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ASIAN TEXTILES

MAGAZINE OF THE OXFORD ASIAN TEXTILE GROUP

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A visit to the Horniman Museum

Also in this issue: Conclusion to our journey along the Silk Road, Chikan embroidery and lots more...

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Front cover photo: Bali dance costume at the Horniman

Rear cover photo: Chikan embroidery from Pakistan

Asian Textiles is now available online in full colour!

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

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Asian Textiles is published three times a year in February, June and October.
DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS MONDAY 6 February 2011
Contributions should be emailed or sent to the Editor

Editorial

The remarkable discovery of a woven skirt, preserved almost intact for nearly 6,000 years in a cave in Armenia further undermines the argument that our ancestors dressed themselves in crude animal skins until the modern era. Textiles have been woven for tens of thousands of years and only their fragility over time prevents us knowing more about how humans first began to cover themselves. And the development of a dating technique for silk, also reported here, will further aid archaeologists and anthropologists attempting to piece together our prehistory.

This issue also sees the final part of Susanna Reece's epic textile journey along the Silk Road. Her four articles make up a wonderful introduction to this fascinating subject. They have drawn out the connections between the various waypoints along the road from Europe to Asia, ending this issue in the great island chains of Indonesia and Malaysia.

Also in this issue is another article from Azra Nafees on Chikan embroidery from Pakistan. I am sure that, like me, you have all enjoyed Azra's articles on the diverse textile traditions of Pakistan. Even more remarkable is the fact that Azra has managed to complete her last couple of articles despite the fact that both her house and the school in which she taught in northern Pakistan were washed away in recent floods.

The Editor

I don't have a lot of information about this Russian postcard, except that it shows a clearly prominent figure from Russian Turkestan wearing a sumptuously decorated robe. The card dates to before the First World War. Can anyone read the Russian text?

OATG EVENTS PROGRAMME

Wednesday 9 November 2011

AGM at 5.45pm for members only

followed at 6.15pm

Krishna Riboud, a one-of-a kind collector of outstanding Asian textiles

Aurélie Samuel

Assistant Curator in charge of textile collections at the Musée Guimet , Paris

Mme Riboud, a relative of Tagore and friend of Henri Cartier Bresson started collecting ancient textiles from Bengal and over the years her collection grew to over 4000 pieces. During the 1960s she made a special study of Central Asian textiles combining technical and historical research.. Her collection was bequeathed to the Musée Guimet and forms one of the most comprehensive in the world.

25-27 November 2011

The *Textile Society Conference* will take place at the Ashmolean Museum

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Wednesday 15 February 2012

Dressing Up Chinese: William Robinson and his Chinese Alter Ego

Verity Wilson

History of Art Department, University of Oxford and Editor of *Costume*

In the context of researching how a particular Chinese garment - the dragon robe - came to be used and modified in a western setting, it became clear that mnay European and American stage entertainers of all kinds dressed up as Chinese. This talk will look at one such performer, William Robinson (1861-1918) alias Chung Ling Soo, to discover how he set about devising his costume and accessories and how his success as a hugely popular music hall star influenced luminaries as Pablo Picasso and Orson Welles.

Wednesday March 14 2012

The Art of the Sikh Loom: Kashmir Shawls and Phulkaris:

Jasleen Kandhari, Art historian and lecturer

Indo-Tibetan art historian, Jasleen Kandhari will explore the heritage of Sikh textiles in the Punjab from the 19th century. She will focus on the Kashmir Shawl and Phulkari textile traditions and will provide her own Sikh textiles in a handling session after her lecture. She has lectured and published extensively on Sikh and Indian art and curated the Sikh Manuscripts exhibition at the British Library. Previously she was the Curator of Asia at the University of British Columbia and has worked for the British Museum & the British Library

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

Programme Coordinators:

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5,900-year-old woven skirt excavated in Armenian cave

Archeological excavations at the Areni-1 cave in Armenia's Vayots Dzor region in the southern Caucasus have unearthed a woman's straw-woven skirt believed to be more than 5,900 years old. "The woman's clothing dates back to the 39th century BC," said Pavel Avestiyan, director of the The Armenian Archaeology and Ethnography Institute at a press conference in Yerevan .

