

ASIAN TEXTILES

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OATG events programme

Monday 18 July 2016

A Show and Tell evening of tribal and village weavings from Iran and Central Asia
by Angela and Christopher Legge

Wednesday 28 September 2016

Meiji ornamental textiles at the National Museum of Ireland
by Dr Clare Pollard

Thursday 13 October 2016

***A Carpet Ride to Khiva* Talk**
by author and specialist Chris Aslan Alexander

Wednesday 2 November 2016

John Gillow will be giving a talk at the **Pitt Rivers Museum** to celebrate **the exhibition of Sheila Paine's textiles and photographs** at the Museum.

Wednesday 16 November 2016

Deeper than Indigo: Tracing Thomas Machell, Forgotten Explorer
by Dr Jenny Balfour Paul

Full details on page 30, all events in Oxford

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Front cover Sandibai and her daughter on the threshold of her house,
Maramanahalli tanda [community] 2013.
See *Textiles of the Banjara* page 8. Photograph Tim McLaughlin.

Hawaiian Featherwork

by Nick Fielding

During a visit to Hawai'i last year, I was struck by the growing interest in a great textile art that has often been overshadowed in the past by kapa-cloth work, the subject of a separate article in *Asian Textiles* 61. I am speaking, of course, about featherwork, one of the great glories of Hawai'i.

Originally, the makers of the feather cloaks for which Hawai'i is so famous would have used the feathers of indigenous honey-sucker birds. Each cloak is made from up to 20,000 feathers and today these species are either extinct or protected, so dyed chicken feather or feathers from ducks, geese, guinea hens, peacocks, pheasants, and quail are used.



Detail of Hawaiian 'ahu 'ula cloak in the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford. Olona fibres covered with feathers from two species of honey-sucker birds; approximately 2.6m x 1.18m. 1840s.

HAWAIIAN FEATHERWORK

The construction of featherwork in ancient Hawai'i required an incredible amount of labour and craftsmanship. Birds were caught by skilled trappers using nets or decoy birds to lure them onto branches coated with a sticky substance. Usually they would harvest only a few feathers from each bird before releasing them back into the wild so they could produce more feathers. Skilled workers belonging to the *ali'i* class crafted the *olonā* cordage backing, a netting used as the foundation for the cloak, onto which the bundles of feathers were attached, creating bold designs.

Pitt Rivers Museum's 'ahu 'ula cloak

The earliest textiles decorated with feathers that can definitively be connected to Captain James Cook's first voyage to the South Seas come from New Zealand and Tahiti. They had lain almost unknown in the Pitt Rivers Museum until they were re-analysed and recognised in 2004. But the museum also holds one particularly remarkable example of featherwork from Hawai'i dating back to the 1840s and donated to the museum in 1951.

This cloak, known in Hawaiian as an 'ahu 'ula cloak, was given to Sir George Simpson by Queen Kekauluoki of Lahaina – who was premier of Hawai'i at that time – as a gift for his wife in return for services rendered by Simpson, who was then a governor of the Hudson's Bay Company. Simpson had aided the Royal family in a dispute over foreign claims against the Hawaiian Government.



Above 'ahu 'ula cloak. Olona fibres covered with feathers from two species of honey-sucker birds; approx 2.6m x 1.18m. 1840s. Pitt Rivers Museum.

Right Princess Nāhi'ena'ena painted in 1825 by Robert Dampier (1800–1874), shows her wearing a very similar cloak. Honolulu Museum of Art.



Measuring approximately 2.6 x 1.18 metres, the cloak is constructed with a close network of Olona fibres covered with feathers from two species of honey-sucker birds. Each feather is tied in with fibre. This cloak is probably one of the last ever made. The report of the Pitt Rivers curator for 1951, the year of its accession, describes it as "outstanding". A famous painting, in the Honolulu Museum of Art, of Princess Nāhi'ena'ena, completed in 1825, shows her wearing one that is very similar.

HAWAIIAN FEATHERWORK

Captain Cook's featherwork gifts eventually return to Hawai'i

There are other extraordinary examples of Hawaiian feather work given to Captain Cook on his last voyage, but these have a remarkable history and have not been in Britain for more than a century. In 1779, the reigning chief of Hawai'i Island, Kalani'ōpu'u, greeted Cook after his ship made port in Kealahou Bay. As a demonstration of his goodwill, Kalani'ōpu'u gifted the *'ahu 'ula* (feathered cloak) and *mahiole* (feathered helmet) he was wearing to Captain Cook, draping the cloak on Cook's shoulders. Cook was killed soon after during a skirmish with islanders.

The *'ahu 'ula* and *mahiole* left on Cook's ship were taken to England and passed through the hands of various museum owners and collectors. They eventually came into the possession of the Second Baron St Oswald, who decided to present his entire collection in 1912 to the Dominion Museum in Wellington, New Zealand – now known as Te Papa Tongarewa. The cloak and helmet have been there in the national collection ever since.



Left Ahu-Ula, cape, and **Right** Mahiole, hat, both from Captain Cook's last voyage, and both recently returned from New Zealand to the Bishop Museum in Hawai'i.

However, in 2013, discussions began between Hawai'i's Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum in Honolulu, Te Papa Tongarewa, and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, to bring these treasures back to Hawai'i. Eventually the governors of Te Papa Tongarewa decided to let them come back on a long-term loan to the Bishop Museum, where they arrived in March this year after 237 years away. They were received at the Museum in a moving ceremony. The exhibition space at the Bishop Museum is to be called '*He Nae Ākea: Bound Together.*' This, announced the Museum, reflects the connection of Kalani'ōpu'u to his land and people, the connection between the peoples, nations, and cultures throughout the centuries who have cared for these treasures, as well as the connection between the three institutions directly involved in this loan.

As the Bishop Museum says; "The feathered cloak and helmet have great extrinsic value, but more importantly, they possess great intrinsic and spiritual significance. For Native Hawaiians, the *'ahu 'ula*, *mahiole*, and all other featherwork were reserved

HAWAIIAN FEATHERWORK

exclusively for the use of their *ali'i* (royalty), symbolizing their chiefly divinity, rank, and power.”

***Kāhili* – feather standards**

Another very typical Hawaiian artefact that can be found in the Bishop Museum, and which can be seen in the painting of Princess Nāhi'ena'ena, is the *kāhili*, or feather standard. The *kāhili* signified power from the divinities. Members of the Royal Family, the Ali'i, surrounded themselves with the standard. It was made using the long bones of an enemy king, or Kauila wood or another native wood, and decorated with the feathers from birds of prey. The Royal Coat of Arms of Hawai'i depicts the twin Kame'eiamoku holding a feather standard. Among the pieces collected on Captain Cook's voyages were seven *kāhili* of the usual design before European influence.



