

OXFORD ASIAN TEXTILE GROUP

Newsletter No. 17

October 2000



Ceremonial headdress, Indonesia; red, purple and green with gold wrap supplementary weft.
Ashmolean Museum (EA 2000.14) - see p. 15

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EDITORIAL

Rummaging out the minutes of last year's annual general meeting, I was struck by the fact that only 59 members had rejoined by the time of the meeting, even though subscriptions are supposed to be paid by 1 October (have you paid yours yet? Why not stop the worry by filling out and returning one of the standing order forms enclosed?) The final figure, however, turned out to be 128, and I was interested to discover where they all lived.

Only 29 actually live in Oxford, and a further 28 in surrounding Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire. In other words, fewer than half live within what you might call "striking distance" of Oxford, though there is evidence that many members travel from farther afield to attend our meetings. Eighteen live in the counties surrounding what might be called "the inner ring", 8 in London, 6 in the West Country, 5 in the north of England, 7 in the south-east, 4 in East Anglia, 3 in Scotland and 2 in Wales. In addition, 9 live in the U.S.A., 3 in Australia, 2 in Saudi Arabia, and 1 each in India, France, Germany and the Netherlands.

It can be seen from this that many of our members get no more than the Newsletter for their subscription, and for this reason - though not only for this reason - I try to make it as good, fat and wide-ranging in its interests as possible.

You must be tired of my pleas for comments, articles, letters to the editor and suggestions, but they do sometimes bear fruit. The latest suggestion - from a reader in Saudi Arabia - is that I should include a video "column", but this proves easier said than done. I think it is a good idea in principle; there must be quite a number of textile videos "out there", but the question is, are they available? It would be nice, for example, if those of us who missed Cynthia Cunningham Cort's talk in May could see her film *Double Ikat Weaving in Western India*, but can we? I have been given one or two possible contacts and will pursue the matter.

Meanwhile this issue is not so fat as usual, and it does not contain the customary review of a collection as its first article. This is due to a crisis which has prevented the author who promised one to get it done in time and occurred too late for me to tap another source. All being well we can look forward to reading the missing paper next June. Partly for this reason the current issue is not so wide-ranging either; in fact it is heavily biased in favour of the Ashmolean Museum where more than usual seems to be happening in the textile line.

PROGRAMME

Wednesday 18 October
at 5.45 p.m.

at the Pitt Rivers Research Centre, 64 Banbury Road, Oxford

Annual General Meeting
(O.A.T.G. Members only - papers enclosed)

followed by refreshments and
at 7 p.m.

Professor Anne Morrell
will talk about her work at **The Calico Museum of Textiles** (Gujarat, India)
and other projects in which she is involved in the region
(Professor Morrell has been a consultant at the Calico Museum since 1994)

Members free; visitors welcome, £2

Saturday 11 November

Whole day outing to Bath
with specially arranged tours at
The Costume Museum and The Museum of East Asian Art

Numbers limited. Cost £15. Contact Ann Guild at the address below

St Nicholas Day - Wednesday 6 December
6.30 for 7p.m.

CHRISTMAS PARTY

at the home of Dymphna Hermans
The Warden's Lodgings, All Souls' College, High Street, Oxford.

Cost £5. Contact Ann Guild at the address below

CARPET STUDIES IN OXFORD

A significant event in the world of textiles in Oxford has been the bequest by May Hamilton Beattie to the Department of Eastern Art at the Ashmolean Museum for the establishment of a facility dedicated to the study of carpets. May Beattie had a scientific background and worked initially as a bacteriologist. Her interest in carpets began in the 1950s, but her serious study of them only started in 1961 and at the time there appeared to be no one in the academic world with a focussed interest in the subject other than Kurt Erdmann, who died in 1964. The foundation of carpet studies had been laid earlier by scholars of the "German school", Wilhelm von Bode, Ernst Kühnel and Kurt Erdmann, but after them there was no-one to continue their work.

The essential problems of carpet studies are that carpets have been woven for at least 2,500 years, they are rarely signed or dated, they are easy to transport so may end up far from their place of origin and, being made of organic material, they are rarely preserved in the archaeological record. The result is that we know very little of the history of carpets and for those that do survive we know precious little about where or when they were made. The researcher is thus faced with the challenge of bringing some kind of order to a mass of historical material of unknown date and provenance.

The scholars of the German school were primarily concerned with the problems of chronology and attribution as they applied to carpets associated with the arts of the great Islamic courts of the near east. In this they were greatly assisted by their wide knowledge of the arts of the Islamic world, and they derived much of their evidence from comparisons made between the decorative style of certain carpets and the style of objects executed in other media. However, they also called to their aid a variety of other sources, ranging from the appearance of recognizable carpets in European paintings to information derived from trawling through old records and inventories. By the time of Erdmann's death, scholars had succeeded in establishing a sound chronology and most of the older carpets had been assigned a place of manufacture. Nevertheless many problems of provenance remain, and it must be said that their work on chronology has proved more durable than their attributions.

A landmark publication in the field was a study by Kühnel and Bellinger in 1957 entitled *Chinese Rugs and Others Technically Related*. This study demonstrated the important link between structure and provenance. The underlying principle, which can be applied to the technical aspects of many crafts and skills, is that techniques are more stable than patterns. A technique once established - such as handwriting or the way a person holds their pen - is likely to remain the same throughout that person's life. So it is with weaving; the way a person weaves is learned when young. In the course of their working weavers will learn to execute many different patterns and will have little difficulty in learning new ones; their technique, however, is unlikely to change.

