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ASIAN TEXTILES

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The Kazakhs of Western Mongolia

Also in this issue: The Krishna Riboud collection at the Guimet Museum in Paris, the Calico Museum in Ahmedabad, India and much more...

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Front cover photo: A Kazakh woman from Western Mongolia sitting in front of embroidered bed panels.
Back cover photo: Constructing a yurt or *kiiz yi (both photos by Anna Portisch).*

Asian Textiles is available online in full colour!

This edition of *Asian Textiles* is available on-line in full colour in a pdf file to download, view and/or print. Access to the pdf file is either via http://www.oatg.org.uk/magazine.htm whilst it is the current issue or always via the back issues page http://www.oatg.org.uk/magazine-backissues.html by first clicking on the cover image thumbnail.

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DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS MONDAY 4 JUNE 2012
Contributions should be emailed or sent to the Editor

Editorial

This edition contains a wonderful article by Aurélie Samuel, who, members will recall, gave a fascinating talk to our AGM last year. Aurélie has written a detailed—and rather longer than usual—history of the Krishna Riboud collection of textiles at the Guimet Museum in Paris. We are indebted to her, particularly for the extensive bibliography.

Also in this issue is an article by Anna Portisch on the textile traditions of the Kazakh minority that inhabits Western Mongolia. As the Kazakhs lose their own textile traditions, this isolated community living in the remote mountains and valleys of Mongolia continues to produce amazing embroideries, felt carpets and wool-bound reed screens.

OATG member John Sharp spent part of January visiting the Calico Museum in Ahmedabad in Gujarat, India, where he was able to examine some of the many wonderful textiles in the collection, in particular the Rajasthani *pichwais*, painted on cotton. I am sure readers will enjoy his observations.

Finally, please note the appeal for a treasurer for OATG. Without active members we cannot continue to function. Now is the time to step forward! *The Editor*

My card for this edition was originally given away with Liebig Oxo Cubes. The company produced a large variety of cards, many on textile themes. This one shows Japanese artisans painting on silk.

Thanks to those of you who gave translations of the postcard in the last issue. According to David and Sue Richardson its says: "*Bhukhara Khanate: Chardjou beg in embroidery of the Turkestan type*". Chardjou, they add, is the Amu Darya crossing point on the road from Bukhara to Merv.

OATG EVENTS PROGRAMME

Wednesday March 14 2012

The Art of the Sikh Loom: Kashmir Shawls and Phulkaris

Jasleen Kandhari

Indo-Tibetan art historian Jasleen Kandhari will explore the heritage of Sikh textiles in the Punjab from the 19th century. She will focus on the Kashmiri Shawl and Phulkari traditions and will provide her own textiles in a handling session. She has lectured and published extensively and was Curator of the Sikh Manuscripts exhibition at the British Library and has been Curator of Asia at the University of British Columbia.

Friday 30 March 2012

Hajj; Journey to the Heart of Islam at the British Museum, London

A visit is being arranged which will include a talk by one of the exhibition curators particularly about the embroidered textiles which hang round the Ka'ba and form an important part in the Hajj. Exhibition entry £12, but there is a significant reduction for group tickets. If you are interested please contact Fiona Sutcliffe as soon as possible for further details.

Wednesday 25 April 2012

Dressed to Rule - The Chinese Emperor's Wardrobe

Ming Wilson, Senior Curator, Victoria & Albert Museum

The lecture looks at the clothing system of the Chinese court, where there were clear rules on what to wear on different occasions. Every detail of the emperor's outfits is explained, the importance of colour and symbolism is discussed, and the rationale behind such an elaborate system is explored.

Wednesday 29 August

David and Sue Richardson will present a talk based on their forthcoming book on Karakalpak textiles.

Talks are held at the Pauling Centre, 58 Banbury Road, Oxford.
Refreshments from 5.15pm.Visitors welcome (£2)

Programme Coordinators:
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Welcome to our new membership secretary!

Agnes Upshall has recently agreed to become our new membership secretary. We would like to extend our thanks to Felicity Wood, her predecessor. Here, Agnes introduces herself

I've had a real passion for textiles for some years now - not exclusively Asian ones, I have to admit - since before I went to university, when I started learning to knit. I probably spent vastly more time than I should have done at college with knitting needles in my hands, rather than literature and grammar volumes.

I quickly moved on to greater things, joining a weaving group in Oxford in the holidays, and picking up the rudiments of embroidery and spinning after that. Alongside these practical aspects, I've also developed a great interest in textiles from a cultural and historical perspective, and was fortunate to be able to spend some time getting to know the textile collection at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge after my finals, thanks to Carol Humphrey (also a member of this group!). I'm now working in publishing, as an editor of textile books at Berg/ Bloomsbury in London.

Over the year and a bit that I've been a member of the OATG, I've greatly enjoyed all the talks and visits that I've attended, and have met some really fascinating people – not least the other members themselves! I'm very pleased to be joining the OATG committee, and only hope I can live up to Felicity's high standards!

Urgent need for a new OATG treasurer

OATG is in a *very* serious situation. For family reasons, Helen Adams, our current treasurer, would like to hand over the accounts to a new treasurer as soon as possible.

During the course of the past year committee members have approached various OATG members to ask whether they would consider being Treasurer but, to date, there has been no success. In the running of any organisation, a treasurer is essential.

The bottom line is that, without someone in this role, OATG may find it difficult to continue in its present form.

If there is anyone who would be willing to help, do please contact OATG's chair, Aimée Payton, aimee.payton@ashmus.ox.ac.uk, who would be happy to talk on the phone or in person about this role and to send a job description.

We are looking for someone with a sense of order who could keep simple financial records. If it's not your thing but you know someone who might be willing to take this on, a spouse, for instance, for the sake of the continuation of OATG, maybe you can persuade them to help.

Think about it and do get in touch.

Mystery hat—Can you help?

OATG member Marilyn Wolf recently purchased this hat, but has been unable to identify it. The dealer who sold it said he thinks it was bought in Turkey. It is made of leather, embroidered with silver metallic thread.

Marilyn says: "We've seen literally hundreds of Central Asian hats. Not one even hints at this. South-east Asia is a better guess. I've sent pictures to the Museum there with no response. Can you help". I have every confidence someone will know. Please contact the Editor if you have any suggestions.

MEMBERSHIP OF OXFORD ASIAN TEXTILE GROUP

(includes three issues of *Asian Textiles*)

Membership subscriptions were due for renewal on 1st October.

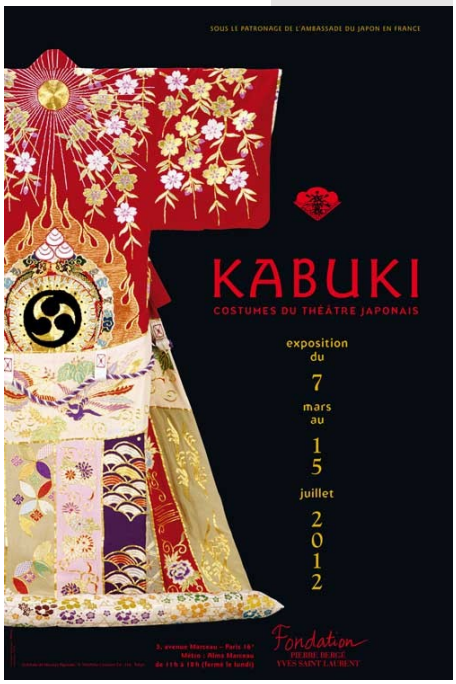
The current subscription is £15, or £20 for joint membership.
If you pay by cheque and have not yet done so for this year, I look forward to receiving your subscriptions very soon. If you are not on e-mail and would like to receive a receipt, please include a stamped addressed envelope with your payment.

If you have been paying by cheque please consider setting up a bankers order.
You can download a form from the website
http://www.oatg.org.uk/oatg-bo.pdf

Any queries, please contact me.

Agnes Upshall, Membership Secretary
Tel:. 07890 731331 email: agnesupshall@gmail.com.

Kabuki Costume on show in Paris



Aurélie Samuel from the Guimet Museum is curating a new exhibition at the Fondation Pierre Bergé – Yves Saint Laurent on Japanese Kabuki theatrical costumes. It will run from 7th March—15th July.

The costumes from the Shôchiku Costume Company, accompanied by accessories, engravings, photographs and documentary footage, serve to illuminate a traditional dramatic art which emerged in Japan in the seventeenth century.

The Fondation's exhibition of Kabuki costumes is the first of its kind ever held in Paris. Aurélie will be writing a detailed article on the exhibition for the next edition of *Asian Textiles*.

Further details at http://www.fondation-pb-ysl.net/en/Upcoming-exhibitions-597.html

New award for young writers on textiles

The Oriental Rug and Textile Society (www.orientalrugandtextilesociety.org.uk) is delighted to announce the creation of its ORTS Award, to be given annually.

Applicants are invited to present any original material or research that reflects and develops the Society's interest in peoples, cultures, and their textile and weaving techniques, namely:

To promote knowledge of the traditional and new centres of Asian weaving and textiles.

To advance the understanding of the processes involved in the creation of rugs and textiles.

To participate, an entrant must provide a maximum of 1500 words containing no more than five hyperlinks and a maximum of five images of no more than 250kb each. The competition is open to all, whether they are formally studying Textile or Oriental subjects or not. Subjects may vary for example from, say, a critique of Naga headgear to a new direction identified in Southwest Persian Rugs.

Entry is open to those aged up to 25 as of 1 Sept 2011 and affiliated to a British Institution or workplace during 2011/2012.

First prize is the Society's Annual Silver Cup, plus a week's stay in a private house in the historic quarter of Istanbul, close to the Blue Mosque, including a return flight from London. Also, three years' membership of the Society.

Second prize is the Society's Annual Runner's Up Silver Cup and two years' membership of the Society. Entries to be sent to ortscup@orientalrugandtextilesociety.org.uk by 31st March 2012. The winner will be announced on 30th April 2012.

