Dr Fiona Kerlogue is the Deputy Keeper of Anthropology at the Horniman Museum, London, where she is responsible for the Asian and European collections. Her publications include *Arts of Southeast Asia* in Thames and Hudson's World of Art series, *The Book of Batik* published by Didier Millet, and *Wrapping Japan* (Horniman Museum).

Abegg-Stiftung – the museum and conservation studio

Abegg-Stiftung

The Abegg-Stiftung is a museum and conservation studio primarily dedicated to Asian, European, and Egyptian textiles which date from prehistory to AD 1800. It is a private foundation situated in hilly pastureland adjacent to the village of Riggisberg, a relatively short train and bus ride from Bern in Switzerland.

Open in the afternoons only from late Spring until the early autumn, the permanent exhibition has items from the foundation's world-class collection and in addition, annual specialist exhibitions are also displayed.

Founded by a Swiss, Werner Abegg, and his American wife Margaret, the complex now employs about 60 people including four curators, seven full-time conservators and several "Students in Textile Conservation/Restoration".

Werner and Margaret Abegg

Werner Abegg (1903-1984) came from a family of Zurich industrialists who owned textile factories mainly in north Italy. The family sold the business when the Italian Fascists rose to power.

Werner Abegg began collecting as a young man in the 1920s when he was living in Turin and where he was in contact with the art dealers Adolfo Loewi, based in Venice, and Pietro Accorsi in Turin itself. Abegg focused mainly on textiles, but early purchases included not only medieval vestments from the cathedral treasury of Salzburg, but bronzes from the collection of Albert Figdor of Vienna and Limoges enamels from the collection of Albert Germeau.



Margaret and Werner Abegg

Werner Abegg met Margaret Harrington Daniels (1901-1999), an art historian, in New York during the Second World War. After the war, they spent part of each year in Europe and part in New York, where the city in the 1950s and 1960s provided a wealth of opportunities for buying artefacts with illustrious provenances. Dealers such as Leopold Blumka and Rosenberg & Stiebel were selling pieces from prominent European collections, while Adolfo Loewi, who had also emigrated to the United States, was a source for textiles.

ABEGG-STIFTUNG



Left *Abegg-Stiftung public entrance*



Right *The new wing opened in 2011*

In due course Margaret and Werner Abegg decided to return to Europe full time. Copying the example of American collectors, they founded the Abegg-Stiftung (Stiftung translates as institution or foundation) in 1961 to house their collection adjacent to the house they were building, the Villa Abegg. In both period and theme, the Villa Abegg was designed to complement and augment the institute's collections. The villa and formal gardens were completed in the late 1960s in the style of the late-17th-century North Italian Baroque school of Filippo Juvara. The institution was well endowed and the first exhibition was held in 1967. An extension to the museum was completed in 2011.

The aims of the institute and its organisation

As well as its collections of textiles and related artefacts, the Abegg-Stiftung has a major textile conservation studio and in addition to conserving its own collections takes in outside work. There is also a research library, and the foundation publishes academic books and papers which are available for sale.

The institute was established:

- to create a wide-ranging collection of woven textiles based on the founders' private collection
- to exhibit works of fine and applied art from antiquity to the Baroque
- to hold an annual exhibition drawing on the holdings of the textile collection
- to conserve and restore textiles and train conservators to degree level
- to further academic exchange of textile art through the organisation of conferences, the publication of books and papers, and the provision of an academic library with a focus on applied art, textile art and conservation.

Dr Regula Schorta is the Director of the institute and is also in curator for the textiles from Central Asia and China. Dr Michael Peter is curator for textiles of the 5th to 13th centuries, and also looks after velvets, metalwork, and early ceramics. Dr Evelin Wetter is curator for textiles of the 13th to 16th centuries, as well as embroideries, sculptures, and furniture, while Dr Anna Jolly is curator for textiles of the 16th to 18th centuries, and paintings, drawings, porcelain and glass.