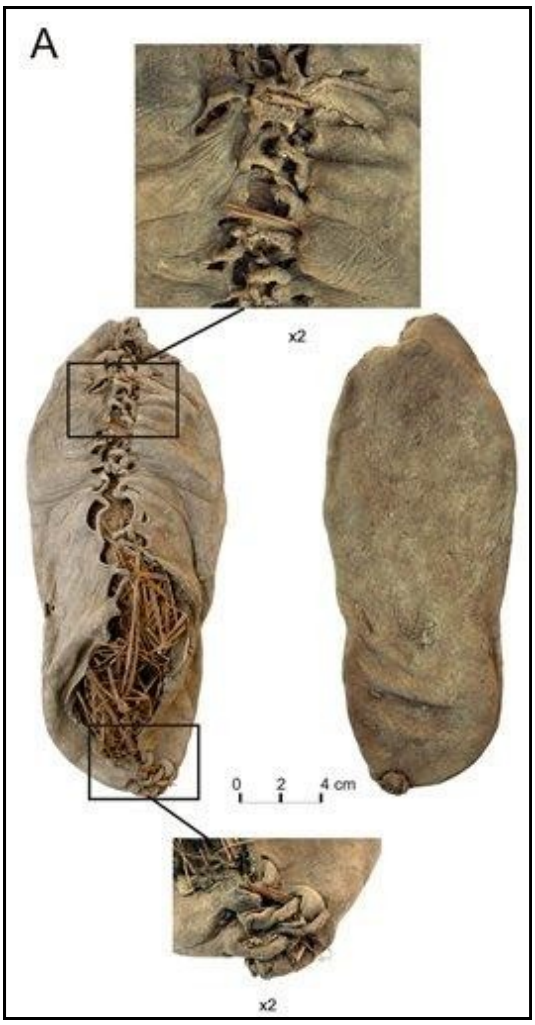
"So far we have discovered the skirt's parts, which were superbly preserved. It is an amazing material with rhythmic color hues, and other remnants of the straw-woven material were also discovered. Such thing is recorded in Armenia for the first time."

The Areni-1 cave, which was inhabited from Neolithic times up until the mediaeval period, has already given up some remarkable finds. In 2009, the world's oldest leather shoe, dated to around 5,500 years old, was found there and a wine press has also been discovered. Many of the finds were preserved in perfect condition under a thick layer of sheep droppings. The leather shoe, for example, is in perfect condition and was thought at first only to be a few hundred years old. In fact, it is older than Oetzi, the iceman found on top of the Alps and now preserved at a special museum in Bolzano, northern Italy.

The stable, cool and dry conditions in the cave resulted in exceptional preservation of the various objects that were found, which included large containers, many of which held well-preserved wheat and barley, apricots and other edible plants.

The woven skirt will be put on display in Yerevan after it has undergone conservation by French specialists. However, it is not the oldest piece of clothing ever found. In 2009 archaeologists excavated a cave in the Republic of Georgia which revealed cloth fibres more than 34,000 years old. They came from flax and although the original clothing items had disintegrated, it was evident that they had been coiled into string or rope, either for use in clothing or for making ropes or baskets.

Fibres dating from 28,000 years ago were also found in imprints in clay objects recovered from a site in the Czech Republic in 1996. Other flax fibres were found in layers dated to about 21,000 and 13,000 years ago. They were discovered when scientists analysed organic remains in the search for tree pollen.



Woven skirt (above) and shoe (right)

The magnificent collection of the Esterhazys

In September I was fortunate enough to visit Budapest, where the Museum of Applied Arts has been showing a wonderful exhibition entitled 'Aristocratic textiles from the Esterhazy Treasury'. The Esterhazy family was one of Hungary's greatest and during its heyday in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries its most prominent members were the country's leading patrons of art and music, as well as the biggest landowners.

