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ASIAN TEXTILES

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Inside: Miao textiles; Hawaiian bark cloth; Muslin; Shoes; the Beattie Archive and more.

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Front cover: 2010.3.14.7 Hani or Aini group hat, puttees, bodice, skirt, belt & jacket from Yunan Province, '93. Bought by Wendy Black at Menghun Sunday Market in Jinghong, China. Courtesy and copyright, Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.

Back cover: examples of Hawaiian *kapa* cloth, and the wooden beaters used to make it.

Editorial

This issue of Asian Textiles just about encircles the globe, from Hawaii to Taiwan, with several stops in between. Nick Fielding reveals the delights of making bark cloth in Hawaii, before we cross the Pacific to an exhibition that includes some of Yushan Tsai's intricate reproductions of aboriginal Taiwanese woven textiles. Next we visit the Miao in China, makers of some marvellous items that are now in the Pitt Rivers collection—Faye Belsey describes these. Continuing westwards, we stop in Bengal to learn about the history of muslin with Sonia Ashmore. Back in the UK, we continue to look beyond the horizon, with Indonesian textiles in Wimbledon, Middle Eastern carpets in the Ashmolean's Beattie Archive, and a glimpse of the V&A's new exhibition of shoes from all over the world.

The Editor

Readers' comments

Louise Cort writes about the 'show & tell' account in *AT*60:

'Surely the textile shown on p. 26, fig. 3, is not Indonesian but Cambodian. It is a typical example of a *pidan preah*, an ikat-figured cloth made for display above or in front of Buddhist images on an altar. The figures in the textile are of seated images of the Buddha flanked by celestial deities and guardian figures, with warriors on white horses above and *pidan* (worship halls) and white elephants below. A band of text in Khmer runs between the *pidan* and the elephants.
Khmer weft-ikat silk textiles are woven in twill weave, to bring the pattern 'forward'. Thus the back of such textiles always appear 'paler', as the *Asian Textiles* text states.
This is a new textile, of mediocre quality, typical of *pidan preah* made in the efforts at revival of ikat-patterned silk textiles in Cambodia since the 1990s. Excellent *pidan preah* are produced in the workshops of the Institute for Khmer Traditional Textiles (IKTT), directed by Morimoto Kikuo. The IKTT workshop uses handspun local silk, natural dyes, and expert ikat specialists. An excellent small publication on this topic is Siyonn Sophearith, *Pidan (Bitan) in Khmer Culture* (Phnom Penh: Pidan Project Team (PPT) and Reyun, 2008, 2nd edition 2012) ISBN: 9789995055431.'

OATG events programme

Saturday 8 August

OATG's 20th Birthday Celebration

A talk by our founder, Ruth Barnes: 'Dressing for the Great Game – the Robert Shaw Collection of Central Asian Garments in the Ashmolean Museum'

Since leaving the Ashmolean Museum, Ruth is now Senior Curator in the Department of Indo-Pacific Art at Yale University. Her talk will give an account of a remarkable collection of ikat coats and other garments from Central Asia, collected by the explorer Robert Shaw in 1868/69 on his travels from India to Yarkand and Kashgar. Their 'rediscovery' in the Ashmolean's Eastern Art Department and identification ultimately led to the founding of the Oxford Asian Textile Group.

Ashmolean Museum Education Room, 2 pm drinks, 2.30 talk, followed by questions and refreshments, including birthday cake. 5 pm finish. OATG members free, non-members £3.

Tuesday 20 October

A talk by Rosemary Crill: 'The Fabric of India'

Rosemary is the V&A Museum's Senior Curator for South & Southeast Asian textiles and dress, Middle Eastern carpets, textiles & dress and South Asian painting

Rosemary has curated the new V&A exhibition, *The Fabric of India*, which can be seen at the V&A from 3 October 2015 to 10 January 2016. The exhibition will be the highlight of the V&A's India Festival and will be the first major exhibition to explore the dynamic and multifaceted world of handmade textiles from India from the 3rd to the 21st century. Rosemary is also the author of the exhibition catalogue.

The Pauling Centre, 58a Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6QS. 6 pm for a 6.15 start. The talk will be followed by questions and drinks to 8.15 pm. OATG members free, non-members £3.

SITUATIONS VACANT

As you may remember, we resigned from our positions as Events Coordinator and Magazine Editor at the last AGM, the resignations to take effect on the day of the 2016 AGM. In order to ease the transition to our successors, it would be very good to have volunteers for these positions assisting us between now and January.

We have enjoyed our time in these roles, but now have too many other commitments to continue next year, so would like to give any help we can to the next people to take them on before we finish. To this end, we would be grateful if members who are interested would contact us by email or telephone*.

Each position could be filled by one or more people, and both are a really good way to get involved with OATG and meet many interesting people.

Best wishes

Christine and Jane

* Christine: 01865 556882 or christine@fiberartgallery.com; Jane: jane.anson@ntlworld.com

Asian Textiles is published three times a year: in February, June and October.
We welcome input from members — send a review of a book or an exhibition.

THE DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS
FRIDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2015

Contributions should be emailed to: jane.anson@ntlworld.com

Miao textile collections at the Pitt Rivers Museum

Following her talk to the OATG on 30 July 2014, Assistant Curator at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Faye Belsey, discusses the acquisition of the Wendy Black and Deryn O'Connor collections of textiles from south-west China.

There are approximately 2,523 textiles in the collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum, a fraction of which come from the founding collection presented by General Pitt-Rivers himself in 1884. Like the collections of the museum in general, the textile collections come from all corners of the globe, though a significant number are from Nagaland in north-east India, collected by the anthropologists and former colonial officers James Philip Mills and John Henry Hutton. When in 2006 and 2010 respectively the museum was offered a large number of textiles from south-west China collected by Deryn O'Connor and Wendy Black, we had to consider how these prospective donations would enhance and complement the existing collection from this region. All offers of collections are considered very carefully by the museum. Once the museum has accepted an offer of a collection, it has a duty of care to it and is responsible for its thorough cataloguing, related research, and appropriate storage. Space in the museum is a constant concern, with the textile store in particular sometimes appearing to be 'bursting at the seams'. However, after much consideration the museum was pleased to be able to accept both collections: Deryn O'Connor's being the larger, consisting of 260 pieces, while Wendy Black's consists of only 64 pieces. We were keen to avoid duplication and to achieve instead a good representative collection, and by taking the two collections together we were able to achieve this. Both collections include a mixture of men's and women's garments, for both everyday use and festival wear, and illustrate a variety of techniques. Both acquisitions enhance the museum's existing holdings and underline the use of dress as an expression of group identity.

The two collections are interesting for a number of reasons. They both include items that range in quality but as a whole represent a wide range of embroidery and other patterning techniques from many of the Miao (Hmong) groups. Both women had a keen interest and practical expertise in decorative and embroidered textiles and made their collections on multiple trips over a period of several years. They were also both members of an informal network of women from the UK who collected Chinese minority textiles in the 1980s and 1990s. Another member of this circle was Gina Corrigan – geographer, photographer, textile specialist and frequent visitor to China from 1973 – who gave her

A view of my desk at the Pitt Rivers Museum during the cataloguing process. Courtesy and copyright, Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.