The museum

The exhibits date from the 4th century BC to the 18th century AD and are particularly concentrated on Europe, the eastern Mediterranean and regions along the Silk Road. The museum comprises two main long galleries which house those parts of the permanent collections on show to the public. The European and Asian collections are arranged in chronological order. It is possible to walk between their parallel galleries to symbolise how the two continents were connected through the Silk Road.



Left and right Gallery with textiles from Europe, Persia and the Ottoman Empire, 16th to 18th centuries.

During the Renaissance and Baroque periods, Europe’s aristocrats became enthusiastic collectors of their contemporary art. The Abegg-Stiftung exhibits include work that represents the aristocratic preferences. The collection include silks from Italy and France used to make gowns or interior furnishings, and Ottoman and Persian silks of the 16th and 17th centuries also form part of the collection.



Above The very large Dionysos tapestry is a Roman wall hanging. Dionysos, the Greek god of wine and ecstasy, and his entourage stand beneath arcades decked with climbing foliage and braided ornaments. The cult of Dionysos was widespread in late antiquity and promised its adherents life after death, so it became an articulation for a life of happiness and superfluity. Egypt, 4th century, wool tapestry on a linen ground, h. 210 cm, w. ca. 700 cm, inv. no. 3100a.

Right The Dionysos tapestry in its display space.



ABEGG-STIFTUNG

Silk Road textiles

For the past twenty years Silk Road textiles have been a major focus of the Abegg Collection and of the Abegg-Stiftung's research. Paintings, sculptures and ceramics are also on display and shed light on the interrelationships between textiles and these other art forms.



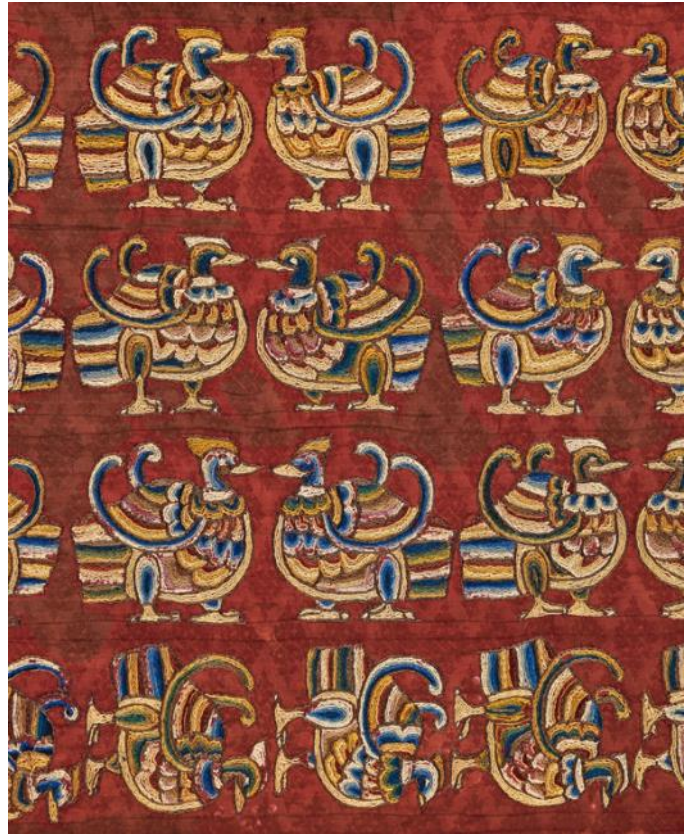
The oldest objects in the Abegg Collection are from Egypt and the Near East and date from the 6th millennium to the 3rd century BCE. Some of the more spectacular objects on view are finds from excavations in Central Asia and the deserts of northern China dating from the 4th century BCE to the 3rd century AD. One of the institute's publications recording items on display is *Fabulous Creatures from the Desert Sands, Central Asian Woollen Textiles from the Second Century BC to the Second Century AD*,



Above This heavy silk saddle cover was woven from eight different colours of thread. Originally brightly coloured with a red ground, it is now faded. The saddle is made of wood and the pommel and cantle would have had metal trimmings. Central Asia, late 8th–mid-9th century, silk (samite), length 64 cm, inv. no. 4866/4870/4906/4922.