Much of the collection was eventually sold to the Hungarian state in the mid-nineteenth and the items on show at the wonderful Museum of Applied Arts, with its bright green roof, were mostly collected by the first of the Esterhazys to make his name – Count Nikolaus (1582-1645), who was responsible for driving the Turks out of Hungary. He and his son Paul (1635-1713) began the first phase of serious palace-building and art collecting.

Most of the items in this exhibition were taken as war booty from the defeated Turks and thus represent one of the greatest collections of Ottoman items from the early seventeenth century. There are bedspreads from Turkey and Iran, carpets and silk robes, including the robes worn by several Turkish sultans and Hungarian kings.

In addition to noble clothing and bedspreads, a number of superb harnesses and horse blankets are on display, including several known as *jancsik*, for which the cloth was interwoven with silver and hundreds of rubies.

Other items are ornamented with gemstones, pearls or gilded silver plate. They were stored in velvet-lined leather cases and were only taken out on special occasions. There are wonderful examples of Ottoman saddles, horse covers, quivers and scabbards as good as any in the Topkapi Museum in Istanbul.

Harnesses – of which there are 70 in the exhibition - played a special role in the treasuries of nobles at this period, when the number of horses and the quality and quantity of their harnesses were seen as a measure of the rank and wealth of an owner. One of the horse covers in the treasury is in the shape of horse armour, whilst another is a luxury item, with silver-embroidered silk and ruby stones.

That the collection is on display at all is a minor miracle. During the second world war it was stored beneath the Esterhazy Palace at Buda, which was bombed by the Germans in 1945 and almost completely destroyed. Many of the priceless textiles stored in the vaults were beyond salvage. However, since the 1960s the Museum of Applied Arts has been working to restore whatever it can and the results – on show her for the first time - are magnificent.

Nick Fielding

One of the exhibition halls at Budapest's Museum of Applied Arts, showing Ottoman bedspreads and noble garments

New technique discovered for dating silk

Scientists at the Smithsonian Museum Conservation Institute in Suitland, Maryland, have developed, for the first time, a fast and reliable method of dating silk. The new method uses the natural deterioration of the silk's amino acids--a process known as racemization--to determine its age. As time goes by, the abundance of the L-amino acids used in the creation of the silk protein decreases while the abundance of D-amino acids associated with the silk's deterioration increases. Measuring this ever-changing ratio between the two types of amino acids can reveal the age of a silk sample.

This process has been used for decades to date bone, shells and teeth, but the techniques have always required large samples, which has usually been impossible when considering silk objects. However, the new dating technique was developed when chemist Mehdi Moini joined the Institute last year and gained access to the world-famous collection of silk treasures.

He had been working for years on a way of measuring the natural decay of materials made from protein – including silk. His only problem was that until he began work at the Smithsonian he had no well documented and dated silk items with which to calibrate his clock. His technique relies on the tendency of amino acids in protein to flip from what is known as a left-handed form to a mirror-image right-handed version. That shift in the orientation of the molecule's carbon backbone is a rare event, but it does happen at a steady rate. The more time that has passed since a silkworm spun the thread, the greater the ratio between the two types of amino acids.

By combining two chemical techniques—narrow capillary electrophoresis and mass spectrometry—Moini figured out how to measure that ratio in just 20 minutes using microscopic samples of silk.

As his technique was non-destructive, the museum allowed him to sample silk objects ranging from ancients Chinese silks to French Renaissance tapestries, a US civil war flag and even silk spun only last year. The calibration curve he developed fitted almost perfectly and no silk artwork was damaged by the process.

MEMBERSHIP OF OXFORD ASIAN TEXTILE GROUP

(includes three issues of *Asian Textiles*)

Membership subscriptions were due for renewal on 1st October.

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

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

Any queries, please contact me.

