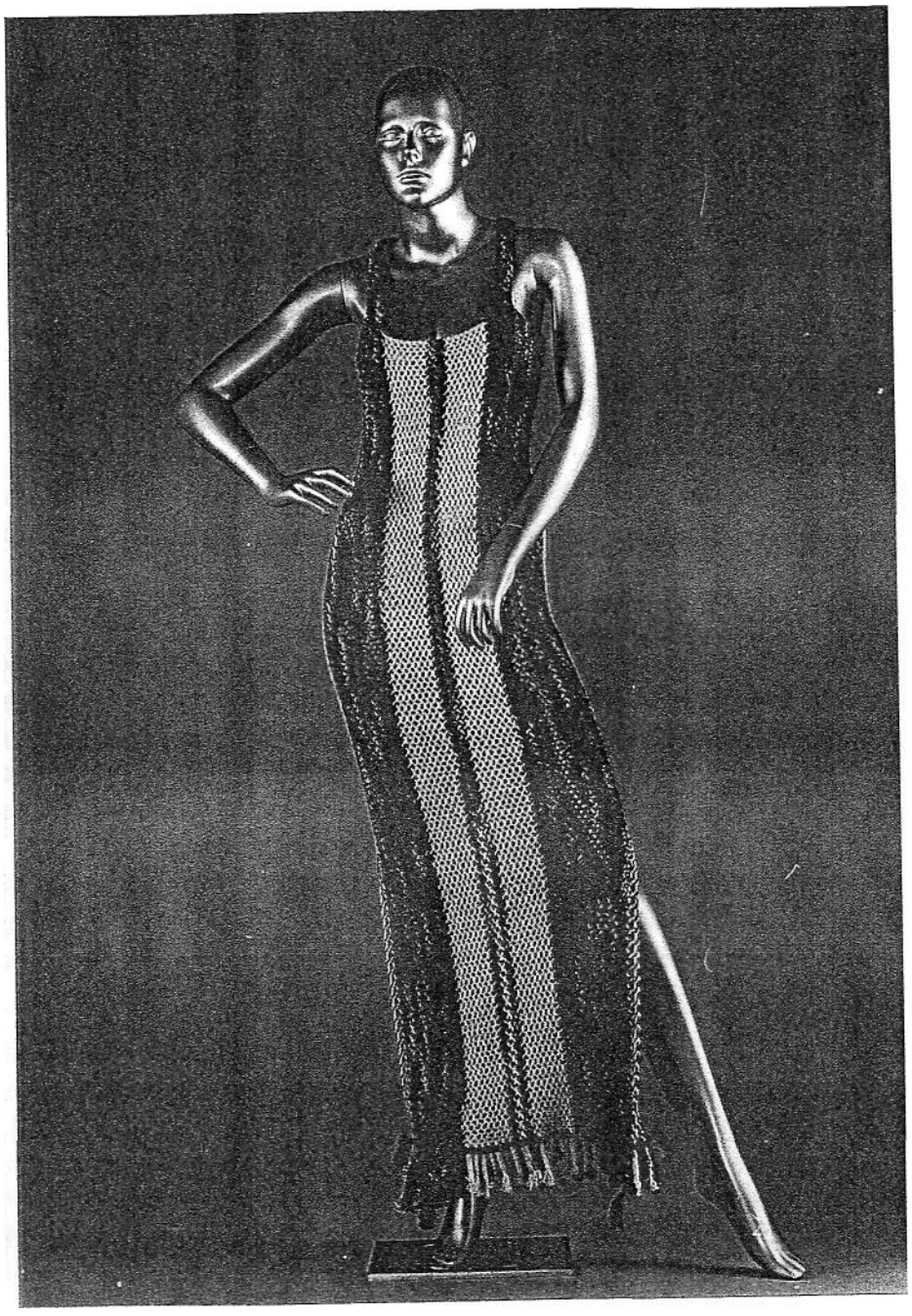
OXFORD ASIAN TEXTILE GROUP

Newsletter No. 19 **June 2001**



Dress by Erroll Pires Nelson, size 12, 2-ply cotton cord, tied and dyed, ply split interlinking. June 2000, National Institute of Design, India. Photograph by M.F. Jadiwala, Senior Photographer, N.I.D.

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EDITORIAL

The picture on the front of this newsletter seems to me to epitomize the mood of the whole issue which, by chance, is one of looking forward/looking back.

This very modern dress is made in an ages old technique traditionally used for camel trappings. The technique of ply split braiding, the subject of Julie Hedges' article (p.9), has emerged from the camel paddock in the past two decades to become such an enthusiasm of braid makers worldwide that they are actually about to hold an international convention on the craft. How many of them make camel trappings, I wonder. Most of these new devotees are more likely to make items of dress, jewellery or even "sculptural works".

Sculptural works, too, are among the exhibits in both *Textural Space* appearing at various venues throughout the summer and autumn, and *Meeting Points* at the Royal Museum. Edinburgh. In both exhibitions, Japanese textile artists show artefacts which sound far removed from textiles as we have known them - free-standing pieces, delicate sculptures made of wire, feathers and bamboo. Perhaps the garments made of "cutting-edge technology fibres", also at the Royal Museum, are nearer to what we expect. It is from Japan, too, that "three splendid machine-embroidered *uchikake"* have come to the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. Machine embroidery can certainly be called a modern technique, though it has been around for a few decades now, but if the *uchikake* illustrated on the front of our newsletter no. 16 is one of these, then it is being used in a very traditional way.

On the other hand, in her report of Vibha Joshi's study session on Naga textiles, Kay Staniland says, "harnessing of new ideas and new technologies is not as recent as we assume, and it is to be hoped that this most recent phase of introductions in Nagaland will serve to enrich rather than to destroy the area's textile tradition". And in her first draft (not published) of her review of Gina Corrigan's *Miao Textiles from China,* Felicity Wood wrote, "As with so many peoples, with better education the end result is a more 'jeans and T-shirt culture' and a loss of knowledge of techniques".

Does it matter? you may well ask. I am old enough to remember how in the decade following the end of the Second World War everything tended to be made of the new plastics. Fortunately there were enough potters, woodworkers and metal-workers left to step in when it became apparent that plastic was not the answer to every prayer. Let us, Janus-like, look both back to tradition and forward to innovation in our textiles.

PROGRAMME

Wednesday 20 June at 5.45 p.m.

Pakistan: Embroidery of Desert and Mountain
by Sheila Paine

at the Pitt Rivers Research Centre, 64 B anbury Road, Oxford
Members free Visitors welcome, £2

As Sheila Paine's lecture at the Society of Antiquaries in May clashed with Rosemary Crill's lecture to the Q.A.T.G., she has kindly offered to repeat it for us. The embroideries of two remote areas of Pakistan - Makran and the Himalayan valley of Palais - will be discussed, setting them in their social and geographical context There will also be an opportunity to see Pakistani embroideries from Sheila Paine's collection.

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Saturday 21 July at 2 p.m.

Gallery tour of the exhibition *A Stitch In Time* at the Ashmolean Museum
by Marianne Ellis

Booking necessary for this event; contact Ann Guild, address below

The items for this exhibition have been chosen by Marianne Ellis from the Ashmolean's Newberry Collection, one of the most important collections of mediaeval Islamic embroideries from Egypt and Syria, and the subject of her book *Embroideries and Samplers from Ancient Egypt*, which has just been published (see below p.17).

Thursday 6 September at 5.45 p.m.
Weaving from the Womb: Textiles, Gender and Kinship in Rhupshu (Eastern Ladakh, India) **by Monisha Ahmed**

at the Pitt Rivers Research Centre, 64 Banbury Road, Oxford
Members free Visitors Welcome, £2

In Rhupshu, where both men and women weave, the significance and symbolism of a woman's weaving and thus her ability to create and sustain social structures will be the focus. Monisha Ahmed is the author of *Living Fabric: Weaving in Ladakh, Himalaya* and co-founder of the Ladakh Arts and Multi-Cultural Outreach Trust. She will be showing textiles from this region that she has collected for the Pitt Rivers Museum.