The challenge of bringing order to the classification of carpets was eagerly taken up by May Beattie who, with her scientific training and keen analytical mind, was quickly drawn into the work of applying the techniques of textile analysis to the problems of carpet taxonomy. Having taken up the challenge she pursued her new interest with extraordinary

dedication. By good fortune she had the means to travel and in the course of her working life succeeded in visiting a large proportion of the museums, country houses, religious establishments and other institutions of the world where old carpets are to be found. Private collectors also sought to draw on her expertise with the result that in the course of time she accumulated a deep and wide-reaching knowledge of the field matched only by her sole rival, Charles Grant Ellis of Kingston, New York. Ellis and Beattie soon became friends and collaborators. Ellis, an architect by training, was also self-taught. Thus it came about that the field of carpet studies came to be dominated by two highly competent and dedicated scholars, both without formal training and both working freelance.

It was May Beattie's wish that some pathway should exist for the support and nourishment of future studies in the field to which she had devoted so much time and energy, and she decided that Oxford would be the right place. In her will she bequeathed her books, carpets, photographs and all her records to Oxford University, and in addition left a sum of money for the support of carpet studies in the future. The money has been used to endow a visiting fellowship in the Department of Eastern Art at the Ashmolean Museum, where her library, photo archive and carpet collection are now kept.

The immediate aim is to build up, by degrees, a focus and centre for carpet studies in Oxford. At the outset the main effort will be directed towards gathering together the necessary facilities, of which an important element will be the formation of a reference library specifically devoted to the subject. May Beattie's own collection of approximately 1400 volumes will become the core of this library, but there are many gaps, and donations on the subject of carpets and textiles would help greatly.

The bequest includes some fifteen thousand slides and several thousand prints and photographs. One of the first tasks will be to put these images into a form suitable for access to a wider public, especially those engaged in research. The current plan is to form an electronic database of all known carpets prior to 1800 using May Beattie's archive as the foundation and, to give a more complete record, the relevant technical data from her notebooks will be added.

Dr Beattie's carpet collection of over a hundred items contains little of any historical interest apart from a few fragments. Her wish was that these relatively unimportant pieces would become a hands-on study collection to be used specifically for teaching purposes, a wish that the Museum intends to fulfil. At present there is no suitable place where such a facility could be established, but this is already on the wants list for the next round of new facilities.

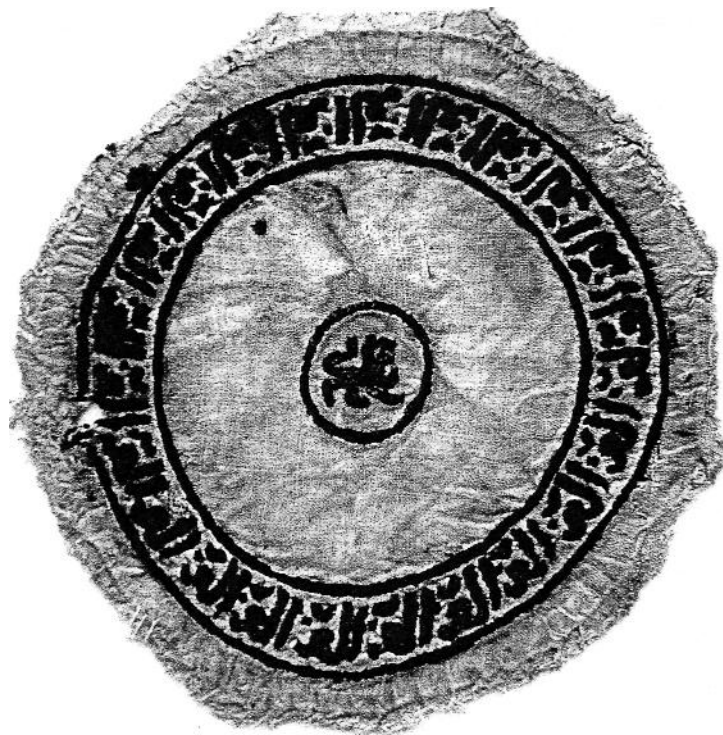
The establishment of an academic appointment in carpet studies is a historic first in any western university. As things get under way collaborative research projects with other disciplines in Oxford are under discussion and a series of small conferences focussed on specific topics is planned for the future. Perhaps May Beattie's wishes will come closer to being fulfilled when teaching in the subject becomes available to students - and that should not be far off.