Krishna Riboud: One of the truly great collectors

Aurélie Samuel, assistant curator in charge of textile collections at the Musée Guimet in Paris, gave a wonderful presentation at our AGM in November. Here, she explains the history of the outstanding Krishna Riboud collection

Today the Musée Guimet holds one of the richest collections of textiles in the world, but it has not always been that way. The Musée Guimet, or National Museum of Asian Arts, came about due to the determination of Emile Guimet (1836-1918), a wealthy Lyon industrialist and lover of religions. During his lifetime, he collected a vast number of works and items related to religious iconography from Europe, North Africa and Asia.

In 1879, he founded a museum of religions in Lyon in a building that he personally paid for, designed by Jules Chatron (1831-1884). Ten years later, given the local lack of interest in his museum, he decided to move his collections to Paris and donate them to France, in exchange for a building to house them. The resulting building, heavily influenced by Jules Chatron's original, was designed by Charles Terrier (1841-1900) and opened on 23 November 1889.

In 1927, when the Trocadéro's Indochina museum closed its doors, the great art historian and aesthete Philippe Stern (1895-1979) took the large group of Khmer sculptures brought by Louis Delaporte (1842-1925) in 1889 to be displayed with Emile Guimet's collections. In 1989, the museum's curatorial team - led by director Jean-Francois Jarrige and the French Museums Department - started working on a plan for the complete renovation of the museum.

Fig.1: Mme Krishna Riboud

They produced a study for a preliminary programme, which culminated in 1992 with the drawing up of a master plan for restructuring. This 1992 study laid down the following objectives for the future museum: to restore coherence to the interior spaces while respecting the original architecture and trying to rediscover some of the original spaces around the central axis formed by the large Khmer room; to reorganise the reserves, installing them in the basement; to rethink the temporary exhibition space, which was too small and not properly functional; and, last but not least, to improve visitor reception. The museum reopened to the public on January 2001.

Since its foundation, the Musée Guimet had owned very few textiles, except those brought by Paul Pelliot. The Asian collections of the Louvre, transferred to the Musée Guimet in 1945, contained almost no textiles at all. Emile Guimet himself had in fact not brought any textiles from his travels in Asia. If its collections are now among the richest in the world, it is largely thanks to one person, Mme Krishna Riboud (Fig.1).

Born Krishna Roy on 12 October 1926 in Calcutta, she was the daughter of a renowned physician and the great-grand-niece of Rabindranath Tagore, winner of the 1913 Nobel Prize for Literature. As such, she grew in an intellectual and cosmopolitan atmosphere that gave her a unique view of the world. After studying philosophy in Boston, Krishna Roy married Jean Riboud, whom she had met through

Henri Cartier-Bresson in New York.

Fleeing the pernicious atmosphere of McCarthyism, the couple moved to Paris in 1951. Jean Riboud joined the Schlumberger Company, soon to be one of the largest French financial groups. Krishna Riboud, who returned frequently to India, began very early to develop an interest in the arts and traditions of her native country, and decided to start a collection of textiles.

She began her collection in the 1950s by buying Baluchar saris from Bengal, the state where she was born, but, as she said herself, she collected them enthusiastically but without any precise idea in mind. Following the 1962 exhibition at the Galerie Bernheim in Paris, which displayed her textile collection, she began her collaboration with the Musée Guimet.

Jeannine Auboyer, then Director of Guimet, entrusted her in 1964 with the study of the museum's textiles, particularly from the famous collection brought back from Central Asia by Paul Pelliot. This study helped Krishna Riboud to understand the crucial nature of technical analysis in the process of understanding the works, allowing them to be placed in their historical, social and economic context.

As she said later: "*I think technical studies are of tremendous value because that is when you start thinking about the person who made it and the technical means employed. (...) You think of the person who has spent the time and who has developed his art and skill using a vast knowledge but bringing every time something new to it. If you don't do technical study you really remain nothing but an aesthete. Then you can only be a collector but you can't be a disseminator of information."*

This realization led to her commitment with the Centre International d'Etude des Textiles Anciens (CIETA), Lyon, and, eventually, to the publication, along with Gabriel Vial and Madeleine Hallade, of the catalogue of the Dunhuang textiles kept in the Musée Guimet and the Bibliothèque Nationale (French National Library). And after this catalogue, she continued to publish very important papers on Han and Tang fabrics (see the bibliography for more details). This new scientific and technical approach prompted her to pause her collecting for nearly ten years, instead studying the pieces she had already acquired. In the 1970's, she started again but at that time her previous interest – which we could define as essentially aesthetic and sentimental – had been enriched by her new scientific point of view. While her Indian textile collection went on increasing, she began focusing on other countries - mainly China, Indonesia and, a bit later, Japan.

In 1979, Jean and Krishna Riboud transformed the collection into a private foundation and in 1982 they opened the AEDTA as a research centre. Along with the collections, the AEDTA housed a library and a photographic archive and the staff created a huge documentation not only on the pieces from the collection but on Asian textiles as a whole. Several publications, well known to scholars and connoisseurs, appeared between 1989 and 2000.

The aim of the AEDTA was to show the importance of textile and their close links with the social, economic and religious contexts. The centre was open to scholars and students but it was also Krishna Riboud's desire that her collection should be known by the general public. For that reason, quite a number of items were lent for exhibitions. Her study of the Pelliot collection had been the start of a very special bond that emerged between Mme Riboud and the Musée Guimet. She remained intimately associated with the institution for the rest of her life, a closeness that explains why she chose to bequeath her collection to Guimet. In 1990, she donated 150 historical pieces to the Musée Guimet, which were displayed as soon as the museum re-opened after its complete renovation, in 2001.

This donation was, in her mind, the first step towards a transfer of the AEDTA to the museum. As a matter of fact, she was aware that her collection could not be kept as it was after her death but wanted it to remain extant. The choice of the Musée Guimet was not chance: not to speak of her personal links with some of the curators, she selected a museum dedicated to the Asian civilisations and not a textile museum, which was closer to her philosophical point of view on those fabrics.

These nearly 4,000 specimens are now housed in the Musée Guimet, either exhibited in the galleries or kept in storage, but they are still accessible to researchers, students and every person with a specific interest in textiles. The collection is so extensive that it is useful to present here, in a summary way, the main axis of its composition.

Fig.2: Fragment, Safavid Period, 17th century, brocaded silk, Paris, Musée Guimet, MA 11491

The composition of the collection

With about 4000 pieces, made between the 5th Century BCE and the 20th Century CE, Mme Riboud's collection includes costumes and textiles from all around Asia, especially from India. The collection is unique due to its diversity, reflecting the many cultures and traditions of the subcontinent.

Roughly speaking, the collection covers a huge area, from Turkey, Iran (Fig 2) and Egypt (there are about 50 fragments of Coptic textiles) to Japan, to which we must add some items from Europe but also, more surprisingly, from Africa and pre-Colombian America, collected mainly for comparison (less than four per cent of the whole). But, as said before, it focus on four countries: India, Japan, China and the Indonesian archipelago. For those areas, almost all textile techniques are represented, which was the aim of the AEDTA.

India

With more than 1,600 items (around 40 per cent of the whole), it is not surprising that India comes first (of course, in this paper, India is used in an historical way and designates the different parts of the Indian sub-continent). It is also this ensemble that constitutes the historical core of the collection.

These textiles can be presented, first, according to their technique. Many of them are made of cotton, painted or dyed, with the use of mordants. In this category, the masterpiece of the collection is most certainly the famous *kalamkari* (Fig3) depicting a South Indian court scene. Acquired by Krishna Riboud in the 1960's, it is equalled only by the set of seven panels from the Brooklyn Museum. Displayed in the USA and in the United Kingdom in the 1980's and for the reopening of the Musée Guimet, it has been published many times but still keeps its mystery, its iconography, among other elements, being so unusual.

Opinions on its date, provenance and meaning are diverse, but it was probably made in the Tamil country in the middle of the seventeenth century. The previous unsympathetic restorations of this piece have been entirely undone and a new restoration is currently being completed.

Although most of the other painted cotton hangings from the collection are of a latter date (some quite recent), there are nevertheless very interesting pieces from the Mughal period, such as *qanats*, or tent panels, famous for their floral motifs. A very rare talismanic shirt on which verses from the *Quran* have been hand-written, dates to the end of the Sultanate period. On other fabrics the motifs are printed, generally with a block.

The most ancient items are mere fragments found not in India – though they were probably made in Gujarat – but in Egypt, where the climate favoured their (relative) preservation: hence their labelling as "Fustat" fragments (Fig. 4). This archaeological discovery unearthed painted and block-printed textile fragments during a period estimated from the 14th to the 18th centuries.

Very few documents contain reliable data regarding Indian exports to the Middle-East. However, we know that two main routes existed: the Red Sea route and the Persian Gulf route. The Fustat fragments probably arrived through the latter road.

While the majority of the Indian textiles are either dyed, printed or painted, others are embroidered. Most of these are popular textiles – the term "popular" being employed without any pejorative meaning, since some are real masterpieces.

Fig.3: Detail of Kalamkari, Nayak period, 17th century, Paris, Musée Guimet, MA 5678

There are around 30 *phulkari* from Punjab and some very interesting *rumal* from the Chamba valley, depicting Hindu mythological scenes. The Chamba valley, situated among the Punjab hills, in Northwest India, is rightly renowned for its Pahari -style miniatures. Nevertheless, its fame also derives from its brightly coloured, silk embroidered scarves and handkerchiefs. They used to be wrapped around gifts and religious offerings. Made by women from the royal court and their entourage, they were generally square-shaped and inspired from the aforementioned miniatures, or, more often, from mural paintings. However, they are devoid of landscapes to focus on characters. The Chamba *rumal* generally feature religious themes.