Notes from Deryn O'Connor on 2009.135.167: 'ASIA, CHINA, S GUIZHOU PROVINCE, DANZHAI COUNTY, QAINNAN; DANZHAI MIAO. Bought YUNNAN PROVINCE, KUNMING. Woman's jacket (see 35-38) Label: Danzhai Miao costume See photos Spring 96 Autumn 97. Qainnan South Guizhou. Bought from dealer in Kunming September 29, 2000. Set of 4–jacket, skirt, apron, tail band. DO'C photos taken in village. Acquired: 29th September 2000. ASIA, CHINA, S GUIZHOU PROVINCE, DANZHAI COUNTY, QAINNAN; DANZHAI MIAO. Bought YUNNAN PROVINCE, KUNMING.' Courtesy and copyright, Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.

collection of Miao textiles to the British Museum. All three women were collecting in a region of south-west China that was only just becoming accessible to tourists. They bought textiles mostly from villages in the provinces of Guizhou, Guangxi and Yunnan, often directly from the makers or wearers, at a time when textiles were not being produced specifically for the tourist market. This was an interesting period, as south-west China had become more accessible and in touch with the wider world and at the same time traditional methods and costume production were developing and changing. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to go to south-west China today and make collections of such range and quality. The added richness of these assemblages comes from the expertise that O'Connor and Black were able to apply by recording detailed information about the individual pieces: the 'who, when, where, how and why' that is so critical when objects are removed from their original contexts and placed in a museum.

Luckily my colleagues and I were able to meet with both collectors and to 'pick their brains' about their trips to the region and the acquisitions they made. They had both made detailed notes and diary entries, which proved hugely beneficial when cataloguing the collection, and which I have drawn on here for the captions to the illustrations. Both provided information about how they started collecting and how they acquired the textiles in their collections. As Wendy Black noted:

'You ask about my background as a textile collector. It began when I went on a Cultural Tour of China and at the end of that trip I decided that I would like to return to China, but to explore some of the "off the beaten track" areas in that country. Through NADFAS I was put in touch with Gina Corrigan and her Occidor Adventure Tours and I did my first trip with her in 1990. It was a walking tour, visiting different

villages and different Miao groups. I had just started my City & Guilds embroidery course Part 2 and was naturally interested in embroidery. What I then saw was so fantastic that I made a total of around ten trips in all to various parts of remote areas of China. These included some trips that I led for Gina to "cultural China" and Tibet. I originally had no idea of collecting but found the garments so interesting that I went ahead. I have given a lot of talks using these textiles and they are always much admired and appreciated by audiences.'

Guizhou province of south-west China is about the size of England and Wales combined. Chinese minority groups were forced to migrate to this more remote region of China due to the expansion of the majority Han Chinese. Individual groups became isolated in these mountainous regions, resulting in the present-day diversity in their culture, costume and dialect. The Han Chinese showed little respect for the minority groups, considering them uncultured, as they had no written language. When the People's Republic of China was established in 1949, the Miao were recognized as a minority with similar rights to the Han Chinese. However, they remained poor as the Han Chinese took the best land, whilst the Miao were forced to live on the poorest limestone uplands in Guizhou. The environmental conditions make this region of China scenic to visit but difficult to live in, with villages set atop hillsides covered in thin, stony soil that is hard to cultivate. The province is divided by deep valleys and gorges, making communication within the area almost impossible, though in recent years more roads and railway links have been built. These geographical factors have led to the province being one of the poorest in China, but one of the most culturally diverse.

This diversity is mirrored in Miao costume, with combinations of different techniques found in any one garment and a range of skills employed to produce them.

Notes from Deryn O'Connor on 2009.135.40: 'Little Flowered Miao see G's Catalogue page 26-30. 6. ASIA, CHINA, NW GUIZHOU PROVINCE, NANKAI AREA, CIHONG VILLAGE; MIAO, "LITTLE FLOWERED MIAO". Skirt of hemp. Wax resist. Top section is bought cotton from the market. Base is hand spliced hemp, woven, dyed etc by hand. Pattern made by wax. Pattern v. complex and subtle. Indigo. Not purchased as one complete costume, bought from different people. If you are a married woman you have different layers – not clear if this skirt is for a married or unmarried woman.' Courtesy and copyright, Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.

Notes from Deryn O'Connor on 2009.135.51: 'ASIA, CHINA, SE GUIZHOU PROVINCE, HUANGPING; MIAO. Bought at KAILI. Child's skirt of pleated cotton. Colour made from green crystals beaten in – gentian violet. Label: 01 10 96 Huangping. Child's skirt brought Kaili (main town in E. Guizhou, has large market). Acquired: 1st October 1996.' Courtesy and copyright, Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.

Living as swidden cultivators in relative poverty, their most valued possessions were (and still are) richly woven and embroidered festival costumes. These served as the main form of visual expression for both men and women, and would be painstakingly handmade by generations of women in one family, the skills being passed from grandmother to mother and from mother to daughter. With increasing western influence, more young girls are adopting a jeans and T-shirt culture; however, since the end of the ravages of the cultural revolution (1966–1976), when all traditional dress was discouraged, there has been a revival of interest in traditional dress amongst Chinese minority groups.

Traditionally, women's costumes are inventive variations on a basic theme, consisting of a long-sleeved jacket worn over a pleated skirt, aprons – often worn at the front and back, and gaiters to cover the lower legs. Older women wear traditional dress as everyday wear. What is particularly good about O'Connor's and Black's collections is the mixture of everyday wear and festival costume. Though it would be usual to see less effort put into the making of a skirt to be worn every day, this is not the case among the Miao and this is evident in both collections. Whilst the festival wear is often striking, there is a tendency in all garments for brighter and more striking effects to be adopted whenever possible, and the quality of the work does not differ too much between a festival piece and an everyday piece.

Festivals are a particular highlight of the Miao calendar, providing opportunities for groups belonging to different villages to gather and socialize. Families flock to these events, often carrying bundles of costume on shoulder poles. The number of garments and their richness demonstrates their wealth. Often it is at festivals that daughters are paired with future husbands and mothers have the chance to see their married daughters, though this is not so much the case today. A great emphasis is placed on decorative fabrics achieved by pattern-weaving and wax-resist dyeing in indigo, but chiefly by highly skilled and inventive embroidery of different kinds, usually in cotton,

wool and silk thread. In many examples the embroidered elements are constructed in the form of panels stitched to the garments, allowing the work to be done without the paraphernalia of frames. The O'Connor and Black collections demonstrate the variety of techniques employed, including cross-stitch, satin-stitch, two-needle stitch, knots and couching, braid embroidery, appliqué and wax-resist. Most of this is done by hand, but a few pieces are machine-embroidered. Jackets often provide the basis for demonstrating a wide variety of techniques on one garment. The variety of techniques and methods used reflect the time period in which the collections were made.

Garments are mostly made from the two main bast fibres grown in the region, hemp and ramie, though cotton is grown in the south in areas where it is not too wet. Markets in Kaili and Guiyang (the provincial capital) provide access to raw cotton and manufactured cotton yarn as well as to a variety of embroidery threads, braid, decorative ribbons, synthetic threads in bright colours and silks, along with both traditional and commercial dyes. Indeed, as recorded in the collectors' accompanying notes, both collections include whole garments purchased from markets and others with sections made from raw materials bought from markets.

One of the most important components of Miao women's clothing is the skirt. These are particularly distinctive in their fullness and pleating, with pleats varying in sharpness and depth according to the type of cloth. They are constructed in one of three ways, the method most prevalent in the collections being the joining of several lengths of loom-width cloth horizontally to form a tiered pleated skirt attached to a plain waistband, usually in three tiers. Traditionally, starch was used to keep the pleats stiff. Both collectors had an interesting method of storing the skirts to help maintain the pleats, rolling them up and then inserting them into the legs of nylon stockings – which is how they arrived at the museum. These skirts are certainly difficult to store. They are now in boxes and, inevitably, the stiffness of the pleating will be lost over time as the skirts lie in storage. The mass of fabric used to make the

Notes from Deryn O'Connor on 2009.135.39: 'ASIA, CHINA, GUIZHOU PROVINCE, LOUDIAN CITY, FENTING TOWNSHIP; MIAO, "RED HONG MIAO". Skirt. Label: Red Hong Miao. Skirt with hemp top. April 30 1996 Feng-Ting township Loudian area, Guizhou. Acquired: 29th April 1996. This skirt demonstrates a variety of techniques, wax resist, appliqué, silk felt pieces stab-stitched in place and cross-stitch.' Courtesy and copyright, Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.