Jon Thompson, first May Beattie Fellow

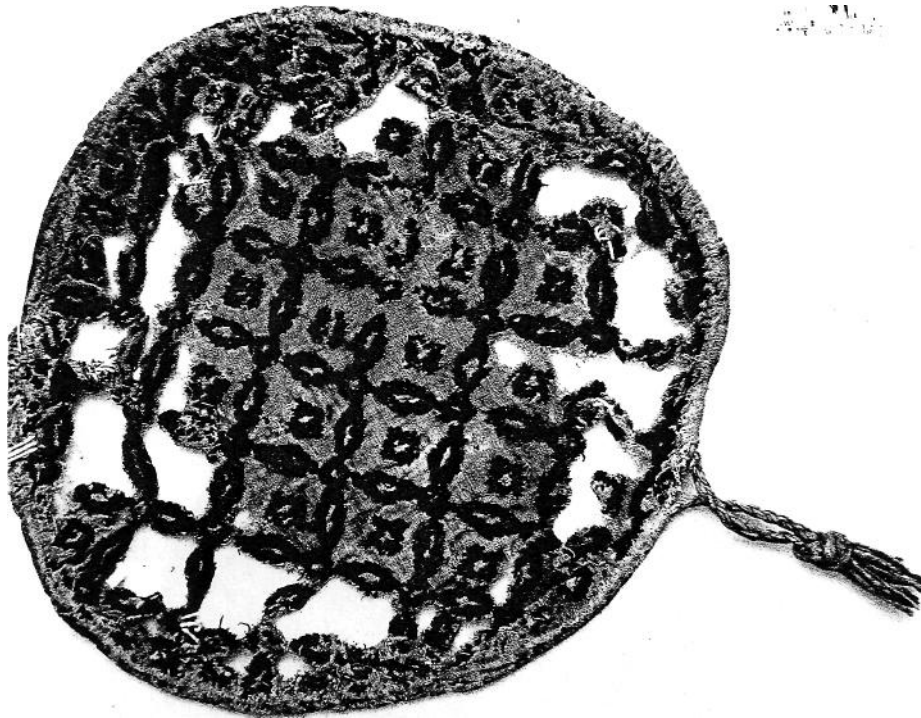
EMBROIDERED ROUNDELS FROM EGYPT

The textile collections in the Department of Eastern Art at the Ashmolean Museum include a large number of embroideries donated in the 1940s by Professor Percy Newberry and his wife Essie. He was a distinguished Egyptologist, while her interest and expertise in embroidery was widely recognized. The collection provides a fascinating range of embroidered textiles from Egypt dating from the 10th to 19th centuries. Amongst them are a substantial number dating from the Fatimid Caliphate (969-1171), the Ayyubid period (1171-1250) and, above all, the Mamluk Sultanate that ended in 1517 with the arrival of the Ottoman Turks. Although many pieces are fragments excavated from graves and rubbish mounds, they show the wide variety of designs and embroidery techniques employed to decorate light clothing and furnishings during the Islamic mediaeval period.

In spite of their fragmentary nature, it has proved possible to place the textiles into categories using a combination of design and stitch as the criteria. Also, in some cases, sufficient numbers of similar objects have survived to allow us to consider them as a group related to a specific function. For instance, there are six caps, over thirty samplers (these include mere scraps used for experiments) and, intriguingly, nineteen circular embroideries. Although some of the latter are incomplete, they demonstrate in miniature many of the designs and stitches found on Mamluk and early Ottoman embroidery.



N.1 (EA 1984.44) Linen embroidered with blue silk thread in close herringbone stitch, 18 cm diameter



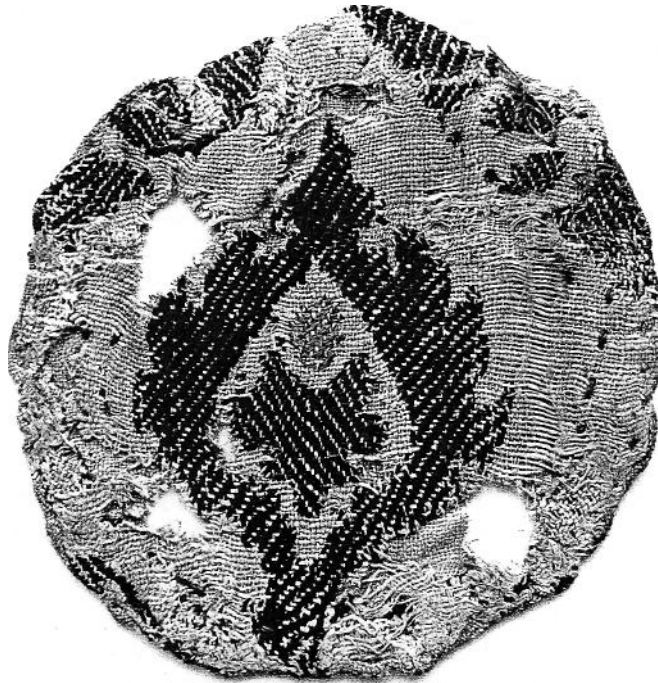
No.2 (EA 1984.62) Linen embroidered with red and blue silk thread, couching over surface satin stitches.

Like the majority of the Newberry embroideries which appear to date from the 13th to 16th centuries, the roundels are made of linen and embroidered with silk thread. An exception is where one has a silk ground fabric with a linen lining. At first sight, the embroidery shown in illustration no.1 could be compared with earlier tapestry-woven examples applied to some Coptic tunics. Its raw edges are creased showing where the fabric was folded under. However on close inspection, it appears that the fabric was folded over twice to form a casing. Also, creases around its circumference show that the cloth was once tightly gathered at the edges. On other examples, remains of casings and cords can be seen, and the roundel seen in illustration no.2 is complete with the casing and cord intact. A roundel in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Mass. (48.1059) gives us the best idea of how the others might have looked. The cover is complete with a long drawstring still threaded through the casing ending with an elaborate tassel, 9 cm long.

What was the purpose of these circular embroideries? Carl Lamm, the Swedish art historian, thought they were used as seal bags and they have also been catalogued as purses. However, their designs suggest that they were meant to be viewed flat and not gathered tightly to form bags. In fact, small bags in the collection are made in the more practical rectangular shape. Also, the roundels vary greatly in size, from 6.5 cm to 18 cm. In my opinion it seems much more likely that they were covers for jars. We know many large and small cloths, made of linen and decorated with embroidery, were used in Mamluk households. They acted as dust covers for all manner of objects, including trays, baskets, cooling jugs for water, and storage jars. Examples of the latter have survived both of the type known as *albarelli*, or drug jars, and ovoid ones. Importantly, the jars have pronounced lips so that covers could be fixed snugly by means of draw cords.

Dating the Newberry embroideries precisely proved difficult. Only a small number has been radiocarbon dated, so we largely depend upon stylistic comparisons. It is clear that embroidered roundels were in use over a long period of time, several centuries in fact. An early example with a distinctive palmette design is so similar in colouring and stitch to a

fragment decorated with Seljuk dragon heads that it is likely to date from the 12th or 13th century. Conversely, two fragments have features that are unmistakably Ottoman, probably fashioned from covers or hangings usually dated to the 17th century.