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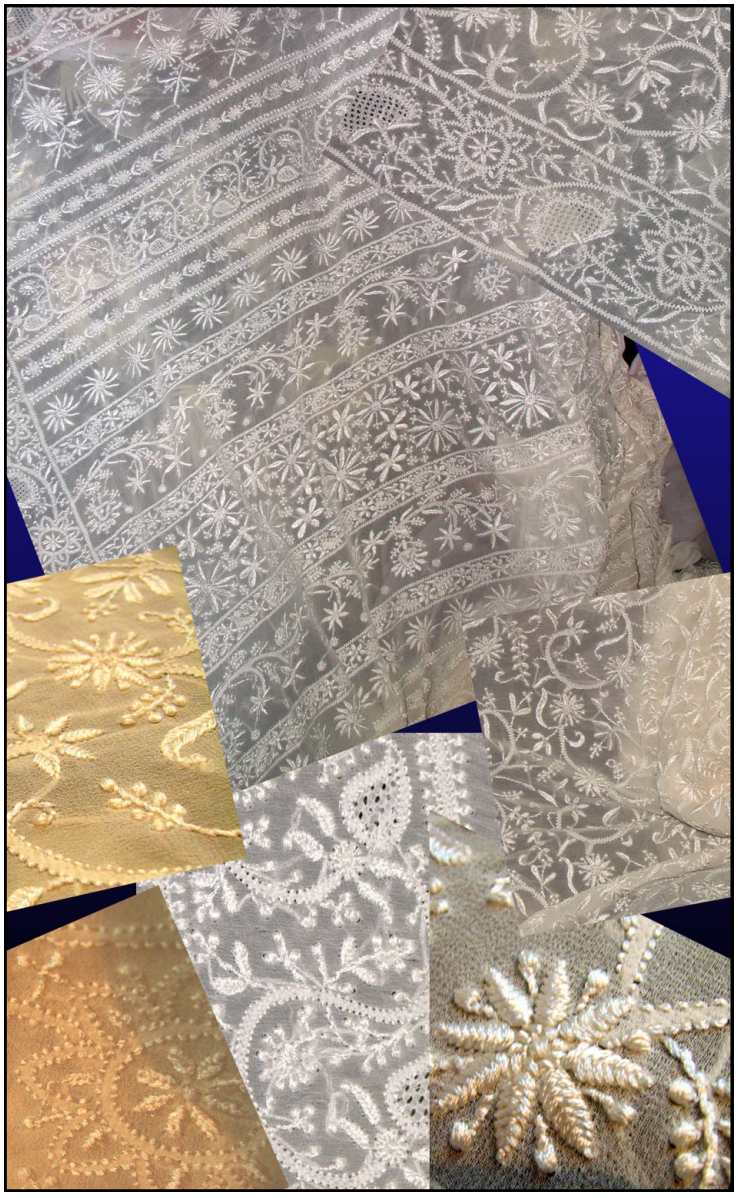
Transforming cotton into yards of magic

Azra Nafees writes about the delicate and complex embroidery technique in Pakistan that transforms the plainest textile into a work of magic

Chikankari is an art, which results in the transformation of the plainest cotton and organdie into flowing yards of magic. The word "*chikan*" is derived from a Persian word *chakeen*, derived from *chic*, which referred to the '*jali*' work done on marble or wood at that time. It also meant the rendering of delicate patterns on fabric. If you wear *chikan* you really are wearing a piece of history, as it is a form of embroidery that has been part of the art of India for centuries.



Examples of the diverse styles of chikan work

The ancient history of this style is uncertain, but it is known that in the 18th century it was introduced from the state of Bengal (now Bangladesh) into Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. Today, Lucknow is still the chief centre of production. This art travelled to different parts of the Indian subcontinent and developed roots in the south of Pakistan too. The main areas of focus today in Pakistan include the interior of Hyderabad, Sukkur and Rahimyar Khan.