Left Fragments from the front of a robe found in the cemetery of Yingpan (Xinjiang, China). The Hellenistic influence of late antiquity is apparent in the style and choice of motif, although the pattern features a number of Central Asian elements as well. The symbolism of the Erotes chasing butterflies and the duel between the eagle and the serpent is of the afterlife and overcoming death. Eastern Central Asia, 5th–6th century, wool (taqueté), h. 114.5 cm, w. 44 and 54 cm, inv. no. 5073/5175.

edited by Dominik Keller and Regula Schorta (see Note 1 for further information), about the textiles thought to come from a burial ground near Shanpula, located on the southern edge of the Taklamakan Desert. It lists all the relevant pieces in the Abegg-Stiftung collection.



Left Circular medallions, classically framed by beads, are a distinctive design element of Persian silks. Variations of medallions influenced silk weaving from China to Byzantium for several centuries. This particular silk shows pairs of heavily stylised deer inside flower-bud medallions. The brightly coloured, almost naïve design is exceptionally well preserved. Central Asia, 7th–8th century, silk (samite), h. 52 cm, w. 35.5 cm, inv. no. 4901.

Right Embroidery with ducks. Eastern Central Asia, 7th–8th century, silk embroidery on silk damask, h. 52.5 cm, w. 131.5 cm, inv. no. 4902.



Above Tapestry strip including an archer with a bird of prey in pursuit of a winged chimera. Mythological traditions of Western Asia are adapted to Steppe culture, and expressive stylisation is combined with realism. Eastern Central Asia, Xinjiang, 1st–3rd century, wool (tapestry, twill oblique interlacing), h. 47 cm, w. 92 cm, inv. no. 5138. Asian Textiles 56 carried an article on these tapestry bands which included several illustrations.

ABEGG-STIFTUNG

There are also Liao Dynasty funeral clothes of the 9th to 11th centuries AD. Those buried were found to have several layers of clothing worn on top of each other with the outer ones of necessity woven in larger sizes. They are very well preserved thanks to this part of China's dry climate, so that, unlike artefacts excavated in Europe where the reverse maintains, animal fibres are well preserved while plant fibres had perished.



Left This robe is known to have been the outer garment, worn over several other layers, which explains its size as it seems far too wide for a woman. The robe was probably tied at the waist with a belt made of precious metal. The medallions are formed by four lions chasing a flaming pearl, while four dragonfish facing a diamond-shaped ornament are in the spaces in between. Northern China, Liao Dynasty, first half of the 11th century, silk (samite, weft-faced on both sides), padded and lined, h. 148 cm, inv. no. 5239.

Below A woman's headdress which originally retained its shape with inner stiffening. It has ribbon ties and is embroidered with phoenixes chasing a flaming pearl. The phoenix has been identified with the red Bird of the South which stood for the empress, although it was not reserved for her alone at the time of the Liao Dynasty. Northern China, Liao Dynasty, first half of the 11th century, silk gauze, embroidered with strips of gilt paper and silk, h. 72 cm, inv. no. 5250.



