

OXFORD ASIAN TEXTILE GROUP

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Turkish embroidered felt waistcoat, Horniman Museum, see p. 5

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EDITORIAL

The O.A.T.G’s inaugural meeting was held almost ten years ago (28 September 1995) in the Pitt Rivers Museum, combined with a private view of Sheila Paine’s exhibition *Embroideries from Islamic Journeys* in which she gave us a wonderful “walk-about” introduction to the embroideries on show.

In the ten years since then Sheila has been a good friend and loyal member of the Group, giving talks and frequently attending meetings. Many of us have enjoyed days at her house studying and admiring items from her collection carefully arranged according to country and/or theme in the various rooms in the morning. Then, while we were relaxing over lunch, Sheila would be busily hurrying around putting away all the exhibits we had seen and putting out another wonderful display for our delectation in the afternoon.

We have enjoyed more exhibitions and talks, more often than not at the Oxfordshire Museum in Woodstock. What will probably be the last of these – *Amulets: A World of Secret Powers, Charms and Magic* – runs from 23 June to 14 August (see below p. 25). There is a private view of the exhibition on Sunday 26 June, 12 noon to 2 p.m., which Sheila and the Museum have generously invited O.A.T.G. members to attend. Please contact the Museum (tel. 01993 811456) if you would like to accept this invitation.

Sadly, Sheila has decided to dispose of her marvellous collection and had hoped it would go to the British Museum. Unfortunately, after some years of negotiation, the Museum has withdrawn from the purchase, in order to handle the backlog of material from the Museum of Mankind. Sheila will now be looking for a new home for the collection and would be pleased to know of any museum that might be interested.

Meanwhile she is busy photographing, annotating and digitising so that whoever is so fortunate as to acquire the collection will acquire it fully documented – and all this in addition to putting on the Woodstock exhibition, giving talks, etc. in her usual energetic way. I am sure she will not wind down after all this, but find other ways in which to please her many friends and her public.

I am sure we all wish her and her collection well.

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PROGRAMME

WEDNESDAY 10 AUGUST at 2 p.m.

Visit to the
James Henry Green collection of textiles from Burma
at the Brighton Museum and Art Gallery,
Pavilion Gardens, Brighton.

Behind the scenes viewing of the collection with Sarah Posey and Helen Mears
Keeper and Curator of World Art, who will also (after a cup of tea) show us the
James Henry Green Gallery of World Art (which contains more textiles from Burma).

It is planned to travel to Brighton by National Express, probable departure 9.15 a.m.

(For members who will be in Brighton on the morning of 10 August, it will be possible to
arrange a residents' rate entrance fee for the Royal Pavilion. Unfortunately there will not be time to do this after
viewing the Green Collection.)

Numbers are limited so, if interested, please contact Rosemary Lee as soon as possible
Tel. 01491 873276 e-mail: rosemary.lee@talk21.com

* * *

WEDNESDAY 28 SEPTEMBER at 5.45 p.m.

**Asian Textiles in the London Saleroom:
East India Company Auction Records of the Seventeenth Century**

by Anthony Farrington

(Archivist and editor, former head of the India Office Library and Records and a student of the Company's
archives for the past forty years. Publications include *The English Factory in Japan, 1613-23* (1991), *The
English Factory in Taiwan, 1670-85* (1995), *Catalogue of East India Company Ships' Journals and Logs,
1660-1834* (1999) and *The English Factory in Siam, 1612-85* is in the press.

Rather than deliver a formal lecture, Tony Farrington would like to initiate a dialogue. The
evening will be very much a "work in progress" report, discussing quantities, types, prices,
purchases and seeking the assistance of and exchanging information with Members.

* * *

WEDNESDAY 26 OCTOBER at 5.45 p.m.

Advance notice of A.G.M., to be followed by a talk:

Cloth that Lies: the Recycling of Clothing in India

by Dr Lucy Norris.

Details in the next Newsletter

Meetings on 28 September and 26 October will be held at the Pauling Centre,
58 Banbury Road, Oxford.

Non members £2

Refreshments from 5.15 p.m.

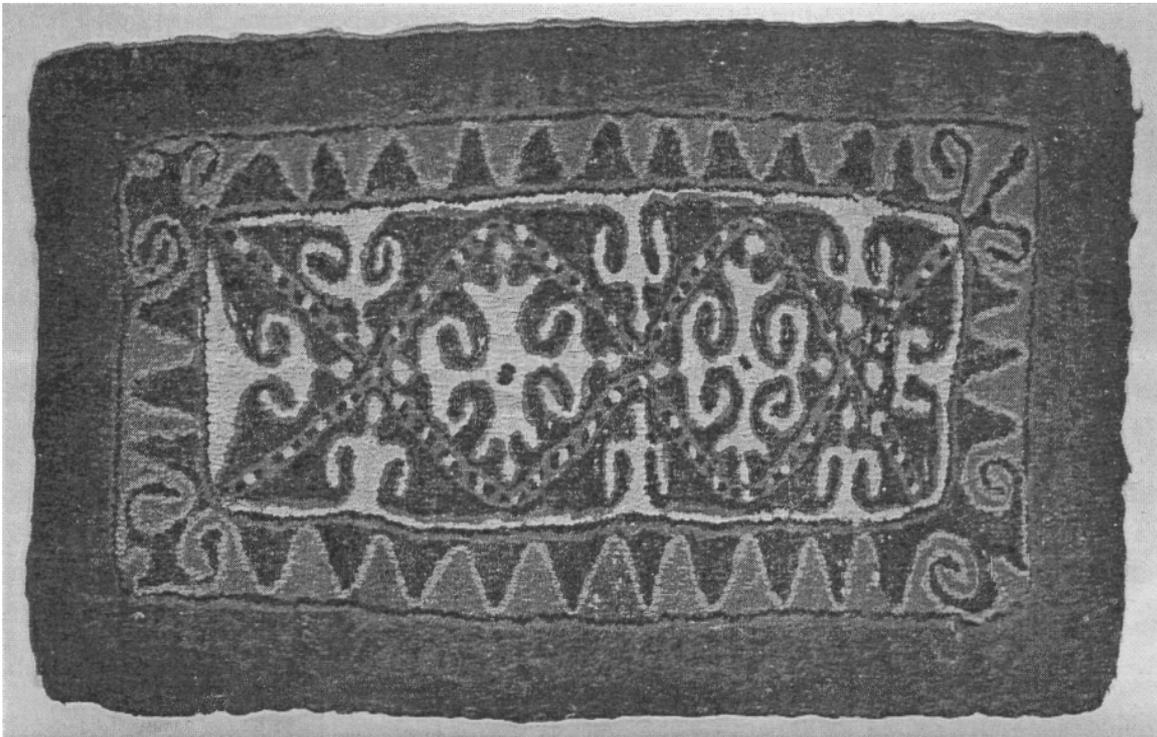
ASIAN FELT IN THE COLLECTIONS OF THE HORNIMAN MUSEUM

The Horniman Museum in Forest Hill, South London, first opened in 1901 to display the private collections of Frederick Horniman, the Member of Parliament for Falmouth and son of a successful Victorian tea merchant. The original collection was amassed over forty years from the 1860s to 1900, and collections continue to expand and diversify.

A significant portion of material in the collections comes from Asia and items of felt are well represented, ranging from domestic furnishings to animal trappings, from Turkey, Iran, Kazakhstan, Tibet, Mongolia and China.

Felt has a long history, apparently dating back to the Uighur period (8th to 9th century CE) in central Asia and to the Hittite period (1750 - 1200 BCE) in Anatolia. At the Hittite cities of Bogazkoy and Yazilikaya are carvings showing people in felt caps and clothes. Felt makers today are found in Turkish provinces such as Afyon, Sanilurfa, Konya and Erzurum, where they tend to work within guilds, unlike the case in Iran where felt is made by families for themselves and their neighbours.