Left Princess Ruth Keelikolani with Hawaiian landowners Sam Parker and JA Cummins as *kāhili* bearers
Right Part of the *Kāhili* Room, Bishop Museum, Hawai'i.

Revival in featherwork making

After many years of neglect, interest in Hawaiian featherwork has begun to grow, much as there has also been a revival in kapa cloth-making. San Francisco's de Young Museum recently held its first-ever exhibition of royal Hawaiian featherwork and interest is widespread throughout the Hawaiian islands. People like Mary Louise Kaleonahenahe Wentworth Peck Kekuewa – known as Aunty Mary Lou – an expert feather worker and tutor, kept the art alive and transmitted it to the next generation.

During my visit to Hilo on Big Island I was lucky enough to see a class being led at the Lyman Museum by Aunty Doreen Henderson. She and her students, collectively

HAWAIIAN FEATHERWORK



Above Cape possibly 19th century from the Bishop Museum, exhibited at San Francisco's de Young Museum, which recently held its first-ever exhibition of royal Hawaiian featherwork.

Right Feather lei work of Aunty Doreen and her students; modern indigenous production.

known as Lei Hulu of Hilo, make items such as *lei hulu* (feather lei, often used as hatbands), *kahili* (royal feather standards), 'uli'uli (feather gourds and rattles), 'ahu'ula (feather capes), and *mahiole*.

Aunty Doreen has dedicated her life to the preservation and perpetuation of Hawaiian featherwork and has been practising the art for over 30 years. She studied under Master Kumu Mary Kahihilani Kovitch, a student of Aunty Mary Lou Kekuewa, who is considered one of the foremost featherwork teachers in Hawai'i. With such great defenders, no doubt the skills will never be lost.

Nick Fielding is a journalist and author and former editor of *Asian Textiles*.



TEXTILES OF THE BANJARA

Book review by Pamela Cross

Textiles of the Banjara: Cloth and Culture of a Wandering Tribe

by Charllotte Kwon and Tim McLaughlin; foreword by Rosemary Crill, senior curator at the V&A
published by Thames and Hudson ISBN 978-0-500-51837-3. 190 pages. £29.95.

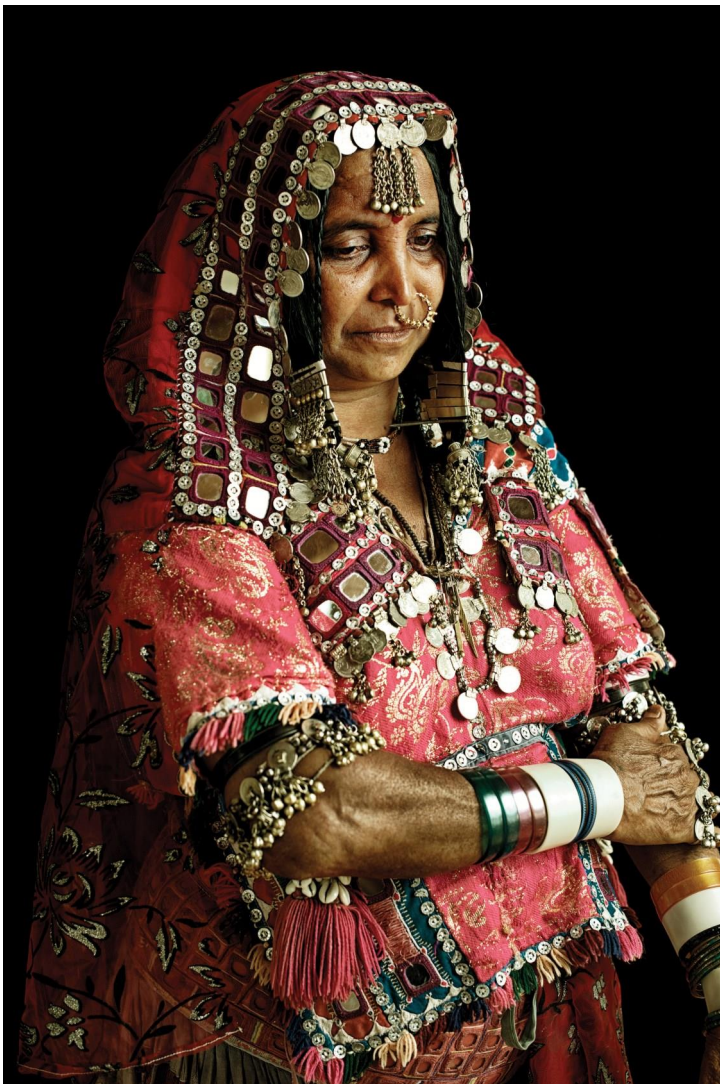
Charllotte Kwon is director of the Maiwa Textile Symposium, owner of Maiwa Handprints Ltd, and director of the Maiwa Foundation. In 2002 she curated an exhibition of tribal embroideries from the Kutch Desert. Charllotte is internationally recognised for her work championing artisans and handcraft. Tim McLaughlin is a photographer and writer. In collaboration with Charllotte Kwon he has edited and co-directed four documentary films. In 2014 Tim's photographic work was awarded the Prix de la Photographie Paris.

I have a small collection of vibrant Banjara textiles collected mainly in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when small pieces were affordable. They were some of my

earliest textile 'buys': I was attracted by their rich ochre and red madder colours, eye-catching graphic design and fine stitchery. Most are displayed in my living room where they enhance my daily life. When I received information from Joss Graham about *Stitching the Square: an exhibition of Banjara Embroidery from India* at his gallery, as well as a seminar and book signing, I was hooked!

Prior to *Textiles of the Banjara* there has been very little information available on the Banjara aside from, as Rosemary Crill points out in her foreword, a few sentences or at best a chapter in a broader work.

The book provides a history of the semi-nomadic Banjara who, before roads and railways, provided long-distance bullock caravans supplying and trading low-cost and bulky items such as salt, grains, spices, cotton and rice, acting as independent merchants buying at source and selling at the destination. The whole family would travel on the caravans, with the women taking



Gambibai is a skilled embroiderer who lives in Kaddirampura, Karnataka. She embroiders items for the Surya's Lambhani-Banjara Women Welfare Trust (Surya's Garden) project, 2013.

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an active role supporting the men in protecting the goods. The caravans could be huge with, at their height, droves of 180,000 bullocks that could take days to pass a single point. Generally they moved slowly. They supplied the military during the Mughal era and the British forces at the end of the 18th century. However, the consolidation of British power and the arrival of the railways marked the end of the cultural and political conditions under which the nomadic caravans flourished, and ended with the whole tribe being criminalised under the 1871 Criminal Tribes Act.



Detail of a quilted bag with exceptionally fine interlacing stitches, Shimoga Hills, c.1920. John Childs collection.