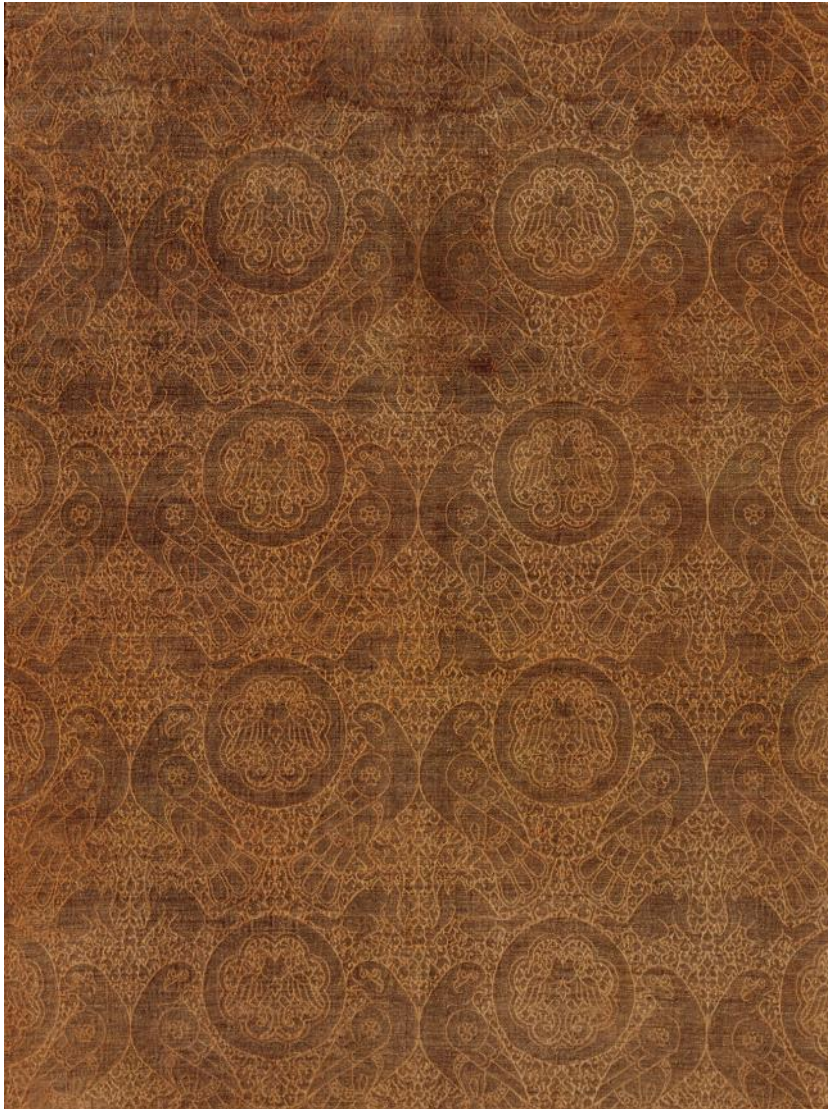
Above Pair of boots, Northern China, Liao Dynasty, first half of the 11th century. Silk gauze, embroidered with strips of gilt paper and silk. The Liao Dynasty hierarchy were clad in silk from head to foot, in both life and death.



ABEGG-STIFTUNG

The Middle Ages saw technically and artistically sophisticated metalworking, glass manufacture and silk-weaving spread from Late-Antiquity Persia through Central Asia and northern China.

The textiles, in particular, were remarkable for their array of colours and intricate patterns. Silk was used to make regalia, standards and even saddlecloths. Medallions containing animal motifs seem to have been popular.



Left *Eastern Iran or Central Asia, late 12th–first half of the 13th century, gold-patterned silk (lampas), h. 127 cm, w. 84 cm, inv. no. 4905.*



Left *A weaving with a ground completely covered in gold thread probably made in Persia under the Safavids (1501–1722). The naturalistic rendering of the rose and bird already points to the influence of European botanical illustrations on Persian art, which began towards the end of this period. Luxury textiles from Asia were coveted in Europe from the early 17th century. Persia, late 17th century, silk, metal threads, h. 72 cm, inv. no. 5411.*

ABEGG-STIFTUNG

Textile conservation at Abegg-Stiftung

As experienced collectors, Werner and Margaret Abegg were well aware of the fragility of the fabrics in their possession. From the start they endowed their foundation with a studio for the conservation of textiles.



The Abegg-Stiftung conservation studio.

The Abegg-Stiftung textile conservation studio is concerned first and foremost with the foundation's own textile collection and the textile furnishings of the Villa Abegg. When surplus capacity is available, it also provides consultancy, conservation and restoration services for other institutions in the public sector. Private individuals seeking advice on the handling of historical textiles are given the names and addresses of freelance conservators.