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This year's A.G.M. will be on Wednesday 24 October - details in the next newsletter

Further information from Ann Guild, Programme Secretary, The Old School, Ducklington, Witney, Oxfordshire OX8 7UR, Tel. 01993 899033 or e-mail macguild@btinternet.com

ASIAN TEXTILES IN THE BIRMINGHAM MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

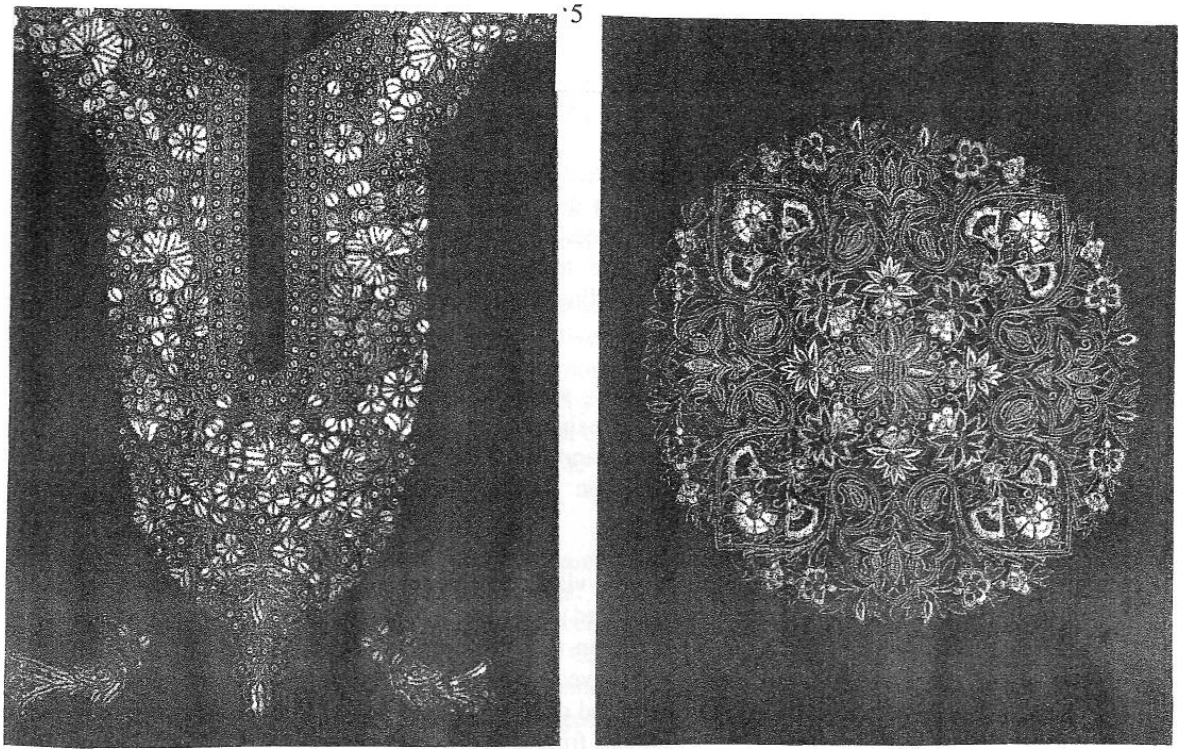
This article focuses upon the Asian textiles located within the collection of Textiles and Dress in the Art Department at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, The collection contains a wide range of culturally diverse material spanning four hundred years. It comprises approximately 5000 items of dress and 2400 textiles. Within this context, the Asian holdings are a relatively small group, but are significant not only in themselves but in terms of the history of the Museum and the development of its collections since its opening in 1885.

A group of embroidered textiles from Sindh and Hyderabad were amongst the first items to enter the Museum's collections. These include table, chair and cushion covers, a saddle cloth and an unmade jubla. Funded by "Industrial Art Gallery Subscription", these were purchased as examples of contemporary work from the International Workmen's Exhibition in 1870. Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery's early development was very much on the model of the South Kensington Museum in London. The new institution was intended to act as an inspiration to manufacturers, designers and workers through collecting and exhibiting examples of fine workmanship from the past and from other parts of the world. For a manufacturing town like Birmingham there was a clear benefit in developing design and art education.

The cushion covers are black or cream felt with central circular floral designs. One pair is intricately worked in coloured silks using a finely tamboured chain stitch, another two are embroidered in gold and silver thread with coloured silks. These and the jubla, encrusted with goldwork, beads and spangles around the neckline, were amongst the displays that the first visitors to the Museum saw in 1885.

The largest distinct group of South Asian textiles consists of over a hundred printed and painted cotton items purchased in 1890 via the Gallery Fund from Sir Caspar Purdon Clarke. Clarke's career reveals a long-standing involvement with and interest in Asian art and culture. During the 1870s he was collecting in Europe for the South Kensington Museum (now the V.& A.), and was the architect of the Indian Court at the Paris Exhibition of 1878. He became the first Keeper of the Indian collections at the South Kensington Museum in 1882. Henry Cole was keen actively to develop the Indian collections and sent Clarke to the Sub-continent to research existing items and collect more. He travelled widely during the 1880s. Details of the circumstances of Birmingham's purchases from Clarke are not known, but there had been a close and supportive relationship between the South Kensington Museum and Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery during the previous two decades. The former had made many loans available for display, and assisted in sourcing purchases. Clarke went on to be the Director of the South Kensington Museum and then the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

These pieces mostly date from c.1888 and derive from approximately fifteen different locations throughout the Indian Sub-continent, including Bombay, Sindh, Delhi, Lahore, Bengal, Kashmir and Madras. They are all fragments of similar dimensions, none more than



L: Jubla (detail), Surat, 19th century (1885 M 988). Rt: Cushion cover, Hyderabad, 19th century (1885 M 990) Both purchased from the International Workmen's Exhibition, 1870.

about sixty centimetres long, taken from wall hangings, prayer mats, floor cloths, scarves and bed hangings. Most are block-printed with natural colours. They demonstrate a wealth of floral, geometric and figurative designs, many showing Persian influence. Some show religious imagery and symbolism; part of a Hindu prayer shawl from Sind incorporates text and represents Vishnu's footprints. A selection from a vividly painted temple hanging from Madras represents Vishnu with the serpent Kaliya and snake-bodied worshippers.

A significant group of Turkish and Iranian textiles, predominantly embroidered towels, come from three sources: the collections of Estella Canziani, William Morris and the local Cadbury family. Estella Canziani was a painter and a collector of ethnographic material. She travelled primarily in Europe, focussing on peasant artefacts and dress. She came to Birmingham to give a lecture and was encouraged to donate the collections by the Keeper of the Art Gallery, S.C. Kaines-Smith. A large amount of diverse material was given in 1931.

In 1938 May Morris bequeathed a major part of her father William Morris' personal collection of embroideries to the Museum. Fascinated by textiles throughout his life, Morris had studied and researched items at the South Kensington Museum, and built his own collection from around the world. The evidence suggests that he used his collection in a practical way, for inspiration and reference.

The embroidered towels are of varying size and show several distinctive styles, with an exquisite range of goldwork, reversible stitching and outlined pattern.