Notes from Deryn O'Connor on 2009.135.85: 'ASIA, CHINA, E GUIZHOU PROVINCE, JIANHE CITY; MIAO. Bought KAILI. Back apron. Label: Jianhe SE Guizhou, back apron. Bought from trader Kaili market (with thin jacket) Autumn 1993. Acquired: 1993.' Courtesy and copyright, Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.

skirts is surprising, and their weight makes it difficult to imagine them being comfortable to wear. This clothing had a very practical aspect, however, for the heaviness of the material kept people warm in the hills and the way they were constructed allowed a freedom of movement for working in the fields.

A particular decorative technique that interested O'Connor was that known as 'tin' embroidery. In December 2003 she wrote: 'There is a particularly unusual form of embroidery found among one Miao group. This involves using white metal, known as "tin" as its embellishment. The technique has only recently been observed and understood." She also noted: 'a Chinese observer said that a few years ago old toothpaste tubes were once flattened and used as a decorative white metal.' Her notes also suggest that the tin embroidery technique was observed as early as 2000 during a visit to Rao village. Initially, Miao were nervous of foreign visitors to the region, and when the first tourists came in the mid-1990s provincial and local government authorities considered some techniques to be 'secret' and not to be observed by non-nationals for fear that they would be replicated abroad. Similarly, outsiders were banned from seeing the process of making indigo paste and the subsequent dyeing process.

Many changes have occurred in south-west China in recent years. Improved roads and rail networks have proved a lifeline for some Miao communities living in remote areas, making it easier for them to get to town centres to sell their goods on market days. Tourism has provided additional income and co-operatives now produce textiles for sale. The strain of working to earn enough to live on means that fewer women have time to make textiles and there is more opportunity for people to buy clothing, or component costume-parts, from markets and machine-stitch them together at home.

In big market centres like Kaili, some women have made a profession of making textiles for sale. Traditional clothing is being made using new methods and materials such as machine-embroidered ribbons, screen-printed skirt-pieces and pleated skirts made of synthetic fabrics rather than hemp. Traditional costume has also been adapted to be more theatrical for tourists. A combination of western clothes and traditional clothes is being worn more often. Trousers are replacing puttees, trainers replacing traditional embroidered shoes of straw and hemp, and cheap blouses and shirts are now worn under traditional jackets to protect against the cold. Miao girls may no longer meet their future husbands at festivals, but on the whole Miao are proud of their traditional heritage and wish to keep their identity in a world dominated by Han Chinese. Change is not only inevitable, however, but encouraged by the new entrepreneurial socialism fostered by Chinese government policies. In contrast, I was interested to hear from a colleague and OATG member, Maria Wronska-Friend, of the popularity of traditional dress among the Miao diaspora in Australia, where the focus has been on expressing pan-Miao identity rather than subgroup differences.

Soon after the collections arrived at the museum, we were able to put a small selection of pieces on display in a case in the court devoted at the time to new acquisitions. As things stand, there are no immediate plans for a special exhibition devoted to the collections; however, they both provide rich insights into the cultural identity of Miao peoples and offer plenty of scope for research projects and future displays. I have only been able to touch lightly on some of these aspects in this article. For example, I should have liked to have been able to say more about some of the specific embroidery and dyeing techniques and about some of the particular types of object such as the baby-carriers – excellent examples of which are included in both collections – that play such a vital role in Miao culture.

The collection has now been fully catalogued, though a few have yet to be photographed. The relevant entries in the online version of the museum's fully searchable and regularly updated database can be accessed at http://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/databases.html by using the relevant collection numbers: 2009.135 and 2010.3. Prospective researchers wishing to access the collections can find full information about the museum's visiting researchers programme on the museum's website at http://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/researchnotes.html.

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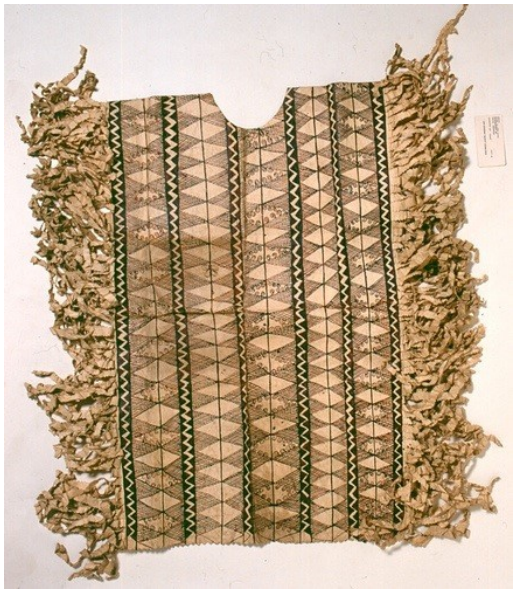
Hawaiian revival: rediscovering the art of making *kapa*

On a recent visit to Hawaii, Nick Fielding discovered the local bark cloth, and met some of the people who are reviving the art of making it.



Samoan *tapa*.

Cloth made from bark fibres is well known throughout the Pacific islands of Oceania, and even further afield. Known as *tapa* in Tahiti and the Cook islands, *ngatu* in Tonga, *masi* in Fiji, *siapo* in Samoa, *hiapo* in Niue and *kapa* in Hawaii, the cloth is mostly made from the bark of the paper mulberry tree (*Broussonetia papyrifera* or *wauke* plant in Hawaii), although once it was the dye-fig (*Ficus tinctoria*) that was the main source.

Wauke plants.

Generally speaking, in Western Polynesia a piece of *tapa* was produced by pasting sheets together in layers and then joining smaller pieces by pasting to make a larger cloth. A heavy, coarse material results from this method. In Eastern Polynesia a felting process took place, pounding pieces into a single layer, without a fusing agent, or paste. Gradually a large piece of cloth is built up using this felting process, and a softer product is the result.

Hawaiian *kapa* (there is no 't' in the Hawaiian alphabet) is very different from bark cloth produced in the rest of Oceania. In Hawaii, where *kapa* production arguably reached its high point, the tradition had almost died out, but now, thanks to the efforts of a small group of enthusiasts, its production is reviving, along with featherwork – the other great Hawaiian artisan skill. On a recent trip, I decided to find out whether or not it was still being produced and how it is being used.

White *kapa*.

Once, *kapa* was the main textile used for clothing, for bedding, for ceremonies and for wrapping the bones of ancestors (*iwi*). Traditionally, women wore a *pa'u*, measuring three feet wide by 12 feet long, wrapped several times around their body. Women from the

Wooden *kapa* beaters.

nobility wore *pa'u* with elaborate designs, with up to ten layers. Men wore a *moio* or loin cloth, generally 10–12 inches wide and 12–18 feet long. Both sexes often also wore a *kihei* – a cape made from a large sheet of *kapa*, around six feet square.

Blankets, known as *kapa moe*, were made either from a single sheet or from several sheets sewn together and decorated on the top edge. But even in the remotest islands, by the beginning of the twentieth century it was being replaced by cotton and other more modern textiles. The fact that it loses its strength and falls apart when soaked is a major drawback, as is the lengthy production process.

Captain James Cook collected the earliest examples of *kapa* from Hawaii on his third (fatal) voyage in 1778–79, when the colour palette was red, yellow, brown and black. Some of these examples can be found in the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford. The *wauke* plant itself is thought to have originated in China and reached Hawaii via New Guinea and the vast chain of islands across the Pacific, taking thousands of years to complete the journey.

Bamboo *kapala*.