The Banjara are thought to have originated in Rajasthan, north-west India, but are found in almost every Indian state under a variety of names such as Lambadi, Lamani, Laman Banjara, Gro Banjara, Sugali, Vanjara, Wanjara, Brinjaras. Phonetic interpretations result in a plethora of spellings. The book examines the thesis that the Banjara are gypsies, citing linguistic and genetic evidence of an association with the European Roma originating from the Doma or ancient aboriginal populations of north-western India.

Throughout the book there are illustrations in glorious colour of Banjara textiles as objects or worn by Banjara women. The Banjara women, regardless of name or individual group, were instantly recognisable by their brightly coloured clothing decorated with mirrors, embroidery, appliqué, shells and lead bells, and heavy bangles on arms and legs. The quality of the images is excellent. The pictures of the textiles seem to glow with rich colour and detail so that you touch the page expecting to feel the fabric itself. There are also several older images unearthed during research relating to the Banjara and their history.

Sadly the end of the traditional Banjara way of life, and the criminalisation of the

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tribe, has been very destructive, leading to poverty and associated social problems such as alcoholism. In turn this has led many Banjara to reject their traditional dress, as they feel it marks them out as backward and brings discrimination and prejudice. Only a few older women still continue to wear it. However, some successful groups have managed to balance tradition and modernity and wear traditional clothing when it suits them. These are generally involved with handicraft and are skilled in the traditional techniques. The makers have become their family's main income providers and have awoken a pride in their traditional identity.

Chapters three and four in the book describe the techniques, design and style of Banjara embroidery, clothing and jewellery – beautifully illustrated throughout. The last chapter covers the revival in embroidery, particularly at Surya's Garden, a not-for-profit collective and trust founded in 2002 amongst the Lambani community of



The historic and the revival. Historic inspiration left, Surya's Garden revival bag right.

H a m p i ,
Karnataka, by a
young Banjara
woman, Laxmi
Naik, with her
Belgian husband,
Jan Duclos. After
a meeting in 2009
with Charllotte
Kwon, a strong
relationship has
developed. Both
groups have a
shared aim in
creating high-
quality work and
have brought
t o g e t h e r

complementing strengths. As well as a marketing outlet, the Maiwa Foundation has provided photos of historic examples from its collection and, in turn, Surya's Garden gives it a permanent presence close to the communities with which it works. Images in the book that show historic and revival examples side-by-side illustrate the very fine work being created from the association. I was impressed by the quality of the textiles which Charllotte and Tim brought to the seminar and which will be included in the exhibition at Joss Graham's gallery.

I am pleased to be able to set my few Banjara pieces in context and, even more, to enjoy the glowing photos of the people and their textiles which spring off the pages in this book and which is a welcome addition to my groaning bookshelves. I strongly recommend visiting Joss Graham's gallery to see the exhibition (which ends on 30 July) of historic pieces – some are for sale, some not – and be tempted by the fine revival textiles which Maiwa has left at the gallery at 10 Eccleston Street, London SW1W 9LT Tel +44 (0)20 7730 4370 <http://www.jossgraham.com/>.

Pamela Cross is a textile collector, administrator of the www.tribaltextile.info/community forum, and OATG web manager.

TEXTILES AT THE GULBENKIAN

The star of Lisbon

by Aimée Payton

Calouste Gulbenkian (1869–1955) was one of the richest people in the world. He made his fortune in oil, which enabled him to acquire a truly magnificent fine art and decorative art collection, including many paintings purchased from The Hermitage Museum. Of particular interest to OATG members is his collection of carpets, Safavid and Ottoman textiles, as well as a few other Asian items. I was lucky enough to see them for myself at the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum in Lisbon, where around a sixth of the collection is on display.

Gallery of Eastern Islamic Art

The gallery devoted to Eastern Islamic Art is dominated by textiles. The sheer quantity of the carpets hits you first, virtually covering the floor of the huge gallery as well as adorning the walls.



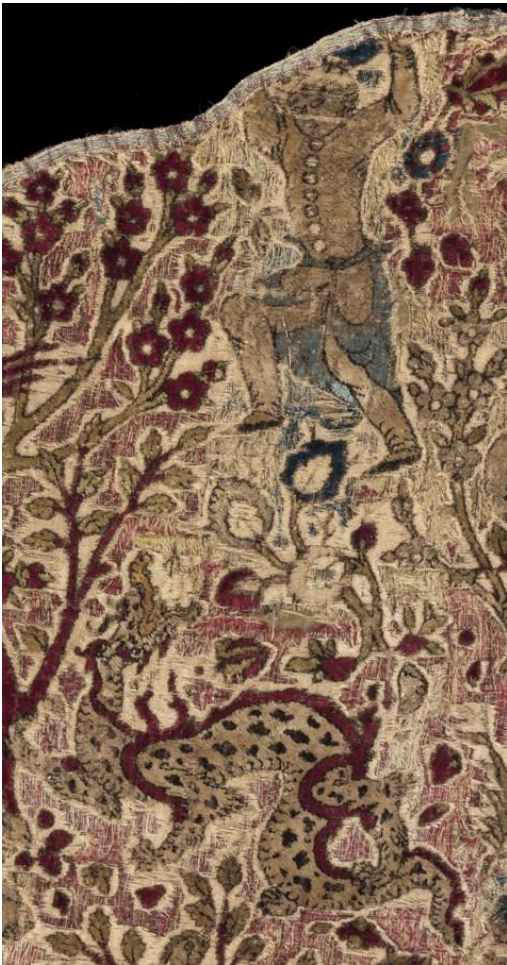
Part of the Gallery of Eastern Islamic Art at the Gulbenkian.

The majority of the carpets on display are superb examples from the Safavid period (1501–1722) and there are a range of designs: Esfahan, Grotesque, Sickle-Leaf, Polonaise, etc. The Animal Fighting carpet (Inv. T100) was woven in Kashan in the mid-sixteenth century. From a distance you have no idea of the violence it contains. There

TEXTILES AT THE GULBENKIAN

are birds in symmetrical angry stances ready to attack, lions mauling their prey, and dragons in full combat, all elegantly knotted in intricate silk detail.

Also on display from the Safavid period are velvets, brocades, and two coats. Amongst the large, domestic, luxury textiles is an exquisite velvet fragment (Inv. 1505) which continues the violent theme, showing Alexander the Great slaying a dragon with a rock. In spite of the extensive conservation the intricacy and technical skill are clearly visible.



Above *The Animal Fighting carpet (Inv. T100) woven in Kashan in the mid-sixteenth century.*

Left *Alexander the Great slaying a dragon with a rock (Inv. 1505). Velvet. Safavid period.*

A black and white velvet (Inv. 1437) with silver threads shows evidence of the transference of designs and ideas as it includes an imitation of the Chinese cloud motif.