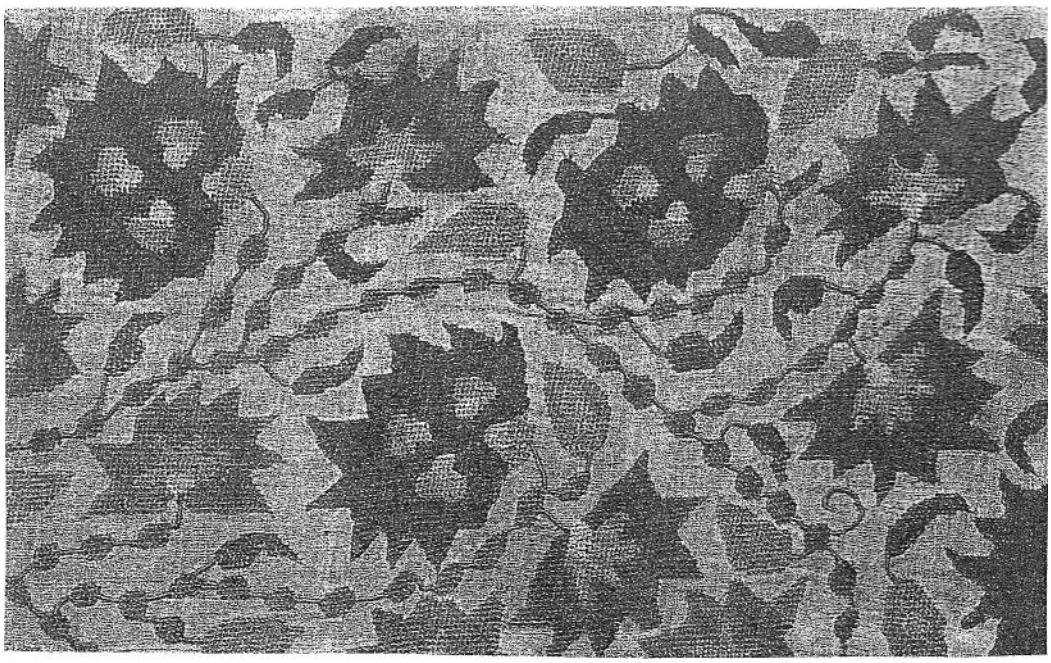
The Morris bequest also contains a small group of Japanese woven textiles. Far Eastern textiles in the collection are limited to these and a few examples of embroidery and dress. There are three Chinese dragon robes, some twentieth century embroidery, and garments produced for export. Other Japanese items include a couple of kimonos and three splendid machine-embroidered *uchikake* wedding robes from the 1980s which were recent donations.

At present there is no dedicated display space for the Textile and Dress collection. Material is displayed as part of the temporary exhibition programme; *Connecting Threads* in 2000 focussed on embroidery in the Museum and Art Gallery and dress at four of the City's historic community museums. An exhibition including some items from the Canziani collection is planned for 2003.

Public access to the stored collection is via an appointment system. The Museum is currently working towards a new computerized collection management system which will ultimately provide public access to information about the collections. Birmingham is also one of eight regional museums services involved in *Common Threads,* a European-funded website project, which will highlight textile and dress collecions in the region, go some way towards visitor access, and feature fifteen items from the collection in detail.

Zelina Garland

Curator (Applied Art), Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery



Strip (detail), Turkey, 18th century (1939 M 290), bequeathed by May Morris, 1939

THE TENT OF TIPU SULTAN, POWIS CASTLE, WELSHPOOL

In 1999 the National Trust succeeded in safeguarding the nationally important collection of Indian artefacts displayed at Powis Castle. The collection of almost a thousand pieces was purchased from the Earl of Powis and the Powis Estate Trustees with the generous support of the National Heritage Memorial Fund and the National Art Collections Fund.

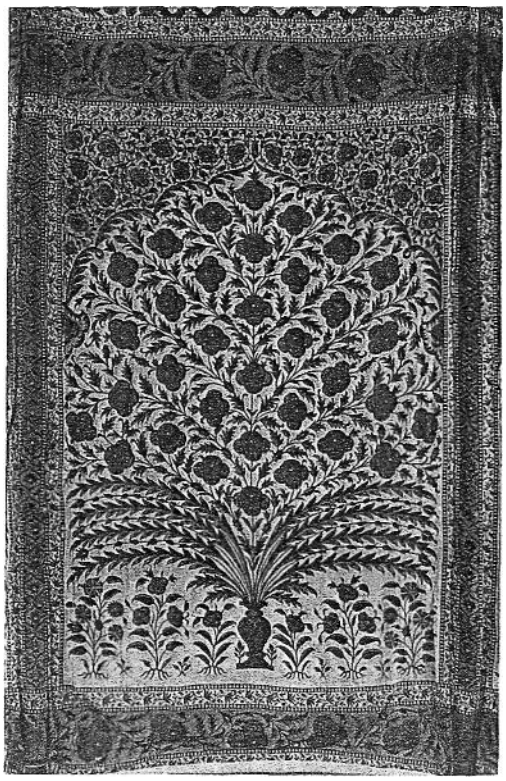
One of the most spectacular parts of the collection is the Mughal tent, dating to c.1725, which was acquired by the 2nd Lord Clive following the defeat of Tipu Sultan at Seringapatam in 1799. Clive was the Governor of Madras at this time. It may also be the same tent used for Lord Cornwallis' reception by Tipu's hostage sons in 1792, which followed the Treaty of Mysore. Contemporary accounts describe a "fine chintz tent surrounded by sea-green *qanats*" and the event is depicted in the painting by Robert Home, which is part of London's National Army Museum Collection.

Inventories of goods sent back to England by the Clive family exist in the Powis archives but little mention is made of the tent. In 1801 Henrietta Herbert, wife of Edward, 2nd Lord Clive, learnt that Powis Castle had been bequeathed to her son. This explains how the Indian collection came to reside at Powis Castle, The tent was used for some years as a marquee for garden parties; an elderly lady remembers it being used in the 1930s at a fete in the park at Powis where one shilling was charged for admission.

Part of the tent is now on permanent display in a room off the ballroom, adjacent to the Clive Museum. This display was constructed in 1987 and gives the impression of the inside of the tent while protecting it within a sealed environment, A decision was made, following condition reports, to reconstruct the roof for the display using modern copies of the roof panels. These are suspended above the glazed viewing area. The original roof canopy and two of the wall sections are kept in store.

The Powis tent comprises a roof canopy, composed of eight roughly triangular segments divided by "channels" enclosing ropes and terminating in fabric-covered leather patches with attached support or guy ropes. There are three wall sections *(qanats),* two of nine panels with sockets for poles, and one of thirteen with integral poles stitched between the layers of fabric.

The tent's chintz interior is spectacular. Each white-ground panel is printed with an arched niche enclosing a vase with a symmetrical flower arrangement. This seems to burst from the tiny central vase almost emulating a displaying peacock's tail; growing flowers flank each vase. The predominant colours are red and green, the latter of which has deteriorated to a certain degree because it was achieved by overpainting the deep shade of indigo with a fugitive yellow dye. The flowerhead motif is used throughout the rest of the design, enlarged on a green ground in the horizontal borders and in a reduced form in the spandrels of the arched niche. A black and white merlon and rosette band runs along the top of the wall sections.



The wall sections are constructed of three layers of fabric, the chintz of the inside, a heavy loose-weave cotton interlining and a more densely woven outer layer. The layers are lightly gathered onto thick cotton tape at the top and bottom and between each panel. Between every third panel of the two smaller wall sections a double thickness of rope is inserted between the layers of cloth. Rope is also sewn in at either end. In the larger wall section the integral poles have been inserted between each panel, bound in with leather patches at the top and bottom. Rope loops for pegs emerge from the base of each pole. The roof is of similar construction, with the fabric panels meeting at a central leather-covered boss. On both the roof and the wall sections faint black stamps are visible on the red cotton. These may be *toshkhana* stamps indicating provenance from an Indian royal collection.

Spectacular tents such as the Powis example are well documented and illustrated in Indian manuscripts and paintings and in the accounts of European travellers. Tented encampments were the travelling palaces of the Indian rulers, who made journeys of state throughout their kingdoms to administer and regulate their affairs. The complex enclosures used different styles of tents for different functions and for the various ranks within the court. Various shapes of tents and canopies are described and illustrated: lattice, two-storey and one pole tents, with *qanats* or screens providing walls and dividing the area into smaller enclosures.

The extant tent at Powis Castle - roof canopy and three wall sections - is likely to be all that remains from one of these vast complexes of tents and screens used by Tipu Sultan.