Secular scenes are scarce but not unknown. The most popular features were scenes from the Vishnu mythology, in particular the god's well-loved avatar Krishna. These pieces always feature similar setups: a central scene framed by a border of embroidered floral décor. On this particular one, the central scene depicts Rama, hero of the Ramayana, with his brother Lakshmana and Hanuman, general of the monkey army, who assist him in liberating his wife Sita.

Nevertheless, most of the Indian embroideries from the collection still await real study; they mainly come from Bengal (quilts of the *kantha* type) and from Gujarat (hangings, canopies, or dresses and accessories).

Along with all these "popular" items, the collection also proudly boasts of an almost unique piece: an old scarf or hanging used by Jain nuns and depicting eight *vidyadevis* (goddesses of knowledge) and *kusha* grass. Dating from the 16th century, embroidered with cotton, silk and *kusha* grass, it is comparable only to a very similar piece kept in the Calico Museum in Ahmedabad. This lengthy band of embroidered fabric is divided into nine panels; eight of them framing an eight-pointed star each depict a different *vidyadevi*. There are usually 16 *vidyadevi*s, so we may infer that there was a matching piece to this one.

Each *vidyadevi* (Fig.5) stands out on a dark red background. They sit cross-legged on cushions, under an arcade. Their heads, seen from a three-quarters angle, face left and wear halos. They all have four hands, the upper hands holding their divine attributes, their lower hands making a gesture of bestowal (*varadamudra*). Their skin colours vary, and they wear skirts embellished with geometric motifs, *cholis*, and belts. The décor of this embroidery is quite similar to those of Jain miniatures from the 15th and 16th centuries, which makes it quite ancient for an Indian textile – the Indian weather being adverse to the conservation of textiles. This is truly a unique piece.

Fig.4: Fustat Fragments, printed reserve-dyed cotton, 16th-17th centuries, Paris, Musée Guimet, MA 5682

Another way to pattern textiles is through complex weaving. One of the most common is brocade, with the addition of a supplementary weft. Many saris – in which a gold thread is interwoven with the tabby ground – are made according to this technique. The richest are from Benarès (Varanasi). The East India Company took over the administration of Varanasi in 1764. Under its rule, the city became a major brocade production centre, especially for *kinkhab*, a Persian word for a solid silk, thick enough to be mixed with gold and silver thread.

Among the other gold brocaded textiles of the collection, we have some gorgeous Mughal belts (*patka*), dating from the 17th and 18th centuries. Krishna Riboud was rightly proud of acquiring some fragments both very rare and of complex structure and great skill. Most have been published in the book on *samit* and *lampas*. The most prestigious were found in Tibet where they had been re-used as frames for paintings; originally, they came from Assam and show a very strong *vaishnava* affiliation (Fig. 6). These pieces were made somewhere between the late 16th and the early 18th century.

During the 16th century, Sankaradeva, a holy man, worked to develop the cult of Krishna in Assamese temples. He settled in Barpeta in Assam, where he died in 1569. According to literary sources, during the 1560s Prince Chilarai (a brother of the local king Cooch Behar) commissioned Sankaradeva to execute the weaving of a large silk scroll retelling the youth of Krishna. The endeavour gathered 12 weavers and took a whole year, ending shortly before the death of the holy man. The unearthed pieces may not be parts of the original work, but they are in its legacy. Sankaradeva disapproved of the worshipping of images, the main object of his cult was a Bhagavata Purana manuscript set on an altar. These fabrics were probably used as altar covers..

Fig.5: Jain ritual textile, (*puthia*), India, Gujarât, 16th century, Cotton embroidered with silk and *kusha* grass, Paris, Musée Guimet, MA 5684 (AEDTA 2381)

Fig. 6-Silk strips showing Vishnuit scenery, North-East India (?) ; found in Tibet, late XVIIth century, silk *lampas*, Paris, Musée Guimet, MA 11099 (AEDTA 3223)

As already noted, Krishna Riboud insisted on the technical aspects of textile study as the first step toward a more complete comprehension of those pieces. In 1997, she summed up her point of view as follows (*Orientations*, vol. 28, n° 4: 43):

"In Asia, textiles are essential to what we know about ancient civilisations and what the impact of those civilisations has been upon the world. Textiles defined culture in China and in India. As trade goods, they conveyed the impression of one people to another. The transfer of technology and patterns is tied to other transfers – religion, literature, art, economics, politics. We need to know how textiles were made, how they were used and what they meant."

Therefore, the collection from the AEDTA must not be considered solely from the technical point of view, but also according to the use and the function of each item – and this is as true for the Indian textiles as for the rest of the collection. As a matter of fact, a huge number of Indian textiles are costumes, or at least part of costumes. Those range from the highest ranks of society to the more humble ones. Of course, the court costumes are the most impressive as they display the most refined techniques as well as the richest materials. Some of them are of brocaded silk; others, made of thin cotton muslin from Bengal, were favoured by Mughal emperors.

Megasthenes, an ambassador to the Maurya (Chandragupta) court, that ruled over India from the 4th to the 2nd Century BCE, relates in his book *Indica* that "Indians love jewellery and ornaments. Their robes are embroidered with gold and set with precious stones, their garments embellished with flowered décors, woven from the finest muslin." Thanks to such Greek travellers, the reputation of Indian fine clothes and fabrics spread through southern Europe.

The Roman Empire loved Eastern finery. The Indian merchants played the part of providers and intermediaries for the Romans. During the 1st Century CE, the Indian muslins worn by Roman women were known as *venti*, "light as the wind" or *nubela*, "vaporous". Some were woven especially for them, in particular in Arikamedu, now in the area of Pondicherry. Later, translucent muslin *jama* were manufactured in Dacca, Bengal.

The saris – there are about 250 of them in the collection –may not be as prestigious, but some of them are just as flamboyant. Others, like the Baluchari saris, offer fascinating glimpses on the daily life in 19th century Bengal (Fig.7).]

Along with these costumes, Krishna Riboud purchased quite a lot of fabrics with a more religious purpose. Here the study of the textiles must be accompanied by an iconographical approach, even if some of those hangings do not display mythological scene properly speaking.

These are examples of the major painted cottons from Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, depicting stories from the *Puranas* or the Epics, like the *Ramayana*.

From the most ancient times, India was a centre of production which exported fabrics all over the world, towards Middle East and Europe. Most of the time these products were made in accordance with the customers' wishes.

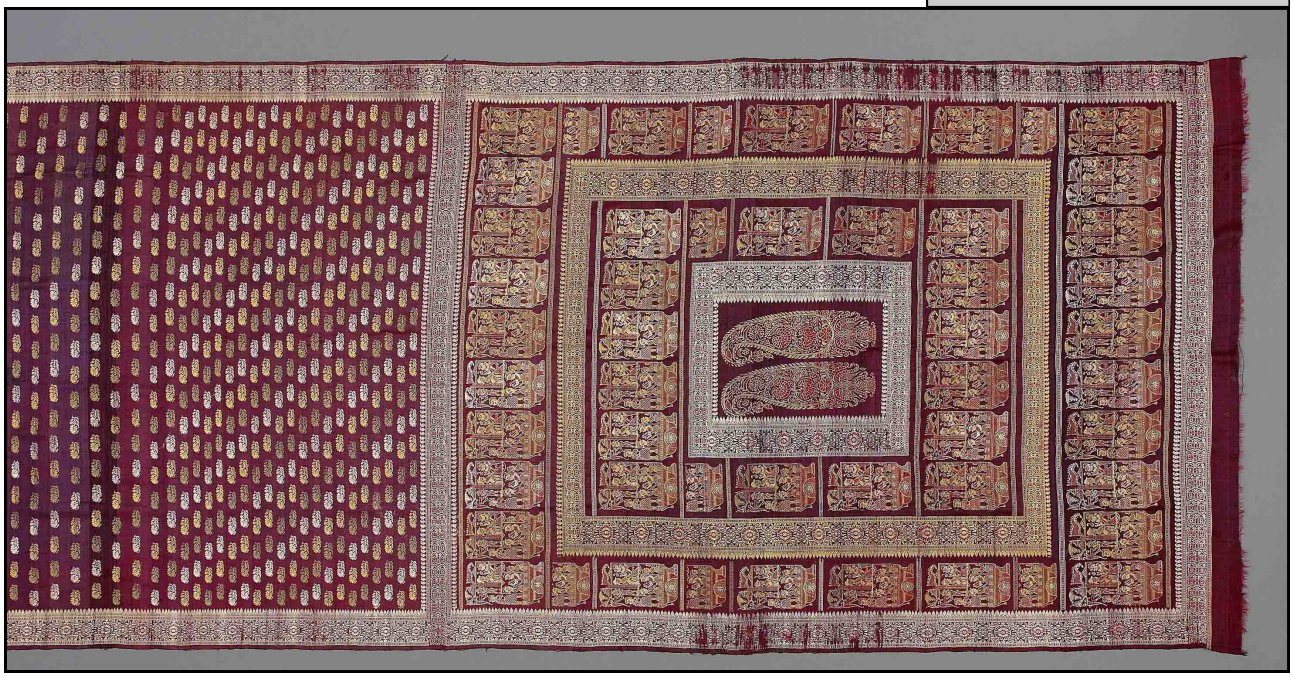


Fig.7 Sari Baluchar Butidar, India, Bengal, Baluchar , XIXth century, moving taffeta, brocaded and lancé, Paris, Musée Guimet, MA 11686 (AEDTA 3845)

As a conclusion to the Indian part of the collection, let's have a look at the Kashmir shawls. About 100 pieces come from Kashmir, including shawl border fragments from the late 17th century or beginning of the 18th century, or colourful late 19th Century fabrics, very popular in France at the time.