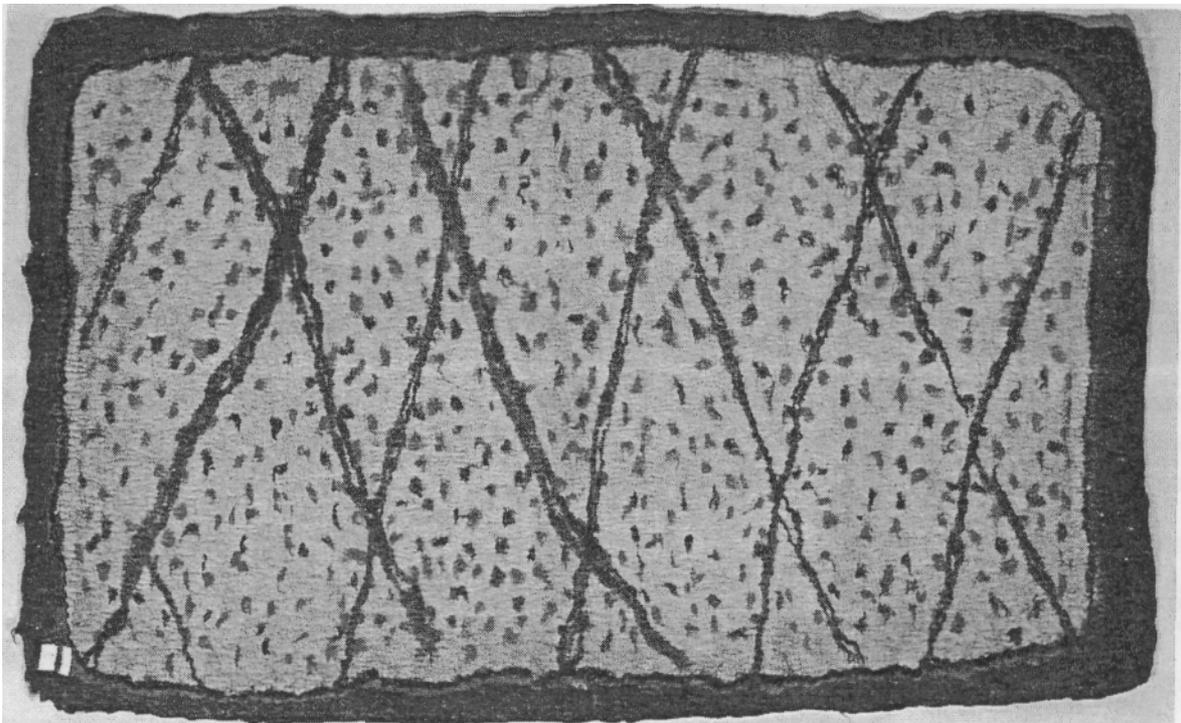
The oldest felt item in the Horniman collections is a fragment from Beyçesultan, Turkey, dating from c.2000 BCE. More recent acquisitions include domestic furnishings such as the floor felts (*keçe*) collected by Ken Teague, a former curator of Asia at the Museum, and several Anatolian specimens from Konya and Afyon acquired in 1984 from Mary Burkett, a former director of Abbott Hall Gallery in Cumbria. Much of the Burkett collection is illustrated in the catalogue of a touring exhibition held in the 1970s, 'The Art of the Felt-maker' (Burkett 1979). The Burkett collection includes a fragment of a floor felt which demonstrates clearly how the different layers are superimposed (Burkett 1979 cat. no 72).



Mary Burkett also provided a number of items of animal furniture from Turkey – two donkey breech straps, one from Trabzon (1984.75, Burkett 1979 cat. no76a) and one from Adiyaman (1984.74, Burkett 1979 cat. no76b) and a camel's head-dress. This latter piece is elaborately decorated, with coloured beadwork and shells, and attached clumps of camel hair.

There is also clothing from Turkey, such as the several hooded cloaks termed *kepeneks* from western Anatolia. Felt hooded mantles or cloaks occur widely across the Turkic and Iranian worlds. They are worn by shepherds and are known by various names according to the region – the *kepenek* in Anatolia, the Hungarian *szur* and the *tapur* of the Baluchi of southern Afghanistan. The Horniman collections also include a heavily embroidered Turkish waistcoat (1984.95 fig. 1, p.1) and various items of headgear from Konya, Afyon and other parts of Anatolia. There are two tall conical caps – one *sikke* and one *takke* – the former of which is of a type worn by the whirling Mevlevi dervishes (1984.57 and 1984.58; Burkett 1979 cat. nos 58 and 59). This was made in the city of Konya by the late Ali Sampaz, said to be the last Dervish felt hat maker. There are also two maroon *fez* hats from Konya (1984.59 and 1984.60; Burkett 1979 cat nos 60 and 61) and two *sapka* hats from Afyon.

Among the felt items from Iran in the Horniman Museum are two significant collections brought back from Shah Sevan in Persia in the early 1970s by Peter Andrews, then of the School of Oriental and African Studies. There are tent coverings and lashings together with tent-related furniture – acquired by the Museum in conjunction with items from North America and Africa to produce a comparative series on tent technology. Dr. Andrews sent the collection from Tehran on board a lorry, among a cargo of pistachio nuts also bound for London.



Among the items acquired from Mary Burkett are numerous floor felts from Iran, one dating from around 1930. This unusual item has different designs on each side (1983.37, Figure 2a (p.4) and b (p.5)). One side features a centre panel decorated with a central pattern of diamond-shaped fields and cruciform motifs with pointed ends, while the reverse has an overall lattice pattern in maroon and blue-black against a natural field with red and blue-black dots. Felt rugs in the Iranian world are considered as “carpets of the poor” and tend to be employed in work places such as the kitchen, rather than for decorative purposes as in Mongolia and north-western China.

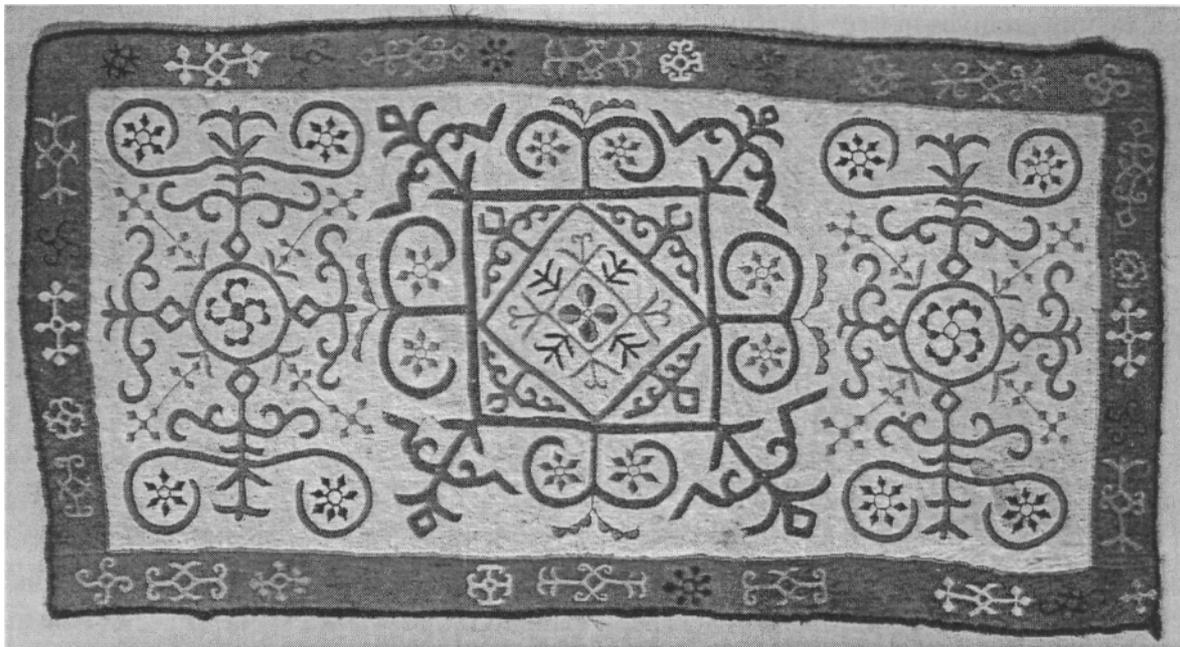
In ancient times in Iran various types of clothing were made of felt, especially headgear. First century historian Strabo refers to the turbans of Zoroastrian priests; Herodotus and Xenophon refer to the toque and tiara of Lycian, Persian, Median and Bactrian soldiers. Felt headgear appears still to be particularly characteristic of the Iranian world, usually in the form of firm convex skullcaps or toques in black or brown. The Horniman Iranian collections include a skull-cap from Lurestan of plain brown felt

Afghanistan is represented in the felt collections of the Horniman by several Uzbek/Lakai and Turkmen items of donkey furniture and by assorted Uzbek floor felts. Two elaborate donkeys’ felt rump bands (1983.44 and 1983.45; Burkett 1979 cat. nos 51 and 52) are constructed from felt panels featuring coloured stitching and embroidery, tassels of plaited wool and tufts of horse hair. Four of the felt rugs feature the same basic design layout – a central field of three lozenges containing symmetrical motifs, surrounded by a panelled border and sometimes an outer black border. The patterning is executed in coloured coral-knot and chain stitch, and on one rug (1983.30, Burkett 1979 cat. no. 43) motifs are scroll-form while on two of the others, motifs appear more like inverted hearts.