Moving on through the gallery you are confronted with the huge red motifs of no less than thirteen large Ottoman velvets and two woven silk panels. Their bold designs make a huge impact en masse, even from the other end of the gallery. Nor do they disappoint on closer inspection when the fine craftsmanship and flawless condition become apparent.

Far Eastern Art Gallery

Textiles are not so well represented in the Far Eastern Art gallery. However the wonderful Japanese export embroidered hanging (Inv. 1416) would have been very much at home in the Ashmolean's Threads of Silk and Gold exhibition held in 2012/13. You could easily pass by the muted colours of the four huge phoenixes, but

TEXTILES AT THE GULBENKIAN

you would miss out on the impressive complexity of the embroidery. The wide range of perfect stitches gives such a depth of texture to this work of art, which would have hung on the walls of a grand nineteenth-century European house.



Above Detail of velvet (Inv.1437) with silver threads shows evidence of the transference of design as it includes an imitation of the Chinese cloud motif. Safavid period.

Below Detail of Japanese export embroidered hanging (Inv.1416) 19th century.



TEXTILES AT THE GULBENKIAN

Kum Kapi carpets

At the Gulbenkian this summer until 19 September is an exhibition on Kum Kapi carpets. These carpets owe their name to the Istanbul district where in the 19th century some Armenian master carpet makers settled and wove knotted carpets of silk with metal threads, inspired by classic Persian carpets of the 16th and 17th centuries.



Far left Kum Kapi carpet. Istanbul (?), Paris (?), 19th/20th century silk, silver threads, Persian knot open to the left 225.5 x 147.5 cm Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Inv. T95.

Left and below Two other Kum Kapi carpets in the museum.

All photographs Carlos Azevedo



Hagop Kapoudjian (c. 1870–1946) was one of the more famous Kum Kapi master carpet makers, and he conceived and restored carpets for Calouste Gulbenkian. He created three of the carpets included in the exhibition which have been placed alongside two works of the contemporary artist Mekhitar Garabedian, also of Armenian origin, born in 1977. There is an accompanying booklet entitled *Kum Kapi: Travelling Carpets*.

There is much more to see at the Gulbenkian. There are more textiles in the Western Art and Decorative Art galleries, and the gardens encourage you to take a lovely stroll to the Contemporary Art gallery.

Lisbon is packed full of museums so I highly recommend a visit. Just make sure you do not miss the Gulbenkian; it was my highlight of the whole city.

[Aimée Payton is chair of OATG](#)

Bags on bikes

An informal look at modern use of saddle bags in Iran

by Gavin Strachan

Cultural traditions have a habit of persisting. In an English context, consider that lawyers still wear wigs and military officers spurs (admittedly only with dress uniform). When it comes to more practical matters, we continue to have thatched roofs. Thatched cottages once housed the poorest families. Thatch was the cheapest form of roofing and was often substandard. Social revolutions over the last 100 years have changed thatch ownership. It is now the quintessence of country cottage charm for the second-home brigade, and in spite of the cost is kept in pristine condition.



Left *Stuffing a saddle bag outside the Tehran carpet bazaar.*



Right *A garish bike adjacent to the Naqsh-e Jahān Square, Isfahan, but simple colours on the saddle bag.*

In the Middle East, and elsewhere, saddle bags were used for transporting goods on beasts of burden. Their charm to us now is that their smaller format often allowed the creation of delightful designs on what were essential, everyday articles, and where there would be excessive wear vulnerable parts might be reinforced with pile. Now donkeys have largely given way to wheels, but saddle bags retain their functionality and can still be seen in Iran – on motorbikes and bicycles.

BAGS ON BIKES

A twelve-day trip to central southern Iran and Tehran in the early autumn of 2015 was enjoyed by ten members of the Oriental Rug and Textile Society (ORTS) of London, some of whom are also OATG members. ORTS organises trips to locations around the world each year. The next trip in September is to Gujarat (which alas is already fully booked).



Left Bicycle in Isfahan.



Right Bicycle in the centre of Shah E Kord.



Motorbike just off the Naqsh-e Jahān Square, Isfahan.

BAGS ON BIKES

The Iranian excursion was led by ORTS and OATG member Christopher Legge, assisted by Iranian carpet dealer and fixer Abbas Rahimi and a local professional guide. So with the driver and the driver's mate, in fact his brother, minders were in plentiful supply. Among the many sites we visited were Persepolis near Shiraz, the Zoroastrian Towers of Silence (a name apparently conjured up by a British Government of India translator in the 19th century) on the outskirts of Yazd, and the Safavid splendours of Isfahan.

Particularly memorable trips were made to selected dealers down hidden alleyways in the bazaars of Shiraz and Tehran, to an artisan felt maker in Shah E Kord, an ikat workshop in a Yazd cellar, and to a lively and crowded Friday market in a three-storey car park in Tehran. And wherever we went, there were bags on bikes.

Admittedly most motorbikes in Iran are fitted with moulded plastic panniers as they are in the west. But a significant number sport woven saddlebags, and some bicycles do too.

Left and below You don't get motorbikes parked in cathedrals in England, but you do at the Friday mosque in Isfahan.



Right On the go in Tehran.

Saddlebags are traditionally woven in one long piece. They are finished by folding the two end panels inwards, but not meeting in the middle, to leave a central face which goes over the back of the animal, and the sides are then stitched to form

BAGS ON BIKES

the bags. The bags on bikes in the autumn of 2015 were all made in this traditional way. All were flat woven. Most were made of wool, although some were produced from what appeared to be man-made fibres. It was not immediately obvious if there were any regional differences between the designs. Perhaps that is a small research project for the future.



Above left Two for the price of one: Tehran Friday market.



Above right Keeping it simple in Isfahan.

Below left Something more traditional in Yazd.



Below right But man-made fibres are used in Yazd too.

The saddle bags displayed on bikes were definitely utilitarian in style, although this did not prevent the use at times of vivid colours, and it would be nice to think that originally some may have been slung over an animal. Although many are prosaic, the point of this short piece is that it was a joy to see, in the crowded streets of Iran, traditional objects still used for their original purpose. Just as I appreciate thatched cottages.

Acknowledgement: Thanks to Elizabeth Bridges who suggested the title while in Iran although she may not remember it.