There are many stories about *kapa* in Hawaiian folklore. According to one involving the goddess Hina, the mother of Maui, the sun sped across the sky so fast that she was unable to dry her *kapa*. To help his mother, Maui made a huge rope from coconut trees, ascended the great mountain of Haleakala and waited for the first rays of the sun to appear. He then lassoed the sun's legs and broke them off, thereby slowing its progress across the sky so that Hina could dry her *kapa* properly. Other ancient stories indicate the importance of *kapa* to the ritual life of pre-contact Hawaii.

Stamping the *kapa* with patterns, using *kapala*.

However, it wasn't until the 1970s that a resurgence of interest and pride in Hawaiian culture inspired artisans like Kanae Keawe and Puanani Van Dorpe from Big Island to research the old techniques and try to revive the art. According to one source, Kanae Keawe says: 'I was self-taught. There were no *kupuna* (ancestors) living who could tell us the correct way to make *kapa*, so I did a lot of research at Bishop Museum. I read Peter Buck's books and others on Hawaiian arts and crafts, studied Fijian *kapa*-making at the

Pounding *kapa*.

Polynesian Cultural Center. I'm a woodcarver originally, so I was able to recreate the tools.' (Betty Fullard-Leo, http://www.coffeetimes.com/kapa2.htm).

Of course, much of the meaning behind the ancient *kapa* designs has been lost, but the new adherents have found ways to recreate some of the old mystical meanings.

In Hawaii, *kapa* designs are made with *kapala* – bamboo liners which are dipped into inks and used to make interesting, often geometric, patterns. As settlers began to arrive, bringing with them new textiles and plants, there was an explosion of designs, often incorporating watermarked patterns beaten into the *kapa*. Colourings became more vibrant with the use of pulverised 'Turkey Red' cloth beaten into the surface of the *kapa*. Blues came from imported indigo and synthetics. But all along, the wearing of *kapa* was declining, under the influence of cheap imports and prudish missionaries.

Above and below: examples of *kapa* cloth.

The production process itself is complex and drawn out. The *wauke* plant itself takes two years to mature. Plants are allowed to grow six to eight feet high until their stems are one to two inches in diameter. The trees are constantly cared for and tended while they grow. Young branches are broken off to ensure consistent, straight fibres that will make smooth, whole *kapa* sheets, unmarred by holes.

Traditionally the *wauke* was harvested by men, who also made the dyes and the implements used to make *kapa*. Women processed the fibre and were responsible for decorating the cloth. The *wauke* stalks are cut at the base, trimmed and a small slit is made at the base end of the stalk. The bast

Verna Kemaile'lauli`ili`i Apio Takashima, wearing a piece of *kapa* she made and decorated herself.

(inner fibre) is then peeled off in one piece. The outer bark is removed by scraping with a shell or cutting with a knife.

The bark strips are then soaked in sea water for a week to remove excess sap. They are then beaten using a kind of round club called a *hohoa*, on a stone anvil. The aim here is to separate out and soften the fibres. There then follows the second round of beating, this time with a four-sided *i'e kuku* beater. Various grooves were carved into the beater to give the cloth a particular texture. During this process the cloth became finer and finer, and could expand to four times its original area.

In Hawaii, a unique process then takes place. The dried cloth is soaked again in fresh water, and then bundled and wrapped in banana leaves and left for several weeks. This process, a kind of fermentation, allows bacteria, fungi and other micro-organisms to break down the fibres into a soft, pulpy mass, which makes it softer. It also means pieces of *kapa* can be joined into larger pieces without sewing. A distinctive watermark can also be added at this point.

One of the people now actively engaged in re-invigorating the production of kapa in Hawaii is Verna Kemaile'lauli`ili`i Apio Takashima. I spoke to her in Honolulu on the island of Oahu, where she grew up. 'There may be approximately 30–40 people who actively make *kapa* and teach *kapa*-making throughout Hawaii, and possibly others on the mainland USA. Many more have begun the journey, especially since the 2011 Merry Monarch Hula Festival in Hilo on Big Island, where 26 *kapa* makers collaborated to make traditional kapa garments for *hula halau* (*hula* groups of traditional dancers and singers)', she told me. In fact, a work of this magnitude had not been presented on the Hawaiian islands for more than 100 years.

I asked Verna what *kapa*-making meant to her. Her reply was very moving:

> *I was inspired by the discovery of* kapa *and* i'e kuku *(*kapa *beaters) in the Bishop Museum collection that were directly tied to my ancestors, going back seven generations. The* kapa *and* kapa *tools – more than 160 individual items – were among other artifacts bought and collected from my*

Above: a piece of *kapa* made and decorated by Verna.

kupuna *(ancestors) – Mama Kahunaaina, J.W. Kahunaaina, Mama's brother Kamahiai and nephew Keoni Ka'ai, as noted in the J.S. Emerson Collection of Hawaiian Artifacts. These were collected by Emerson in 1887.*

It was my brother, Solomon Apio (a master woodworker and stone carver), who came across our ancestors' names in the J.S. Emerson Collection of Hawaiian Artifacts. Imagine our excitement! He said to me, 'Now we got to make kapa *like our* kupuna*, it is in our blood. I'll make the tools and you make* kapa*.' That was the beginning.*

Having been given the opportunity to see, touch and feel kapa *and tools made by my ancestors hundreds of years ago, gave us a small glimpse into who they were and their rank amongst their community. It provided us with a link to the past and to reconnect our genealogical lineage to our* kupuna*.*

To actually touch kapa *made by my* kupuna *and to draw from their* mana *that was beaten into every fibre, enhanced my desire to make* kapa *as they did. Through that familial linkage to my* ohana*, drives my passion of learning the fine art of* kapa*-making as done by them.*

I believe that this discovery wasn't by chance, but it was destiny. Our kupuna *guide us in our search for knowledge and excellence in the art of* kapa*-making. I only hope that I can be as good as they were, for it is a constant amazement that our Hawaiian predecessors created the finest works of art that is credited and admired throughout the world.*

Left: *kapa* cloth showing stamped designs.

Top: a Hawaiian hula dancer wearing an outfit made from *kapa* cloth.

HAWAIIAN REVIVAL

Dancers wearing *hula pa'u* made from *kapa* cloth perform in the Merrie Monarch Hula Festival.

Verna is as good as her word, and now makes remarkable *kapa* cloths. She was one of those who made costumes for the Merrie Monarch Hula Festival, which is the premier event celebrating the arts and culture of traditional Hawaiian society. Last year, the *hālau* unveiled *Hi'iakaikano'eau* at the Maui Arts and Cultural Center, where, again, Verna and her brother Solomon's works appeared on stage, as well as in a gallery exhibition.

The highlight of that weekend for Solomon was a special *i`e kuku* gifting ceremony, overseen by Kumu Hula Nalani Kanakaole and Kekuhi Kanahele and held on the *hula pā* of the MACC. Months earlier, he had obtained permission from the State Department of Land and Natural Resources to return to his ancestors' island to gather the rare *kauila* wood from Pu`uwa`awa`a, the only stand of its kind on Hawaii today. *Kauila*, he knew, was his ancestors' wood of choice for the *i`e kuku* beaters, and would help fellow artisans create the most exquisite and authentic *kapa*.

Today the future of *kapa* production in Hawaii seems to be assured, as Hawaiians discover the spiritual content of these old traditions. Once again, the old songs can be sung.

Kuku kapa e! I ke kua, nā kē-kē-kē kapa e!
Strike the *kapa*! On the anvil, clang, clang, clang, the *kapa*! Strike the *kapa*!
Hohoa ho'i e! Ho'o pulu wai e!
The *hohoa* beater, too! Make it wet with water!
Ku'i ku'i 'alā e! Huli huli i ke alo!
Pound on the stone! Turn it to the other side!
La'i la'i mo'omo'o, a ke kua!
Smoothly join pieces of *kapa*, on the anvil!