In Tibet felt is used in hat-making and in the production of bedding, rugs, saddle blankets, clothing and boots. Each pastoral family needs to produce felt for its own needs and little reaches the market. The Horniman collections include two floor felts obtained by Mary Burkett. One of these (1984.97, Figure 3. top opposite) is of rectangular shape, red, featuring resist decoration. The main upper panel shows a flying phoenix with a floral design to either side, while the lower panel is a band of five linked motifs repeated horizontally.

The Horniman holds one of the largest collections of Mongolian material in Britain. In 1979, a large number of felt tent furnishings were acquired from the Mongolian Artists’ Union. These are part of a systematic collection which includes a tent or *ger* to which the furnishings belong, as well as non-felt items relating to animal management, paintings and decorative art. There are also three items of felt clothing and accessories from Mongolia provided by Mary Burkett – a collar and two cuffs.

Ken Teague carried out fieldwork in Xinjiang province in China in 2001, collecting two felt horse blankets and two floor felts. One of the latter is a rather lovely wedding floor felt with a cream centre and red border (2001.61, Figure 4, lower opposite). It is intricately embroidered with circular and square motifs in coloured thread.



Felt items thus form a diverse component of the collections of the Horniman Museum. From all across Asia they represent very different cultures and lifestyles and are colourful indicators of the processes of daily, social and religious life in the various regions of the continent.

Kirsten Halliday

**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SILK:
INDIAN SILK AND ITS CONNEXIONS WITH THE ENGLISH SILK INDUSTRY**

While researching for my doctoral thesis¹ I had a most interesting and rewarding time examining a wide range of Indian silk textiles in the archives of the Indian and South East Asian Department at the Victoria & Albert Museum. I also visited a number of collections in the north west of England. As might be expected the collections at the V & A are wide-ranging and magnificent². The history of their formation is as fascinating as the textiles themselves and they yielded up a huge amount of information. As the rich research potential of many provincial collections is less well known, however, I will focus on them in this article, as their significance deserves greater recognition.

The collections which include Indian silks in Manchester, Macclesfield and Bradford are all important to the history of the Anglo-Indian silk trade. Although they all proved to be valuable in their own right, one collection in particular proved to be particularly interesting. I refer to the collection of Indian silks formed by Thomas Wardle (1831-1909) in the late nineteenth century which is now in the Textile Department of the Whitworth Art Gallery (WAG), Manchester. Since the nineteenth century it had remained, for the most part, un-researched and its significance unknown. This particular collection is unique and I feel that knowledge of its context makes an important contribution to textile studies in its many forms.

During the research process I was able to link the silks to documentary evidence in local history archives in Leek (Staffordshire), Macclesfield (Cheshire) and Manchester Central Reference Library. The documents confirmed that this was an important collection; its importance lies in the reasons behind its formation, its donation to the Whitworth Institute (now WAG) and its research value today. Other contemporary publications, and material evidence in the form of other archives of Indian silks in the region, produced crucial facts and the story of the formation of this important collection as we now know it is as follows.

Thomas Wardle, a well-known silk dyer and printer, was the man who taught William Morris many of his printing and dyeing skills; in addition he had earned a reputation as an expert on Indian silks. In 1885 he was asked by the Indian Government to form a representative collection of silks then in production in the sub-continent. While in India he used his expertise to help silk producers, at their request, to overcome long-standing problems with disease and production. After experimentation Wardle offered advice that was successfully acted on; Indian producers thereafter produced better quality yarn for their domestic production and for the export market³. He also suggested a scheme to market India's little known 'wild' silks throughout Europe, a campaign that was so successful that demand soon outstripped supply.

In India Wardle formed a magnificent collection, from centres of excellence, of more than two hundred silk items that demonstrated India's capabilities of fine silk production. India's producers, wishing to promote the potential of their silk yarns in Europe, selected the best of their products to display at the forthcoming Colonial and Indian Exhibition, held in London in 1886. In order to boost India's export trade the silks were given prominence at this

extensive exhibition and were displayed in opulent settings, one of which included a re-created Durbar palace. The variety of Indian silks clearly demonstrated that the highest standards could be obtained using both cultivated and 'wild' silk yarns. This was important as India's exported yarns had obtained a poor reputation and the improved quality, due mainly to Wardle's expertise, needed the type of public exposure that could only be achieved through a major international exhibition.

The following year (1887), Wardle again displayed the silks in the even bigger Royal Jubilee Exhibition in Manchester. The two-fold intention was to demonstrate to English manufacturers and consumers that magnificent silk goods could be produced in England using India's range of exported silk yarns. At that time English consumers preferred French silk goods and imported vast quantities. As a result the English silk industry had suffered and was the subject of intense concern.

As the Manchester exhibition came to a successful close Wardle publicly expressed the wish that the Indian silks should be kept in the North West region to be used as a teaching collection. He saw the silks as exemplars, demonstrating universal principles of good textile design and colouring. They were not to be copied, but studied in order that their design principles could be understood. He was successful in his campaign and about ninety pieces from the original two hundred were donated to the newly inaugurated Whitworth Institute⁴. In fact they were one of the earliest donations the Institute received.

British Textile manufacturers at that time were demanding that museums should be placed in industrial areas for the benefit of the local industry, just as they were in many industrial regions on the Continent. France, England's major competitor in silk production, had ancient and contemporary textile collections in museums in its textile regions. There was then no public textile collection in the Manchester region apart from the *Textile Fabrics of India*, a collection of 18 volumes of Indian textiles formed by Dr Forbes Watson (1827-1892), Reporter on the Products of India for the English East India Company.

Forbes Watson was involved with the organisation of the India sections of a number of international exhibitions, some of which produced a huge surplus of Indian textiles. He planned a series of volumes, to make use of this surplus and selected a comprehensive collection of 700 textiles, which he arranged into groups and types. Specimens of a standard size were cut from the lengths of cloth, many of which were silk, and mounted into 18 volumes in such a way that they allowed the examination of the cloth's texture. The hundreds of small samples served as a portable trade museum; and they were classified as they would be in a permanent museum. Many northern textile towns such as Bradford, Macclesfield, Manchester, Preston and Salford, were sent a set of volumes in 1866; which were mainly housed in Town Halls and Chambers of Commerce. The volumes are still in these towns although their locations have changed and they are now in museums. Of the sets that I have seen only the Bradford volumes are still in their original glazed cabinet. The cloth samples were accompanied by a lavishly illustrated publication – *The Textile Manufactures and the Costumes of the Peoples of India*. This volume contained details of production methods and markets. The beautiful lithographic illustrations demonstrated how the textiles were worn in

India. A second series appeared between 1873 and 1880.

The Manchester Art Museum, is one of the lesser-known enterprises in Manchester. Founded by local industrialist Thomas Horsfall in 1884 it was situated in Great Ancoats, a grim industrial area. Horsfall was a supporter of Ruskin and Morris's ideals. He was mindful of the Arts and Crafts reasoning that argued it was not possible to make beautiful things if the makers of those things were only ever surrounded by ugliness. The museum was conceived to provide a counterpoint to its squalid surroundings and provide visual stimuli to those working in the decorative trades. In particular Horsfall wished to expose school children to the best available fine and decorative arts in an attempt to counteract the unrelieved bricks and mortar of their neighbourhood. From the outset the Museum had a loan scheme of items for schools and children were actively encouraged to visit.

A number of costly Indian silk textiles, collected by Casper Purdon-Clarke⁶ in India in 1881/2 were on display in Ancoats. Although in fragile condition a number of these have survived⁷. I was able to examine what remains of this collection and can confirm that they are pieces of complex brocades of high quality; a number are gold and silk *kincobs*, and there is one emerald green satin coat densely embroidered with silver. They do not, however, display the range of designs and silk types that the Wardle collection contains.

The silks that Thomas Wardle collected were mostly costly items of traditional dress: full saris – many with elaborate borders – turban lengths and large embroidered shawls⁸. This was an important consideration for a teaching collection. The large lengths of cloth gave the opportunity to see at first hand how repeat patterns worked end to end across a long piece of cloth, students were better able to understand a great expanse of colour distribution, they could observe how the different types of silk cloth draped and also could study different types of embroidery stitches on the many richly patterned shawls, sashes and turbans.