Sara Burdett
Collections and Research Assistant, National Trust, Wales

INTRODUCING PLY SPLIT BRAIDING

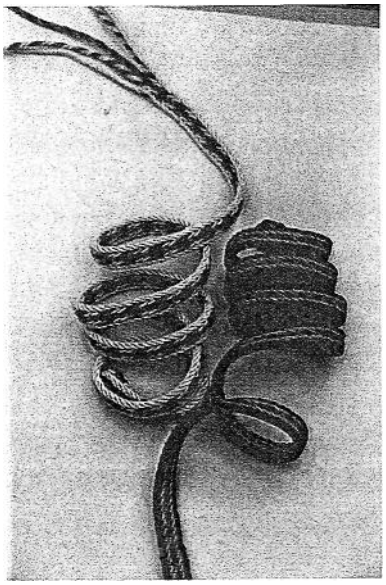
In September this year the first Ply-Split Braiding Convention will take place in Bampton, Oxfordshire (see below p.24). But what is ply-split braiding, you may ask, and where does it originate?

Ply-split braiding has been extensively found in Rajasthan and Gujarat, north west India, where it has mainly been used to make camel girths and animal regalia. During the last twenty years, Peter Collingwood has travelled to India and collected and analysed braided artefacts, the techniques of which have never before been documented. His researches culminated in a book, *The Techniques of Ply-Split Braiding*, published in 1998. During this time, lectures, workshops and demonstrations given by Peter in the U.K., Europe, the U.S.A. and Japan, have brought the technique to a wider audience and consequently weavers and braidmakers have explored and developed it in a number of directions.

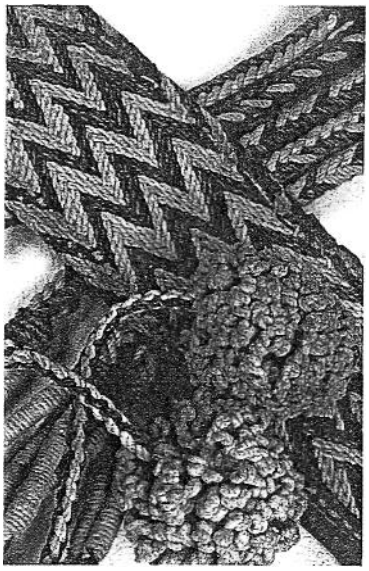
The Technique

The essential materials needed for ply-split braiding are highly twisted, plied cords. These are commonly 4-ply cords, but 2 or 3-ply cords are occasionally used. The traditional girths are made from goat hair yarn or sometimes cotton, but worsted, linen or silk yarns are all used by contemporary braidmakers.

To make the 4-ply cords four ends of yarn of a measured length are twisted separately under tension, putting on as much twist as possible without them snarling; these are then plied together under tension, making the resultant highly twisted smooth cords. A four hooked cabling machine fixed on the end of a hard twist drill is used by many braiders for this purpose. Cords may be made up of one, two, three or four colours.



1. Ply-split darning



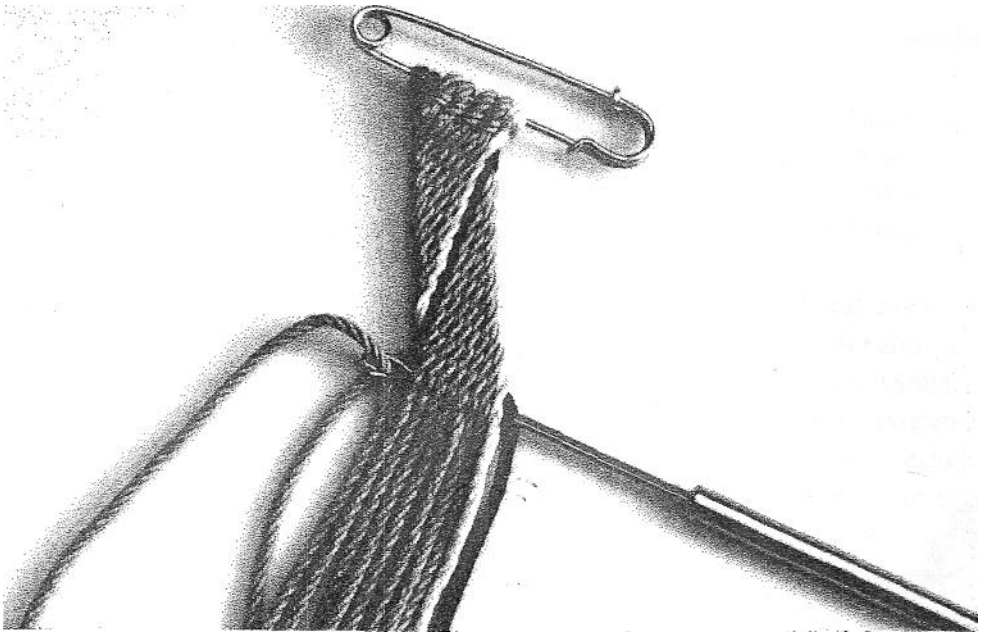
2. Ply-split braiding

Having made 4-ply cords, there are two basic ply-split techniques from which most others are derived:

First, ply-split darning, where a weft thread or cord is passed through a series of 4-ply cords, the weft being taken through the ply of each cord with 2 ply above and 2 ply below. The resulting braid is made up of a series of vertical 4-ply cords intersected horizontally by the weft, which travels through the sequence of cords from left to right and back (illus. 1).

Secondly, ply-split braiding, where a series of cords intersect each other in sequence, again splitting the ply 2 above and 2 below. The braid design depends on the colour order of the cords and the sequence in which the cords are split by each other. The resulting braids have a diagonal fell (illus. 2).

An extended latchet hook can be used to draw the weft through the cords (illus. 3).



3. Latchet hook in action

Being an "off loom" technique, shapes can be made and built upon each other to make more complex designs or three dimensional pieces. Sections may also be braided independently and brought together and divided at will to make net-like structures (see the dress illustrated on p.l).

Pieces can be made from varying weights of yarn, resulting in anything from fine braids for neckpieces, bracelets, belts, etc, to heavier weight pieces for baskets and sculptural works. The possibilities for exploration and development are limitless.

Julie Hedges
(Article first published in *Craftsman* magazine, May 2001)

THE GUJARAT EARTHQUAKE

An Appeal to O.A.T.G. Members

As you all probably know, on 26 January this year, north-west India was devastated by an earthquake that measured 7.9 on the Richter scale. The Shockwaves were felt as far afield as Nepal in the north, to the south in Mumbai, and across the western border in Pakistan. The quake's epicentre was north-east of Bhuj. An estimated 20,000 people died and large tracts of the district have been laid waste. All the main towns of the district - Bhuj, Anjar, Bhachau, Rapar - and many of the villages lie in ruins. Many of the surviving population now live under canvas, refugees in their own land. The semi-nomadic Rabari have been among the worst sufferers.

The district has now entered the stage of rehabilitation and rebuilding. Other organizations are concerned in erecting houses, schools, factories, hospitals, but it is also important that tools and materials should be provided to enable people to start earning again. As this is an area where many textiles are made, we feel it appropriate that O.A.T.G. should support the ongoing work which has now started for this purpose.

We have consulted Professor Anne Morrell, Dr Eiluned Edwards, Dr Monisha Ahmed and Lesley Robin, the latter having just set up a registered charity, The Kernel Trust. The funds raised by the Trust will go towards providing the seed money to help create the right conditions for groups and projects to move forward. Initially it will be supporting the Kala Raksha Trust which was established in 1993 and works to preserve and protect traditional arts, primarily through assisting artisan co-operatives. The Trust is under the direction of Judy Frater who has done extensive field research in rural India, particularly amongst the Rabari communities, over the last 20 years and continues to be fully committed to the work of the Trust.

Lesley writes, "The initial project will focus on the rehabilitation of 500 artisans within the earthquake zone, centred specifically on embroiderers in six villages. As anyone who has visited Kutch knows, the cultural and unique heritage of that region is in grave danger of being lost forever. Women who produce unique embroidery have no other source of income. All their materials have been destroyed. Their embroidery is not just a means of livelihood but holds together the threads of their identity as unique communities. I envisage that this project will go on for some time to come."