**No.3 (EA 1993.275) linen embroidered with red, blue and green silk
in surface darning using counted running stitches**

The roundel shown in illustration no.1 is typically Mamluk in style. The small heraldic lion at its centre could relate to the heraldic devices of late 13th century Sultans and the word al-'izz (glory) is repeated around its edge. Calligraphy and emblems often formed the basis of Mamluk designs across the media. Both this, and another example decorated with calligraphy, are worked in herringbone stitch. It frequently appears on the embroideries, but more often in its counted form used to interpret geometric patterns. Two more counted thread stitches often found on Mamluk needlework are represented on the Newberry roundels. In one case, tiny pink pattern darned motifs are arranged in offset rows and, in another, double running stitches (Holbein) make an attractive zig-zag pattern. On two examples enough stitching has survived to show two types of drawn thread work. One of these must have looked very colourful with its grid of open work, overcast in blue and yellow silk, and a scrolling leaf design of red couched work around its edge. The presence of interlaced herringbone stitch, claimed by the Armenians as theirs, and double chain of "Turkmen" stitch suggest influences from outside Egypt and underline the cosmopolitan nature of Islamic mediaeval Cairo. The jar cover shown in illustration no.3 has been taken from the centre of a medallion design. In style and technique it is comparable with Ottoman embroideries, typically worked in surface darning, using counted running stitches, giving the effect of a twill weave.

The most striking feature of this small group of jar covers is the diversity of design and stitch they represent. Their survival underlines the popularity of embroidered covers for decorating the home during the three hundred years of Mamluk rule. Like other items in the Newberry collection, they also reveal that embroiderers employed techniques practised on later Egyptian embroidery and, indeed, are well known to embroiderers of to-day.

Marianne Ellis

TEXTILE ARTS FOR IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN OXFORD

In the tradition of the groups who contributed to the *Shamiana* scheme, **Bloominarts** based at the East Oxford Community Centre, is working in partnership with local groups to develop four textile projects. The overall aim is to build on the wide range of existing skills and bring new ones into practice in the area, developing a range of exciting and creative work which highlights the rich and diverse cultural heritage in Oxford. Two of the groups are Asian, one West Indian and one African.

One of the Asian groups was the Oxfordshire Chinese Community and Advice Centre (O.C.C.A.C.), who applied successfully for funding from the Year of the Artist Scheme to run a textile residency in July and August of this year. The scheme was implemented by a textile artist from East Sussex, Josephine Tsai-Yin Ho based at the centre. The aims of the residency were to explore the lives and experiences of the members of the Chinese community and communicate these experiences through the development of individual and group textile pieces; to raise the profile of the lives and experiences of the Chinese community within the wider community; and to provide creative opportunities for the Chinese community promoting cultural diversity.

Josephine worked with groups of children, young people, adults and older people for six weeks to produce a group banner, as well as individual pieces such as painted silk scarves and T-shirts. Half of the artist's time was taken with participatory workshops and the other was spent producing her own work.

Seventy-six members of O.C.C.A.C., ranging in age from 5 to 70, took part in the project. This was a very new experience for the community and for many was their first contact with the arts. Although very few of them had any experience of textile work, they produced some beautiful things with which they were really pleased. The banner is now on show at St Mary-in-the-Castle Art Centre in Hastings, close to the artist's home, where it is part of the *Coastal Currents* festival and can be seen until the end of October.

The other Asian project has been developed by "Roshni", the Oxford Asian Women's Association. Their group has been in existence for two and a half years and meets weekly to produce a wide range of traditional dresses and develop embroidery on existing garments using traditional Asian textile skills around themes chosen by the women. The project culminated in the production of a banner which was designed by the women and based on a

traditional Muslim prayer mat. The project supported women to gain a range of traditional textile skills in Indian embroidery and mirror work, block printing and appliqué, and these techniques can be seen in the banner.

Like OCCAC, Roshni has been successful in obtaining a grant, in their case from *Awards for All*, which enabled them to employ an experienced specialist textile artist based in Birmingham, Ranbir Kaur, to provide the sessions. She also trained two local sewing tutors who specialize in Indian embroidery to enable them to develop community textile projects in the future.

The East Oxford community has a significant number of African members who often sew at home. A request came from these women to develop a textile project to enable them to come together and meet other women. This project also led to the production of a banner, as did one established at the West Indian Day Centre.

In the afternoon of Tuesday 12 December there will be a celebration in the Ashmolean Museum, when all four banners will be hung in the Museum's restaurant. All the artists and participants in the scheme and their families will be invited to see them there. They will also be given a tour of the new Chinese paintings gallery and private views of the Museum's textile collections. It is hoped that they will find the Museum a friendly place and a source of inspiration so that they will wish to return again and again. The banners will remain on public display in the restaurant until mid-January

Clare Anderson, Bloominarts



The banner completed with the Chinese Year of the Artist Residency and some of its makers

REPORTS OF O.A.T.G. MEETINGS

The Ancestors' Cloth: New Textiles in Indonesia

On June 21 Ruth Barnes gave a fascinating lecture on her study of the textiles of Eastern Indonesia based on fieldwork carried out over a thirty year period. She has been able to observe the development and changes in the textile material culture of one village over this time.

Ruth first visited the village of Kedan on the island of Lambata in 1969. She found there a society with no weaving tradition of its own. There was even a prohibition on weaving in the old part of the village and textiles were brought in from a neighbouring region.

When she returned to the village in 1998 she found the situation changed. In the new part of the village, close to the beach, textiles were now being woven. Sarongs and shoulder cloths were being made from hand spun cotton in red and brown colours with ikat decoration. The weavers described the textiles as what might have been their traditional cloth if the ancestors had permitted weaving. The local weaving had been established as a result of a government initiative combined with the efforts of a single influential village woman who led the weavers. The new textiles are now worn by villagers for important occasions such as the traditional harvest cycle ceremony.