Further information:
https://kapakulture.wordpress.com/tag/hawaiian-arts/
http://hihumanities.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/kapa-informational-booklet-BW.pdf
http://www.bigislandtalkstory.org/talk-stories/hana-ke-kapa-and-adorn-the-dancers

The woven wind of Bengal

Following her popular talk to OATG members in 2014, Sonia Ashmore gives an overview of the fascinating history of muslin.

Man's *jama* or robe, Bharatpur, Rajasthan c.1855. The skirt is made up of 277 triangular panels and has a circumference of 65m (71 yards). V&A 05567(IS) © Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

'Woven air', 'running water', and 'woven wind' – these were some of the names given to muslin, a woven cotton textile of fabulous reputation. For such an apparently insubstantial fabric, muslin has carried surprising historical and political weight. Bengal, now partly in Bangladesh, was the main source of a type of woven cotton so fine as to be almost invisible. It was an expensive and prized fabric, made in dedicated workshops for the Mughal Courts and often embellished with fabulous decoration. It was exported from India to Ancient Rome, to the Middle East and the Ottoman Empire, to medieval China and to other parts of South Asia. Muslin helped to build the fortunes of Bengal and of the British East India Company. From the seventeenth century muslin became a key commodity and vehicle of social and economic control for the British East India Company in Bengal; other important exports were silk, saltpetre (potassium nitrate, used to make gunpowder), indigo and opium. Statistics for muslin exports are elusive since they are usually included with cotton piece goods. Muslin was a light, easily packed commodity; one East India Company sale, held in London in 1789, offered some 40,000 pieces of muslin for sale, representing the cargo of only two ships.

Many types of muslin were produced in different parts of India, which can make identification elusive, but the finest, and most sought-after muslin was produced in Bengal, in the alluvial areas around Dacca, now Dhaka, capital of Bangladesh. Here, particular local varieties of cotton were skilfully worked to produce a simple, open-weave cloth, often extremely fine, but with a 'downy Nap on its Surface resembling Moss', in the words of Chambers 1798 *Dictionary*. Touch is the most reliable means of identification and it was no doubt the tactile qualities of the cloth that gave it longevity beyond the usual cycles of fashion in the west. Muslin production was essentially a local, cottage industry affair, although by the late seventeenth century, the East India Company was attempting to increase and rationalise production in a way that put enormous pressure and eventually forced indebtedness on weavers.

In India, and in the West, muslin was significantly luxurious to be worn plain, but it was also a vehicle for embroidery, mostly famously *chikan*, or white-on-white embroidery, dyeing, and various forms of shimmering decoration. The most sophisticated type of muslin weaving was *jamdani*, where a design is figured in the loom by hand. The process was, and remains, laborious and expensive; it can take a month to weave a metre of fabric and today cheaper, cruder versions are made on jacquard looms, although there are beginning to be dedicated efforts to maintain or relearn traditional skills in present-day Bangladesh and West Bengal.

THE WOVEN WIND OF BENGAL

By the late eighteenth century, muslin was in great demand for fashionable dress in Europe. The symbolism of muslin was understood by eighteenth-century aristocrats playing at simplicity, and it continued to be worn in the neoclassical dress styles of the Napoleonic and Regency periods; in France it was favoured both before and after the Revolution of 1789 by Queen Marie Antoinette, and then worn in a different, simpler style evocative of the classical styles associated with Greece and Rome, by the Empress Josephine.

By this time, Indian muslin was being copied in Britain, woven first by hand and then by machinery. With the ending of the East India Company's trading monopoly in 1833 and eventual collapse of the company after 1857, and as an attempt to find markets for its industrially produced textile surplus, Britain flooded its Indian empire with imitation cloth, including muslin. This contributed to the near collapse of Bengal manufacture, yet, although British weavers were skilled at copying Bengali muslin, they did not manage to replicate the ethereal quality of the hand-made muslin, spun and woven without sophisticated equipment.

Gown c. 1800, made in England from Indian muslin. V&A T.785-1913. © Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

Examples of muslin cloth and garments in the Victoria and Albert Museum's extensive Asian textile collections are embroidered, dyed with vivid colours and embellished with embroidery, gold, silver, spangles and even propaganda. There are also superb muslin textiles and garments in the European collections: male and female dress, baby clothes, dolls, ballet costumes in the theatre collections, as well as prints, portraits and paintings depicting muslin. The collections also illustrate how muslin was adapted to changing western styles of accessory and dress throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – from embroidered aprons dating from the early eighteenth century, to elegant 'Empire'-style gowns, Victorian crinolines and Edwardian tea gowns. In the twentieth century, coarser versions of muslin were used by mass-market designers such as Barbara Hulanicki, Vivienne Westwood and John Galliano. Other examples show how muslin was used both for delicately embroidered (whitework) baby wear and even the humble baby's nappy. There are also other museums in Britain with good collections of muslin garments, notably the Bath Fashion Museum, representing the type of garment worn in the city in its fashionable heyday as a spa.

Piece of white muslin, with two tiers of chikan work embroidery and open work in white cotton, flowers and foliage. Dhaka, c.1855. V&A 4415(IS). © Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

Muslin embroidered with metal thread and spangles. South India c. 1855. V&A 0438(IS). © Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

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Shoes: pleasure and pain

Helen Persson, curator of the forthcoming V&A fashion exhibition, gives a taste of what we can expect to see.

The transformative power of extreme footwear will be explored in the V&A's summer 2015 fashion exhibition, *Shoes: Pleasure and Pain*. More than 250 historic and contemporary shoes from around the world will be on display, many for the first time. The exhibition will explore the agonizing aspect of wearing shoes as well as the euphoria and obsession they can inspire.

The exhibition is based on the V&A's unrivalled collection of footwear, spanning the globe and over 2000 years. It will discuss how shoes are powerful indicators of gender, status, identity, taste and even sexual preferences.

Shoes worn by or associated with high-profile figures including Queen Victoria, Nizam of Hyderabad, the last Khanum Dondogulam of Mongolia, Marilyn Monroe and Sarah Jessica Parker will be shown as well as famous shoes, such as the ballet slippers designed for Moira Shearer in the 1948 film *The Red Shoes*. Footwear for men and women by 70 named designers, past and present, including François Pinet, Roger Vivier, Manolo Blahnik and Prada will be on display. Historic lotus shoes made for bound feet and 16th-century chopines, mules with vertiginous platforms designed to lift skirts above the muddy streets, will also feature.

The exhibition will be shown over two floors in Gallery 40. The luxurious, boudoir design of the ground-floor gallery will examine three themes: transformation, status and seduction. 'Transformation' will present shoes that are the things of myth and legend, opening with different cultural interpretations of the Cinderella story from across the globe. It will explore the concept of shoes being empowering as passed down through folklore, illustrated by the Seven League boots, and how this feeds into contemporary marketing for such things as football boots and the concept of modern-day, fairy-tale shoemakers, whose designs will magically transform the life of the wearer.

'Status' will reveal how impractical shoes have been worn to represent privileged and leisurely lifestyles – their design, shape and material can often make them unsuitable for walking – and how shoes also dictate the way in which the wearer moves, how they are seen and even heard. Shoes on display will include Indian men's shoes with extremely long toes, noisy slap-sole shoe worn in Europe during a brief period in the 17th century and the now infamous Vivienne Westwood blue platforms worn by Naomi Campbell in 1993.

'Status' will also demonstrate how historically shoe fashions originated from the royal courts, while today the focus has shifted to famous shoe wearers and shoe designers. Desirable shoes such as the

Wedding toe-knob *paduka*, silver and gold over wood. India, 1800s. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

'Pompadour', worn by trend-setting women in the 18th-century French court will sit together with designs by some of the most well-known names in fashion today, including Alexander McQueen and Sophia Webster.

Within 'Seduction' the shoes represent an expression of sexual empowerment or a passive source of pleasure. Like feet, shoes can be objects of fetishism. High Japanese geta, extreme heels and tight-laced leather boots will be on display as well as examples of erotic styles channelled by mainstream fashion in recent years.