In the conservation studios the attention to detail is rigorous. Restorers consider "what is the best for the textile as a whole". Glass pipettes are initially used for hoovering objects, for if artefacts are just washed they could lose valuable evidence. Silk is bought from Bradford as it has the fewest impurities. Any restoration is done with synthetic dyes so that the process can be carefully controlled.

When accessioning new objects the studio does not freeze them, instead items are hermetically sealed, the air taken out and replaced with nitrogen. This kills anything and everything. As a training centre for budding conservators, the conservation studio is fully equipped with modular tables and extractors, monitors to display videos and pictures, and a washing room. The Head of the Textile Conservation Workshop is Bettina Niekamp. Corinna Kienzler is Deputy Head of the Conservation Workshop, and Caroline Vogt is Head of Studies.

In late 2017 just arrived for conservation was a 16th-century doublet, shirt and trousers, the last lined with leather, which had belonged to the Prince Elector of Saxony (1589-1615). The Saxony colours were evident in the striking yellow

background embellished with bold black embroidery. It was estimated that its conservation would take 600 days to complete; not a cheap exercise for the outside owner.



Above Conservation of a silk fabric by stitching.

Right The same silk after conservation. Central Asia, first half 7th century, inv. no. 5686a.



MA in Conservation-Restoration

The Abegg-Stiftung has been training conservators specialising in textile conservation and restoration since 1962. The Master of Arts in Conservation-Restoration offered by the Abegg-Stiftung, and since 1997 in conjunction with Bern University of Applied Sciences, is a five-year programme. It has theoretical modules but has an emphasis on hands-on work, so preparing students for the varied work of a textile conservator.

ABEGG-STIFTUNG

Annual exhibitions

Annual temporary exhibitions are a feature of the Abegg-Stiftung. The 2017 temporary exhibition was about textile conservation techniques, while the 2016 display examined animals in medieval textile art; fabrics with animal motifs were fashionable in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The 2015 exhibition concentrated on Italian silk weaving, which reached its first great apogee in the fifteenth century. Cities such as Lucca, Venice and Florence became hubs for luxury textile production and trade, competing with the traditional silk-weaving centres in the Near East, Persia and China.

2017 annual exhibition *Material Traces – Conserving and Exploring Textiles*

The Abegg-Stiftung's special exhibition of 2017 gave visitors insight into the work of textile conservation. Using some recently conserved textiles from Central Asia, all over a thousand years old, the exhibition described the various tests and conservation work required before a textile is displayed. As a result of the conservation, the exhibition also looked at the knowledge gained on the production, function and history of the items.



A main attraction in the 2017 conservation exhibition was two large hangings from Central Asia, dated to the 8th–9th century and decorated with facing stags inside a medallion, a widely used pattern type at the time but here greatly enlarged so that the medallions extend over the full width of the cloth. The fields bordering the medallions contain smaller animals and plant motifs. As the hangings came from an archaeological site they were very dirty, and the search for a suitable cleaning method uncovered a hitherto unknown dyeing method for indigo.

The conservation and restoration of textiles have been a key part of the Abegg-Stiftung since it was founded. The paramount aim is to conserve what is there, even if that means leaving alterations and the signs of wear and tear, and creating conditions conducive to an artefact's long-term preservation. The conservation and restoration of historic fabrics is a time-consuming business. It generally entails a preliminary assessment followed by cleaning and consolidation, preparation for proper storage or display, and the writing of a report detailing the actions taken.

Often those who work in Abegg-Stiftung's type of conservation do pioneering research because no comparable pieces have survived. Scientific testing, for which the Abegg-Stiftung sometimes draws on the support of experts outside the institution, supplies important pointers. Only after all detailed analysis like this is completed is a textile conservator able to begin suitable treatment.