Chikankari is also famous as "white embroidery work". It has since evolved and attained its glory and perfection in the world of fashion and textiles. Traditional *chikankari* was embroidered mainly on fine muslin with a white thread. Gradually the work started being done on other fabrics like organdie, *malmal*, *tanzeeb*, cotton and silk. Presently all types of fabrics, - voil, chiffon, lenin, *khadi* and handloom cloth, terry cotton, polyester and georgette - are also used in *chikan* embroidery.

Chikan has a certain grace and elegance, which ensures that it never goes out of style. Chikan embroidery is done with patterns of different designs stitched using untwisted white cotton or silk (or rayon) threads on the surface of the fabric. There is a fixed repertoire of stitches which helps in enhancing the

A woman concentrates on the detailed embroidery work that goes into making chikan.

intricacy and beauty of the embroidered work. The different types of Chikan work done today are *taipchi*, *bakhia*, *phunda*, *murri*, *jaali*, *hath-kati, pechni, ghas patti, chana patti,* etc.

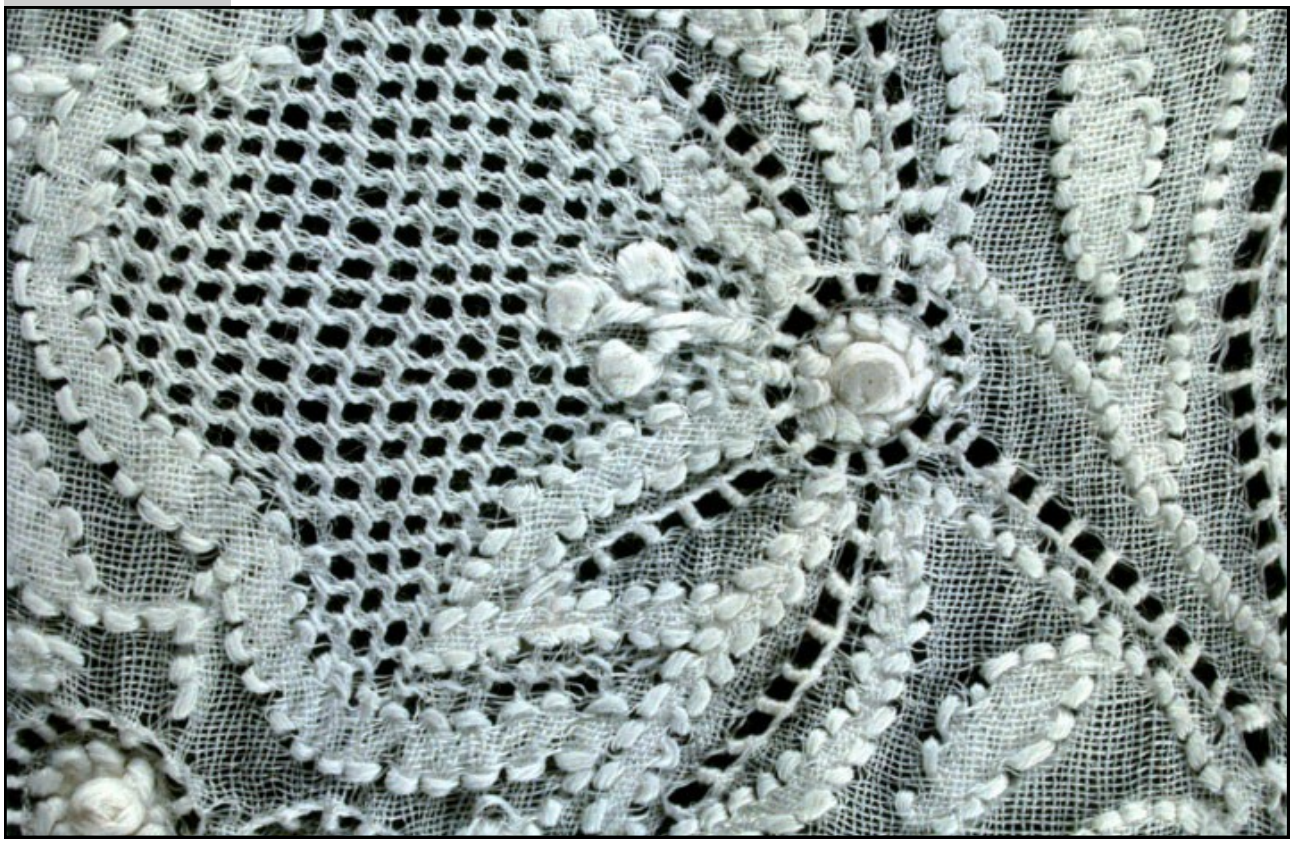
Making *chikan* embroidery is a very laborious and time consuming task. The craftsmen are trained for 15 to 20 years and sometimes it takes 10 to 15 days to make a hand-embroidered outfit, as they fill in the detailed designs with threadwork. This is why *chikan* is so expensive as compared to machine embroidery.