Mme Riboud was extremely interested in Kashmir fabrics, especially after she met Mme Monique Lévi-Strauss in 1981. As Mme Lévi-Strauss recollects: "*Krishna Riboud invited me to her home, avenue de Breteuil, to see her shawl collection. She was about to form the AEDTA and shared her projects with me. I told her that I intended to set up an exhibition around Kashmir shawls, in order to display to the public the dating system I had put together after three years of research. Madeleine Delpierre, head of the Musée Galliera at the time, agreed to host the exhibition. To illustrate the evolution of Kashmir shawls between 1790 and 1890, we had to borrow pieces from public and private collections both. Very generously, Krishna Riboud lent us all the pieces lacking in our exhibition*."

Japan

Compared to the Indian collection, the Japanese one is not as numerous: around 650 items (17 per cent of the whole). But Krishna Riboud started collecting fabrics from Japan at a much later date. Therefore, the aim was not to cover every field and every period, but rather to focus on some very particular styles of pieces, notably the *kesa*, as well as costumes and textiles from the Edo period (1603-1868). The more contemporary fabrics in her collection were mostly added for comparison purposes. Madame Riboud went a dozen times to Japan, mostly to study textiles preserved at the Shoso-in in Nara. Although fascinated by the study of Chinese textiles, she was profoundly affected by Japan with which she wove a kind of spiritual connection. She especially loved walking in her garden, which was designed after the Japanese fashion.

John Vollmer says that one day he went into the private office of Krishna Riboud to study Han textiles. She approached a statue of a Japanese monk, sat down and lit an incense stick and explained: "For 28 years I have burnt incense when looking at the actual Han period silks. […] I am not superstitious, but in all that time we have not had an accident"

Krishna Riboud maintained very close relationships with many Japanese people, including Mr Moto Tatsumura, whom she met in 1985 in Japan. A descendant of Heizo Tatsumura (1876 -1962), who founded the textile factory that bears his name, Mr Tatsumura owned a large textile collection and a weaving studio where ancient textiles were duplicated, a place that Madame Riboud visited regularly to better understand manufacturing techniques. In 1989, Mr. Tastumura donated to the AEDTA several reproductions of antique fabrics, one of them a sample of a replica of a Shoso-in *kesa* (MA 19927 - AEDTA 3047).

Madame Riboud bought most of her textiles from antique shops or major dealers such as Spink in London. She sometimes purchased pieces during her many travels, but that was the exception, not the rule. A small but important part of Madame Riboud's Japanese collection came from collections gathered by the early European collectors from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the fame *japonistes*. These pieces were still circulating in Paris when she began to collect Japanese textiles.

Most of these people had discovered Japanese art in 1867 at the Paris Exposition, the first to officially welcome Japan, where some Japanese textiles were displayed. The diffusion of Japanese patterns was also achieved by samples

Fig 8: Katagami stencil, Paris, Musée Guimet, MA 11991-AEDTA 330 BJ

bought by collectors and reproduced in various books, such as MP Verneuil's *Etoffes Japonaises tissées et brochées* (Paris, 1905).

Such textile samples were purchased by Madame Riboud in large numbers. They were kept in albums, and illustrate her desire to build a true reference collection, combining the broadest techniques and patterns as possible. In 1994, the AEDTA's collections were enriched by several very interesting pieces: eight pieces of silk with figurative and narrative patterns for the manufacture of *obi* and tobacco pouches that were popular in 19th century Japan.

Among the first pieces related to textiles collected by the *Japonisants*, we find paper stencils (*katagami*), which played a major role in the spread of Japanese motifs around the world (Fig.8). There were very few stencils in the West before 1880. Among Krishna Riboud's collection, there are a number of *katagami* stencils that profoundly influenced Japanese decorative art.

Edmond de Goncourt (1822-1896), a writer and an avid collector of Japanese art, decorated his house in Auteuil with textiles from the Far East. Some of these fabrics were used in unique ways. In *La Maison d'un artiste*, a book he published in 1881, we learn that the walls were "(...) covered with drawings from the eighteenth century, *fukusas* and *kakemonos* (...)" (*La Maison d'un artiste*, I, p.72) As this passage shows, the Goncourt home, like those of other collectors, boasted many woven or embroidered pieces:

Louis Gonse in "*L'art japonais*", defined *Fukusa* in a footnote: "I already said that *fukusa* is a square-shaped fabric, more or less adorned depending on the rank and fortune of the person who owned it. It was used to wrap a gift or a letter in a small lacquer box. Of course, the *fukusa* was returned to the sender as an acknowledgment" The collection of Krishna Riboud holds a few *fukusa* (among which MA 9468 - AEDTA 1447, purchased in 1983, ill. 3) in the spirit of those sought by collectors of the 19th century.

Fig 9: Ainu dress, appliquée cotton tabby, larch fibres (ohyô), late 19th century, Paris, Musée Guimet, MA 10197-AEDTA 2239

The costumes in the collection were worn by people from a large array of social classes: rich Edo bourgeois, aristocrats, revered Buddhist monks, samurai, farmers, fishermen, peasants, [and even] Ainu from Hokkaido and residents of Okinawa. Among these pieces, we can find beautiful *kosode* and silk kimonos. These *kosode*, of the *uchikake* type, were worn over another *kosode*. One of those kept in the Musée Guimet (MA 5759- AEDTA2632) shows a stylized view of the universe of Chinese inspiration (tortoise, sacred mountain and crane).

In Japanese textiles, Madame Riboud admired "the use of humble materials that the Japanese craftsmen have always been able to elevate to the rank of a work of art". That is why we also find among the collection dresses made of banana fibre or *ramie*, a kind of nettle, from Okinawa. For example, we have a summer dress (MA 10102- AEDTA 2130) made of banana fibre (*bashô*), introduced in Japan in the 14th or 15th century, which shape is similar to that of traditional Japanese costumes. The collection also holds elm fibre clothes from the Ainu people of Hokkaido. Ainu traditional clothes are made from the inner bark of elm (*ohiô*). Once the fibres are processed into thread, they are woven on a simple loom. The most recent pieces (MA 10197 - AEDTA 2239) mix cotton and *ohiô* (Fig.9)

Furthermore, a fine collection of cotton clothing illustrates the use of indigo in Japan. Most of the clothes made for groups such as carpenters, firefighters or tradesmen, were made of cotton. A jacket for a carrier or a messenger, made from woven cotton rag and dyed with indigo and dating from the early twentieth century (MA 9749 - AEDTA 1766) is displayed near another jacket of dyed *shibori* (MA 9829 - AEDTA 1848) and straight quilted stitch to make it more robust.

Samurai clothing using various techniques completes this very rich set. The *kamishimo* from the early nineteenth century (MA 5760 – AEDTA 2612 A and B) consists of a *hakama* and a *kataginu*. It was worn by samurai of high rank as ceremonial clothing, and later by the musicians of Noh and Kabuki theatre. In addition, the collection features two *jimbaori* (MA 5761 - AEDTA 2800 and MA 11827 - AEDTA 3991) from the Edo period.

Some works are distinguished by their very valuable iconographic, aesthetic and technical worth. This is the case of the *suzukake* (MA 11849 - AEDTA 4015) of raw hemp which would be worn by *yamabushi* monks. Renondeau says (in his book, *Le Shugendô, histoire, doctrine et rites des anachorètes dits yamabushi*, Paris, 1965), "the *yamabushi* monks, to protect themselves from morning dew or droplets of water from falling branches, wore a hemp coat with wide sleeves over their clothing." The *yamabushi* ascetics usually lived as hermits in the mountains. The pilgrim who wore this dress had written his resolutions and ascetic vows within its neckband. Many wood-engraved indentations and prints cover the piece. This work came to the Riboud collection in June 1999 and is one of last three Japanese pieces to have been purchased by Madame Riboud.

As for the Noh theatre costume (MA 11492- AEDTA 3642) of silk gauze, it is one of the masterpieces of the Japanese collection. Designed for a man playing the part of an old woman (recognizable by its white colour), the gilded *lancés* draw a pattern of grasses in autumn. This costume belongs to the category of *ôsode*, since the ends of its sleeves are not stitched. The *moiré* effect is an optical illusion, obtained through two layers of gauze-layered patterns that allow both sides of the costume to be visible simultaneously. It is the only Noh theatre costume in the Riboud collection.

The Japanese collection is two-fold and the second part comprises the *kesa* or monk shawls. The *kesa* collection of the AEDTA is probably one of the richest outside Japan, numbering approximately 100 pieces (80 at the time of the donation).

Kesa, a term derived from Sanskrit and Chinese - *kashaya jiashi*, referring to the reddish-brown colour in the dress of monks - is a monastic shawl made of different pieces of fabric sewn together (a sort of patchwork) in bands or columns.

Originally, the Buddhist requirements recommended that monks dressed in rags collected from the dust, to emulate the rags worn by the Buddha himself. *Kesa*, whose earliest examples are between the 7th and 9th centuries CE, consist of a central band, framed by an odd number of sewn sidebands, named *jô*.

In 1978-79, Madame Riboud had in her possession a few pieces that she had bought from Spink's in London. In 1983 60 late 18th and early 19th century *kesa* from the personal collection of Alan Kennedy were acquired by the AEDTA. He had bought most of them in America where many pieces were exported following the opening up of Japan. The *kesa* were sold by the Buddhist temples, forced, during the Meiji era, to cede some of their properties, and were found in large numbers in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many public sales were organized. The Shojiro Nomura sale in 1914 in Boston numbered many Japanese works including *kesa*. Many of them are now held by the Metropolitan Museum in New York.

In order to make the work of the AEDTA and its collection public, Krishna Riboud began developing an active policy of publications and exhibitions. The 1991-1992 exhibition *Manteau de nuages: Kesa japonais*, first displayed at the Musée des Textiles in Lyons, and later at the Musée Guimet in Paris. Madame Riboud opened the exhibition along with Japan's Crown Prince and Princess.

China

The style of Japanese *kesas* was borrowed from China, and the collection also houses some Chinese *kesas* or, to give them their original name, *jiashas*. This leads us to a short examination of the Chinese part of the collection, which comes third with 580 items (15 per cent of the whole). Strangely enough, even though Krishna Riboud devoted her scholarly life to the study of Han and Tang silks, there are very few of these in the collection.