Following an action plan tailored to the exact needs of a particular piece, any damaging substances are removed, the item protected, and either stored or exhibited under appropriate conditions. While some old dyes and materials are extremely stable, others are very sensitive to light, water and climatic changes. The method by which an article is cleaned, and any work done, must take account of this. Tears and holes may be closed by aligning the threads along the grain of the weave. Intervention is generally restricted to the prevention of further fraying, where the preferred method is to stitch underneath the damaged area with a matching backing fabric stitched in place with fine silk thread.



Heel of a twine shoe before conservation. Central Asia, Xinjiang, 5th to 6th century, inv. no. 5649b.

Dust-proof and light-proof storage under stable climatic conditions is essential for the long-term preservation of textile works of art. Exhibitions of historical textiles have the lowest level of lighting possible, and tailor-made mounts and figurines are the best form of support.

The 2017 exhibition included videos of some of the textiles on show when they were being treated in the conservation studio: a densely embroidered robe was freed from dirt with the aid of a minuscule vacuum cleaner and a brush, and a conservator used a surgical needle and ultra-fine silk thread to stitch a textile onto a supporting fabric.

ABEGG-STIFTUNG

Shoes may also fall within the remit of the textile conservator. The exhibition included four examples of twined plant fibre and silk shoes, probably made in Eastern Central Asia and dating to the 5th–6th century. That the flat, finely-patterned shoes were made by a sophisticated twining technique was clear, but how was it achieved? Experimental archaeology was used to produce a replica shoe which demonstrated that they must have been made in a single piece. The process was sophisticated enough to manage without seams, but still produced the desired shape and pattern.

The exhibition also featured several robes, among them one from China, which at first glance was not remarkable, but closer inspection shows that it is embroidered all over with scenes on the theme of immortality, rosettes and animals, and tiny, gleaming flecks of light produced by tiny fragments of mica scattered between two transparent layers of weaving.

Magnified footage of the mica-inlaid weave with the embroidery on top was shown in one of the films, allowing a sight normally reserved only for a conservator looking through a microscope. This is the only textile inlaid with mica known so far to the Abegg-Stiftung. When it was made in the 5th–6th century, the robe would have sparkled whenever the wearer moved, which just shows that clothes have been worn for millennia to attract attention and to demonstrate social status and wealth.



Child's upper garment made of wool. Central Asia, 4th to 2nd century B.C., inv. no. 5567.

Suitable storage and presentation

The Abegg-Stiftung has a growing textile collection of 6,000 items. Essential to their long-term preservation are stable climatic conditions, protection from dust and light, and suitable forms of storage. It is the responsibility of the textile conservator to monitor the ambient conditions in which textiles are kept and to design and manufacture suitable mounts, stands, and supports. A form, if used, should match the shape and cut of the garment exactly.



Fragment of a skirt featuring a procession of stylised deer. Every second deer carries a bird on its back or what might be a wing with a bird's head at its tip. Comparable tapestry strips and whole skirts were found in the Shanpula tombs on the southern rim of the Taklamakan Desert. Eastern Central Asia, Xinjiang, 3rd–1st century BCE, wool (tapestry, twill oblique interlacing), h. 51 cm, w. 102.5 cm, inv. no. 5157.

The behind-the-scenes storage facilities of the Abegg-Stiftung have multifunctional dressers made of teak for the flat storage of textiles of different sizes. Cupboards house three-dimensional textiles and rolled textiles are stored using two main rolling systems, one with a metal roll covered with a Polyester film (Melinex®) and fabric, the other one with cardboard. The design of the storage was by the first Textile Conservator of the institute, Dr Mechthild Flury-Lemberg, in the 1960s, who received wider recognition when she conserved the Turin Shroud in 2001/2.