In contrast, the laboratory-style setting of the first-floor gallery is dedicated to dissecting the processes involved in designing and creating footwear, laying out the story from concept to final shoe. This will be enhanced by films and animations, to reveal how shoes are made. The displays will show how makers combine traditional craftsmanship with technological innovation and how they unite function with art.

Man's shoes, gilded and marbled leather, Northamptonshire, England, c. 1925. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Designer sketches, materials, embellishments and shoe lasts, such as lasts created by H. & M. Rayne for Princess Diana, will be on show, alongside pullovers from Roger Vivier for Christian Dior. The section will highlight the makers' ingenuity in creating innovative styles and dealing with the structural challenges of creating ever higher heels and more dramatic shapes and will feature filmed interviews with five designers and makers.

The exhibition will go on to examine shifts in consumption and production – with examples from an 18th-century 'cheap shoe warehouse', one-off handmade shoes and trainers made in China. It will also look at the future of shoe design, with experiments of material and shapes, moulding and plastics. On display will be footwear that pushes the boundaries of possibility, including the form-pressed 'Nova' shoes designed by architect Zaha Hadid with an unsupported 16-cm heel, and Andreia Chaves' 'InvisibleNaked' shoes that fuse a study of optical illusion with 3D printing and high quality leather-making techniques.

The last section of the exhibition will look at shoes as commodities and collectibles. Six different people's collections will be presented, from trainers to luxury footwear.

Shoes: Pleasure and Pain is curated by Helen Persson and Research Assistant Lucia Savi. It is on show at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, from 13 June 2015 to 31 January 2016. Sponsored by Clarks, supported by Agent Provocateur and with additional thanks to the Worshipful Company of Cordwainers, it is accompanied by a lavishly illustrated book edited by Helen Persson. http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/exhibitions/shoes-pleasure-and-pain/

NOVA, by Zaha Hadid for United Nude. © image courtesy of United Nude.

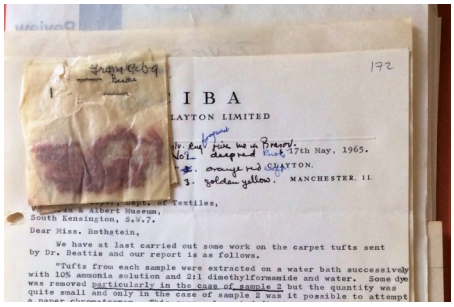
Human feeling and hard facts about carpets: an update from the Beattie Archive

We recently introduced full-length features as a new post category on the OATG blog, and to launch it we have a fascinating feature from Katherine Clough, the Beattie Archive Assistant at the Ashmolean Museum. Kathy has agreed to write a series of updates about her work with the Beattie Archive over the next few months, and we hope to publish six in total. This first update is also appearing in *Asian Textiles* magazine, but the remainder will be published only on the blog, so keep checking oxfordasiantextilegroup.wordpress.com for future instalments.

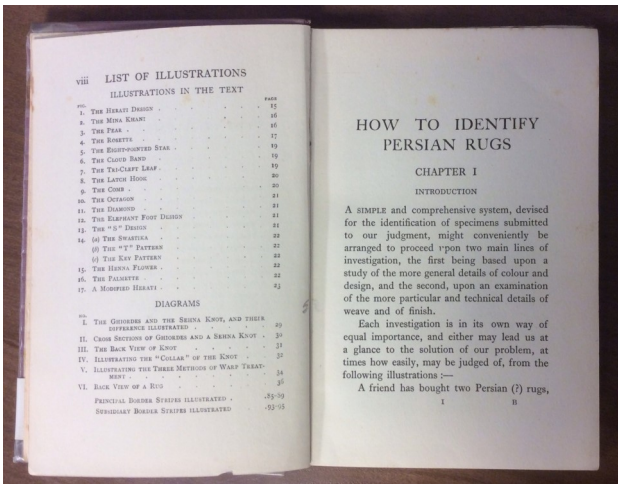
A photograph of May Beattie attached to a travel document.

One of the things that I find most exciting while working with the archive of renowned carpet specialist May Hamilton Beattie (gifted to the Ashmolean Museum in 2000) is that moment of anticipation just before opening a box to discover its contents. Some expectations are generated before opening: clues found in the layered labels stuck to the lid and through the lists provided in the nine-month-long mapping project by museum volunteer Suriyah Bi in 2013. However, I continually find myself in awe at the revelation of the vast amounts of photographs, paperwork, notes and articles on a comprehensive range of subjects, and textile fragments collected for analysis, all collated by this singular researcher. This current project of foliating and rehousing over 150 boxes to archival standards is the latest in a string of activities to provide better long-term care and improved access to Beattie's material legacy. In the pursuit of facilitating future research, these ongoing tasks build on the work of previous Beattie Fellow, Jon Thompson, of Pirjetta Mildh with the digitization of Beattie's carpet analysis sheets and slide collection, and on work completed by museum volunteers, as publicized by Ashmolean curator Francesca Leoni in the 2013 winter edition of Hali (Issue 178, p.37).

The quantity and arrangement of the material in the archive represents a lifetime of specialized hard work. It is therefore perhaps surprising that Beattie only began the serious study of carpets in her forties, stimulated by a conversation at a cocktail party, and encouraged by her scientist husband, Colin, to publish her research or remain 'a typical dilettante' (Mackie 1987, p.10). Over 40 published articles and catalogues of various private collections from around the world appear in the bibliography of her works compiled by Louise W. Mackie for the 1987 edition of Hali's *Oriental Carpet & Textile Studies* (Vol. III, Part One)*. The supporting original research material for Beattie's publications resides in the archives now held at the Ashmolean, along with vast amounts of unpublished notes, travel diaries, samples, correspondence and collated material.


I B A
LAYTON LIMITED
MANCHESTER, 11.
17th May, 1965.
South Kensington, S.W.7.
Dear Miss. Rothstein,
We have at last carried out some work on the carpet tufts sent by Dr. Beattie and our report is as follows.
Carpet tufts attached to a letter.

A bacteriologist by training with a PhD from Edinburgh, Beattie is widely recognized for the scientific approach she brought to the study of carpets, reflected in her use of analysis sheets. This is also reflected in the overall organizational structure of her archive into text-based reference material and image strands that cross over and correlate with each other. The full extent of this organization has only recently come to light (see Suriyah Bi's article in OATG's *Asian Textiles*, No. 56, 2013), as many of the connections are not explicitly labelled on the



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HOW TO IDENTIFY PERSIAN RUGS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A simple and comprehensive system, devised for the identification of specimens submitted to our judgment, might conveniently be arranged to proceed upon two main lines of investigation, the first being based upon a study of the more general details of colour and design, and the second, upon an examination of the more particular and technical details of weave and of finish.

Each investigation is in its own way of equal importance, and either may lead us at a glance to the solution of our problem, at times how easily, may be judged of, from the following illustrations :—

A friend has bought two Persian (?) rugs,

I II

May Beattie's copy of *How to Identify Persian Rugs*.

individual boxes but would have been stored in Beattie's own memory. One of the challenges of working with the archive is to try to retain and restore these connections in the process of documenting and rehousing the folios.

The archive also contains Beattie's library collection of well over 1,000 books and pamphlets, of which the books were recently catalogued into the Oxford University library search system, increasing their visibility for reference use in the Museum's Eastern Art Study Room. Amongst the shelves a humble looking edition of Delabère May's *How to Identify Persian Rugs* (London, 1920) was the first and only book on carpets that Beattie owned while living in Baghdad for ten years before her full enthusiasm for rug studies erupted (Mackie 1987, p.7). This 95-year-old book includes chapters on examining rugs closely – particularly their knots and weaves – in addition to design characteristics, an approach Beattie took to greater depths with her later scientific analyses of rug composition.