Gavin Strachan is editor of *Asian Textiles*

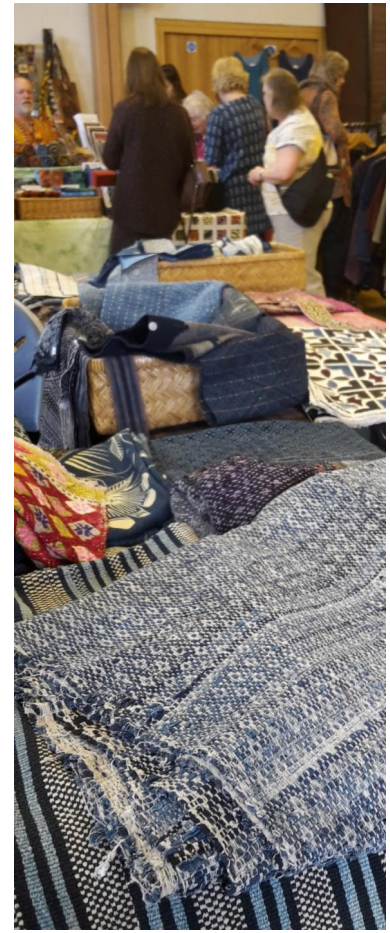
Report: World Textile Day King's Sutton near Banbury

On Saturday 4 June Aimée Payton, Kathy Clough and Gavin Strachan, as well as other OATG members, went to King's Sutton, near Banbury, for a jolly and informative textiles event. World Textiles Days have been running since 2009 in locations across Great Britain. Organised by two companies, Textile Traders and The African Fabric Shop, the events are an opportunity to hear excellent talks, purchase from textiles dealers, and have a cup of tea and a chat with fellow enthusiasts.

The village hall in



The sales room. On the left Japanese textiles with shibori in the foreground.



King's Sutton is divided into two large rooms. The sale room was full of gorgeous textiles from around the world. Aimée asserted that she was not prepared for the quantity and diversity on offer; there was a Japanese shibori still with the resist threads attached, Indian block-printed garments, vintage Chinese embroidery, Indonesian batik, and much more. She was so excited by all the wonderful things that she declared it was impossible for her to choose, and instead went home with some Indian printing blocks.

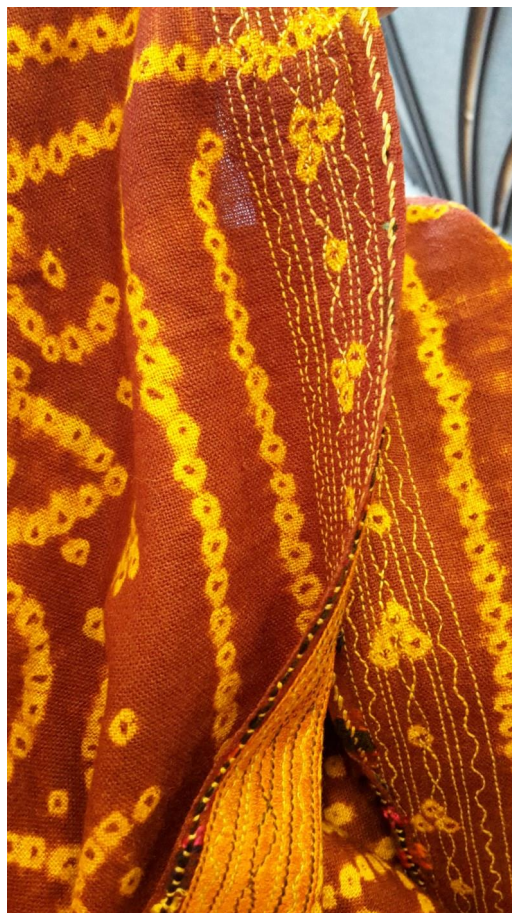
The morning talk in the adjoining room by **John Gillow**, an OATG member who also had a stand at the fair, took us on his personal discovery of the textiles of north-western India and into Pakistan. We even got to handle and examine most of 40 or so items he discussed. Once he had given an introduction to each one, and perhaps also told an engaging anecdote, they were passed along the rows of listeners in the crowded room.



John Gillow's Meghwal hat.

WORLD TEXTILE DAY

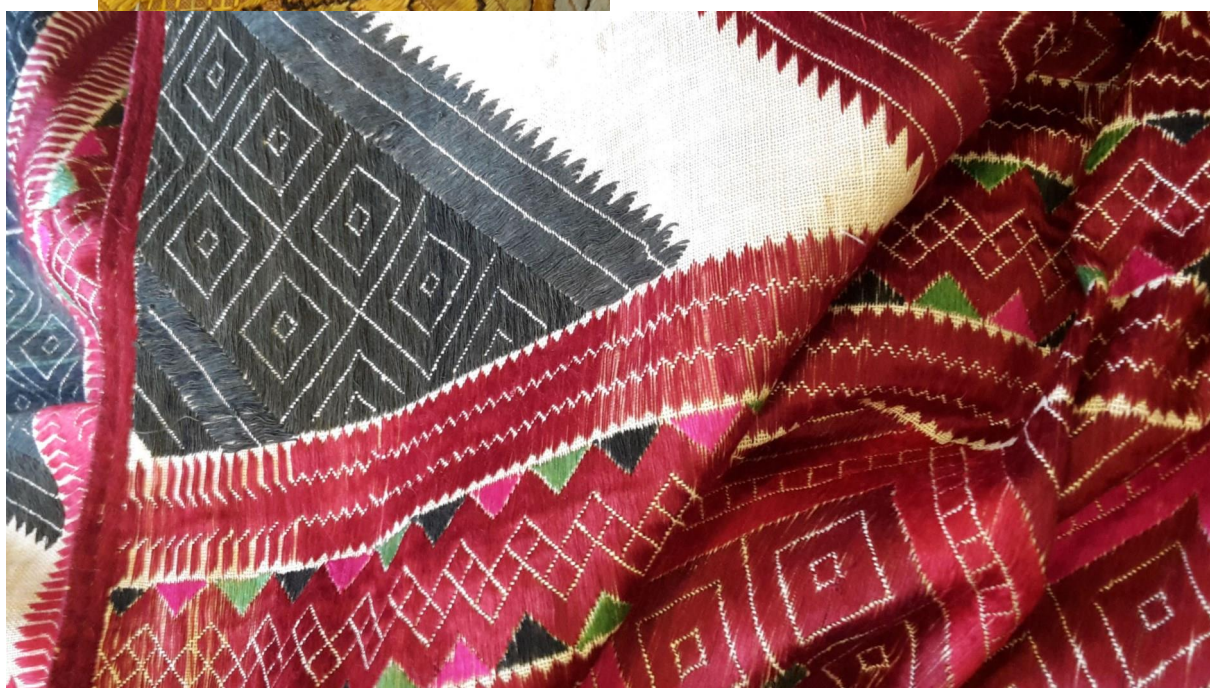
John Gillow's talk was accompanied by appreciative noises from the audience as he produced beautiful garments, domestic textiles and even a horse's hood. He has an in-depth knowledge, and pointed out subtle differences between similar garments, explained which motifs and colours were used by different castes and religious groups, how the cut of a garment might indicate its use, and which techniques were most prized.



Above Tie dyed in Kutch.

Left and below Silver and gold phulkaris are worn by Hindus and Sikhs, while pink and red ones are worn by Muslim women.