Notes

1. With contributions by EC Bunker, JH Hofenk de Graaff, D Keller, R Knaller, RMR van Bommel, Wang Bo, Xiao Xiaoyong. 256 pages, 118 illustrations, paperback, 23 x 31 cm, 2001, ISBN 3-905014-29-7.
2. A visit to Abegg-Stiftung was organised in September 2017 by the Oriental Rug and Textile Society.
3. Abegg-Stiftung reopens for the 2018 season on 29 April.
4. This article benefitted from contributions by Daniele Pasta and Gavin Strachan.
5. The Abegg-Stiftung website is <http://abegg-stiftung.ch/en/>

‘Dressed’ Indian prints at the British Museum

by Pamela Cross

I was recently introduced to a form of what might *very* loosely be termed ‘Asian textiles’ in the form of ‘dressed’ Indian chromolithographic prints. They were new to me, and I thought I would share them with OATG members.

These were included in the recent exhibition at the British Museum (BM) *Politics and paradise: Indian popular prints from the Moscatelli Gift*. They were selected from a larger group of Indian printed imagery donated to the BM by Claudio Moscatelli in memory of Nicholas Owston. The exhibition ran from 19 July to 3 September 2017 as part of the BM’s contribution to the India-UK Year of Culture 2017.

I might well have missed them if Richard Blurton, Curator: South East Asia Collections at the BM, knowing of my passion for textiles, had not drawn my attention to them. For some reason they particularly aroused my interest, perhaps because, more than five decades ago, I had created somewhat similar bas-relief textile images of 19th-century women from English fashion plates of the era, and applied them

(without any paper background) to material around a waste paper basket – yes, clearly high art – as a gift for my mother, and sadly disposed of recently in her flat clearance.

The two ‘dressed’ chromolithographic prints in the exhibition were from the 1920s and 1930s and showed the Maharaja Sir Sayajirao Gaekwar (1920s) and the Maharaja of Mysore, Khrishnaraja Wadiyar IV (1930s) almost stepping out from their prints, each posing in carefully stitched fabric finery

HH the Maharaja Sir Sayajirao Gaekwar. The Gaekwads, a Maratha dynasty ruled from Baroda in western India (now Gujarat). Sayajirao III (ruled 1875-1939) was one of the most progressive of the princely rulers, instigating, amongst much else, primary education for all. The University of Baroda is named after him.

This print has been ‘dressed’, elaborating parts of the original print, including the orders that had been conferred upon the Gaekwad (at his neck is the insignia of the Order of the Star of India).

Chromolithographic print. 1920s. Unknown press. Given by Claudio Moscatelli. Asia 2016,3051.72.



DRESSED INDIAN PRINTS AT THE BM

with sword, sparkling glass jewellery, and insignia. Both men might be termed enlightened Indian rulers who fostered access to education for their subjects.

Richard Blurton told me such clothed prints were not common and these were the first such rare and sought-after examples to come into the BM's collection. He indicated that such prints usually portrayed gods especially Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of wealth, fortune and prosperity. She would be shown with fine silk clothing embellished with (imitation) jewels and pearls. I would be interested to know if any OATG member is aware of other examples of these 'dressed' prints.

The technology of chromolithography, a multi-colour printing technique stemming from the process of lithography using stones or metal plates, is based on the principle that oil and water do not mix. A separate plate was used for each colour. The technique originated in Germany, but the ability to produce for a mass market coloured prints of gods, goddesses and popular figures caught on in India in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Originally printed in Germany for the Indian market, they were then produced in India using imported German machinery.

There is an interesting feature on-line describing the history of the process in India from the Sun News at <http://www.harekrsna.com/sun/features/01-09/features1251.htm>

My thanks for personal communications from Richard Blurton and his article 'Popular Culture' in the Winter 2016 Issue 86 of The British Museum Magazine.

For a profile of Pamela Cross see page4.



Maharaja of Mysore. This print, of another progressive and much loved ruler, has had added cloth stitched to the print. Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV (ruled 1894-1940) came to the throne as a minor following the early death of his father. During his long reign, Mysore in southern benefitted from an increasingly democratic system of government, as well as greatly increased educational opportunities for its citizens. Chromolithographic print with added stitched cloth. 1930s. Printed at he Ravi-Vaibhav Press, Ghatkoper. Given by Claudio Moscatelli. Asia 2016,3051.69.