The *chikan* industry entails five main processes - cutting, stitching, printing, embroidery, washing, and finishing.

Cutting is carried out in lots of 20-50 garments. The layouts are done in such a manner as to minimize the wastage of material.

Stitching may be 'civil' - done exclusively for higher priced

It can take up to 15 days to make a hand-embroidered outfit



Examples of chikankari work using white cotton threads on plain muslin.

export orders - or 'commercial', which is done for cheaper goods.

Printing is carried out by using wooden blocks dipped in temporary dyes like *neel* and *safeda* (which are washed out after the embroidery has been done).

Embroidery on the fabric is mainly done by women - It takes an artisan at least four to five days to embroider a *chikan* ensemble. Each piece has to be completed by one artisan as the handiwork of each artisan differs. Only those with artistic and nimble handiwork can master the art fully.

Washing and finishing is the last step in the process. It includes bleaching, acid treatment, stiffening, and ironing.

The most common motif used in *chikan* embroidery is that of a creeper. Individual floral motifs may embellish the entire garment or just one corner. Among the floral motifs embroidered, the jasmine, rose, flowering stems, lotus and the paisley motif are the most popular.

Due to the variety of stitching-styles involved in *chikankari*, it is said to be a one-of-a-kind hand embroidery that is impossible to imitate in any other part of the

world. *Chikan* embroiders claim a repertoire of about thirty-two stitches, to which they give delightfully fanciful names, including, for example, Double-Star Earring and Peacock Feather's Eye.

Chikankari is delicate, fine embroidery done in white cotton threads on plain muslin. *Chikan* work attains a rare perfection as it relies for effect on simplicity of design, the motifs being limited in number and the excellence of the work being judged by the minuteness and evenness of the embroidery. The number of stitches is also limited; the most common are the darn stitch, the inverted satin stitch, the elongated satin stitch, network, and appliqué work.

The *chikan* designs depend for their effect on the variety of stitches used and different grades of threads used to form the patterns that include the lace like *jali*, the opaque fillings (like those done in shadow work) and the delicacy or boldness of outline and details.

There is a discipline and method in the application of the stitches. The darn stitch is worked on rough cotton fabric to fill angular designs and to cover the surface of the fabric, while satin stitching is done exclusively on delicate fabrics like silk, muslin, or linen. In *chikan* some stitches are worked from the wrong side of the fabric, while others are worked from the right side.

It is, however, unique in its discipline in as much as stitches designated for a particular purpose are used only for that purpose - they are not replaced by other stitches. For example, the chain stitch (*zanjeera*) will only be used for the final outline of a leaf, petal, or stem.

Chikankari is something like unity in diversity i.e. it includes some simple and complex stitches giving it an effect which is simple, gentle, delicate and yet elegant. In days gone by *chikankari* was only done on dresses, but these days it can be seen on a variety of items such as saris, suits, *kurtas*, table covers, bed sheets, pillow and cushion covers, table linen and curtains etc. Earlier, *chikan* embroidery was done using white-coloured thread only, but now it is found in a variety of colours to cater for the modern and international tastes.