During the last years of the AEDTA, only some Tang fragments were purchased. When she began collecting,

Fig.10: Semi-formal court coat (*jifu*), embroidered silk, 19th century, China, Paris, Musée Guimet, MA 10051

Madame Riboud was more concerned with furniture, textiles and costumes from the Ming (1368 – 1644) and Qing (1644 – 1911) periods. The collection holds, for example, beautiful decorated silk satin jackets and unofficial costumes from the Qing era (Fig.10).

Along with the prestigious court costumes – impressive but of a type well-known and well-represented in many museums around the world – quite a lot of accessories, like collars, hats and shoes are also kept. They illustrate the evolution of decorative techniques during this period. And even if the purpose of neither the AEDTA nor the Musée Guimet is strictly speaking ethnographic, the collection is also rich in some minorities' costumes, especially from Southern China (Miao tribes and others).

However limited in number, the Chinese textiles are nevertheless the most valuable part of the collection, since in the 1990's, Krishna Riboud was lucky enough to purchase, at the same time as the main American museums, some newly discovered fragments of Liao, Jin and Yuan brocaded silks (Fig. 11).

In these same years, she also acquired very interesting fragments, embroidered according to the complex technique called needle-loop, as well as dragon robes, the famous and impressive imperial regalia, whose elaborate and strictly defined décor illustrated the necessary virtues of the Son of Heaven. The collection also holds semi-formal

Fig.11: Silk fragment with swans, 11-13th Century found in Tibet, brocaded silk taffetas, Paris, Musée Guimet, MA 11109

dragon robes for young imperial children, and more “modest” dragon robes worn by imperial high officials, set apart from the emperor’s robes by the design of dragons, that number only four fingers or claws - the five-fingered dragon being the privilege of the emperor and his sons.

Indonesia

Among the different countries of South-East Asia, Indonesia is particularly well-represented (360 items out of nearly 500). This is also the most ethnological part, so to speak, of the collection, as shown by the Kauer jacket from Sumatra, adorned with shells and mirrors. Sumatra and Java are probably the most important provenance places here, though there are textiles from the Nusa Tenggera islands (especially Flores and Timor) and from Sulawesi. Most of these fabrics had a ritual purpose.

The diversity of techniques is often fascinating, be it the different types of *ikat* (especially the warp *ikat*), the use of supplementary weft (*songket*), the use of gold leaf glued on the fabric (Balinese *perada*), or the different processes of dyeing. Of course, the AEDTA was well-known for its batik section. These amount to nearly 100 specimens and were the subject of the first extant catalogue published by the AEDTA.

The conservation of the collection now at the Musée Guimet

Acknowledging it would be difficult for both technical and financial reasons for AEDTA to outlive her, Madame Riboud decided early on to bequeath her collection to the Musée Guimet. In the spirit of her scientific approach, whereas the study of fabrics was essential to the historical understanding of civilizations that produced them, Madame Riboud guaranteed with this decision the continuity of her work. Her wish was that her collection, one of the most comprehensive in the world, would not be dispersed. She wanted it to stay accessible to researchers and the general public alike. Madame Riboud stated: "Any collection which is not institutional is based on the arbitrariness and vision of one individual, and belongs to one only. Initially, over 40 years ago, the pieces gathered today at the AEDTA, their rationale and purpose, were unknown to Western audiences."

Moving the collection

The AEDTA had created storage spaces specially for the pieces of the collection. In a major renovation project of the Musée Guimet, a reserve was set up for the arrival of 150 pieces from the textile collection given by Madame Riboud in 1990.

In 2003, in anticipation of moving a large part of the 4000 pieces of the bequest, the reserve was entirely remodelled (Fig.12). Its storage capacity was extended to better meet the conservation needs of these fragile works, their formats differing from one another.

To this end, several types of storage furniture were built to facilitate the handling of pieces and to allow access to researchers. The *Kesa* are kept rolled because of their extreme fragility. The different weaving techniques used, including the use of strips of gold paper (*kinran*), make the conservation of these works particularly delicate. Similarly with the saris and the shawls, also in order to preserve the integrity of their adornments.

They are regularly unrolled for students and researchers to study them. In addition, young curators wishing to specialize in technical studies often come and see them. This helps create a better understanding of the pieces and to

Fig.12: Textile storage facilities installed in 2003

provide a number of solutions for their better conservation.

Special storage units - multi-plan closets called *tessoniers* - were designed in order to be able to store some textiles flat. The best-preserved costumes are hung in closets. The library and the entire documentation of the AEDTA were also transferred to the Musée Guimet. They are now available for study, thereby constituting a major collection of documents for researchers.

Nevertheless, the Indian works are the only ones to be displayed to the public among the permanent collections by rotation in the Jean and Krishna Riboud Galerie, on the first floor of the museum. Japanese, Chinese and other Asian works may only be seen during temporary exhibitions or on the occasion of the many national and international loans we accept.

One such exhibition was "*Lumières de Soie*", held at the Musée Guimet in 2004 as homage to Madame Krishna Riboud. Curated by Vincent Lefevre, it featured many masterpieces from the collection. Another was "*Children's Costumes – Reflections of the Grown-ups*" (Oct. 20th 2010 – Jan. 24 2011), featuring all the costumes and textiles related to the world of childhood, one of Mme Riboud's main interests. Krishna Riboud felt a special affection for children's clothes, one of her favourite subjects. In 1999, an exhibition in partnership with the Victoria and Albert Museum in London was in the works, but, unfortunately, Mme. Riboud did not have the time to bring this project to fruition.

Guimet's exhibition, while paying homage to Mme Riboud, made it possible not only to fulfil and complete her very last endeavour, but also to bring to light beautiful pieces of woven taffeta, twill or satin with brocaded or gilded weft-patterned decor, displaying the most complex techniques and offering an illustration of the deep significance of weaving throughout Asia. It is such a diversity that makes Guimet's collection one of the most comprehensive in the world. The Musée Guimet is now trying to preserve this priceless heritage and to constantly enrich it through new acquisitions.

Conclusion

The Krishna Riboud Collection is unique in many respects. If it is remarkable, it is not only due to the aesthetic interest of the works it comprises, but also because it is, through its historical extent and its diversity in techniques, a true reference collection. Its textiles offer a broad overview of all the weaving and dyeing techniques used in Asia.

The arrival of the collection at the Musée Guimet made the museum one of the richest institutions in the textile field, enabling it to establish itself as a leading resource for the study of Asian textiles. The museum follows in the steps of the work initiated by Mme Riboud, who defined what she wanted to highlight in these words: "*One of the things I hope with the collection here is that people will not only look at the pieces for the delight of the eyes, which is important, but will start thinking in terms of the person who manufactured them. Textiles are very intimate things and people put a lot of themselves into their creation. This is also true for any traditional textile made today and is one of the things I want to emphasize."*

The aim of my lecture in Oxford was to give an idea of the content of this important collection. Along with the four countries mentioned above, there are major items from Central Asia, Persia and the Middle East in the collection. When the AEDTA existed it was the largest private collection devoted to Asian textiles. It would be wrong to think that these 4,000 textiles are all masterpieces. Many are invaluable, for sure, but others were acquired only for comparison and study and are more recent and/or common. But, as it is, the collection is so extensive that it can be considered as a reference, since almost all aspects of textile history and techniques in Asia are represented – especially when one adds to those the archaeological fragments previously kept in the Musée Guimet.

Many of the textiles have been studied and published. But a lot of other enquiries, and even discoveries, remain to be done. To begin with, we have to complete the photographic archive. This is what makes this collection very much alive, and we hope that, as it was at the time of the AEDTA, the textile department of the Musée Guimet will continue to receive the attention of scholars and public from all over the world.

I wanted to leave the last words to Mme Riboud:

"The power that particular works have on us, in every type of creation, is difficult to define. But if we do not wish to view certain profound undertakings as stereotyped luxuries, we begin to recall that significant pieces, however small or humble they may be, have the value in their origin in a distant and observed past."

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The Kazakhs of Western Mongolia

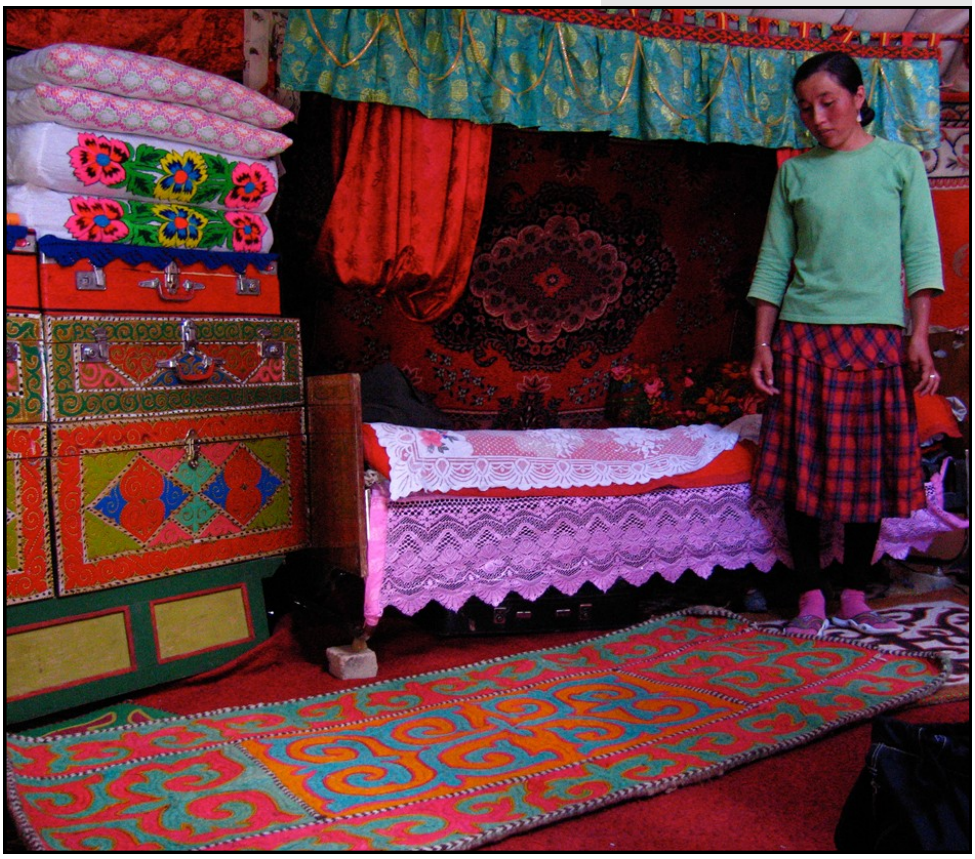
In the first of two articles Anna Portisch explains the remarkable and varied textile traditions of the Kazakhs who live in the remote and beautiful region of Western Mongolia