Macclesfield's Silk Industry Museum⁹ also has an almost complete set of the Forbes Watson volumes, which was given to the town in 1866. The volumes were originally placed in the Town Hall for local manufacturers and others to view. The Museum archives also contain a vast number of pattern books¹⁰ containing woven and printed cloth from the local silk industry, and in many of these it is possible to see how strong the influence from India was. This is evident in designs, colorations and also the cultivated and wild silk materials used.

Many items in the archive of Macclesfield Art School, which trained artisans to work in the local silk industry, also show how India's wide range of designs was a stimulus to creativity. Designs on paper and samples of woven silk, which students produced for examination purposes, clearly demonstrate India's influence¹¹.

Contemporary publications clearly show that at the time these collections were formed Indian textile design was seen by many as praiseworthy. It was singled out as remarkable for its perceived universal design qualities, including a matchless use of colour, centuries old natural dye techniques, and total understanding of flat pattern design. Design theorists, industrialists, educationalists, consumers, artists, and those founding major

museums clearly expressed their admiration for Indian textile design. At the same time, debates raged over the poor quality of British industrial design. It was clearly stated that Indian artisans had much to show us and, indeed they had already made substantial contributions to the British textile design vocabulary since at least the 17th century.

The collections referred to above still retain their original intention. Students following textile courses in the region are greatly encouraged to use museum collections as creative stimuli.

¹ *Collections of Indian Silks and their Involvement with English silk Industry 1830-1930*, PhD thesis, Royal College of Art, 2000

² See Crill, R, *Oxford Asian Textile Group Newsletter No 6*, Feb 1997

³ Wardle was knighted for his work in India.

⁴ Now the Whitworth Art Gallery

⁵ *Collection of Specimens and Illustrations of the Textile Manufactures of India*, E Eyre and W Spottiswood, London 1866

⁶ Keeper of the Indian Section, South Kensington Museum. The budget for the silks was £2,000

⁷ They are in the care of Manchester City Galleries, Platt Hall.

⁸ The collection also includes a few sewn garments such as an embroidered *kurta* (shirt), a long satin jacket and a number of caps encrusted with gold embroidery.

⁹ Silk Industry Museum, Park Lane Macclesfield, Cheshire SK11 6TJ Tel:01625 612045.

¹⁰ Approximately 800 pattern books.

¹¹ Similar influences can be seen in the designs of Bradford students, who were also training for the local silk industry

Brenda King

[Publication of Brenda King's book *Silk and Empire* by Manchester University Press is due any day now. More about it in the next newsletter. – Ed.]

O.A.T.G. SUBSCRIPTIONS

This is just to remind you that subscriptions are due on or before 1 October. We have valued your membership and hope you will renew. Rates remain at £10 for individual membership or £15 for two or more people living at the same address and sharing a newsletter. Payment may be made by sterling cheque drawn on a U.K. bank, Euro cheque drawn on a EU bank, U.S. dollar cheque, international money order, or bank transfer to the Membership Secretary, Joyce Seaman. Better still, ask her to send you a banker's order form and save yourself the annual strain on your memory. Joyce's address is 5 Park Town, Oxford, OX2 6SN; tel. 01865 558558; e-mail: e-art-asst@ashmus.ox.ac.uk

We realize that for those of you who find it difficult to attend meetings and activities membership may not be a priority, but it does include receiving the newsletter three times a year. Subscription rates have not risen in the nine years of the Group's existence, whereas the newsletter has increased in size from 8 to (usually) 32 pages, and we hope you agree that this represents good value for money.

Your Committee

A FASHION FOR ETHICS: SOME THOUGHTS ON “ETHICAL” CONSUMERISM AND FASHION

Ethics are “in” this season. From recycled toilet paper to “ethical” investment bonds, as shoppers in the U.K. we are presented daily with the opportunity to make moral decisions about hundreds of products. We spend an estimated £24.7 billion a year on “ethical” products and withhold approximately £273 million in boycotting certain, footwear and clothing brands deemed as “unethical”, manufactured in sweatshop conditions in some of the poorest countries in Asia.

Here, I do not wish to demonize any particular brands, but merely to highlight a few of the general dilemmas I face as a new designer trying to produce an “ethical” clothing range, and how these reflect the complicated relationships between “ethical” consumerism and development.

“Ethical” as applied to consumer goods denotes a whole plethora of “good” values consciously associated with a product by its designer or manufacturer. Basically these values are driven by a common desire for the protection of rights – Human Rights, Animal Rights, Workers’ Rights, Children’s Rights – and the instillation of the social, economic and environmental responsibilities incumbent upon manufacturers.

This concept of “ethical consumerism” may only exist for a basically affluent society, i.e. the “developed” nations of the West. In demographic terms, this affluent market represents a very privileged minority of the world’s population. An oft-quoted statistic is that for every U.S. dollar given to less developed countries in aid, two dollars is taken back by unfair international trade laws. “Ethical consumerism,” as championed by organizations such as OXFAM, organizers of the Make Trade Fair campaign, encourages more affluent nations to take greater responsibility in protecting the rights of less developed countries. Gradually, access to increased healthcare, education, training, technology, export markets and opportunity should ensure a substantially increased and eventually sustainable standard of living.

However, cynics may suggest that “ethical consumerism” is impossible and is fuelled predominantly by the guilt of privilege, felt by affluent individuals and societies in a post-colonial age. Less affluent societies and individuals cannot afford to consider such values as “Fairtrade” and “eco-friendly”. A “fair” trade is only possible because of the economic differential between less developed countries and the West.

How to apply the word “ethical” to fashion presents an additional layer of dilemma, as “fashion” may be deemed as a fundamentally unethical practice, imposing on the public seemingly arbitrary and often contradictory sartorial rules several times a year. In fact, nowadays, there may be as many as 52 seasons in any one fashion year. Point-of-sale data is constantly collated with catwalk predictions, design and manufacture data to bring brand new “catwalk” looks to the shelves of High Street stores in less than two weeks. This paradigm is known as “lean retailing” and usually works because manufacture is carried out on demand

and close to the country of sale, thus reducing unnecessary stock-piling, transportation costs and the possibility of delays or errors in the transmission of design specifications. Thus for “high fashion” value stores in the U.K. and E.U., much manufacturing is carried out in the cheaper countries of eastern Europe and north Africa, such as Romania and Morocco. In this way retailers make money by churning out low-cost high turnover garments that encourage more people to buy more new outfits more frequently.

Fashion exists on many levels and is both a reflection of and a reaction to contemporary material culture. It exists in every country of the world where people wear clothes or adorn themselves, not merely in rich “Western” nations and the pages of *Vogue*.

Contemporary “fashion” is an instantly and universally identifiable index of international material culture. Fashion provides us with material archaeology of the future and stands as a testament to the technologies, international trade relations, tastes and interdependent economics of particular nations at particular times. Textiles and fashion have driven international trade for thousands of years and been at the heart of the pursuit of technological development since the Industrial Revolution. Weaving on an industrial scale was driven by the fashion for Kashmir shawls in Britain and the ideas of industrial design patenting arose from the “stealing” of chintz patterns from India. The Designing and Printing of Linen Act of 1787 gave limited copyright protection to those who engaged in the “arts of designing and printing linens, cottons, calicoes and muslin” for two months from the date of first publication¹.

To-day, contemporary fashion as it exists on the catwalks and in the pages of *Vogue* is as international and eclectic as the people it might hope to attract. One cannot look at a fashion spread without some mention of words like “African Print, Ethnic, Boho-Gypsy, Global-Chic” or other, sometimes meaningless exoticized phrases.

At the luxury end of fashion, such “global” styles may incorporate “genuine” hand-crafted textiles that have been produced by master craftsmen under very “ethical” conditions. Established designers often naturally opt for more “ethical” manufacturing practices as supporting the brand values of quality which they can afford to impart to their appropriately-priced garments.

For mass production retailers aiming at a less affluent market, or for new designers trying to establish themselves, it is difficult and expensive to ensure “ethical” or “genuine” manufacturing practices. An “African print” in the High Street is more likely to come from Guangzhou than from Ghana. It might be impossible to source the print from Africa, as very little manufacturing capability exists. The design may actually be printed in China, where labour is plentiful and cheap, and unionization is weak. This means cheap, efficient manufacture with fair profit margins. The economic benefit is passed to the less affluent consumer by providing the “African print” catwalk look at a fraction of the price. Thus the less affluent consumer in an affluent nation becomes the global dictator instigating affordable supply and demand chains for mass-produced goods².