Wonderful effects can be obtained by using different stitches and grades of thread

Afghan rug trade unravels

This article by Abdul Latif Sahak was originally published in *Afghan Recovery Report*, No 411, published by the Institute of War and Peace Reporting

Carpet-weavers in northern Afghanistan say business is so bad and working conditions so difficult that they are going to Pakistan, where the trade is in better shape. Traders say Afghanistan lacks the processing infrastructure needed to make the carpet industry self-sufficient, raw materials are expensive, and the taxation system is all wrong, with foreign sales penalised by heavy duties while imported rugs are taxed at a low rate. They say the government needs to do more to support this traditional industry which still accounts for a high proportion of exports.

Murad, 55, from Afghanistan's northern Balkh province, said more than 200 families involved in weaving had left his home district, Kaldar, in the last six months, heading for Pakistan. "My cousin [who has left] has urged me to go there as well, because there's more work available for good pay," he said.

Murad's family is currently working on a large carpet, and when that is finished they too will be going to Pakistan as they cannot survive on what they earn in Afghanistan. "We have to buy raw materials ourselves, which many weavers can't afford to do. We don't have electricity here, so we are prevented from working by the heat of the day and by darkness at night-time," he explained..

Abdul Sabur Qaderi, head of the Balkh provincial department for refugees and displaced people, confirmed that the exodus was widespread. "We don't have precise figures for the number of carpet weavers who have left, but we can say as an estimate that dozens of families from every village have moved to foreign countries," he said.

In northern Afghanistan, rug-making is closely associated with the Turkmen minority. Abdul Satar Begzadah, who heads the association of Afghan rug exporters and the weavers' union, said current production in Balkh, one of the northern provinces where carpet-making is an important industry, showed a 60 per cent decline on output two years ago, measured by the total area woven.

Many weavers fled from the Soviet invasion of 1979, and resumed their trade as refugees in Pakistan. Some returned after 1992 when the mujahedin took over government, but had to flee again soon afterwards as internecine conflict broke out. After the Taleban government was ousted in 2001, weavers joined the general influx of Afghans returning from exile.

Paradoxically, although the weavers came back, most of their work is not exported in finished form to the international market. Instead, most carpets are sent to Pakistan to be trimmed and washed, because those processes can be done cheaper and better there. Then they are exported as Pakistani rather than Afghan items.

According to Begzadah, 97 per cent of the carpets produced in Afghanistan are taken to Pakistan to be finished. "They are exported as Pakistan-made brands, and Pakistan earns the [principal] income," he said.

Apart from the lack of cutting and washing facilities, Begzadah said the Afghan tax system was an additional disincentive to selling finished carpets. He said the Afghan customs rate on exported rugs was over 12 US dollar per kilograms, whereas in Pakistan it was one dollar a kilo.

A trader in Mazar-e Sharif, Mir Ahmad, said it was almost impossible to market Afghan rugs abroad. "Our country doesn't have good relations with countries where there's a good market for

our carpets. And when we participate in exhibitions organised in countries where people don't know about carpets, we make a loss," he said.

He also alleged that the Afghan authorities did not support dealers who tried to strike out on their own. "If a carpet trader wants to travel to a neighbouring state, a country in the region, he will need to have 100,000 dollars deposited in the bank before he'll be granted a visa. Traders aren't able to deposit that kind of money, and the government is uncooperative," he said.

Sayed Taher Roshanzadah, chairman of the chamber of commerce for Balkh province, said things were not as bad as the carpet traders claimed. "If a trader wishes to import or export something, the chamber of commerce works with him. There's no problem obtaining visas, [but] if a trader tries to get a visa independently, embassies will ask for a bank account," he said.

Other than that, he said, the biggest difficulty facing the rug industry was a purely technical one, "The main problem is lack of washing and cutting facilities and professional carpet designers. The reason Afghan carpets are taken to Pakistan is for processing."