We therefore invite O.A.T.G. members to send donations (payable to The Kernel Trust) to Lesley Sobin, 37 Wolvercote Green, Upper Wolvercote, Oxford, OX12 8BD. Lesley will send members full details of the Trust and the work it will be carrying out, and will also be able to reclaim tax on donations.

Ann Guild

REPORTS OF O.A.T.G. MEETINGS

Naga Textiles: a Study Session with Vibha Joshi

The Pitt Rivers Museum has the largest holding of Naga textiles and artefacts in the world, and on 27 March a group of O.A.T.G. members were privileged to see some Naga skirts from the collection. Their origins and significance were explained to us by Vibha Joshi, a D.Phil student at St Edmund Hall currently preparing a thesis on Naga religious beliefs and practices. She painted a fascinating picture of the lives of these peoples who at some time in the past migrated westward into the hills of N.E. India, perhaps from Burma, and still maintain a distinct culture. The skirts were woven on back-strap looms and might take about seven days to weave, plus an extra day or two for finishing and ornamenting.

These wrap-around cotton skirts or cloths were worn by both sexes and those we saw were mainly dark blue with contrasting weave in red; white skirts are also worn, usually on festive occasions. The Naga are a mainly hierarchical society and their skirts can be redolent with symbolic indications of wealth and status. To uninitiated eyes these may appear simply as a variant in the introduction of decorative woven motifs. The unmarried status of girls or boys is proclaimed to all around by this means: the message here is "I'm available".

Men's cloths are longer than women's and have an extended upper corner which flicks over the shoulder. We were all intrigued by the way that the decoration applied to these men's cloths, often using cowrie shells, not only advertised the wearer's warrior status, but also depicted his victims one by one! I am becoming increasingly interested in the widespread and inventive use of natural materials in ethnic clothing and on this visit notched up a first for the use of orchid stem skins; these gleaming silky-looking yellow bands were bound round finger-thick gatherings of red-dyed goat (or dog?) hair firmly in place on the shoulder ornaments of men's cloths.

So much does a society like the Naga express itself through its appearance that any changes to its structure or beliefs are quickly reflected in its dress. Although the skirts we were shown by Vibha appeared traditional, having been collected some years ago, they already demonstrate radical changes taking place in Nagaland. For example, chemical dyes are now used to reproduce the traditional colours drawn from natural dyes; they are deep and lasting, but many might think them rather harsh. Increased familiarity with western printed textiles has similarly encouraged experimentation with different colours. Missionary influence can be seen in the introduction of Christian symbols into the language of skirt designs, whilst those earlier head-counts of warriors' victims have metamorphosed into motifs advertising academic or professional qualifications - "I am a mighty warrior" has now become "I am a professional man". In many ways this harnessing of new ideas and new technologies is not as recent a phenomenon as we assume, and it is to be hoped that this most recent phase of introductions in Nagaland will serve to enrich rather than to destroy the area's textile tradition.

This was only the second meeting of the Group I have managed to attend and a prolonged and very focussed involvement with collections of purely English costumes meant that I had no idea what I might see. It is a great delight to be able at last to turn to the textile heritages of other parts of the world and I realize how privileged we were to be able to examine this group of skirts and to benefit from Vibha's very clear explanations as well as to catch her enthusiasm for this intriguing culture.

Kay Staniland

Naga woman weaving

Indian Painted Cotton and Chintz

Those attending Rosemary Crill's lecture on 9 May tracing the history of Indian painted cotton and chintz will almost certainly come across chintz in some form or another. It is still enormously popular as a furnishing material and is almost impossible to avoid in houses and home decoration magazines in this country and in many other parts of Europe. It is for this reason that Rosemary's lecture was so interesting, as many of us associate chintz with flowery curtains and little else.

The two traditions of painting and textile production come together in chintz to form pieces that are not only beautiful to look at but also technologically quite amazing. After great patience in the face of a defective slide projector, Rosemary showed us photographs of several textiles, ranging from simply painted early 17th century temple cloths using local dyes and materials and influenced by the Indian wall painting tradition, to 19th century

pieces which depicted Indian interpretations of European life, made for the secular European market.

Looking at some of the slides Rosemary showed, it was almost impossible to believe that the designs were painted freehand rather than printed. However, given the intricate painting and the various complicated stages of produetrion, it was not hard to see how time-consuming the pieces must have been to produce, even with several craftsmen in a studio working on a specific aspect of each piece. Although Indian dyers never wrote down the different processes involved, some observers did, and Rosemary's slides of the different stages were particularly useful in showing the complexity of production of this type of textile.

One of the most interesting aspects that Rosemary discussed was the impact of foreign trade and contact on the textiles. As well as trading to Europe, India traded painted textiles east to Timor, Sulawesi, Thailand and Japan, and west to Cairo. The style was adapted for specific needs and for aesthetic appeal to the individual market. For example, a difference in style is visible between pieces made for the Dutch and the British markets. European crewel work patterns were traced and sent to India to be produced in chintz. The contrast between the original textile and the one that returned is stunning. Even though the layout often remained faithful to the original pattern, the feel of the pieces was totally different.

The popularity in Europe of the new "pintados" and the fact that they revolutionized furnishings in Britain from the 17th century onwards is hardly surprising when seen in comparison with the heavy velvets and embroideries they began to replace. The chintz textiles had the appeal of exotic designs and also of the fabric itself - a lightweight, colourfast, washable cotton. This had a much lighter informal feel, ideal for use in the bedroom and dressing room, even if materials such as velvet continued to be used for the decoration of state rooms. The picture of Mme de Pompadour wearing a chintz dress in a relaxed informal setting stresses the informality of the fabric and also its value. The chintz of her dress predates the painting exceedingly, suggesting that the material may have been kept and reused several times as it was highly prized.

The chronological and geographical span of this type of Indian painted textile has been enormous. Thanks to Rosemary Crill I have begun to look at a furnishing fabric that I once walked past without a thought in a totally new light.

Marina de Alarcón

O.A.T.G. SUBSCRIPTIONS

Members are reminded that subscriptions are due on or before 1 October. Rates remain at £10 for individuals and £15 for two or more people living at the same address and sharing a newsletter. If you do not wish your membership to lapse, please send your subscription to the Membership Secretary, Joyce Seaman, or save yourself the annual hassle by asking her to send you a banker's order form. Address: 6 Park Town, Oxford, OX2 6SN, tel. 01865 558558, e-mail: mjseaman@hotmail.com

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Ten months have gone since Krishna Riboud passed away. Helped by a particularly efficient and devoted team, she had accomplished something unique in France: the elaboration of a collection of 4500 textiles assembled and kept in a research centre whose scientific approach is internationally renowned.

Krishna Riboud undoubtedly would have wished the Centre to continue, but unfortunately A.E.D.T.A.'s present situation makes it impossible for me. I thus had to take the difficult decision to close the Centre and to disband the team. A,E.D.T.A. is losing here its most precious element; a real professionalism. I will praise here Valérie Lefebvre and Dominique Scott's administration, Marie-Hélène Guelton, Sachiko Hosoda and Alexandra Lorquin, whose technical and historical analyses were always extremely accurate, Francoise Pelenc and Isabelle Straram for their impeccable care in organizing and keeping the collection, Anne Eraser's infinite patience and dedication, not forgetting Wilson Menezes Brancaga, without whom the day-to-day running of the Centre would have been difficult.

Nevertheless, this unique collection still remains. And according to Krishna Riboud's often expressed wishes, and thanks to the always close links maintained between A.E.D.T.A. and the Musée National des Arts Asiatiques - Guimet - my family and I have taken the decision to bequeath the totality of the textiles to the French Government. We are hoping by this means to have found the best solution for the collection to continue being studied, and the safeguarding of the textiles.

May I take this opportunity to express once more my most sincere thanks to the A.E.D.T.A. team and also to all the close colleagues; experts and institutions from all over the world who contributed to the success of this exceptional project.

Penelope Riboud-Duran
President of A.E.D.T.A.