Turner Prize nominated artist Yinka Shonibare plays on the multiple complexities of “ethnic”, “national” and “colonial” dress traditions in his “African Print” textiles and dress-based installations. He uses textiles commonly identified as “African” to construct garments with silhouettes in situations commonly understood as “European” and displays them on headless mannequins. In fact the “African” prints are a product of the Dutch and Manchester factories, based on Indonesian batiks which found favour with the West African market³.

Fashionable items in West Africa currently include the wearing of T-shirts with iconic “Western” logos such as “Burger King”, though I suspect this relates closely to the practical issue of the trade in second-hand clothing. Clothing donated to charities in the U.K. is sometimes bought by clothing dealers and exported to less developed countries for sale. This is an excellent example of how international trade rules can both benefit and destroy less developed countries. There is no restriction on the import or export of second-hand goods, so less affluent countries can afford to buy inexpensive second-hand cast-offs donated by more affluent nations. However, such imports are cheaper and more “exotic” than items of local manufacture, so local textile and clothing industries are undermined and a less developed nation becomes even more dependent on imports and less capable of sustainable growth and development.

Many of these “Western” T-shirts and clothes are probably manufactured in China, to U.K. design, and then sold on second-hand to Africa. Increasingly “developed” countries cannot afford to manufacture as labour costs are high, and so the manufacturing industries and “traditional” skills vanish in the more affluent nations and are replaced by design and service industries. Transnational corporations looking to produce a value product often own none of the plant and machinery used to manufacture goods, and sub-contract every stage of manufacture to a local business who can use whatever local standard of employment law is in force, without reflecting badly on the transnational corporation’s solid public commitment to Corporate and Social Responsibility (CSR). On 1 January 2005, the international trade Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC) lapsed. This effectively signals the beginning of a “race to the bottom”, with less developed countries competing against one another to gain the orders from transnational corporations, by offering the cheapest price and the fastest turnaround. The manufacturing countries of south and east Asia like Bangladesh and Cambodia may easily lose out to China’s economy of scale, and throw millions of the poorest people on the planet into further deprivation.

As a new designer, trying to establish myself, I probably cannot afford to manufacture in the U.K., although I would love to keep production local and eliminate as many air miles as possible (and all the pollution that causes) between me and my production line. Nor can I afford the time to manufacture everything myself, or ensure the standardized level of quality control that an industrial production line affords. Unless I aim my clothing at the very top end of the luxury market, where people may be prepared to pay for exquisitely hand-crafted products, it seems very difficult for me to get my foot on the bottom rung of an “ethical” and affordable production ladder. As anthropologist Daniel Miller puts it, “The elimination of poverty depends on industrialization and mass production. Numerous little crafts are fine as a personal hobby, but as an economic foundation they are simply a recipe for increasing

poverty. William Morris produced marvellous craft works, but I don't know many people who can afford to buy them.”⁴

Quite apart from global-local economic and social issues of clothing manufacture, there are serious ecological issues to confront in textile production. I am finding it quite difficult and exhausting to find comprehensive and authoritative guidelines for designing and sourcing “greener” textiles⁵. Pesticides used to protect crops such as cotton poison farmers. About 10% of all world pesticides and 25% of all insecticides are used in cotton agriculture. According to the World Health Organization, globally upwards of 20,000 people in less developed countries a year die from pesticide poisoning in conventional cotton agriculture. Pesticide Action Network U.K. estimates that the figures are much higher, with more than one million deaths and three million long-term poisonings per year. “Organic” cotton exists, but not enough to provide even 10% of the fashion industry's demand for cotton.

The process of adding permanent colour to fabric – i.e. dyeing – can require huge volumes of water, and releases contaminants into the water supply. Natural dyes require mordants which can be harmful to dyers and the environment. The agriculture of natural dyestuffs themselves must be sustainable. The manufacture of PVC and viscose produces poisonous dioxins. Chlorine bleach, combined with heat and organic matter (e.g. cotton) produces highly toxic dioxins linked to birth defects, cancer, and reduced fertility in men. Chemicals used in sheep dip have been known to affect farmers, as well as contaminate meat, and may still be present in wools. Leather tanneries are notoriously bad at discharging untreated effluent.

As the popularity of “ethical” consumer goods in affluent nations increases, the demand for textile and fashion staples, such as more organic cotton, clear sets of ecological guidelines and transparent labelling guaranteeing labour conditions and country of origin. Some established designers, such as Katharine E. Hamnett and Rogan Gregory, have brought out “ethical” eco-brands of clothing this year. There is a growing number of small businesses in the U.K. and abroad catering to specific fashion demands in a consciously “ethical” way. The second Ethical Fashion Show will take place in Paris in October, and Conscious Fashion Week should run beside London Fashion Week this year.

As for my own practice, I am pragmatic and employ a mix-and-match approach. I am currently weaving samples with some organic wool sourced locally, from Ardlanish Organic Farm⁶ on the Isle of Mull. I have sourced some luxurious hemp and silk mixed yarns from a company in Italy and some heavy grade hemp jersey. Hemp can be grown really easily without any pesticides and is similar in texture to linen. I have also discovered the art of digital textile printing. It may not be maintaining a traditional craft skill, but it is minimising dye, pigment and water wastage, and the dye cartridges are recycled and disposed of responsibly.

This is by no means an exhaustive reflection on the complex relationships that exist between textile and garment production and issues of development, but I hope it suggests some of the conflicts that arise – “global” vs local, real vs fake, fair vs free, craft vs industry,

etc. I would be very interested to receive feedback on my musings. For me, the matter is in constant flux between the quality and appearance of the raw materials and the finished product, playing against “ethical” criteria and lack of authoritative information. I am not willing to produce a hair shirt to make the quilt of privilege go away.

¹ <http://www.intellectual-property.gov.uk/std/resources/designs/history.htm>

² See e.g. Miller, Daniel, *Consumption as the Vanguard of History: A Polemic by Way of an Introduction* in Daniel Miller (Ed.) *Acknowledging Consumption: A Review of New Studies*, Routledge, London, 1997

³ Cheddie, Janice M., *A Note: Yinka Shonibare: Dress Tells the Woman's Story*, Fashion Theory Journal, Vol. 4, Issue 3, 2000, pp. 349-358

⁴ Miller, Daniel, *The Poverty of Morality*,

⁵ Four examples: Hamnett, Katharine, *Fashion Conscience*, New Consumer, May/June 2004, p.31.
<http://www.co-design.co.uk/jhealey.htm>
<http://www.pan-uk.org/Cotton/cotindex.htm>
 Gale, Colin, and Jasbir Kaur, *The Textile Book*, Berg, Oxford, 2002, pp. 107-119.

⁶ www.isleofmullweavers.co.uk

Emma Dick

[Members will remember that Emma used to be archivist of the May Beattie Carpet Archive based at the Ashmolean Museum. After resigning in 2003 she spent some months touring India visiting textile enterprises. She is now completing a Master's degree in Textiles as Fashion at Glasgow School of Art, and will show her current collection on 13 and 14 December. Emma invites feedback and I hope that will lead to some discussion in these pages. You can contact her direct at emma_dick@hotmail.com – Ed.]

REPORTS OF O.A.T.G. MEETINGS

Carpet Riding in Khiva

On Tuesday 22 February the snow was falling on North Oxford in soft white flakes, but from the very first slide he showed, Chris Alexander transported us to a different world – the oasis city in western Uzbekistan, not on the tourist routes, a walled city of homogeneous Islamic architecture, where he has been active in reviving local crafts of carpet-making and embroidery.

Coming from a background of working for a Swedish charity which was interested in working with the most disadvantaged members of society, including the disabled, Chris was able to get to know local woodcarvers whom he helped by getting orders for their work from tourists.

He soon found that textile craftsmen had suffered under the Soviet regime and their craft had become debased. The kilims they made were of poor quality, garishly coloured scraps of wool, but the makers were interested in reviving old skills and once again using natural dyes.

Having persuaded UNESCO to take on this revival as a new project, Chris set up a workshop in a beautiful old medresseh (Koranic school) with the aim of running it as a model ethical business. Local needy people were employed and old techniques of dying silk were revived.

Uzbekistan is the largest producer of silk after China, but the supply system had become very corrupt. It was difficult to work through official channels, so these were by-passed. Silk worms were hatched and then handed out to the villages to be reared – a process which takes place only during the five to six weeks in spring when the temperature is suitable. The worms need feeding five times a day, so the process is labour-intensive.