Iban *sungkit* cloths

Mike Heppell

In May 2016 OATG member Dr Mike Heppell gave a lecture in Oxford to OATG members about the beaded garments and wealth of the Iban; their skill in weaving textiles and how these ‘trump Malay textiles’.

In the 1970s Mike carried out his doctoral research amongst the Iban in the Batang Ai in Borneo. His publications include *Iban Art: Sexual Selection and Severed Heads: Weaving, Sculpture, Tattooing and Other Arts of the Iban of Borneo* which was jointly authored with Limbang Anak Melaka and Enyan Anak Usen and published in 2005. More recent is *The Seductive Warp Thread: An evolutionary history of Ibanic weaving*.

Mike was originally at Oxford University and now lives with his wife, Marguerite, in Australia.



Left Mike Heppell. **Right** Marguerite Heppell, and in the background OATG members examining the 2.7 metre pua' belantan cloth.

Mike Heppell brought two *sungkit* cloths with him to the lecture. He has provided the following commentary.

Sungkit cloths

The two *sungkit* cloths happened to have been collected from a Los Angeles textile conservator who is regarded by many as one of the very best in the business. The red base one, as can be seen from the lower of the two photographs, has not been repaired. According to the conservator, the knotting on the whole piece was too fine for her to match.

IBAN SUNGKIT CLOTHS

Saribas Iban *pua' belantan*

The Saribas Iban, from whom this 2.7 metre *pua' belantan* came, prided themselves on having developed a refined and very tight knotting style after machine-spun cotton threads appeared in Sarawak in the middle of the second half of the 19th century. The *belantan* cloths were particular to the Saribas. They were woven for senior weavers to carry in a sling, nurse and sing a newly taken head into the longhouse of the warrior who had taken it.



Right and below
Details from the 2.7
metre *pua' belantan*
cloth from the Saribas
Iban.



This cloth has three sets of tiered images woven in *sungkit* and *pilih* including panels of figures which probably represent mythic heroes from the Iban pantheon of deities.

IBAN SUNGKIT CLOTHS

Labuyan river blue base sungkit

The blue base *sungkit* from the area round the Labuyan river in West Kalimantan has been repaired by the conservator. Fortunately for the Iban, blue bases are unusual in their cloths as they are woven by a woman in mourning for a loved one lost on a head-hunting expedition, blue being a symbol for death and the lower world. They are woven with a simple message – revenge.



Left and below Details from the blue base sungkit from the area round the Labuyan river in West Kalimantan.

The motif in the photograph above represents a named sword which is called after the tail feathers of the rhinoceros hornbill, which would be expected to wreak that revenge. The main design of the cloth (hairy lozenges) represents the severed heads which will be harvested.

The frayed fringes indicate that this cloth is regarded as very powerful. Individual lengths have been cut off through time for



ceremonies related to farming, warfare and sickness. These would have been set alight and the ash dropped into an offering. Weavers sometimes drink infusions of the ash and water to gather strength to wrestle with a powerful design. The fact that the selvages have not been stitched completely to the main body of the cloth indicates that the mourner was a woman still in her child-bearing years.

She was also no mean weaver as the red, white and yellow weft wrapped slit tapestry design testifies, as the technique is regarded as supremely difficult by the Iban. She clearly wanted that fact to be known because it is rare to find such an addition to a *pua'* cloth.

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The rate is £25 for single membership and £35 for joint membership. 2017/18 subscriptions are due on 1 October 2017. We prefer that payments are made by standing order. Cheques should be made out to "OATG".

We depend on your subscriptions to keep our programme of lectures running, as well as for the printing and postage of *Asian Textiles*.

Password details for 2017 editions of *Asian Textiles* on the OATG website

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We welcome input from members and any other readers – send a review of a book you've read or an exhibition you've seen, or even something more elaborate.

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Contributions should be emailed to: gavin@firthpetroleum.com



Detail from a silk with suckling lionesses in medallions from the Abegg-Stiftung in Switzerland (see page 13 et seq.) Central Asia, 8th to mid-9th century, inv. no. 5687.