60 bis Avenue de Breteuil, 75007 Paris, France

Dear Editor,

A.E.D.T.A. closes its doors on Asia but a window opens on the Orient.

To-day a new association is born dedicated to Syrian textiles and costumes and the Islamic world. Within this association I will continue the same type of information professional activity as at A.E.D.T.A..

In that I will always be indebted to Krishna Riboud, who was first of all a guide and mentor in my personal approach to the textile field, and then allowed me the liberty of pursuing different directions in my work,

The aims of the association, known as the **SY**rian **T**extile and **CO**stume **S**quad (SYTCOS) is to unite all people interested in the field of Syrian textiles and costumes or the Islamic world, and to promote its study by conferences, publications, exhibitions etc., as well as a regular Bulletin written in French, English and German.

For further information, or to become a member, please contact me.

Valérie Lefebvre-Aiadawi
Ingénieur documentaliste

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MUSEUMS ROUND-UP

Those members who attended last year's Christmas party at Dymphna Hermans' house will remember the wonderful, huge batik bedspread that Sybille Haynes brought along. Those who missed the party can see Sybille showing it to us in a photograph on p. 15 of the last newsletter (No. 18, February 2001). Sybille has now decided to part with it and donate it to the Ashmolean Museum. The batik was made in Yogyakarta, Central Java, probably early in the 20th century. It has a large central diamond shape which is half blue, half white, and the surrounding batik pattern is a combination of the diagonal *parang rusak* motif and the sacred *garuda* bird, the vehicle of Vishnu. Sybille's father bought the cloth from a princely family in Yogyakarta just after World War II.

The recently established Education Department at the Pitt Rivers Museum has been trying to initiate new ways of using and interpreting the collections. One path that they are keen to follow is the establishment of a handling collection for outreach work. They started in March with visits to Rose Hill and Barton armed with a loom and some textiles. They are now appealing for quality artefacts to complement and represent the Museum's collections. Currently they have around 20 objects, but need more if they are to be able to offer a range of programmes. Any O.A.T.G. members who think they may have suitable items they could offer, or who would be interested in being part of a handling group, are asked to contact Andrew McLellan, tel. 01865 270944, e-mail andrew.mclellan@prm.ox.ac.uk

If, like me, you have been expecting an announcement of the opening of the Clothworkers[1] Centre of World Textiles any time now, I am afraid you are going to be disappointed. I understand that the development of the New Oxford Street site for the British Museum Study Centre, of which the textile centre is to be part, has been subject to

considerable delay. Consequently we cannot look forward to the opening of the C.C.W.T. until 2004 at earliest.

Just to remind you that very little of the Horniman Museum is open this year because of extensive building works, which are expected to continue until autumn 2002. The site, however, is not entirely given over to the hard hat brigade, and the Museum is managing to celebrate its centenary with a grand party and circus on Sunday 17 June followed by a series of concerts and "fun-filled" events throughout the summer. The only galleries open at present are African Worlds and Natural History, but it is hoped to open a Collections Gallery later this year. The Living Waters Aquarium, the oldest free aquarium in London, reopened last month. The fishes may give you inspiration for your embroidery, but as soon as there is anything to report more closely related to Asia and textiles I will let you know.

I gather from Julie Cornish, the Shamiana Project Co-ordinator at the V.& A., that the website mentioned in the last newsletter is now up and running on www.vam,ac.uk/vastatic/microsites/shamiana/ As well as images of the Shamiana textiles, online activities include group projects, creating your own tent, guidelines on setting up new projects and how to take part in THE TENT THAT COVERS THE WORLD.

Editor

BOOKS

Mediaeval Islamic Embroideries

Marianne Ellis, *Embroideries and Samplers from Islamic Egypt*, Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, 2001, 20.5 x 27 cm, 96pp, 66 col. Illus., hb. ISBN 1 85444 154 X, £24,95. Pb. ISBN 1 85444 135 3, £16.95

This new publication is intended to be an introduction and guide to the Ashmolean Museum's exceptionally large and varied collection of Islamic mediaeval embroideries, which are part of the Newberry Collection of textiles. The material was acquired by the Egyptologist, Percy Newberry, in the 1920s in Cairo, and he donated it to the Ashmolean Museum in 1941.

Marianne Ellis has chosen sixty-six pieces out of the total of 1010 kept in the Department of Eastern Art, and she discusses their function, date and stitch technique. Her expertise and love for the collection is clearly evident from the way she writes about it. The chronology ranges from the tenth to the sixteenth century, with the majority of pieces made during the Mamluk period in Egypt and Syria (1250-1517 A.D.). The book is beautifully produced, with very good full colour illustrations, often showing the embroidery in detail as well as giving an overall view.

The publication coincides with an exhibition in the Ashmolean Museum (see below p.21) and the author, who is a member of the O.A.T.G. and well-known to many of us, has agreed to give a tour of the exhibition as part of our latest programme (see above p.3)

Ruth Barnes

British Museum Publications

The British Museum claims to be the home of some of the most rare and most stunning textiles in the world. Some of these are now being published in the form of *Fabric Folios*, a series of designer sourcebooks, each of 88 pages and containing over a hundred specially commissioned photographs of around thirty items. Two well-known members of the O.A.T.G. are among the authors of the first four folios, to be published next month: Gina Corrigan and Sheila Paine. Their contributions are reviewed below. The other two volumes being published now are on printed and dyed textiles from Africa by John Gillow, and on Guatemalan textiles by Ann Hecht. A further four titles are planned for next year.

Fabric Folios, each 88 pp, 22.5 cm sq., 100 col. illus., pb., £12.99
Gina Corrigan, *Miao Textiles from China,* ISBN 0 7141 2742 6
Sheila Paine, *Embroidery from India and Pakistan,* ISBN 0 7141 2744 2

Miao Textiles from China by Gina Corrigan

Through Gina Corrigan many of us have become familiar, or more familiar, with Miao textiles. It is therefore a delight that she is the author of a book on these rich and varied fabrics. In the introduction we are told of the origins of the Miao - how some 5000 years ago they were forced from their lands in the Yellow River basin and eventually migrated to southern China. This clear explanation and the good map do credit to Gina as a geographer. As the Miao had no written language until quite recently, their costumes are very important as identifiers of their different groups. We are taken on a brief tour of the types of clothes, the fibres used, the methods of construction, dyeing and decoration, festivals and courtship and finally, tradition and change. This section includes some very good pictures taken in the field.

Having been given such a good background, we are then served with a cornucopia of photographs of individual items of clothing. Each has a double page devoted to it so that we see not only the whole garments but several details. This would be very valuable to embroiderers in particular. Appliqué, cross stitch, satin stitch and "tin" decoration may be seen very clearly, as can the shiny indigo cloth and the resist patterns. There is, finally, a short glossary and reading list.

I was not keen on the bi-coloured lettering of the title on the cover of the book, which not only seems busy against the background picture of embroidery but is difficult to read. However, this is a small matter and does little to detract from the publication as a whole. See for yourself and enjoy! This book would be a treat for specialists and non-specialists alike.

Felicity Wood

Embroidery from India and Pakistan **by Sheila Paine**

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This enticing book focuses on textiles from the British Museum's fabulous collections. I particularly like the clear, concise layout and logical sequence of Sheila Paine's text. This outlines how domestic embroidery is used to define and protect Indian and Pakistani women, who embroider for their dowries and families, and how it indicates their social status and cultural background.

Using knowledge gained during her journeys in India, Sheila describes the materials used, the dyeing processes, stitches, patterns and symbolism, the tribes who embroider and regions where embroidery is made. She talks of traditions and of changes currently taking place which are threatening the continuity of some of the world's richest embroidery.