Raw silk is gummy and needs to be degummed using the bluish ash of a desert plant. Then it is dyed using an alum mordant and onion skins to produce yellow, madder for red, oak gall for scarlet, pomegranate skins for gold, walnut for brown and indigo for blue – the last two needing no mordant. Green is produced by overdyeing gold with blue, black by using brown and blue together. Sulphuric chalk (zok) with pomegranate and oak gall gives navy. Finished rugs are washed in cream of tartar to bring out the colours, clipped, shampooed and conditioned. The warps are dyed to make the fringes blend in, then the rug is made using the Turkish knot.

As well as reviving natural dyeing, the workshop has revived old carpet designs from the Timurid period (1370-1490) by examining miniature paintings in old manuscripts.

The organization of the workshop aims to have high wages and low profits. Standards are kept up by counting the knots produced and by paying workers according to the difficulty of the design. They are sold for cash only to tourists, both in Khiva and in the more popular destinations of Samarkand and Tashkent.

A further development has been the production of *susani* embroideries and the involvement of the British Council in the project. *Susani* embroidery is an ancient technique using chain stitch, satin stitch, cord stitch and couching, embroidering through a design drawn on paper which is then torn away. The main items produced are cushion covers, bedspreads and handbags, using the same silks and dyes as the carpets, on a foundation of bought-in cotton or silk and cotton. Workers are chosen after a trial period.

By a mixture of determination, knowledge of local conditions and ability to motivate people, Chris Alexander has put together a most inspiring project which enthralled the audience and sent us out with a feeling of hope.

Helen Adams

Reflections of Time and Space: Textiles from Tuban

Rens Heringa was the speaker for OATG on Wednesday, 27th April. Tuban, near Surabaya in N.E. Java, has been the area of her field work for many years. The fact that this back water may be reached by just one road has meant that many of its old traditions have remained fairly unchanged. This applies particularly to the traditions surrounding the weaving and dying of cloth.

Rens unfurled a complex system for the making and wearing of batik cloth which has taken her years to discover for herself. The whole process is related to a continuous cycle following the movements of the sun which rises in the east, declines towards the west and ends with death in the north. This cycle not only follows the life of each individual, but also the different tasks carried out within the family group, and finally the specialisation of each village in the area. In practice this means that the various steps in the process of cloth production may be carried out by one particular age group within the family compound but also in one specific village which is conceived of as a symbolical age group.

The cycle is initiated by the women of the Eastern village (considered symbolical “children”) who harvest the cotton (planted by men), while the next step is taken care of by the symbolical “grandmothers” of the Northern village, who prepare and spin the cotton, wind it into skeins, and weave the plain white base cloth for batik.

One village does not participate in the making of textiles: the “nubile girls” of the South-eastern village contribute essential needs for all life-passage rituals by weaving baskets of lontar palm leaves. In the Southern village the slightly more mature women are allowed to wax shoulder cloths; their second dress cloth, the hipwrapper, must be bought in the market, as it is made in a neighbouring district. In this way the – as yet – “childless brides” show they have not reached full maturity.

Only the symbolical “mothers” – full members of the community – in the western and central villages make batik shouldercloths and hipwrappers in the local style. There is nevertheless a distinction between the west and the centre: the mature women of the Central village are considered most expert in the art of applying the wax, so they are freed from working their husbands’ rice fields. However, as Rens discovered, the paddy fields are, in fact, fully represented in the lay-out and the patterns on the batik hip wrappers.

The last step of the process, dying, forms as it were the pinnacle of the whole batik process. One family of expert dyers in the central village applies the traditional colours to all waxed cloths and thereby marks all women of the area with the identifying shades of red and blue appropriate to their age group and village of residence. The senior dyer guards the sacred natural indigo blue reserved to elderly wearers, while her daughters dip the opposite colour, the red shades worn by the younger generation. Before the 1940s, natural mengkudu dye was brought over from the Moluccas to produce the red, but now synthetic dyes imported from Europe are considered an acceptable substitute.

Our heads were spinning as every slide showed more significance, symbolism and connexions. Each combination of colour and pattern could be “read” to show the age, gender, social position and village of the wearer. The last slide showed the final use of the cloths: at the funeral the three differently-coloured shouldercloths are tied over the four hipwrappers that cover the bier and hold it together, clearly symbolizing the role of the three generations of women in the family.

Although, nowadays, some cloth is produced for sale to tourists, the textiles made for personal wear are still of the highest quality and contain all the traditional ‘language’. We were pleased to hear that Rens has arranged for some of this high quality cloth to be sold in the shop of the National Museum in Jakarta, thus ensuring an income for its makers and helping to maintain the textile traditions.

Felicity Wood and Rens Heringa

Visit to Winchester

On 10 May about ten of us made our way to Winchester from different parts of the south of England for a truly worthwhile day of learning and pleasure.

The morning was spent in the Textile Conservation Centre where we were shown around the purpose designed building by the well-informed and accessible Malangell Penrhys-Jones. She took us around the different working spaces: the storage facilities, the digital photography room, the laboratories with their state of the art equipment for testing and analysing fabrics, the wash rooms and the dye room. We also had the opportunity to observe textile conservation in practice in the conservation laboratories where students were working on their projects – they work on real pieces (we saw a lovely 19th century waistcoat, a sampler, a woollen pennant in dreadful state and more) and consult with their clients about their work as they go along. The aim is generally not to interfere with the piece in any way and to try to ensure that the conservation is reversible (although in practice this is not always possible); treatment is expected to last 30 years. We also looked at the conservation work in progress in the commercial conservation laboratory: huge banners in silk and cotton were spread out on tables and Melangell explained to us the possible ways in which their conservation could be best achieved. All conservation laboratories are double height spaces with light from the north which enables the Centre to take on the conservation of larger objects. Similarly, the photography study has double height and a gallery to facilitate accurate photography of all parts of even large textiles. The whole Centre is environmentally controlled to enable best conservation practice.

The afternoon was spent at Chilcomb House where Alison Carter and her team had taken out of storage a host of treasure boxes with materials from South East Asia. The Museum specializes in European costumes, and within that category in English costumes. But when they are offered gifts of textiles from outside the region, they do accept. These objects have generally not been catalogued or researched as yet and so we found ourselves in a

veritable Aladdin's cave of wonder: beautifully embroidered cloth panels probably from the 19th century and made in India for the western market; gold embroidered waistcoats most likely from India, a dress with beetle work embroidery of great beauty, innumerable Chinese dress panels, banners and wall hangings, daintily embroidered Chinese shoes and slippers, a magnificent rain cloak made of palm fibres and more, much more. Nothing seemed too much to Alison's team.

Last but not least, Ruth Smith introduced her new book on Miao Embroidery from South West China: it looks at embroidery in detail and especially at the way in which the Miao combine dye resist and embroidery. Ruth's background as a teacher shows in the many excellent detailed drawings and explanations of how to achieve the many different stitches the Miao use (see review opposite).

It was a truly wonderful and instructive day and many thanks must go to our two programme secretaries for organising this event.

Dymphna Hermans

THE THAI TEXTILE SOCIETY

We welcome the news that a textile society has recently been formed in Bangkok. Its aims are to study, teach and preserve the textile arts and to educate the public about the beauty of textiles and the history of textile arts in Asia. It is also committed to the promotion and preservation of textiles as one of the most important cultural heritages of Thailand and other countries in Southeast Asia. It maintains a close working relationship with the Jim Thompson Foundation, of which you will have read news from time to time in this newsletter.

Mrs Kathleen Johnson, wife of the former U.S. Ambassador and a textile scholar, was instrumental in starting the Thai Textile Society by bringing together scholars, designers, weavers, collectors and other textile lovers – in the same way that Ruth Barnes brought us together. The Society continues to thrive under the leadership of Dr Sathirakorn (“Ging”) Pongpanich of Chulalongkorn University. It is at present about the same size as the Oxford group, and I hope to maintain the same kind of friendly relations with it as we already enjoy with the Textile Society of Hong Kong.

Editor

APOLOGY

I regret to say that *The Josephine Kane Collection of Dresses from the Middle East* appears in the contents list on p.2 of the last newsletter as *The Joseph Kane* . . . I apologise to Josephine and to you all. Despite my best efforts, I have yet to produce an error-free newsletter.

Editor

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
Textile Enthusiasts in Singapore

Dear Editor,

I have been a member of the O.A.T.G. from the early days and have enjoyed receiving my newsletter at regular intervals out here in the Far East. Unfortunately I have been unable to attend any meetings as I'm never around, but it's still nice to hear what's going on. I have also looked at the website Pamela Cross has set up and am duly impressed by her skills.