The lecture was accompanied by slides of the village and villagers taken in both the sixties and the nineties, and Ruth was able to tell us about the families and the characters of those who had become friends during her visits.

In conclusion Ruth wondered if parallels could be drawn between the development of Indonesia's indigenous textile tradition and the way the Kedan villagers had more recently established a weaving culture. Weaving in Kedan had grown as the result of external influences and the energy of a single exceptional personality. Could the import of Indian block-printed cottons and patolas several centuries ago have been an external influence which prompted a similar reaction in the indigenous people?

Susan Stanton

Visit to the Reserve Collection of Chinese Textiles at the Victoria and Albert Museum

Not strictly an O.A.T.G. meeting, but the Friends of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society were delighted when several O.A.T.G. members were able to join them at the V.& A. in July. Valery Garrett, long-time collector of Chinese textiles, R.A.S. Council member, and adviser to the Hong Kong Museum of History in the building up of their collection of dress and textiles, took us on a journey into the recent past when she

showed us a selection from the 250 pieces which she had collected in the New Territories in Hong Kong and which are now held by the V.& A..

This is not a collection of Imperial robes, but one of handmade peasant attire as worn by the farming and fishing peoples. Until the late 1970s the way of life had not changed for these people for centuries and many still wear traditional clothing. However, Valery realized that traditional Chinese dress was fast disappearing as families were rehoused in high-rise apartments with the consequent "turning out" that such an upheaval as this entails, and that families were prepared to sell. Her research took her - together with camera, an assistant who spoke Hakka dialect, a notebook and a bulging purse - into the villages and markets of the northern New Territories. Here lived the fishing communities of the Hoklo, the Daanga and the farming Hakka peoples.

Set out before us were a range of their garments - jackets, trousers and aprons - some in the shiny black cloth that is made by repeated dyeing and beating, which is used for clothes that would be worn on special occasions and at festivals. The aprons had woven bands sewn on to them; these often denote the status of the wearer as well as providing attractive flashes of colour on what would be drab indigo and black cotton material. There were also the checked head-scarves worn by the Hoklo which feature so prominently in Chinnery's paintings.

Carrying a baby safely on the mother's back has long been the custom in China; traditionally it was the grandmother who provided the carrier when the baby was a month old. Several Hakka carriers were on display; made of cotton or hemp, the centres are often richly embroidered in silk with good luck symbols. Those of the Daanga and Hoklo are not usually embroidered, but coloured strips and triangles are appliquéd into a central square.

We also saw shoes, a peculiar hat worn by the Hakka which consists of a broad brim with a valence of cloth around it, as well as a small selection of jewellery - bangles of thick silver and earrings formed of tassels of silk.

For those who had lived in Hong Kong the hour was a feast of memories. And for those who could not come, we hope Valerey Garrett will find time to talk to the O.A.T.G. on another of her hurried visits to England.

Rosemary Lee

O.A.T.G. SUBSCRIPTIONS NOW OVERDUE

Members are reminded that subscriptions are due on or before 1 October. Rates remain at £10 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 paid, this is the last newsletter you will receive. Please send your cheque to Dymphna Hermans, The Warden's Lodgings, All Souls College, Oxford, OX1 4AL, pay at the meeting on 18 October or - better still - use the enclosed banker's order form.

IN THE SHADOW OF SCHEHERAZADE

As mentioned in the last Newsletter, your committee is collaborating with the Costume Society, which is holding its annual symposium in Oxford next July. The theme of the symposium will be *In the Shadow of Scheherazade: The Influence of Orientalism and Exoticism in Western Dress*.

Subject areas will be Eastern influence in Western dress, Europeans in Eastern dress, textile design for dress decoration and dressing for performance. Key speakers will be Ruth Barnes, Pamela Golbin (Curator, 20th Century and Contemporary Costume Collection, Musée de la Mode et du Textile, Palais du Louvre, Paris), Aileen Ribeiro (Reader in the History of Art, Head of the History of Dress Section, Courtauld Institute) and Verity Wilson (Curator, Far Eastern Department, V.& A.).

The symposium will start with lunch on Friday at the Ashmolean Museum, followed by an afternoon of lectures, an opportunity to view an exhibition of Islamic embroideries and visit the print room. Dinner at the Museum will be followed by "a dynamic interactive evening of events full of eastern promise" at Wadham College.

A special visit to the Pitt Rivers Museum on Saturday morning will be followed by lunch at Wadham. Lectures will be held at the College in the afternoon followed by a drinks reception at the Pitt Rivers. The Conference Dinner will take place in the Hall at Wadham.

Lectures will continue on Sunday morning at Wadham where lunch will also be served, followed by further lectures, optional workshop or visit.

An optional visit may also be arranged for Friday morning. For fuller details of the programme contact Judy Tregidden at the address below.

O.A.T.G. members will be able to attend at the same price as members of the Costume Society. For £180 they will have entry to all lectures/visits/workshop/entertainment; lunch on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, Friday dinner and The Symposium Dinner in Wadham College on Saturday; coffee and teas and a drinks reception at the Pitt Rivers Museum. For £260 they will get all that plus bed and breakfast in student accommodation.

Any O.A.T.G. member wishing to attend should write as soon as possible and preferably before the end of this month to the Symposium Co-ordinator, Judy Tregidden, at 25 Church Crescent, Finchley, London, N3 1BE, enclosing a deposit of £30 and S.A.E..