The visual impact of the sixty pages of photographs is stunning. They illustrate close up details of the stitches, as well as the kaleidoscopic range and intensity of the brilliant colours. This delightful book would make an excellent introduction for those interested in learning about the embroidery of India and Pakistan, and will also be useful as a reference for the more knowledgeable. A glossary is included as well as suggestions for further reading,

Ann Guild

Ann Hecht, *The Art of the Loom: Weaving, Spinning and Dyeing Across the World,* ISBN 0 7141 2553 9, 208 pp, 21 x 27.5 cm, 60 col. & 109 b/w illus., pb. £14.99

Eva Wilson, *8000 Years of Ornament: An Illustrated Handbook of Motifs,* ISBN 0 7141 2745 0_5 208 pp, 22 x 27.5 cm, over 600 line drawings, pb., £12.99

The B.M.P. is now issuing in paperback two important books that were first published in hardback a decade or more ago, which are probably already well-known to many readers. The paperbacks seem to be straightforward reprints, not revised in any way.

One is *The Art of the Loom* by Ann Hecht. Readers should not be misled into thinking that this is a handbook or history of weaving worldwide. It is both more and less than that: more in that it covers not only weaving, but spinning and dyeing as well; less in that it concentrates only on eight specific techniques in specific places - three in the Americas, four in Asia and one in West Africa. These are discussed in depth. The Asian chapters deal with the tents and saddle bags of the nomadic Bedouin of the Arabian peninsula, Indonesian textiles, the Kasuri resist dyeing of Japan and the inlay weaving of Nepal.

The book is very methodically arranged. After an introduction in which the loom, dyeing, spinning and weaving are dealt with in general, a separate chapter is devoted to each of the eight areas. In each case an introductory section briefly sets the geographical, social

and cultural scene in which the textile is made, and this is followed by detailed and very clear descriptions of the loom, yarns, dyes, etc.. Do not be misled by my emphasis on method and detail into expecting this to be a dry book; it is enlivened with such titbits as the description of warping the Bedouin ground loom - "Two women sit, one at each end, facing each other, and a child with a ball of warp yarn runs between the two", which make it very readable.

The book is profusely illustrated in both colour and black and white, and is due to be published next month. If you do not already have the hardback version, I can recommend this volume to all who have an interest in textile techniques.

The other reissue, already published, is *8000 Years of Ornament* by Eva Wilson. Subtitled *An Illustrated Handbook of Motifs,* this is not so closely related to Asian Textiles, but the author takes her examples where she finds them, and she finds them in all cultures that are represented in the British Museum, and on all types of artefact. If, like me, you find the interrelation of motifs between East and West fascinating, or if you are a maker seeking inspiration for your designs, then this is the book for you.

Phyllis Nye

The Other Books

Hazel Clark, *The Cheongsam,* O.U.P., 2000, ISBN 0-19-590939-9, 20x15 cm, 72pp, 18 col. & 26 b/w illus., £10.99

The latest textile addition to the series of small hardbacks, *Images of Asia,* traces the history of what is perceived in the West as the quintessential Chinese women's dress, from its origins in a 19th century Manchu man's robe,- through its peak in the mid-20th century, decline and almost disappearance in the 1970s, to its revival as a fashion garment in the last few years. There are sections on production, fabrics, fastenings, etc. Many of the black and white illustrations are historic photographs.

Susan Conway, *Lan Na Court Textiles,* Bangkok, River Books, autumn 2001, 25 x 22 cm, 200 pp, 300 col. illus., hardback, ISBN 974 8225 65 8

The unique character of Lan Na culture developed from the interaction of different ethnic groups, especially among royalty and the elite families. In this lavishly illustrated book Susan Conway traces the history of the Lan Na princes, their complex marital alliances and political relationships with surrounding states. A dramatic change in 19th century male court dress acts as a metaphor for political manoeuvring, while Lan Na princesses and their attendants continued to wear indigenous dress that demonstrated loyalty to their own culture.

EXHIBITIONS

A Stitch in Time: Medieval Islamic Embroideries from Egypt

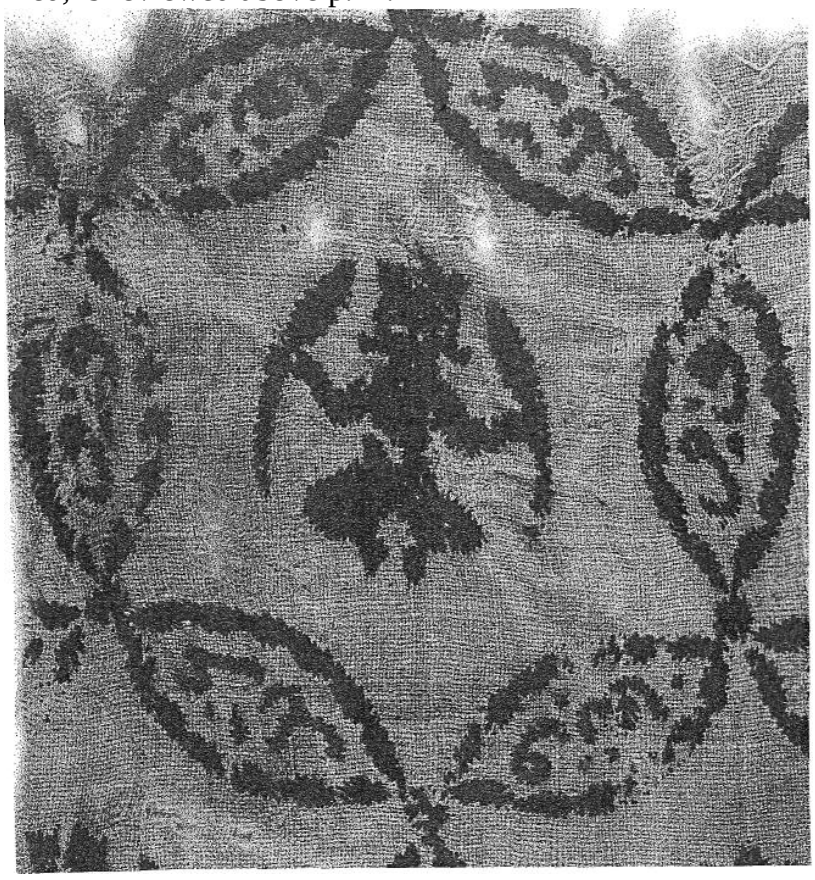
Eric North Room, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

This exhibition, which is on until 22 July, provides an opportunity to see examples from one of the most important collections of mediaeval Islamic embroideries. It was accumulated by the Egyptologist, Percy Newberry, between 1900 and 1930 while he was living in Cairo. Much of the material is fragmentary but the exhibition will include over sixty key examples, mostly from items of dress and domestic furnishings. They demonstrate some of the skilful and diverse ways in which embroiderers decorated textiles in Islamic mediaeval Egypt with a wide variety of designs and patterns. In addition, there is supporting material indicating the important influence of these textiles on later European embroidery.

Marianne Ellis

Ruth Barnes will be conducting a "Behind the Scenes" session on 21 June from 10 a.m. to 12 noon, £12 (Ashmolean Friends £10). Ruth will also be giving a "The Curator and the Collection" talk on Wednesday 13 June and Jose Allen gallery talks in the exhibition on Fridays 29 June and 20 July. All these talks will be held at 1.15 p.m. and cost £1.50. Booking is necessary for all these events; contact the Ashmolean Education Service, tel. 01865 278015

Marianne Ellis' book, *Embroideries and Samplers from Islamic Egypt*, with which the exhibition is linked, is reviewed above p.17.



While you are in the Ashmolean admiring these goodies, you might like to step into the Reitlinger Gallery next door, where there is a small display of mainly Turkmen Carpets and weavings until 16 August The opening of the exhibition coincides with the first May Beattie Memorial Lecture, given by Robert Pinner, and is intended to raise the profile of carpets and carpet studies within the context of Eastern Art

Japan 2001 at the Royal Museum, Edinburgh

Meeting Points - on display until 23 September - brings together the work of twelve contemporary textile artists, six from Japan and six from Scotland. The artists have been paired with the intention of stimulating creativity through the exchange of ideas. Works by the Japanese artists include shirts which have been burnt by incense slicks, delicate sculptures made of wire, feathers and bamboo, hanging pieces made of polyester, organza and felt and large wool and acrylic tapestries.