Her drive for continual advancement of her own knowledge, and the wider field of carpet studies, can be seen in the fact that Beattie supplemented her own publications held in the Beattie Library with reviews and criticisms of the work stapled to the inside covers, along with her own annotated corrections on the pages themselves. These personal touches, in addition to the more obviously intimate records of her diaries and correspondence also in the archive, offer tangible insights into the personality of a remarkable researcher, fieldworker and woman with a good sense of humour mixed in with scientific rigour. While reporting on her mapping project, Suriyah Bi commented on her own sense of getting to know Beattie through the process of surveying her material. Beattie herself acknowledged an appreciation of putting the 'human feeling as well as hard fact into a subject' when commenting on Cecil Edward's 1953 publication, *The Persian Carpet* (Beattie, 1963, p.150; Mackie, 1987, p.9).

We are six weeks into our six-month schedule and so far over 13,000 folios have been numbered, recorded and rehoused under the guidance of Bodleian Library Archivist, Gillian Grant. Forty boxes have been worked on; there are quite a few boxes to go. The process could be a fairly monotonous exercise; however, the 'human feeling' of May Beattie's life is very evident in the archive during these practical tasks. It is hoped that completion of the project will allow Beattie's personal passion and expertise to go on continuing the advancement of carpet studies as a sustainable and accessible archive resource.

**This edition was dedicated to May Beattie on the approach of her 80th birthday, in recognition of her contribution to the field of carpet studies.*

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OATG visit to Sri Owen

Sue Richardson writes a mouthwatering account of a members' visit to the home of Indonesian food writer Sri Owen.

On Saturday 18 April David and I were among a group of OATG members fortunate enough to have lunch at the home of the renowned Indonesian food writer Sri Owen. The event was held to raise funds for Connect Indonesia, a charity run by fellow OATG member Nelly Andon Br. Torus.

Trudging up Wimbledon Hill from the station our mouths were salivating at the thought of delicious Indonesian food. We were not to be disappointed. The aroma that met us as we entered Sri's home was just fabulous.

Before settling down to eat however, there were of course textiles to be admired. Some of these were from Sri's personal collection, while others had been brought by Nelly, Fenty Prior and Tiana Hanford. They hailed from widely different areas of Indonesia such as Sumatra, Rote, Flores, Bali, Savu and Sumba. Pamela Cross introduced Judy Cottrell to the different stages of the ikat technique, while I had an interesting discussion on dyes and mordants

Opposite, clockwise from top left: Sri Owen; Fenty Prior holding one of the salads; Pamela Cross explaining some aspects of Indonesian ikat to Judy Cottrell; Nelly receiving spectacles from Judy Cottrell.

This page, clockwise from below: Jennifer Glastonbury, Deirdre Scott and Jan Gannaway discussing a Sumbanese textile; Marion Maule examining a textile; Sri Owen (centre).

with Marion Maule and Francesco Maria Gallassi.

Nelly was also delighted to receive several pairs of spectacles from Judy and Christine Yates. These will be sent to members of the weaving groups that

OATG VISIT TO SRI OWEN

Nelly is working with. We were all touched when she recounted the story of giving spectacles to an elderly gentleman who was a basket maker. He immediately looked at his arms and pointed out the hairs on them, which he hadn't been able to see before.

The highlights of the lunch for me were Sri's famous Beef Rendang and the Lamb Curry cooked by Nelly. The vegetarian guests were also well catered for with a selection of tofu-based dishes. Sri kept us entertained with stories of her travels and of her experience cooking Balinese-style duck for Raymond Blanc – apparently a charming man who insisted on taking over the carving.

Above: Programme organiser Christine Yates; centre: Fiona Kerlogue and David Richardson examining a beautiful Batak textile that belonged to Nelly's grandmother; below: tofu dish, lamb curry.

Having been a member of the OATG for many years and attended lots of the lectures, I must say that I have found these smaller group events a really good addition to the programme. They provide a real opportunity to get to know other members better in a relaxed setting and to discuss our shared interests.

Many thanks to Sri and Roger Owen for hosting this and to Nelly and her team for organising it.

The weaving skills of the plains aborigines in Taiwan

A number of Yushan Tsai's painstakingly recreated woven textiles are on display as part of an exhibition at the National Taiwan Museum, Taipei. Here, we get a taste of Yushan's work and of the exhibition.

The plains aborigines are renowned for their weaving skills and the distinctive style of their woven fabrics, particularly the meticulously detailed entwining twill pattern and decorative diamond pattern used on the Hanging Flags Banner. Exhibition items of note include a two-piece bridal skirt, special horizontal stripes on a four-colour brocade jacket, and patterned designs that appear to be covered with red seal stamps. These are characteristic of the plains aborigines' traditional weavings, and are one of the treasures of Taiwanese handcraft art. The bridal skirt is a work of rare quality. It not only has a high warp density and exquisite patterns, but also is the product of many hours of hard work by an expert weaver. The example in the National Taiwan Museum collection is the oldest bridal skirt known.

Like other Taiwan aborigines, the plains aborigines used back-strap looms. All the woven reproductions in the exhibition are based on the research of Associate Professor Tsai Yu Shan of the Department of Textiles and Clothing at Fu Jen Catholic University. The original items are rare and often sole surviving textiles in the collections of the National Taiwan Museum and Museum of Anthropology of National Taiwan University. The reproductions use the same weaving structure as the originals, but are woven on a dobby loom. The plains aborigines traditionally used long fibres from the stalks of ramie and dendrobium plants in their weaving, but the reproductions use modern natural silk, cotton, linen, wool and a new ecological plant fibre. [National Taiwan Museum exhibition text.]

Above: Yushan working on her reproduction of a 19th-century bridal skirt.

Below: part of the red jacket, woven in ramie and wool.

The masterpiece is a 19th-century bridal skirt rich in elaborate patterns and decorated with glass-bead fringes on the bottom. It was part of a bride's wedding attire, and was a woven fabric with a thin cotton-cloth band sewn to the top of it. Generally, plain weave is most common in supplementary weft woven fabrics; this skirt, however, was woven in a fancy plain weave.

The red jacket is woven in ramie

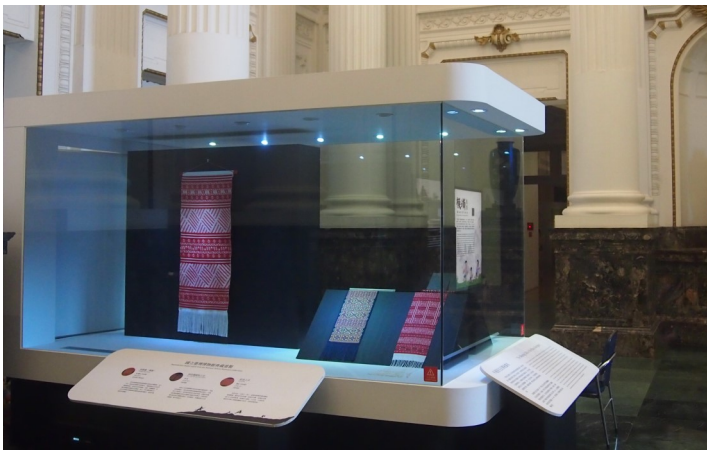
and woollen threads. It is unique in its graphic design. The fabric appears as if it has been printed with vermillion seals all over it.

Yushan made detailed notes and drawings before weaving the reproduction of the brocaded jacket.

The brocaded jacket woven in ramie, wool and dendrobium fibre used to be worn as ceremonial attire. Even in the National Taiwan Museum, such finery is among the rare and precious items in its collection. Such fabrics are characterised by the richness of their colours and the vivid patterns created by supplementary wefts. The jacket is rectangular and was made by sewing together two pieces of cloth. This was once a common garment among Austronesians. However, as the woollen threads were loosely twisted and have become fragile with age, almost all the finery that we see in the museum has suffered from damage with broken wefts; the yellow dendrobium fibre has been damaged the most.