In the summer of 2005, a small yurt had been erected in a calm, tree-lined street near the Academy of Sciences in Almaty in Kazakhstan. On entering the dimly lit space, I found tables along the walls brimming with embroidered wall hangings (*tus kiiz*). A beaming young man told me about the embroideries, and it transpired that they were all from Bayan-Ölgii, as was he. Bayan-Ölgii is the western-most province (*aimag*) in Mongolia, popularly known as 'the Kazakh *aimag*', since it is home to almost 100,000 Kazakhs who form the country's largest minority.

The young man had recently moved to Kazakhstan, like many other Kazakhs from Mongolia, who since the collapse of the Soviet Union have sought better livelihood opportunities in the 'Motherland' (see Diener, 2009). He had set up business, selling his extended family's old wall hangings, but had since expanded and now sold a wide variety of embroideries from all over Bayan-Ölgii. He sold these to tourists, but also to Kazakhstanis. I had to disappoint him, however. My suitcase was already full of wall hangings from Bayan-Ölgii, where I had just spent a year learning to make domestic textiles (as part of my doctoral research). But we were able to exchange a good deal of gossip and news.

Old wall hangings are favoured by buyers abroad and tourists who come to Bayan-Ölgii more than new, brightly coloured embroidered pieces. On the other hand, Kazakhs in Mongolia, in

Selling *tus kiiz* in Ölgii market in Western Mongolia (All photos by Anna Portisch).



A young wife showing a recently completed felt carpet - *syrmaq*

many instances, keep certain textiles in their possession that they have inherited or that they value for specific reasons, but they are mostly happy to part with old, faded and worn wall hangings. All the better if they can earn some money selling them).

The key to the difference in aesthetic appreciation perhaps partly lies in production. Kazakh women in Mongolia continue to make intricately embroidered wall hangings and many other textiles which are used year-round in their home. These textiles are both a valued material heritage and artefacts of everyday use. Their production is an integral part of daily life in many rural areas, and young women learn to make textiles from their mothers, siblings and older female relatives as part of learning to run a household.

In Bayan-Ölgii, domestic textiles are often customised for use in the yurt but are also, to a lesser extent, used in the winter-house. Most Kazakhs in this area live in mud brick houses or log cabins (or communist-era apartment buildings in town) during the long cold winter months. From June to September, they set up their yurt. Families that are responsible for large herds of domestic animals (sheep, goats, cows or yaks, horses and camels) move several time a year between distant seasonal pasture locations. People with few animals or jobs in the village may set up their summer yurt directly adjacent to the winter house as an additional reception room or living space.

In western Mongolia, most people say that the yurt is their preferred dwelling, and the months spent in summer pasture locations (*jailau*) is the favoured time of year. The yurt, called a *kiiz yi* in Kazakh, meaning ‘felt house’ is often referred to as the ‘true Kazakh dwelling’. The interior is furnished with a wide range of textiles: some embroidered, some woven, some made of felt and some factory-made and bought at the market.

At the centre of the yurt sits the stove, with the chimney pipe leading out through the crown of the yurt (*shangiraq*). Metal plated or painted chests are placed behind the seat of honour (*tör*, situated directly opposite the door), often with a TV and DVD set on top (accompanied, outside the yurt, by a satellite dish and solar panel). Stacks of suitcases decorated with embroidered, lace or crochet doilies may also be placed in this area of the yurt. At tea and meal-times household members and guests sit on felt carpets (*syrmaq*) or low stools around a table.

Beds sit alongside the lattice walls and in front of each is usually placed a felt carpet. These

Assembling a side section of a *syrmaq*

are sturdy, thick carpets, made of two layers of home-made felt. The top layer features a ram's horn pattern made up in mosaic or appliqué style (or both). The different sections are made in contrasting colours and the overall pattern is one in which foreground and background are of equal weighting. They are thick carpets and provide good insulation against the cold ground. They are densely quilted, making these carpets sturdy enough to withstand the comings and goings of family members' feet, children playing, and people sitting and eating on them.

On the wall above the seat of honour and above each bed, embroidered wall hangings (*tus kiiz*) hang from the lattice walls. *Tus kiiz*, are about the length of a bed. Each household member has their sleeping place and ideally each person also has their own *tus kiiz* which hangs behind their bed. In amongst the pattern is embroidered the year the wall hanging was completed and the name of the woman who made it. Sometimes, if it was given on a particular occasion, a dedication might be embroidered into the design.

Tus kiiz are densely embroidered, often with repeated rosettes that feature 'ram's horns', kidney and heart patterns and others named after parts of domestic animals. *Tus kiiz* may also feature patterns like stars, birds, flowers or butterflies. The entire space (usually 2 x 1.5 metres) is filled and no part is left blank. They have a red quilted velvet or silk (or satin) border that frames the central embroidered section, which is usually made of black or dark corduroy or cotton.

The bottom central part of this main embroidered section, in turn, usually features a second 'inserted' square of fabric that is also embroidered with a different pattern. In this part of Mongolia, the fourth border along the bottom of the wall hanging, is always left unfinished. Some craftswomen say this is because it is tucked behind the bed, so it won't be seen. Other women explain that if the fourth border were finished and the *tus kiiz* completed, this would signify that the craftswoman had 'completed' her life's work, that is, she would be ready to die.

In making *tus kiiz*, initially, a pattern is drawn on to the fabric, which is divided into sections by folding it or using a ruler. Part of the fabric is then stretched taut over a metal or wood frame (the rest being rolled up along the side of the frame). Holding the thread on the reverse of

the fabric with one hand, a hooked needle (called a *biz*) is used to penetrate the fabric and 'pick up' the thread from the reverse side, pulling it through the fabric and creating a chain stitch. Experienced craftswomen work quickly, but it can nevertheless take up to a year to complete a *tus kiiz*. This, of course, depends on what other responsibilities a woman has, how many young children, and how many daughters.

Many of these pieces are collaborative. Girls learn the techniques from their mother by helping her on pieces in process. They may be set to work on a relatively simple task. Some women, certainly, work independently on their embroideries, and one woman is likely to have overall responsibility for a piece and its design, but many of the textiles that decorate the Kazakh home are actually 'intergenerational' as Bunn and Martens (2008) also note, and show technical idiosyncrasies of the women who have contributed to completing them.

Kaemalashuly, a Kazakh ethnographer from Bayan-Ölgii, has suggested that the name '*tus kiiz*' is a mis-spelling of 'colourful felt' (*kiiz* means felt; *tus* would have been spelt with a 'ɣ' rather than 'Ɣ', see also Kaemaelashuly 2005), indicating that these wall hangings were once made of felt that was possibly dyed or embroidered (see Bunn & Martens 2008:82). Such an additional layer of felt would have been useful as insulation next to the bed.

The bed of the wife in the household and sometimes also other family members' beds are further enclosed by brightly-coloured satin curtains. During the night the curtains are drawn but in the day the curtains are tied to the sides of the bed with woven straps and a little valance sits at the top which may be decorated with bunches of owl feathers.

It is thought that the pattern on the feathers resembles the arabic script of the Qu'ran and owl feathers, and sometimes whole owl skins with feathers, are used in the home as decorative amulets. Bunches of owl feathers may also be hung along the red quilted border of a *tus kiiz* to protect the person sleeping beneath. Similarly, the red borders of some *tus kiiz* are decorated with buttons sewn on in threes. Some craftswomen say such a constellation of buttons has protective properties, while others suggest they are merely for decoration.

During the day, each bed is cordoned off with a woven ribbon from which embroidered

This *tus kiiz* features the dedication 'made in 1976 for my brother Ustav from Seterkhan'

pieces are hung (see front cover photo of woman dressed in traditional clothes worn for the photo, posing in front of her bed). These embroidered pieces are made using a sewing needle, not a *biz*, and the motifs are of flowers, deer or other animals. In these pieces much of the plain white fabric is left blank, in contrast with the densely-embroidered style used in larger pieces. A similar style is used for pillow covers and 'coverings' used over piles of neatly-folded winter coats or clothes that are kept stacked up during the day on top of the beds.

Beds are further decorated with valances (*tösek ayaq*) that are attached to the legs of the bed, hiding suitcases and other household goods underneath. These valances can be woven or embroidered (some households have cross stitch valances and even cross stitch *tus kiiz*; this style is said to have been in fashion a few decades ago and was possibly inspired by Russian cultural influences). However, valances are usually in the same densely-embroidered style as wall hangings and made with the same hooked needle.

Woven valances are wide versions of the woven straps used around the yurt, for instance to cordon off the beds, to hold the crown in place whilst erecting the yurt, and to secure canvas covers to the yurt frame (photo h, woven bands are seen under the roof poles in this yurt). Such yurt straps are woven on home-made looms, usually during the summer when it is possible to set up a loom outside and work in the daylight.