Editor

OBITUARY

George Wood

It is with great sadness that we have learnt of the death of George Wood on 9 July last. George was an active supporter of the Oxford Asian Textile Group from the very beginning, and he acted as our first Treasurer from 1997 to 1999. In October of that year he had to give up his duties due to ill health. He led a retired life for his last year, and I did not see him during that time, but spoke to him on the telephone many times, when he continued to impress by his fortitude and emotional strength. He and his wife Felicity wished to continue a life of relative normality, as far as possible under these difficult circumstances, and in particular for the sake of their two sons.

George's work for B.P. took him to Asia, where he and Felicity spent many years in South-East Asia and China. Their sons were born in Singapore. They settled in Oxford in the mid-80s, but their home is still full of reminders from their Asian years, especially textiles and baskets. It was through the shared enthusiasm for supposedly humble basketry that I first met Felicity and was introduced to George and the family. Our common interest in Asian topics meant that we met on many occasions; he always impressed me with his good humour and sound realism which was never lacking in sensitivity. His presence will be much missed.

Ruth Barnes

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I am trying to locate **Kosraen and other Micronesian textiles, warping boards and other weaving tools** in collections.

My colleague Dr Ann Deegan (San Bernardino Museum, California) and her brother Ross Cordy (State of Hawaii Historic Preservation Division) wish to find this material, which is scattered around the world*. I am helping with this project.

If anyone has any information, please contact me at 119 Berwick Avenue, Heaton Mersey, Stockport, SK4 3AT, e-mail: stitch2@msn.com

Thank you

ANN MORRELL

* They published a paper in *Ars Textrina: A Journal of Textiles and Costume*, Volume 21, June 1994, pp 107-136

MUSEUMS ROUND-UP

The Eastern Art department of the Ashmolean Museum has received out of the blue a gift of six textiles from a German lady, Susanne Vogt of Baden-Baden. They are of particular interest in having formerly belonged to the German expressionist painter Christian Rohlf. Five of the items are from Indonesia: a small batik cloth from Java and headdresses and shoulder cloths from Sumatra, of which one is illustrated on page one. This is a red, purple and green ceremonial headdress, *tangkuluak*, with gold wrap supplementary weft. The cloth is sewn together lengthwise from two long panels with heavy gold thread weaving at both ends. The gold supplementary weaving is arranged in bands with distinct patterns, of which the widest is *balah kacang* ("split bean"). The colour of the warp is pink, the weft is red, yellow and purple at the two ends and green or blue (probably indigo-dyed) in the centre.

The sixth textile of the gift, a Japanese priest's shawl, was an especially serendipitous discovery - but I am going to leave you in suspense about that, for Ruth Barnes is going to write an article about it, and the other pieces, in the next newsletter - so if you want to know the denouement, don't forget to renew your subscription now.

The new Museum of Domestic Design and Architecture which I mentioned in last October's newsletter (no. 14) is due to open to the public on Tuesday 17 October. It aims to attract everyone interested in design for the home and entrance is free. It is to be found on Middlesex University's Art and Design Campus at Cat Hill, Barnet, and can be reached by underground (Piccadilly line) to Oakwood or Cockfosters, then either a 15 minute walk or - from Oakwood - take the Middlesex University shuttle bus. For visitor information phone 020 8411 5244.

The opening exhibition in the temporary exhibitions gallery will be *Archibald Knox at the Silver Studio*, which will run until 9 February 2001; There will be a study day related to it on Saturday 11 November. The permanent exhibition *Exploring Interiors: Decoration of the Home 1900-1960* considers what our homes were like in the 20th century and why. The displays of fabrics and wallpapers, from expensive designs in the most up-to-date styles to cheaper, popular patterns for the mass market, offer the visitor the sort of choices that were available at the time. Those of you who saw the recent block-buster *Art Nouveau* exhibition at the V. & A. will have seen some examples of the work of the Silver Studio and realize the oriental - Japanese, Indian and Islamic - influences that were at work at that time, as they were later. I hope to include an article on this theme in one of the newsletters next year.

On 8 November the British Museum will open a new permanent Korea gallery devoted to its collection of Korean artefacts, which is widely regarded as the best in Europe. The art and architecture of Korea, from the palaeolithic to the present day, will be on display, including fine examples of stone sculpture, paintings, printed books, screens and folk art, as well as ceramics, lacquer, gold and bronze. A central feature will be a reconstructed scholar's studio or *sarangbang*, part of a traditional Korean house, designed by Shin Young-hoon and assembled by Korean master-craftsmen. A separate section of the gallery will be devoted to rotating displays of contemporary Korean art. Whether many textiles form part of the collection, I have yet to discover.

The V.& A. has been participating in *Creating Sparks* a festival in the museums and other institutions of South Kensington, co-ordinated by the British Association to effect a meeting of the arts and sciences. The contribution of the V.& A., sponsored by the Royal Society, *Nature* and l'Oreal, takes the form of a self-guided tour around the galleries, which runs until 2 November. A series of "eye-openers" reveal the interplay between artistic expression, scientific understanding and technological innovation. It is well worth visiting, and there is one item, *Patterns*, which I find particularly interesting and suspect most of you will too. *Patterns* is appropriately situated in the Islamic gallery for it deals with the complex world of geometric patterns, examples being taken from textiles, tiles and carvings.

The Costume and Textile Association for Norfolk Museums (C&TA) announces a textile competition on the theme of *Eastern Inspirations*, which is open to interpretation across the full range of textile arts and crafts. The only limitation is size, with all entries limited to one square metre for flat work and one cubic metre for 3D work. The projects will be launched with an evening of talks about oriental textiles and their influence on Western textile art. There is an entry fee of £5 per submission, but there is no limit to the number of items any one person may submit. The competition is open to all textile artists, not simply C&TA members. For further information about both the competition and the launch event, phone Kitty Temperley on 01603 628497.