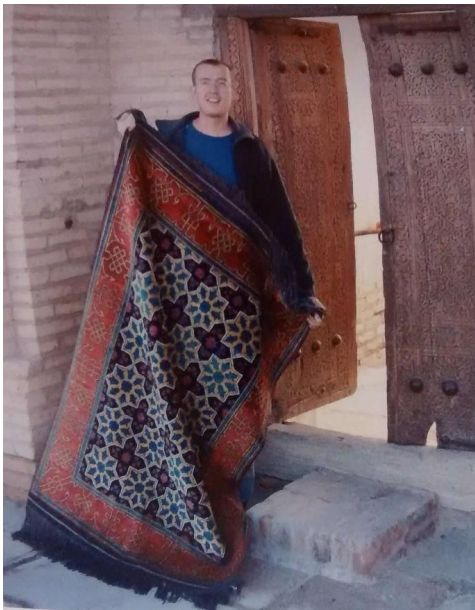
Some of the textiles passed along during John Gillow's talk.



WORLD TEXTILE DAY

In the afternoon there were two shorter lectures followed by a quick show and tell. **Chris Alexander**, now a mature student at Wycliffe Hall in Oxford, talked for half an hour in a totally engaging and unpretentious way about his seven years in the walled city of Khiva in Uzbekistan.

Originally in Khiva to write a guidebook from scratch, he fell in love with the place and set up a carpet-weaving workshop to provide work for the poor and disabled using the local silk and natural dyestuffs. Accompanied by lovely slides, he described the vicissitudes of setting up such an enterprise, the beauty of the place, the charm of the people, sericulture, and how they established a suzani embroidery. The carpet designs are based on Timurid patterns, on Persian and Mughal miniatures, on the tiles that adorn Khiva buildings, and on Khiva's carved wooden doors and pillars.



Above Chris Alexander in Khiva with one of the rugs the workshop wove.



Above right One of the workshop's silk-based carpets 1.53m x 1.11m. They are called Kopa Tolken (door waves) named after **Right** the design from a carved wooden side door to the main Friday Mosque in Khiva.



Christopher Alexander is speaking to OATG on 13

A shorter talk followed by **Diane Gaffney**, who together with husband Jim owns Textile Traders, one of the two companies that organise the World Textile Days. Her subject was how batik is still an essential constituent in the Javanese marriage and birth cycle and the talk was beautifully illustrated with photographs of families celebrating these events.

Word Textile Day is returning to the same venue on 3 June 2017.

The Al Lulwa Collection

Book review by Sheila Allen

Decorative Textiles from Arab and Islamic Cultures: Selections from the Al Lulwa Collection

Text by Jennifer Wearden with an introduction by Jennifer Scarce.
Paul Holberton publishing. ISBN 978-1907372872. 200 pages. £40.

The Al Lulwa Collection was started in the early 1980s by Altaf S Ali Sabah of Kuwait in memory of her late grandmother, and to support the revival of craft traditions in the Arab world by showcasing a range of notable late Islamic textiles. Textiles and garments in the collection come mainly from North Africa, Syria, Arabia, Iran, Turkey and the Indian subcontinent, and include ceremonial as well as everyday domestic items in a wide range of fabrics and decorative techniques. The collection concentrates on nineteenth- and early-twentieth century examples, but the conservative nature of textiles means that it showcases the traditions of the medieval Islamic world.

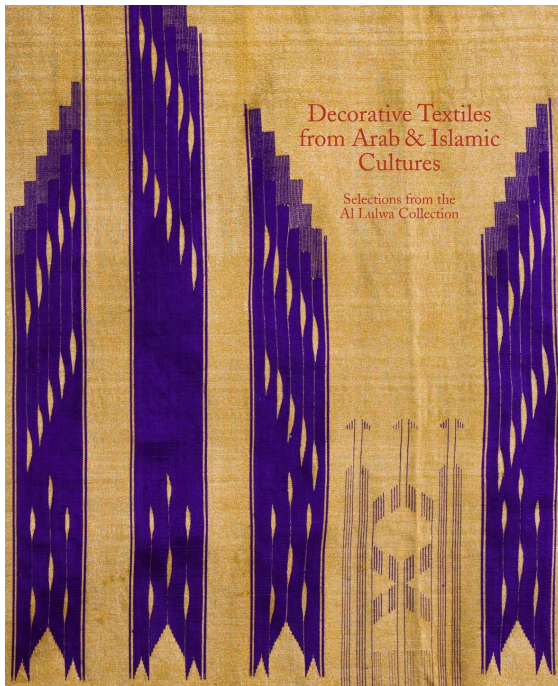


Woman's dress. Cotton twill embroidered with cotton, metal thread and beads. Saudi Arabia Ta'if area, Bani Sa'ad tribe. 2nd half twentieth century. Inv 48.

The book is divided into four sections: floral decoration, geometric patterns, the written word and applied decoration. Each section has a succinct and informative introduction by Jennifer Wearden, former senior curator of textiles at the V&A, who has also supplied notes on every item. These include points on the techniques used in their making, how they were worn or used, relevant geographical and historical information, and detailed descriptions of the designs.

Wearden includes delightful nuggets of information which constantly stimulate a reader's interest. The position of a narrow horizontal border on a woman's trouser panel from Iran shows that the floral design would have appeared upside-down to an observer but the right way round for the wearer. A Turkish towel woven with bands of looped pile was of the kind purchased in the 1840s by Henry Christy and the origin of the now famous Christy towels used in the west. The example in the book is embroidered with metal thread, which of course is not found on the western equivalents.

Jennifer Scarce, formerly curator of Middle Eastern Cultures in the National Museum of Scotland, has produced a wide-ranging introduction which, using items from the collection, discusses the geographical range of the textiles, the materials and techniques employed, and summarises their uses. The striking designs for which Islamic textiles are noted have many antecedents. As a result of cultural fusion, a flourishing textile industry developed in



Above *Front cover of the book.*

Right Woman's shawl. Cotton embroidered with floss silk, Sindh, 20th century. Inv 38.

Islamic countries. While the versatility and portability of the products ensured that the industry was widespread, only a limited number of textiles survive because of their fragility. This sometimes causes problems in their interpretation and historical sequencing. Scarce notes that the principal collections are now in museums in Europe and America, and in private hands in the Middle East.

A glossary gives detailed definitions and usefully includes diagrams of embroidery stitches. There is a useful map showing the three Islamic Empires (Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal) in the seventeenth century when they were at their greatest extent. The book is lavishly illustrated. Many of the items have a full-page illustration, and sometimes a double-page detail.

This is an attractive and scholarly book, and a stimulating appraisal of the Al Lulwa collection.

[Sheilla Allen is an OATG committee member](#)



Show and Tell January 2016

Immediately following the AGM at the Ashmolean on 30 January there was a Show and Tell session. Pamela Cross took on the role of compere.