Many aspects of textile production take place outside during the summer months. Reeds are collected in summer and prepared for making reed screens. Each reed is wrapped with differently coloured dyed lambswool, and the thus decorated reeds are assembled to form the screen. The assembly is done on a (supported) horizontal bar where individual reeds are placed in succession and fastened by looping homespun camel's wool thread over each in alternating fashion (the end of the thread is hung with rocks to hold the reeds and thread tight; see Mateeva and Thompson 1991). The reeds wrapped with dyed wool form precise and colourful patterns. These screens can be seen behind the lattice walls of the yurt, and on hot summer days the bottom part of the felt covers may be lifted to let in air, thus exposing the decorated reed screens.

Similarly, making felt for *syrmaq* and for the cover of the yurt also takes place during the summer. The lambs are sheared and the wool sorted according to colour and quality. Mothers and daughters, cousins, relatives and neighbours help with preparing the wool and rolling felt . As relatively large pieces of felt are made, the activity involves the participation of at least five or six women, and requires space and light. Heaps of wool are beaten or hand carded, the wool is then laid out on a plain reed mat in several layers, sprinkled with hot water and then rolled for a few hours. Once the felt is prepared, women work throughout the long cold winter months assembling the carpets. Again, several female family members may work on a single carpet. Working for a few hours each day, it can take a couple of months to complete a felt carpet.

A combination of raw materials derived from domestic animals and bought materials are thus used to make domestic textiles. Lamb's wool is used to make felt. The wool is also spun and combined with long yak's hair or horse hair to make rope. Lamb's wool yarn is also used for knitting (knitting became popular in the 1990s); and lamb skins line waist coats and winter coats. Camel's wool is spun to make a durable thread used in assembling felt carpets and reed screens, but the wool is also spun more thickly and used for knitting. Many women crochet pillow covers and blankets. Chemical dyes are bought at the market to dye homespun yarn and felt. Before the 1990s, dyes, thread and other materials were imported to the region from Russia, but today these are often imported from China.

Since the 1990s, women have also begun to use Chinese florescent-coloured thread in embroidered wall hangings, valances, and other pieces. The change in colour scheme has been accompanied by the development of a new technique where the needles from discarded veterinary syringes are adapted, adding a small 'handle' and used to create a fluffy kind of embroidery called *tukhty keste*. The fabric is stretched over a frame and perforated with the needle, leaving a small loop of thread to protrude on the reverse. Some women continue to create the densely-embroidered patterns that characterise embroideries made with hooked needle, but others experiment with new motifs such as representational depictions of animals (photo m, woman selling new style wall

hanging in Ölgii market).

The use of a combination of materials and the integration of new materials and sources of inspiration is far from a recent phenomenon. During the Soviet-backed state socialist period (1920s-1990), it was often difficult to get hold of coloured thread, and women extracted thread from existing fabric and used this in embroidered pieces. Today, nylon thread from old 50-kg flour bags is used to stitch felt carpets loosely together. If a certain colour thread or dye cannot be found, old woollen sweaters or hats of a suitable colour may be unravelled and integrated into new pieces. A section of a beautifully embroidered wall hanging that is otherwise falling to pieces may be salvaged and used as a central piece in another wall hanging.

Creative recycling characterises most routine craft practices in this region. That is not to say that these textiles in any way appear to be cobbled together from old pieces, or that the overall stylistic impression of the Kazakh home is somehow haphazard. To the contrary, with all its different styles, patterns, colours and textures, the overall visual impression of a summertime yurt is one of a coherent whole and a distinctively Kazakh style. Moreover, the yurt with its soft furnishings, stand as a testament to these craftswomen's persisting creativity in a region marked by harsh living conditions, poverty and scarcity.

Those wall hangings that make the journey to Kazakhstan and perhaps further afield thus often bear the marks of several craftswomen who have worked together on them. They bear dedications that tell of family ties and histories. Many of the stylised motifs of horns, hearts and other animal parts refer to the domestic animals that remain the mainstay of these Kazakhs. On the reverse and in the detail, they indicate the craftswomen's small everyday decisions and integration of what materials were to hand. In these material aspects they tell of the home they were made in and for, and how they have been adapted over time to suit its needs. When they are sold, they become part of a different 'economy of crafts', one in which they are likely to be preserved as they are, and in which their monetary value will increase, whilst at the same time they cease to be constituents of a dynamic and living crafts tradition.

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Women work together to make felt for carpets

Religious paintings on cloth in Ahmedabad's Calico Museum

In January this year OATG member John Sharp visited the Sarabhai Foundation's Calico Museum in Ahmedabad, Gujarat in India. These are his impressions of this remarkable institution.

I arrived early. My rickshaw swerved in a great curve through three lanes of oncoming traffic and spun into a U-turn to deposit me at the gate to the museum. This is of solid, dark wood, carved all over, probably 18th century, towering 15 feet high and 12 feet across, with a wicket gate. Outside was a character in Dad's Army uniform holding a 1940's .303 rifle. He shoo'ed me away even from the step, pointing to his watch.

Fortunately, from across the way I could hear the drum and bell machine of *puja* in progress so I slipped off sandals and discovered two Shiva temples. As is the way with India, mysteries abound; in one the *puja* was in progress, whilst in the other - a grander hall - it had just finished and acolytes were sweeping up flower petals. There was a scary Hanuman and a bucolic Ganesh outside.

All this passed half an hour and by now a group was gathering outside the museum. Several men in ill-fitting berets were counting and checking. Five and twenty only could be admitted. Those who had booked were in one gaggle, still outside, those not booked were given forms to complete and then sent away. Once inside the great gate we each wrote our life history and purposes in a weighty ledger. Phones, cameras, bags, water bottles, were all confiscated and pushed through a hatch. We waited.

Exactly and precisely at the appointed hour a stiff lady arrived. She was muffled up, for her this is winter and cold. She addressed us in practiced tones. We followed her and were joined silently by several unsmiling ladies in shawls and sari's and by a smart chap in whites with a Nehru cap. We were seated, shoes on, and one by one completed yet another long line of detail in a second ledger. But by now I could see things, a garden with peacocks, a *loggia* with flimsy muslin curtains. Their fluttering in what little breeze there was made dancing shadows on the tiled floor.

The tour began and was conducted at a steady walking pace. The morning tour focused on

The beautiful buildings that house the Calico Museum

the secular. The commentary was largely about the ways in which the various items - garments, tent hangings, horse adornments, palanquin covers, bedspreads - were used. How the queen and her ladies needed to be able to see out of the tents when the men were hunting or at play, without the unworthy peering in. We saw some drawn thread slots with reflective metal threads that would dazzle outsiders.

The things in this museum are of the finest possible quality, the craft is exquisite, but we were not allowed to linger long enough to see much. Dim lights came on briefly. At one point I asked a technical question about how something was done and was told "God had given the craftsman that gift, his work was for God".

(It didn't seem appropriate to ask whether the God concerned was Allah or perhaps Saraswati? The Sarabhais, whose money funds this amazing place, are Jains, not Hindus or Moslem. Most of the treasures seen on the morning tour were made to adorn Moslem conquerors who preferred to speak Persian. This is tricky, politically sensitive, stuff for Indian (Hindu) nationalists - how to explain paintings of the Lord Krishna dressed as a Moslem Prince!

Part of a cotton painted *pichhvai* from Rajasthan, late 19th century. In the collection of the Calico Museum of Textiles

We were told about the materials, wrappings and length of saris. In the western and northern states it can get cold so nine metres of wool were common. In hotter Rajasthan six metres was enough and they were wrapped with bigger folds so as to allow the maximum air circulation; often they were worn with short blouses (*choli*) laced at the back. Hot weather saris were sometimes blue and patterned in waves to suggest moving water.

I cannot overstate the wondrous quality of the things I did manage to study; the minute detail of embroidery, the silk and gold threads; the exquisitely tiny knotting of the best tie dye; glossy beetle wings set in silver for appliqué. There was Ikat and double Ikat. The resources section showed undyed and part-dyed Ikat with the resist binding in sequence. There are examples of blocks, wood for carving, elaborate tools and examples of block printing.

In the morning group were two curators of textiles from Lancashire museums with a party of students. But no time was allowed them to study the detail, to point out the exceptional. The set piece tour was for tourists. "Frustrating" was the comment of one highly qualified person. But it must be appreciated that this is all privately owned and funded. We must be grateful.

The afternoon tour started in the gardens - banana trees, flowering shrubs, moving water, peacocks and an enormous 12 ft(?) across preserved tree wrapped round with string as it would have been in situ, but no petitions were tucked into the string and no puppets hung from it. At the foot, though, were indications of early worship, including ochre-smeared stones, coconuts, terracotta figurines.

The museum buildings must be mentioned. Constructed from reclaimed timbers from around the region there are rooms, galleries, balconies, walkways, terraces, staircases, doorways, all elaborately carved or draped, usually with views of the gardens and designed so that air could circulate. We took off our shoes and entered a Hindu shrine and a Jain shrine, where we were shown a circular (Buddhist like) *mandela* on the floor. It showed the various incarnations of Vishnu and the Vedic ages. Ominously, we are in the age of Kali, the darkness, so the outer ring is black and the end of creation is predicted. Many Hindus expect this age to end soon.

There was a gallery with the finest bronze figures, wonderfully skilled casting, all from South India. We also saw a room of Jain texts, a page from a contemporary biography of Akbar, illustrated texts in Sanskrit and Persian. There was one extraordinary tribal piece, about 12 inches across and 10 feet long, in which a tribe invited a holy man to visit them. Being without written language, the scroll is a request, an invitation and a map of how to get there, all in pictures.

Then came the *Pichwai* (many spellings) I had travelled 500 miles, each way, specifically to study them. I had submitted a letter of introduction from Professor Anne Morrell, who had worked there, and another from a Hindu *pandit*. But still I got no extra time and the postcards were out of print. I bought two big photos and two cloth reproductions which members will be able to see but we can't reproduce. The images accompanying this article are of some of the exhibits. *Pichwai* are religious paintings on cotton cloth for use in temples for festivals and for the changing seasons of the year. They can be as big as 12 ft x 7 ft. There are a few featuring Rama, but most are about the life of Krishna.