Editor

BOOKS

Dorothy S. Alig & Harold Mailand, *Preserving Textiles: A Guide for the Non-Specialist*, Indianapolis Museum of Art, 1999, \$15.

Two of the Museum's conservators give guidance on storage, cleaning and display of all kinds of textiles. Available only from Judy Grimes at the Alliance Museum Shop, Indianapolis Museum of Art, 1200 W.38th St, Indianapolis, IN, 46208, tel. 317 923 1332 extn 118, e-mail: jgrimes@ima-art.org

Alastair Hull & José Luczyc-Wyhowaska, *Kilim: The Complete Guide*, Thames & Hudson, 2000, ISBN 0 500 2822 18, 352 pp, 394 col. & 255 b/w illus., 32 x 24 cm, £19.95

In recent years demand for kilims has reached unprecedented levels. This book unravels the complex questions surrounding the origins and history of these unique rugs and their makers. The numerous illustrations complement original research on techniques and motifs in the countries where kilims are made, including Morocco, Iran and Afghanistan. Chapters on new kilims and the use of kilims as bags as well as rugs, together with a reference guide to collecting, care and further study are included.

Anna Jackson, *Japanese Textiles*, V.& A., 2000, £25 hardback, £18.95 paperback (the latter only obtainable from the V.& A. Museum. (No further details supplied.)

A.Kennedy et al, *Traditional Costumes and Textiles of Japan*, AEDTA, Paris (Portfolio 4), 2000, ISBN 2 908864 11 8, 41 p, 20 col.pl., 1 sketch, 42 cm, 380FF

This album is devoted to Japanese costumes and textiles of the Edo period (1615-1868)

as well as some later pieces. Both urban, and rural traditions are represented in the twenty-two works selected for publication. The wide variety of textile fibres employed in these pieces includes silk, cotton, ramie, banana and elm bark fibres. The social classes and ethnic groups that used these costumes and textiles range from wealthy townspeople, aristocrats, Buddhist monks and samurai to farmers, fishermen and peasants, the Ainu of Hokkaido and the native peoples of Okinawa. The text is in English.

J.P. Mallory & Victor H. Mair, *The Tarim Mummies*, Thames & Hudson, 2000, ISBN 0 500 05 1011, 352 pp, 190 illus (13 in col.), 25.5 x 17.5 cm, £28.

How did tartan-wearing Indo-Europeans come to be in Asia 2000 years before West and East admitted each other's existence? Describing their discovery and revealing the latest attempts of scientists to determine their ethnic identity, the authors examine all the evidence connected with the mummies, including textiles and languages of the Tarim region. The authors conclude by demonstrating the central place of the Tarim peoples in mediating between East and West.

Professor A.Morrell, *Indian Embroidery Techniques at the Calico Museum of Textiles: A Working Guide, Pt A. Embroidery Stitches/Quilting: Darning and Pattern Darning*, Sarabhai Foundation, Ahmedabad, 1999, 4to, 22pp in concertina form, well-illus. in col. In stiff paper envelope, £9.50.

The first in a proposed series of four guides. Excellent reference to traditional methods of Indian embroidery. The accordion format is ideally suited for use as a study or teaching aid. Pt B, *Counted-thread Work/Whitework* is expected to be available later this year, obtainable in U.K. only from Judith Mansfield Books, Claremont South, Burnley Road, Todmorden, Lancs., OL14 5LH, tel./fax. 01706 816487, e-mail: todmordenbooks@indirect.co.uk

J.E.Vollmer et al, *Chinese Costume and Accessories, 17th to 20th Century*, AEDTA, Paris, Portfolio 3) 1999, ISBN 2 908864 10 X, 98pp, 31 col. & 18 other illus., 42 cm, 450Ff.

This album introduces a selection of Qing dynasty (1644-1911) and some related Ming (1368-1644) costumes in the AEDTA collection. Imperial court garments and the celebratory clothing worn for private occasions within Han Chinese, and Manchu elite are featured. The wardrobe of the Tibetan aristocracy who adopted Chinese costumes and fabrics provides a notable parallel use, documenting this luxury industry influence abroad. John Vollmer contributes an essay relating the origin and historical context of these costumes. The text is in English with a French summary.

Zhao Feng, *Treasure in Silk: An Illustrated History of Chinese Textiles*, ISAT/Costume Squad (HK) Ltd, Hong Kong, 1999 (ISBN 962 85691 1 2), HK\$480. To order e-mail: cheung_edith@hotmail.com or fax. (00 852) 2369 4384.

Written in Chinese and English, this book presents the historical development of Chinese textiles from pre-Qin times with a selection of one hundred representative examples drawn from collections worldwide. Over three hundred supplementary illustrations, including photographs and diagrams, enhance the text and a glossary of textile terms is included.

EXHIBITIONS

Ikat Textiles of Asia

This exhibition at the Ashmolean Museum presents textiles from the Department of Eastern Art's collection, all of them rarely on display. The focus is not on a specific geographic region or culture, but on a technique that is especially well developed in Asia. *Ikat* comes from the Malay-Indonesian word for "tie, string"; the term is applied to a resist-dye process where, prior to weaving, warp or weft threads are tied off with a resist fibre and are then dyed. Resist ties are removed or new ones added for each colour. After dyeing, all resists are cut away and the patterned yarns are woven. This complicated method of patterning a textile was developed to an unrivalled level of aesthetic and technical accomplishment in several parts of Asia, most of which will be represented in the exhibition.