Unfortunately, all but one of the related events will have been held before you receive this, but if you are quick, you may get to a demonstration of her work by one of the Japanese artists, Noriko Norahira, in the main hall, 2.30 - 4.30 p.m. on Thursday 12 June.

Complementing the exhibition is a special display in the Aits and Industry Gallery of textiles by two companies, one Scottish the other Japanese. The Scottish company, Bute Fabrics, is displaying the charcoal fabric for a limited edition sculpture, *Daybed,* by Rachel Whiteread, and the Japanese company, NUNO, five contemporary garments made of "cutting-edge technology fibres".

Serizawa - Master of Japanese Textile Design, 11 August to 4 November. Declared a Living National Treasure in 1956, Serizawa Keisuke (1895-1984) was one of the greatest textile artists of 20th century Japan. Often working in large-scale formats such as pairs of folding screens and hangings as well as kimono and using traditional stencil-dyeing techniques, his influences came from all over east Asia, not simply his own country. A hundred of his works will be on show in this major exhibition, the first to be held outside Japan. Details of related events are not yet available.

For information on all these exhibitions and related events Tel. 0131 247 4219

Other Exhibitions in U.K.

Beadwork

At Carrow House Costume and Textiles Study Centre, King Street, Norwich, until 14 December. Drawn from the Centre's own collections, this display comprises examples of costume, textiles, furnishings and ornament from the 17th to 20th centuries. It includes a small section of foreign beadwork, mainly from provinces of India and Afghanistan as well as Amerindian bags. The Centre (including the exhibition) is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays only and only for guided tours. Tel. 01603 223870 or 223873

Before and After and **Family History Behind the Kimono (J)**

Two linked photographic exhibitions on the kimono at the Norwich Arts Centre, Norwich, until 30 August. One explores the patterns on the kimono material and the meanings and stories behind them. The other looks at kimono-clad Japanese women who have been brought up in the U.K. Tel. 01603 660352

Japanese Kimono (J)

At the Victoria and Albert Museum until December. Although kimono were worn by both sexes, this exhibition concentrates on those worn by women from the late 18th to the early 20th century, exploring the various weaving, dyeing and embroidery techniques used to create them, Tel. 020 7942 2000

Songs of the Sun

Batik wall hangings by Mishtu Austin at the Brunei Gallery until 31 July. Tel. 020 7898 4915

Tales from Japan (J)

At Lotherton Hall, nr Aberford, Leeds, until 31 December, an exhibition of works from the Hall's own collection, including ivories, armour, silverware, ceramics, colour prints and textiles. Each exhibit tells a story. Tel. 0113 281 3259

Textural Space -

- the exhibition of Japanese contemporary textiles that has been on view at the Surrey Institute of Art and Design and elsewhere, will be on display at the Sainsbury Centre for the Visual Arts, Norwich (tel. 01603 456161), (9 July to 2 September) and the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester (tel. 0161 275 7450) 21 September to IS November.

The Great Wave (J)

At the Cecil Higgins Art Gallery, Bedford, 17 July to 28 October. O.A.T.G. Member Marion Maule is responsible for this wide-ranging exhibition tracing successive waves of Japanese influence and inspiration on artists and designers in Europe. It will include ceramics, furniture, prints, paintings and textiles from the Gallery's own extensive collection and an interesting variety of loans. It is hoped to recreate an Aesthetic interior, display the rickshaw that Thomas Cook sent to England in 1872, and bring the waves of influence up-to-date with a display of Japanese toys. There will be a party with a Japanese theme on 28 July and a programme of talks, children's activities and workshops. Tel. 01234 211222

Bonnets, Birds and Tuppeny Baubles

At the Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock, 1 September to 14 October. An exhibition of embroidery as a protection against evil spirits, from the collection of Sheila Paine, who will be giving a related talk in the Museum on the evening of Wednesday 12 September, for which tickets will be available from mid-August. Tel. 01993 814115

Spliterati 01 - Expanding the Girths

This event at Bampton, Oxfordshire, 28 September to 21 October (see below p.24) includes the exhibition, *Expanding the Girths* at the West Ox Art Gallery in the Town Hall.

(J) = a Japan 2001 event

Overseas

Fabulous Creatures from the Desert Sands

At the Abegg-Stiftung, Riggisberg, Switzerland, until 4 November, an exhibition of Central Asian textiles from 2000 years ago.

Japanese Fishermen's Coats from Awaji Island

at the Textile Museum, Washington, D.C. June 29 to September 2

Last Chance to See -

Textural Space - the exhibitions at Farnham (Tel. 01252 722441), Brighton (Tel.01273 290900) and Rochester (Tel. 01634 727777) end on 23 June (but see above).

The Silver Studio Then and Now - at the Museum of Domestic Design and Architecture, Barnet, ends on 24 June. Tel. 020 8362 5244

Silk Roads & Tutankhamun's Wardrobe - at the Royal Museum, Edinburgh, end 1 July, Tel. 0131 247 4219

LECTURES AND EVENTS

Hali Fourth Antique Carpet and Textile Art Fair will be held at Olympia 2, London, 14-18 June. Tel. Karol-Ann Roberts on 020 7578 7218, e-mail: karolannr@centaur.co.uk

At least two oriental textile specialists are exhibiting at the Grosvenor House Art and Antiques Fair, Grosvenor House, Park Lane, London, 12-19 June: Sandra Whitman will be showing antique and old Chinese rugs, and Linda Wrigglesworth antique Chinese, Tibetan and Korean costume and textiles.

***In the Shadow of Scheherazade: Orientalism and Exoticism in Western Dress*, Costume Society Symposium** at the Ashmolean Museum and Wadham College, Oxford, 6-8 July (see O.A.T.G. Newsletter no. 17, October 2000). O. A.T.G. members can attend for the same price as Costume Society members, but very few places remain. To reserve one, contact Mrs Dinah Warnock. 9 Hanover Lodge, 37a St Gross Road, Winchester, SO23 9PQ.

Indian Textiles and their Influence on Victorian Design - gallery talk by Imogen Stewart at the Victoria and Albert Museum, Monday 16 July at 1 p.m. Tel. 020 7942 2197

An **International Felt Symposium** in Bishkek, Kyrgystan, 23 July to 1 August. The programme includes exhibitions and carpet-making and yurt-making workshops. Further information can be obtained from Inessa Zhuchkova, Cultural Attache, Kyrgyz Embassy, London, tel. 020 7935 1462, fax. 020 7935 7449, e-mail: kyrembuk@aol.com

Kumihimo Braiding - Demonstration by Jacqui Carey: drop-in sessions in the Toshiba Gallery at the Victoria and Albert Museum, Saturday and Sunday 25 & 26 August, 2-5 p.m. Tel. 020 7342 2197 (J).

Spliterati-01 - The first ever Ply Split Braiding Convention will be taking place at Bampton, Oxfordshire. Described as "a celebration for the curious, the initiated and the addicted", the event will comprise *Expanding the Girths,* an exhibition of traditional camel trappings and regalia as well as innovative ply-split braiding to be held in the Town Hall from 28 September to 21 October; key lectures by Peter Collingwood, Errol Pires and Julie Hedges, and ten days of workshops, 27 September to 7 October. For programme and further details send S.A.E. to Jennie Parry, 21 St Philip's Road, Leicester, LE5 5TR,

ADVANCE NOTICE

The Eighth Biennial Symposium of the Textile Society of America will be woven around the theme, *Silk Roads, Other Roads.* Silk will serve as a primary thread of the conference, while other textile-related topics will be featured in concurrent sessions, and there will be presentations from all parts of the world. The symposium will be held at Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts, 26-28 September 2002. For information contact Marjorie Senechal, Smith College tel. 413 585-3862, e-mail: senechal@math.smith.edu, or Pam Parmal, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, tel. 617 369-3707, e-mail: pparmal@mfa.org.

The O.A.T.G. Newsletter is published three times a year with deadlines on the first Monday in February, June and October

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE - MONDAY 1 OCTOBER

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