I describe *Pichwai* here under three headings: (i) textile techniques; (ii) as works of art in terms similar to discussing paintings; (iii) some of the ideas surrounding Krishna and why he has become so important.

Cotton grows wild around here but there are very few natural dyestuffs that will take to cotton unless it's softened by mordants. We know from fragments from Egypt and the Indus valley digs that Gujeratis developed dying skills thousands of years ago but one reason *Pichwai* are interesting is that so many colours appear on the same piece. Each colour and intensity of tone requires a specific mordant for a given time. Some speculate that 20 separate washes may have been needed.

The initial drawing is done with a bamboo pen but there are many places where the colours join seamlessly, the watercolorists amongst you will guess how. Embroidery is used to enhance a 3-D effect, as is appliqué. Gold and silver are sprinkled on, only adhering to places where a block had previously been used to deposit sticky paste. This sprinkling technique is used for the blessed rains of the monsoon. The overall colour of some hangings is almost black but sparkle with gold and silver rain. Remember these temple cloths are big, were used, moved, folded and stored. They can achieve the splendour of Mughal miniature paintings but without the of use ground up precious stones for pigment or a rigid support..

To understand the significance of these hangings it may be helpful to ponder the role of Krishna. Originally the Vedic Hindu gods, like our Nordic gods, were distant - Sun(day) Moon (day) etc. All we could was placate them. The Hindu Gods developed, according to mythology, into Gods who care about us, so Vishnu and Shiva took on earthly forms (not necessarily human) to see off various demons. Krishna, an incarnation of Vishnu, took on a much more personal God, friend and protector role. In the *Gita* he proclaims Himself supreme God.

Various Krishna cults have developed in which increasingly He is seen as 'like us'. His life story encapsulates his experiences as a babe, an infant, a teenager, as vulnerable from other Gods, a flirt with the milkmaids, then as a God able to forgive us our sins. He drove Arjuna's chariot in battle. There are 20 or more festivals through the year celebrating a Krishna event. In many homes and temples figures or images of Krishna are exposed for veneration eight times a day. There are strands of Hinduism, even amongst Krishna devotees, that favour asceticism and renunciation. But the Vallabha tradition that produced these works favoured luxury on the grounds that 'only the best is good enough for God!'.

So why are *Pichwai* so special?

In Hinduism there are many strands of asceticism, various paths renouncing earthly pleasure, but the group started by Villabha developed to believe that only the best is good enough for God, so these are lavish productions. Embroidery, appliqué, silk and gold thread, gold and silver leaf sprinkled on to stick to paste previously applied by blocks.

But before all this can begin the cloth has to have the design and detail drawn in by bamboo pen. Then, because only natural dyes were available various resists and mordants were applied in sequence. A darker tone required the mordant to bite for longer, greens may require yellows over

various blues. Modern experiments, on smaller pieces, suggest that 20 or more washings would be needed, with each dried in the shade. Technically these are formidable pieces and rare. Modern work is available and modern chemistry has reduced the preparation times but the colours seem over-bright to my eyes and, generally, the drawing isn't good enough.

This is not a place to give details of the enormous complexity of Krishna worship, but we need to understand that Krishna's life on earth has been told in great detail, his birth, his childhood, his teenage pranks, his role as ideal lover; he is the perfect human, as well as being the Supreme personal God, our friend, adviser, and the forgiver of our sins. Depicting Krishna and his various attendants, admirers and lovers requires the draftsman to draw with grace and to give the figures elegance and movement.

Perhaps a Western reader might like to look up Botticelli's work or Giotto's to see the importance of drawing. Even if the figures are anatomically impossible, a certain grace is essential. Another western artist to view in preparation is possibly Marc Chagall. His paintings and his prints tell stories, use odd perspectives, pile characters, major and minor, together in seemingly random order. The next stepping stone towards appreciation would be Persian and Mughal story telling miniatures with their bright colours, lack of shadow, odd perspectives, stylised landscapes together with detailed observation of flowers and birds.

But *Pichwai* are not miniatures painted on solid supports and kept in books or frames. These are huge swathes of cloth, displayed to depict a festival or season as required.

They are very special indeed. I wish to end with reference to another complex Hindu notion, that of *darshan*. Hindus travel miles just to be in the presence of a guru, or an image of a God, or in a holy temple or a holy place. Simply being there, the looking at, and the being looked at in return, all this is a profound religious experience for devotees. Having *darshan* of these masterpieces, however brief, may have done me good.

Detail from banner of cotton, colour and tinsel from Rajasthan, 18th century. In the collection of the Calico Museum of Textiles

OATG hosts The Textile Society's visit to the Pitt Rivers Museum

In early 2011, when The Textile Society was formulating plans for its conference to be held in Oxford, Brenda King, their chair, contacted OATG. She asked if we might like to be involved by perhaps hosting a visit to the Pitt Rivers Museum. Ideas of evening cocktails and soiree-style catwalk shows soon evolved into something more straightforward.

Thus, on the morning of Sunday 26th November, six OATG members, most of whom were also Friends of the Pitt Rivers Museum, welcomed over 50 members of The Textile Society. The visitors were ushered into the Museum's Lower Gallery where there is a very good view out across the Court. Rosemary Lee who, as well as being one of OATG's Programme Co-ordinators, is also a volunteer guide at the Pitt Rivers, gave an introductory talk about the Museum.

Then Felicity Wood handed out copies of a textile trail that she had devised. In addition to acknowledging the textile cases on the ground floor of the Museum, this trail encouraged a broad view of textiles and led visitors to examples within other displays: a Bolivian sling made of plaited wool, a roll of cotton cloth from Nigeria used as currency, and Noh mask covers made from fragments of old theatre costumes, for instance. OATG was on hand to help orientate the visitors and answer questions.

The morning ended with coffee and brownies in the seminar room – a good opportunity for some excellent cross-referencing. OATG is most grateful to the Museum staff for all their help with the arrangements for the morning, and to The Textile Society for their very generous donation.

Forthcoming Events

The Mansoojat Foundation will be exhibiting a costume and photographic display in the Great Court, British Museum on **9th March** to coincide with the major exhibition *'Hajj: journey to the heart of Islam*'.

Ten colourful and contrasting costumes will be displayed from the Sulaym, Jahdaly, Thaqeef, Hudheyl, Bani Sa'ad and Bani Malik tribes of Western Saudi Arabia (known as the Hijaz) the Central (Najd) & Eastern regions of Saudi Arabia and the Hail region and Rashaidah tribe of Northern Saudi Arabia. The costumes will be presented alongside photographs showing their related environment and historical context.

In addition to the costumes, Mansoojat will also be showing documentary films about silver bead making by the Bani Sa'ad tribe of Taif, Hijaz and the complex floral headdresses of Jizan, South-Western Saudi Arabia.

Visitors will be invited to try on a selection of replica costumes and headdresses and pose in a 'virtual studio' to be photographed in front of the dramatic architecture and landscapes of Al-Dar'iyah, Najd, old Makkah, Hijaz and the Asir mountains. Mansoojat will also be selling a selection of unique products designed by Saudi Arabian artists. Check out the website: www.mansoojat.org.

Living in Silk Exhibition, Nottingham Castle Museum & Art Gallery

Saturday 31 March - Sunday 16 September 2012

Living in Silk is a major exhibition of outstanding silk garments, accessories and textiles from the 5000-year history of Chinese silk production. This is the first time the collection has been seen in the UK!

The silk collection will be on loan from the China National Silk Museum in Hangzhou (See www.chinaculture.org/gb/en_museum/2003-09/24/content_30899.htm)

The exhibition will also include beautiful, newly-conserved Chinese costume and textiles from Nottingham City Museums and Galleries' collection; some items haven't been on display to the public for over 20 years; others have never been on public display until now. This special 'Nottingham section' of *Living in Silk* will be created by a group of 22 young people from across Nottingham, lead by *Illuminate*, Nottingham Museums' Young Arts Collective.

Living in Silk is part of the national Cultural Olympiad celebrations as well as Nottingham's own Olympic celebrations. This regional programme feeds into the national *Stories of the World* strand of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad and aims to showcase to a worldwide audience, innovation and excellence in museums, libraries and archives. The project is led by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council in partnership with the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympics Games.

An exciting programme of talks, tours and live fashion events, organised by Illuminate, Nottingham Castle and MA students from Nottingham Trent University School of Art & Design, will run throughout the exhibition. Normal Castle admission charges apply. For opening times take a look at the Castle web page http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1262.

Living in Silk is part of *Dress the World*, a collaborative programme of three East Midlands' exhibitions, celebrating the global exchanges that have shaped and continue to shape fashion in the East Midlands.

Two exciting exhibitions at Washington's Textile Museum

In the spirit of the East Asian calendar's Year of the Dragon, just days after the Chinese New Year, The Textile Museum in Washington DC is opening the playful and colourful *Dragons, Nagas, and Creatures of the Deep* **(3 February 2012 – 6 January 2013).**

The exhibition presents objects drawn from cultures as diverse as the ancient Mediterranean world, imperial China and contemporary South America, portraying dragons as everything from medieval fire-breathing beasts to friendly and beneficent water gods.

The Museum will also be hosting an exhibition on Japan's Tawaraya Workshop, which has produced exquisite silks for more than 500 years for uses which include Imperial garments and Noh theatre costumes. A selection of these precious textiles and kimono will be featured in this unprecedented exhibition, which was organized with the help of Hyoji Kitagawa, the 18th-generation head of the workshop, recently designated a Living National Treasure by the Japanese government. Mr. Kitagawa will be visiting the United States for the first time to deliver a special lecture on 1st April**.** The exhibition will run from **23 March until 12 August 2012**.

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