Pamela's first piece was one she was actually wearing – a waistcoat made of fabric woven by the Tai Daeng (Red Tai). What really made our hearts sing was the Li skirt from Hainan – just fabulous. Recounting how she had found it (along with lots of other gems) right at the end of a trip when she had little money left brought nods of recognition from many in the audience. The colouring was beautiful, and the anthropomorphic figures were very well executed.



Above *Li skirt brought by Pamela Cross.*



Right *Detail of the Li skirt.*

After looking at several examples of clothing, John Sutcliffe's piece was quite different – a salt bag, bought in Armenia and possibly from there. With its lovely natural dyes and strong hooked motifs, this must have been a pleasure to use.

Fiona Sutcliffe kept it in the family with a framed piece of Chinese embroidery that had belonged to John's parents. Next she showed us an intricately stitched hat from Gujarat, decorated with fabulous peacocks.

Sue Richardson then shared two pieces, both from the Indonesian island of Sumba. The first was a shoulder cloth with a bold ikat pattern showing a skull tree, crowned lions and marine life, dyed using indigo and morinda. She explained how the seller had acquired it as part-payment for dyeing some threads; hence a pattern from one part of the island was found in quite another part.

Sue's second piece was a lau wuti kau nggeri – a tubeskirt made from fine handspun cotton, decorated with beads, shells and a fringe. This was last worn by a papanggang (female slave) at the funeral of the Rajah of Pau in 1983. The Rajah had

actually died in 1961, but funerals are such huge affairs in Sumba that it took his family 22 years to raise the funds for it.

Next was David Richardson, who carried on the Indonesian theme with another piece from Sumba. This was again a tubeskirt, but decorated using a very different technique. The ends of the off-white skirt had been dipped in tannin-rich mud, giving them a lovely charcoal colour. The main decoration was achieved with supplementary warps and spot-dyeing.



Above Salt bag bought in Armenia by John Sutcliffe.

Below left Gujarati hat shown by Fiona Sutcliffe.

Below right Sue Richardson talks about her Sumbanese shoulder cloth.



2016 SHOW AND TELL

The wide range of interests of OATG members was evident when next we were shown several pieces from Japan by Marion Maule. Marion traced the journey of a Sassanian roundel motif from the West to Japan, recounting a royal love story in the process. She showed how this motif could be found on a wide range of textiles, from high-status gifts to towels.

Judith Gussin then showed us two beautiful textiles from India. The first was vibrant with wonderful parrot motifs. The second toran also featured parrots, but had a wider range of softer colours. Both were in excellent condition and Judith explained how she used them as inspiration in her own creations.



Above Roundel motifs on a Japanese textile explained by Marion Maule.



Above Judith Gussin's vibrant parrots from India.

Below Parrots on a toran also shown by Judith Gussin.



We returned to the subject of clothing with a man's vest woven from nettle fibre. Sheila Allen explained that it was from Eastern Nepal, and had been worn regularly by her husband during his time there.

Aimée Payton brought a shoe she thought might be from Turkey, given to her by her mum, and told us a charming tale involving her mother wearing it as a child.



Above Navajo rug. Gavin Strachan helped by Marion Maule.

Right Sheila Allen showing the nettle fibre vest from Eastern Nepal.



We then examined a striking late-nineteenth-century Navajo rug brought by Gavin Strachan. It was probably from Ganado in Arizona. Its power lay in its simplicity. Explaining its presence at an Asian textile meeting, the excuse was that Amerindians were ultimately of East Siberian origin, and the Navajo use an Athabaskan language mostly spoken in NW Canada immediately adjacent to Asia. The rug was a transitional piece showing the Navajos moving from weaving blankets for wear to rugs for sale.

The final piece of the afternoon was a haori shown by Felicitas von Droste zu Hülshoff. Haori jackets are traditionally worn on top of the kimono when the weather calls for another layer. They do not cross over or tie with a sash like a kimono – they are meant to be worn open to reveal what is worn beneath. The tie-dye technique used is kaneko shibori. The jacket was decorated with motifs of bamboo and maple leaves. In spite of having been in her family for a long time, it had a very contemporary feel and several OATG members would have loved to wear it.



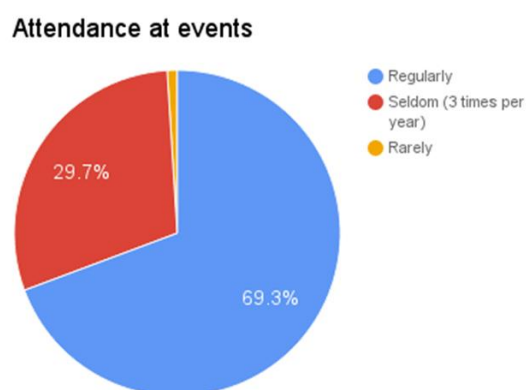
Felicitas von Droste zu Hülshoff and her haori.

OATG events survey

Our Programme Coordinators, Katherine Clough and Felicitas von Droste zu Hülshoff, give us some feedback on OATG events programming, based on the forms that they asked us to fill in at the Annual General Meeting held at the end of January this year in the Ashmolean Museum.

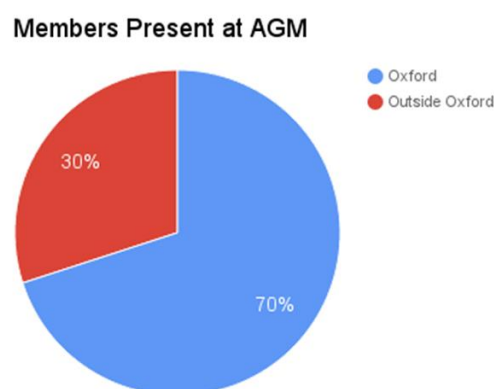
How often do you attend OATG events?

Pretty often, it seems:



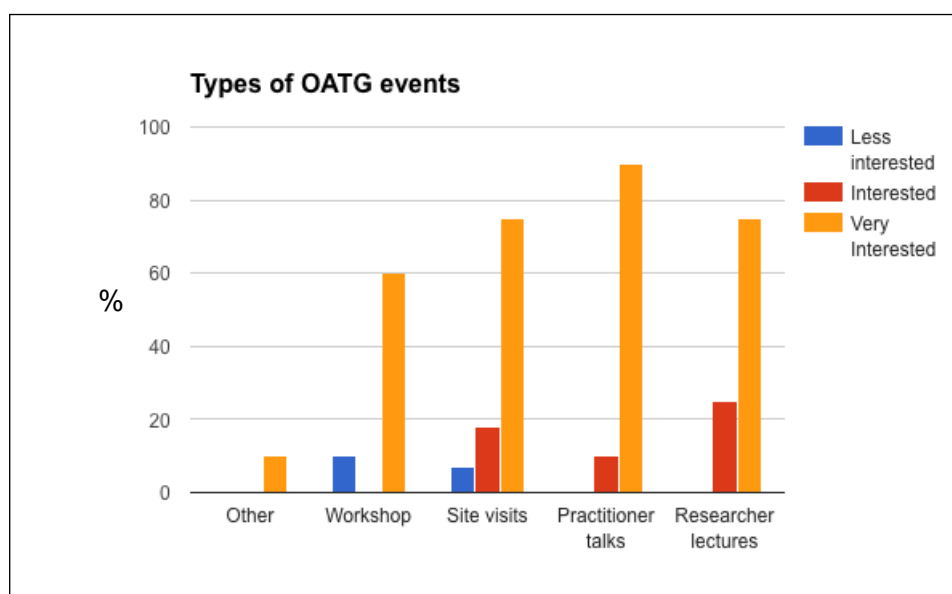
Are you based in Oxford or elsewhere?