The reproduction of the Hanging Flags banner in progress.

The Hanging Flags Banner was awarded to the winner of the traditional annual ritual running race of Taiwan's plains aborigines such as the Pazeh and the Kaxabu. It was about 125cm x 43cm, and was worn hanging down the front of the wearer's body, and was delineated into several sections by horizontal bands. There are two styles of pattern: the first is composed of smaller, connected patterns; the other is gigantic, with a basic grid of over 100,000 reaching 160,000 at its maximum. The huge patterns on the plains aborigines banner are the largest graphic design that Yushan has ever analysed. It is definitely among the world's unique aboriginal fabrics. It is, however, most unique in its weaving technique. In traditional weaving, patterns are based on plain weave and are symmetrical in most if not all cases. The patterns on the plains' aborigines banner are asymmetrical, made by crafting the weave to create asymmetric diagonal patterns. Plotting the pattern for such a design was a difficult task in itself.



Part of the display in the National Taiwan Museum.

The exhibition *Vivid Ancestor Paintings - A Plains Aborigines Exhibition* runs until 30 August 2015.

Non-OATG events and exhibitions

4 October 2014—6 September 2015, Horniman Museum, London
Revisiting Romania: Dress and Identity

The exhibition highlights the elaborately decorated textiles, costumes and artefacts used in Romanian peasant homes to showcase women's skill and industry, to display a family's social connections and to express national pride. It reflects the fascination and enchantment felt by visitors on seeing the textiles of Romania, explores the way in which the upper classes adopted peasant clothing, and looks at how the meaning attached to textiles – particularly costume – was manipulated under the Ceausescu regime to promote national unity.

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5 February—16 August 2015, British Museum, London
Shifting patterns: Pacific bark cloth clothing

In the islands of the Pacific, cloth made from the inner bark of trees is a distinctive art tradition. Probably brought to the region at least 5,000 years ago by some of the first human settlers, its designs reflect the histories of each island group and the creativity of the makers. Spanning the region from New Guinea in the west to Rapa Nui (Easter Island) in the east, the exhibition will show a selection of 77 garments, headdresses, masks and body adornments from the Museum's collection. Dating from the 1700s to 2014, the pieces on display include those worn as everyday items and ceremonial costumes linked to key life-cycle events such as initiation and marriage.

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13 June 2015—31 January 2016, Victoria & Albert Museum, London
Shoes: Pleasure and Pain

This exhibition looks at the extremes of footwear, presenting around 200 pairs of shoes ranging from ancient Egyptian gold sandals to contemporary elaborate designs. It considers the cultural significance and transformative capacity of shoes, and will examine the latest developments in footwear technology. Examples from famous shoe wearers will be shown alongside a dazzling range of historic shoes, many of which have not been displayed before.

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3 October 2015—10 January 2016, Victoria & Albert Museum, London
The Fabric of India

The highlight of the V&A's India Festival, this will be the first major exhibition to explore the dynamic and multifaceted world of handmade textiles from India. It will include a spectacular 18th-century tent belonging to Tipu Sultan, a stunning range of historic costume, highly prized textiles made for international trade, and cutting-edge fashion by celebrated Indian designers.

Showcasing the best of the V&A's world-renowned collection together with masterpieces from international partners, the exhibition will feature over 200 objects ranging from the 3rd to the 21st century. Objects on display for the first time will be shown alongside renowned masterworks and the very latest in Indian contemporary design. The astonishing skills and variety evident in this incomparably rich tradition will surprise and inform even those with prior knowledge of the subject, and is sure to delight visitors.

23—26 June 2015, London
HALI London-based tour

The four-day programme includes: a day at Blythe House in the V&A archives, looking at Safavid carpets and Indian textiles; a visit to the William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow, to see textiles from their collection; a trip to Boughton House, Northamptonshire, to see some unusual carpets; and a ticket to the Olympia Fine Art Fair and Masterpiece Art Fair.

The price per person is £350. All transport to venues from Olympia and two lunches are included. Limited places are available. For further information please contact Rachel Meek at rachel.meek@hali.com or +44 (0)207 657 1220

From 10 September 2015

South Asian Decorative Arts and Crafts Collection Trust, Norwich

Displays will showcase highlights from the SADACC collections, from the 19th century to the present day. Techniques of weaving and decoration will be explored through selected regions, as the exhibition considers the processes and significance behind fabrics used in daily life in South Asia.

Also in the Old Skating Rink, contemporary gallery Art 18/21 will feature work by London artist Hormarzd Narielwalla. Incorporating tailored patterns into his collage pieces, for *Cloth* the artist will make a series of works referencing the textiles in the SADACC collections. All works will be for sale.

For further information, please contact info@sadacc.co.uk or call 01603 663890

The SADACC Trust, The Old Skating Rink Gallery, 34-36 Bethel Street, Norwich NR2 1NR

www.sadacc.co.uk

2016 Textile Tour of the Lesser Sunda Islands

OATG members David and Sue Richardson will be exploring some of the most beautiful islands of Indonesia – Flores, Lembata, Alor, Timor, Savu, Sumba and Rinca – from the comfort of the beautiful *Ombak Putih*. This fabulous tour, limited to just 22 participants, uses a traditional boat, but with all the modern comforts including air-conditioned en-suite cabins.The cruise will start from Maumere on the island of Flores on 19 May and end at Labuan Bajo (also on Flores) on 30 May. Both towns are easily accessed by short flights from Bali.

Days will be spent exploring weaving villages and learning about natural dyeing techniques, plus of course some time for snorkelling and relaxing on deck. Each evening there will be a talk on the people and textiles to be encountered the next day. There will also be an opportunity to see Komodo dragons on the island of Rinca.

The cabins for the 2015 tour (particularly the twins) filled very quickly, so if you are interested in this trip of a lifetime, don't delay. Download the PDF brochure here https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BywpV66c5qIGMTN3TzBaUS03cm8/view?pli=1

You can contact Sue and David at hine.house@ntlworld.com and there is a wealth of information and photos on their Textile Tours Facebook page here:

https://www.facebook.com/David.andSue.Richardson/287466518059

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MEMBERSHIP OF OXFORD ASIAN TEXTILE GROUP

(includes three issues of *Asian Textiles* magazine)

Subscriptions were due for renewal on 1 October 2014

OATG membership runs from 1 October to 30 September, and subscriptions for 2014–15 are now overdue. Membership costs £25 for individuals, or £35 for a joint subscription. If you pay by cheque, please make the cheque out to OATG, and write your name clearly on the back. If you haven't already renewed your membership for this year, we look forward to receiving your subscription soon, at the address below.

Alternatively, you could set up a banker's order, which is a great help to us as it cuts down on admin. You can download a form from the website and send it to your bank.

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* magazine. We do hope you would like to continue your membership of OATG.

Note: we will not send copies of the next magazine to members who have not paid their subscription, so please get in touch soon if you want to remain a member—thank you.

Any queries, please contact:

OATG Treasurer,
Sheila Allen, 19 Southmoor Road, Oxford, OX2 6RF. Email: nick_allen98@hotmail.com

A note from the Treasurer

Unfortunately many members do not seem to have been made aware of the increase, so that a majority of payments by standing order have been made at the old rate of £15. I would be grateful if you could check your bank statements and send me a cheque for £10 if you find that you have only paid £15 so far (cheques to Sheila Allen, OATG Treasurer, 19 Southmoor Road, Oxford, OX2 6RF please). Also could you ask your bank to change your standing order to the new amount please?
I apologise for the inconvenience but look forward to receiving your cheques so that we can continue to produce a high quality magazine and put on interesting events.

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