The earliest textile on view will be a cotton warp ikat fragment made in the Yemen, probably of 9th to 10th century date; it was exported to Egypt in mediaeval times. India is represented with three versions: warp, weft, and the especially tasking double ikat technique, where the resist-dyed patterns of both warp and weft have to be matched up during weaving. This will be illustrated in a true cloth of splendour, the silk *patolu* from Gujarat. From Central Asia, examples will be taken from the Robert Shaw collection, dated before 1869 and therefore the oldest ikat coats in Britain (see illustration below). In South-East Asia ikat textiles achieved a particular quality and social importance: fine examples of warp ikat from Borneo and eastern Indonesia will be introduced and their social significance as bridal gifts and prestige cloths explored. There will also be a second example of double ikat, in this case from Tenganan on Bali, where they are produced for ceremonial purposes. The cloths from Borneo and Bali are on loan from the Pitt Rivers Museum.

Ruth Barnes



Ikat coat from the Robert Shaw Collection, Ashmolean Museum (X3977)

The exhibition runs from 5 December to 11 February 2001. There will be a behind-the-scenes study session on Wednesday 24 January and lunch-hour gallery talks in the exhibition on Friday 26 January and Friday 16 February. For further information or to book, contact the Ashmolean Education Service, tel. 01856.178015.

Other Exhibitions

Exhibition of works by Asian and African women in Oxford -

- at the Ashmolean Museum Cafe, 12 December to 14 January 2001 (See p 9)

Shamiana: The Mughal Tent

12 panels are on show at the Jugnu Bangra Group, Gravesend and Dartford from now until 10 December and

20 panels will be displayed at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, from 27 October until 18 February 2001

The Rainbow Millenium

Exploring a thousand years of the dyer's palette, charting the use of natural dyes, their demise in the face of the newer synthetic dyes and renewed interest in natural dyes in the latter part of the 20th century. Unfortunately notice of this exhibition was not received in time for the last newsletter, but some of you may have time to fit it in before it closes on 14 October. At the Colour Museum, Bradford, tel. 01274 390955.

Spliterati 01

A celebration of ply-split braiding, traditional and innovative, at Bampton, Oxfordshire, which you may just catch if you run, since it also closes on 14 October. Tel. Jennie Parry, 0116 273 7189

Clothes for an Urban Environment

Display of contemporary work by the New York Malay fashion designer Yeohlee at the V.& A, from 1 to 30 November. Tel. 020 7942 2528

Colour: A Chinese Perspective

Through a display of objects from the Museum's permanent collection, including ceramics, jades, metal and lacquer ware, paper and costume ranging from the Neolithic period to the present day, the meaning and symbolism of colour in the culture of China is explored at the Museum of East Asian Art, Bath, from now until 3 December. Accompanying events include a tour of the exhibition on 17 October and a practical workshop with colour consultant Sheila Broun later. Tel. 01225 464640.

Overseas

Why are Textiles Important? -

- at the Textile Museum, Washington D.C, from 21 January - 4 June 2001 discusses meanings of decorative motifs in textiles worldwide. Tel. 202 667-0441

Last Chance to See -

The House Beautiful at the Geffrye Museum, Hackney, finishes 21 January. Tel. 020-7739 9893

Tribal Traditions (Weaving in Anatolia) at the Textile Museum, Washington, D.C. finishes on 28 January.
Tel. 202 667 04411

LECTURES AND EVENTS

October 11 - Sandy Black will talk on *Simplicity, Comfort and Form: Post-Oriental Asian Textiles and Dress*, and

November 15 - Valerie Steele will be in conversation with Yeohlee
in a monthly series of talks under the heading, *Fashion Forum*, at 2.30p.m. at the V. & A.
Tel, 020 7942 2197 for further information.

October 17-22 & 24-29 - **Chelsea Crafts Fair**, 21st birthday show. Tel 020-7255 2272

October 29 - Make your own puppet based on human forms with the Kabutar Puppet Theatre; family activity in the Nehru Gallery at the V. & A, Tel. 020 7942 2197

Wednesday 8 November - ***Around the World in 80 Braids***, talk by Rodrick Owen to the Friends of the Pitt Rivers Museum at the P.R. Research Building, 64 Banbury Road, Oxford, at 6 p.m. Tea and biscuits will be served between 5.30 and 5.50. Non-members welcome, but are asked to contribute £2 to the Friends' Purchasing Fund.

November 9-17 - **Asian Art in London** will be celebrated for the third successive year with a series of specialist shows in dealers' galleries, important auctions, receptions and gala evenings. Among the textile dealers participating are Joss Graham, the Textile Gallery and Linda Wigglesworth, while Phillips' auction on 13th November includes textiles and fans. For further information tel. +44(0) 20 7499 2215 or visit website <http://www.asianartinlondon.com>

Saturday 11 November - to celebrate the opening of the **Korea Foundation Gallery** at the British Museum, there will be a day of cultural events, gallery talks, lectures and touts.

Saturday 11 November - **Sacred Silks: Religious and Devotional Textiles from China and Tibet**, talk by Gary Dickinson at the Linda Wigglesworth Gallery, tel. 020 7408 0177

December 3 - Try traditional carpet weaving with Noreen Roberts and Michael Learoyd at 11.30 a.m., 1.45 and 3.30 p.m. in the Islamic Gallery at the V. & A. Tel. 020 7942 2197

Gina Corrigan's textile tours for 2001 include Guizhou Province 28 January to 14 February and 24 October to 10 November, and - a new venture - Xinjiang, Mongolia and Kazakhstan 23 June to 15 July. Contact her at Hoe Barn, Hoe Lane, Bognor Regis, West Sussex, PO22 8NS, tel. 01243 582178, fax. 01243 587239, e-mail: gina.occidor@virgin.net

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Contributions should be sent to the Editor
Phyllis Nye, Hewel Barn, Common Road, Beckley, Oxon, OX3 9UR, U.K.
Tel/fax 01865 351607