Perhaps not surprisingly you responded:



How interested are you in the following types of events?

You are most interested in lectures from practitioners, then researchers, and you are also very interested in visits and attending workshops.



What has been your favourite OATG event?

- Talk by Rosemary Crill on *Fabric of India*
- Visit to Paris
- Ruth Barnes' talk (Anniversary talk)
- Visit to British Museum collections
- Show and Tells
- Visit to the Richardsons' collections.

On what subjects would you like to see events?

(such as a specific area or technique)

- Cambodian Textiles at the V&A
- Burmese textiles
- Bankfield Museum (in Halifax; its permanent displays include costume, jewellery and textiles from around the world, while temporary exhibitions include costume, embroidery, quilting, and textile art)
- Specific types of textile at the Pitt Rivers
- Rugs
- Central Asia
- India, Central Asian textiles, dyeing
- Textiles of minorities of SW China and Indonesia
- Weaving, printing, embroidery, worldwide textiles
- Museum visits, reserve collections and talks by curators of exhibitions.

Thank you for your comments. We will use them when we are arranging future OATG events.

However, as always, we suggest that if you would like to host an event, or suggest a speaker, especially relating to the list above, please get in touch! The email address is oatg.events@gmail.com.

[Katherine Clough and Felicitas von Droste zu Hülshoff](#)

Non-OATG events

8–9 July 2016

Two-Day Conference *Assam – Textile Transmission and the Performance of Dance*.

To be held at the British Museum to consider Assamese textiles, trade and contact through the Himalayas from north-east India to Tibet, and the performance traditions that connect the ancient Krishna-related textiles with modern Assamese culture.

The conference will include an exhibition viewing and reception. Among the speakers will be Rosemary Crill, speaking about Indian woven silks in Tibet. Tickets are £20.

Exhibition on show until 6 November 2016 *The Tales we Tell – Indian Warli Painting*

This exhibition presents a rare insight into Warli, a tribal art form from Western India. Drawing on a store of tribal memory, myths and everyday life, it has evolved from restricted ritual drawings into an applied art in the process of transition.

The Tales we Tell: Indian Warli Painting is part of the V&A India Festival.



OATG events programme

Monday 18 July 2016

A show-and-tell evening of tribal and village weavings from Iran and Central Asia
by Angela and Christopher Legge

Location: Legge Carpets & Textiles, 25 Oakthorpe Road, Summertown, Oxford, OX2 7BD.

Time: Arrival from 7.15pm to start at 7.30pm.

Places: 15 places available – Please RSVP to eatg.events@gmail.com if you are planning to attend to confirm your place. Free for members, £3 for non-members.

Wednesday 28 September 2016

Meiji ornamental textiles at the National Museum of Ireland by Dr Clare Pollard

A viewing of late-19th and early-20th century Japanese decorative textiles from the Ashmolean collection followed by a presentation on discoveries made during a recent visit to Dublin.

Dr Clare Pollard is the curator of Japanese Art at the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology, Oxford. She has previously worked as Curator of the East Asian Collections at the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin.

Location: Ashmolean Museum Jameel Center Study Room 1 (for the viewing) and the Education Centre (for the presentation),

Time: 4.15–5pm (viewing) and 5.15pm (presentation)

Free for members, £3 for non-members

Thursday 13 October 2016

A Carpet Ride to Khiva Talk by author and specialist Chris Aslan Alexander

Chris Aslan Alexander established two workshops in Khiva in Uzbekistan, re-creating 15th century Timurid carpet designs from forgotten illuminations and reviving silk carpet weaving, natural dye-making and suzani embroidery.

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

Time: 6.15–8pm. Free for members, £3 for non-members.

Wednesday 2 November 2016

John Gillow will be giving a talk at the **Pitt Rivers Museum** to celebrate **the exhibition of Sheila Paine's textiles and photographs** at the Museum.

More details to be announced soon. **Remember to keep an eye on the website and blog for all the latest information on events!**

Wednesday 16 November 2016

The Friends of the Pitt Rivers Museum have organised an event with **Dr Jenny Balfour Paul** in Oxford, which we encourage OATG members to attend (£2 for non-Friends members).

Deeper than Indigo: Tracing Thomas Machell, Forgotten Explorer

Location: Pitt Rivers Museum, Entrance via South Door.

Time: from 6pm for 6.30pm start.

More details see the Friends' website: <https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/friends-museum-events-programme>

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MEMBERSHIP OF OXFORD ASIAN TEXTILE GROUP (includes three issues of *Asian Textiles* magazine)

The rate is £25 for single membership and £35 for joint membership. Most members pay by standing order. The Treasurer is Sheila Allen and she would be grateful if you could check that your standing order is up to date.

Cheques made out to OATG can be sent to her at 19 Southmoor Road, Oxford, OX2 6RF.

We depend on your subscriptions in order to keep our programme of lectures running, as well as for the printing and postage of *Asian Textiles*. We do hope you would like to continue your membership of OATG.

If you have any queries, please contact Sheila Allen, OATG Treasurer, 19 Southmoor Road, Oxford, OX2 6RF. Email: nick_allen98@hotmail.com

Password details for 2016 editions of *Asian Textiles* on the OATG website

Issue Nos	Date	username	password
63, 64, 65	2016	at16	m58yes

Asian Textiles is published three times a year: in February, June and October.

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.

THE DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS MONDAY 3 OCTOBER 2016

Contributions should be emailed to: gavin@firthpetroleum.com



A large Banjara ceremonial quilt with cotton threads on cotton fabric backed with block-printed cotton.

The composition is deliberately asymmetric: one corner element is omitted and the red circle in the lower right is placed in such a way as to appear almost random.

Maiwa collection. 95 x 95 cm. Madhya Pradesh, c1910.

See book review on page 8: Textiles of the Banjara: Cloth and Culture of a Wandering Tribe by Charlotte Kwon and Tim McLaughlin.