My reason for writing to you is to keep you up to date with the goings on in Singapore. I belong to the Friends of the Museum here and about ten months ago we formed a Textile Enthusiast Group. Under the leadership of a very enthusiastic Kim Saunders we now have a membership of over 140 and we have the pleasure of having Genevieve Duggan as one of our group. She has recently spoken to us about the colonial influences on batik in Indonesia. Any readers wanting to find out more about us, can do so by visiting our website, www.geocities.com/FOMTextilians.

Needless to say we should welcome any O.A.T.G. members if ever they are coming this way – especially if they would be willing to talk to the group.

Jan Thompson

BOOKS

Miao Textiles

Ruth Smith, *Miao Embroidery from South West China: Textiles from the Gina Corrigan Collection*, (Researchers: Margaret Baker, Gina Corrigan, Ros Downing, Marianne Ellis, Gobi Erskine, Deryn O'Connor, Thea Nield, Jeru Pinel, Phyllis Smith, Ruth Smith), Gina Corrigan, 2005, 95 pp, 29.5 x 21 cm, 151 col. illus., + map and diagrams, ISBN 0-9528804-1-5, pb, £13.50

OATG member Gina Corrigan is a geographer, author, tour guide and photographer with a specialist interest in China and the Miao minority people. Ruth Smith, a Regional Chairperson of the Embroiderers' Guild, has a practical knowledge of embroidery and a specialist knowledge of the history of English embroidery, especially the seventeenth century. The eight other researchers who bring centuries of accumulated practical and academic expertise augment Gina and Ruth's considerable knowledge. Some of the researchers also bring their personal observations of Miao embroidery from their travels in China.

Over two millennia, the Miao have been forced to migrate into increasingly more marginal land. Of the 8.9m population, half is concentrated in Guizhou Province and the remainder is spread across six other provinces.

Amongst the Miao women “an extraordinarily rich textile tradition of weaving, embroidery and wax resist” survives despite a background of poverty and physical hard work. A young girl is taught to sew by her mother and grandmother. Her festival and marriage costume displays her skill tenacity and wealth, essential in finding a good husband from within her costume group.

As in many embroidery books, there is the usual chapter on materials, which include: fabrics, threads, equipment, dye, dyeing and transferring designs. It is the accompanying photographs that bring a special quality, not the common presentation of skeins of threads and fabric swatches, but wonderful photographs of the craftspeople producing and selling their products.

The bulk of the book is devoted to embroidery stitches and embroidery techniques. Those techniques, which have not been observed first hand, are interpreted and explained based on the researchers’ accumulated experience. There is a wealth of photographs of costumes, stitches, techniques and excellent macro photography. There are also clear diagrams and workable instructions for stitches and techniques uncommon or unknown in the West. As an embroiderer, I highly value the sensible organisation and excellent presentation of this section.

I always find examples of work in progress fascinating. For example, as a western embroiderer used to working with an embroidery hoop, I was interested to note how a sample of two-needle stitch is stiffened by what appears to be dried stalks. And for a truly creative textile artist, such a picture generates a string of imaginative developments.

This book works on so many levels. It is a visual feast providing insights for the discerning traveller and for those with an interest in cultural identities. Above all it is a valuable resource for textile artists and enthusiasts. The glorious richness of Miao costume and embroidery is paralleled by Gina’s magnificent photography and Ruth’s clear presentation. It is a treasure to possess.

Gwyneth Watkins

Shorter Notices

Joseph Fischer, *Story Cloths of Bali*, Ten Speed Press, Berkeley, California, 2004, 144 pp, 26.5 x 26.5 cm, profusely illustrated in colour, ISBN 1 580 08487 7, hb, \$40.

Many of you will remember Joseph Fischer’s talk on this subject following the A.G.M. in October 2001 (reported in newsletter no. 21, February 2002). In this book, according to the publisher’s blurb, he “shares his collection of more than 100 of these exquisite pieces alongside engaging text about how to utilize these textiles to study and appreciate traditional Balinese culture. The first major study of an unusual group of Balinese embroideries, *Story Cloths of Bali* is a fascinating glimpse into a culture rich with creativity, diversity, and tradition.”

Lumieres de soie: soieries tissues d'or la Collection Riboud (Gold Woven Silks of the Riboud Collection), Musées National des arts asiatiques (Musée Guimet), Paris, 287 pp, 8.5 x 11 cm, 109 col. & numerous b/w illus., text in French, ISBN 7711 848167, pb

EXHIBITIONS

Nonya Kebaya at the Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore

I am a volunteer guide at the Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore and over the last few months I have taken great delight in showing visitors round a very colourful exhibition of Nonya kebayas. So what is a Nonya kebaya? It's a long sleeved blouse worn by a Peranakan woman who is known as a Nonya.

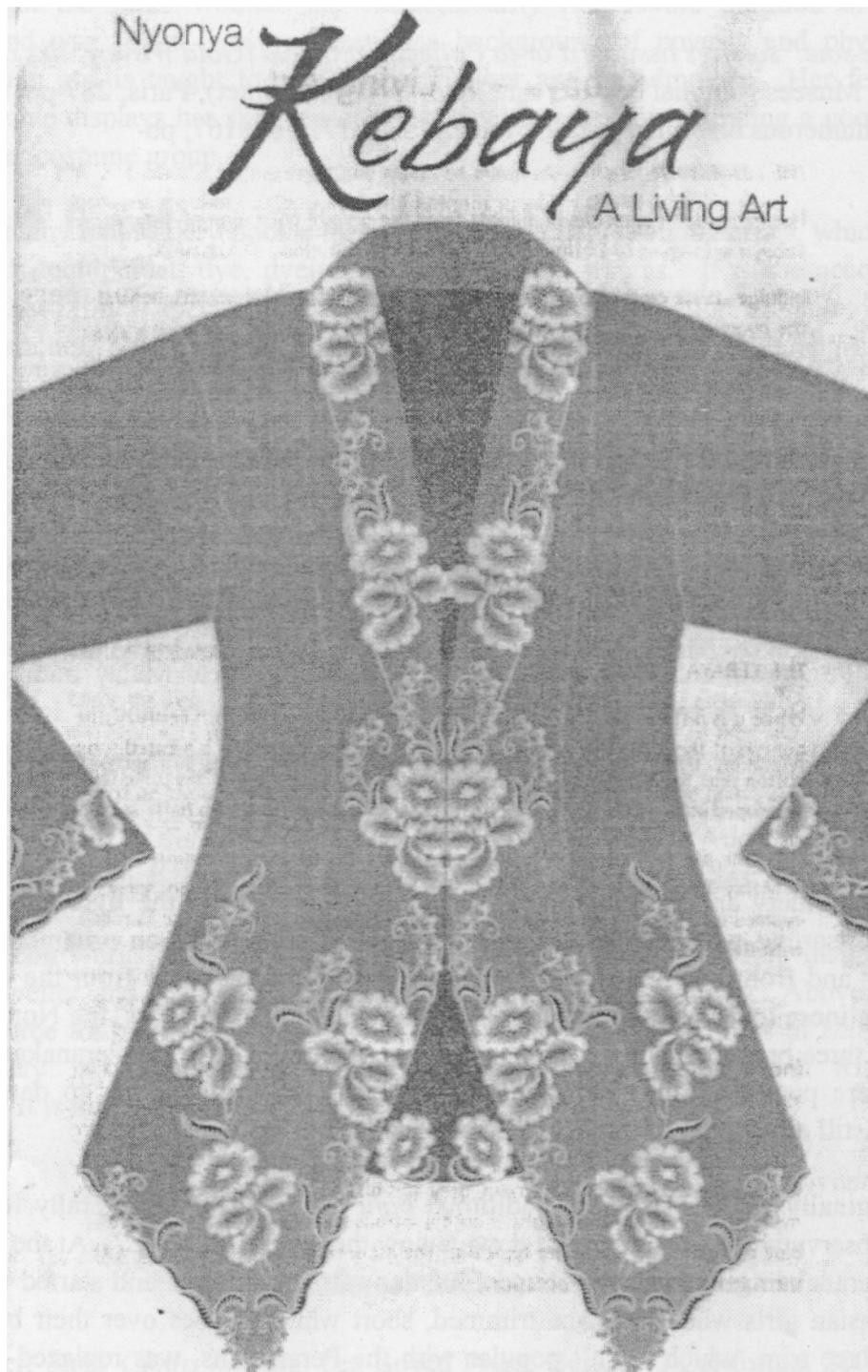
And who are the Peranakans? They are the descendants of early Chinese immigrants (mostly traders) who married local women in Malaysia, Java, Sumatra and Singapore.

The Peranakan culture is a mixture of Chinese and local Malay traditions, a union which over the last three hundred years has created a spicy cuisine, a love of intricate beadwork and colourful porcelain, and in the 1920's the Sarong Kebaya, the Nonya's modern outfit.

The top or kebaya is a light, often transparent, long-sleeved blouse decorated with intricate embroidery and cut-out work. The tradition is to wear the figure-hugging blouse with a batik sarong wrapped around at the waist and secured by an ornamental belt. The embroidery and front opening of the Nonya kebaya distinguishes it from the lacy kebayas worn by Balinese and Javanese women. Instead of buttons or poppers, the Nonya kebaya is secured by three brooches called kerosangs. As an integral part of the Peranakan culture, the kebayas were preserved and cherished and passed down from mother to daughter so the tradition is still alive today.

Originally Nonyas wore the traditional *baju panjang*, Malay literally for long dress and this conservative garment reached down below the knees (illus. p. 27). At the beginning of the 20C, Peranakan girls began to attend Christian mission schools and started to follow the Dutch Eurasian girls who wore lace trimmed, short white blouses over their batik sarongs. Later, the lace trim, which wasn't popular with the Peranakans, was replaced by machine-embroidered edges and the kebaya became more tailored and tapered at the front. The final evolution was to use machine-embroidery to decorate the body of the kebaya and not just the edges, it became more figure-hugging and voile became the favoured fabric.

A camisole had always been worn underneath and as the kebaya became daintier and more tailored, the camisole changed shape as well. The original long-sleeved, high-necked white cotton undergarment mutated into a waist-length, spaghetti strapped camisole that we are familiar with today. In fact, some of the beautifully embroidered examples on show looked very modern in design.



The kebayas were embroidered with flowers and animals, often Chinese inspired motifs chosen for their auspicious meaning: cherry blossom symbolizing youth and chrysanthemums and peonies representing maturity. However, the Nonya ladies could be quite creative in their commissions and were often swayed by foreign influences. Some of the kebayas on display were decorated with gladioli, prawns, mandarin ducks (representing faithful married couples), Spanish flamenco dancers and bunch of grapes. There was even one decorated with Easter bunnies probably made to order for an Easter party.

It was the introduction of the treadle sewing machine, which left both hands free to manoeuvre the delicate voile material, that enabled the tailor to produce more intricately embroidered designs. Though the kebaya is relatively simple to put together, the embroidery and cut-out work demanded a great deal of time and expertise.

Colour used to play an important role as it denoted the status of the Nonya. Young unmarried girls wore the lighter pastel colours like pink and powder blue while the more vibrant colours of emerald green and sapphire blue indicated a married woman. However, bright red which is usually considered an auspicious colour by the Chinese was considered rather 'tarty' by the Nonyas. The Bibik or older Nonya preferred the more muted colours of grey, beige and brown. Kebayas of white, black, sombre blue and green with sarongs of the same colour, were typical of mourning attire in keeping with the solemn mood of the occasion.

The kebayas on display in the exhibition came from the private collection of Datin Seri Endon Mahmood, wife of the Prime Minister of Malaysia. Though she is not a Peranakan herself, she has been collecting kebayas for over fifteen years as she admires the workmanship and artistry. Her mission is to promote the kebaya as a traditional costume and inspire young contemporary designers to come up with their own versions.

Jan Thompson

Singapore was the first international stop for this exhibition and it is hoped that it will travel to Australia and Europe, so O.A.T.G. members may have an opportunity of seeing it. When known, dates and venues will be published in the newsletter. As you know, however, that does not appear until October and if the exhibition occurs in the interim, you might miss it. I am happy to e-mail the information to members who request it, but your better bet will probably be the Asian Civilisations Museum's website: www.nhb.gov.sg/ACM

Editor

Exhibitions in the U.K.

Flower and Flame – an exhibition of 20th century embroidered *palaks* and *suzanis* from the steppes and oasis towns of Central Asia at Joss Graham Oriental Textiles, 10 Eccleston Street, London, until 30 July. The *suzanis* and *palaks* in this exhibition were collected by Brigid Keenan, former fashion journalist for the Sunday Times now, as the wife of a diplomat, living in Central Asia. Clare Cook will conduct an embroidery workshop in the-exhibition on Saturday 9 July, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Tel. 0207 730 4370

Amulets: a World of Secret Powers, Charms and Magic – an exhibition from Sheila Paine's collection at the Museum of Oxfordshire, Fletchers House, Woodstock (Tel. 01993 811325), 23 June-14 August All over the world, throughout history, amulets have offered protection against negative forces, whether witchcraft, the evil eye, enemies, sickness or accident. Intricately beautiful or starkly simple, they come in an astonishing variety of guises, from stones, shells and seeds, through animal tails, teeth and claws, to beads, mirrors, needles and bells. For accompanying lectures, see below, p.28. For special invitation to O.A.T.G. members see Editorial, p.2.

Overseas Exhibitions

Textiles of the Burma Hills – Unfortunately we were not informed of this exhibition in time for the February newsletter, and it ends on 26 June, but you will still have time to see it if you hurry. It is at the Arthur Ross Gallery, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. Tel. 001 (215) 898 2083

Last chance to see ...

The Exquisite Kimono ends at the Oriental Museum, Durham, 22 June. Tel. 0191 374 7911

Textiles from this World and Beyond – treasures from insular Southeast Asia at the Textile Museum, Washington, D.C., ends on 18 September, Tel 001 (202) 667-0441

CONFERENCES AND SYMPOSIA

Form, Materials and Performance – Ars Textrina International Textiles Conference at the University of Leeds International Textile Archive (ULITA), Leeds, 21-22 July. The conference will provide an interdisciplinary forum for scholars with interests relating to the design and performance of textiles and associated fibrous structures. Further information can be obtained from the Conference Secretary, Ms B. Thomas, at ULITA, St Wilfred's Chapel, Maurice Keyworth Building, The University of Leeds, Leeds, LS2 9JT, e-mail: tex9bgt@leeds.ac.uk

Readers are reminded of the following two symposia, details of which can be found in the last newsletter (no. 30), p.31:

Third International Felt Symposium, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 22 July to 3 August;

Status, Myth and the Supernatural: Unravelling the Secrets of Southeast Asian Textiles, Bangkok, 4-7 August.

LECTURES AND EVENTS

HALI Carpet and Textiles Fair - Olympia, London, 9-19 June

Events at the Textile Museum, Washington, B.C. Tel. (202) 667-0441 :

Saturday June 18, 10.30 a.m. – Rug and Textile Appreciation Morning: *Silk in Baluch, Turkmen and Caucasian Textiles*

Saturday June 25, 2.30 p.m. – Lecture by Helen Jessup, *Art and Courtly Patronage in Indonesia*,

Saturday July 9, 2.30 p.m. – Lecture by Ruth Barnes. *Silk for Spices: Indian Textiles in Eastern Indonesia*

Lectures in connexion with the Amulets exhibition at Woodstock (see above)

Wednesday June 29 – *Amulets* by Sheila Paine, traveller, writer, linguist, collector and expert on amulets

Tuesday July 12 – *From Cradle to Grave* (how our European ancestors protected themselves against evil and ill luck) by Christine Bloxham, writer on Oxfordshire traditions and customs

Both meetings are timed at 7 for 7.30 p.m. Tickets (including a glass of wine or soft drink), £5 (concessions £4) £1 discount per ticket if booking for both lectures. Tel. 01993 811456

Textile Study Day – Pakistani embroideries from the villages of the Thar Desert, presented by Clare Cook and Harriet Sandys at the barn at the Manor House, West Compton, Shepton Mallet, Somerset, on 12 July, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. The day will start with a study of Harriet's collection of these embroideries. Clare will then teach three of the main stitches used and participants will make a small traditional embroidery inspired by the collection, which could be developed after the study day into e.g. a cushion or small panel. Price £38 per head, including all materials and lunch. Tel. 01749 890 582

Art in Action – Waterperry, Oxfordshire, 14-17 July. The Eastern Arts tent this year will be visited by some distinguished textile craftspeople from India. For details tel. 0207 381 3192



Elderly Perankan lady wearing the older style of Nonya outfit – the *baju panjang* – and traditional heavy gold hairpins holding her bun in place; these are rarely seen nowadays. See p.23 (Photo Jan Thompson)