Selling handmade Afghan carpets in large numbers inside the country is not really viable, given that average incomes are very low and the bottom end of the market is swamped with cheap machine-made carpets from Iran and Turkey.

Traders like Khwaja Qasim, from Mazar-e Sharif, blame their government for levying low taxes on imported carpets. "People are economically weak and they can't afford to buy Afghan carpets, because the cheapest costs 200 dollars, whereas they can easily buy a foreign machine-made carpet for 40 dollars. That's the reason why there's no domestic market for Afghan carpets," he said.

As weavers find their earnings affected by fluctuations in the market, some are deciding to emigrate or just to leave the trade. Khanom Godasta works with four of her female neighbours at her home in Mazar-e Sharif, but says it is no longer tenable for her to continue.

"We're working on this carpet and we might make 60 dollars each once it's sold. Can one live on that for a month?" she said "In the past, carpets would have been bought and paid for while they were still being made, but now nobody cares about them."

Abdul Latif Sahak is an IWPR-trained reporter in Balkh province, northern Afghanistan.

Some Afghan families are migrating back to Pakistan where the carpet industry is better supported

The end of the journey—the islands of South East Asia

In her final article on the textiles of the Silk Road, Susanna Reece discusses the diversity of textiles found in the islands of South East Asia

This is the fourth (sic) of my trilogy of articles about a "virtual" journey along the Silk Road at the V&A in Autumn 2009. Its publication coincides with the second anniversary of my taking the course and, although this particular course is no longer in the catalogue, a year-long course on the Arts of Asia is running until July 2012 and can be taken by the term as well, so it is not too late to join in for January. Alternatively, the short course ***Silk, Style and Symbolism: Chinese and Japanese Textiles*** is running from 19 January to 29 March 2012.

In this final article, I will be concentrating on South East Asia, which was taught over the last two weeks of the course by Fiona Kerlogue, who will be very familiar to members of the OATG. She focussed more on production techniques than many of the earlier speakers and this was particularly welcome as a means of developing our understanding of the practicalities involved.

Origins, materials and techniques

In her first of four talks, Fiona spoke about the origins of South East Asian textile traditions, their materials and techniques. She first clarified that the areas she was talking about fell into two broad regions: Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam. Laos; and Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Indonesia (and thus to Sumatra and E. Timor), Borneo and Brunei. There are significant geographical, linguistic and cultural differences between these regions and the nearby mainland islands and these are reflected in textile production and technique.

From very early on there was also a maritime influence from Indian and Arab trade. Geographically, there is a chain of volcanoes and mountains in the North Mainland of Asia, with three main rivers - -the Irawaddy, Mekong and Chao Phraya providing irrigation and transport. There is a varied climate, from very dry in Eastern Indonesia, to tropical rainforest and rich fertile valleys with volcanic soil for growing rice. The Equator runs through the maritime region.

The designs on this jacket from Borneo relate closely to those on the intricately woven baskets from the same area, and are also found on local ikat-patterned and beaded textiles and garments. Here, the designs are woven and embroidered. The jacket is fastened at the front with three round buttons made out of conch shell.

From this variety has arisen a range of different textile traditions: rattan weaving in Sumatra, use of barkcloth for a grave in Papua New Guinea, a Sulawesi tunic with patterns painted on in a stylised buffalo head motif, Ikat dyeing and shell-back polish for a blanket in the Philippines. Fibres used include hemp, abaca, palm leaves, rami, pineapple, cotton and silk.

Natural dyes are still used, mostly indigo, with *mengkudu* (morinda citrifolia) used for red dye. The roots are crushed and dried and mixed with water, then mordanted with, usually, aluminium-based plants. Other sources are marelang bark, which produces a reddish-brown colour, and lac, which is similar to cochineal. This was used on silk for the nineteenth century export trade. Fiona noted that there is a lot of secrecy around dyes and their production.

Weaving techniques include the use of a body-tension loom, introduced via southern China, with Ikat being very common, Ikat being the Malay word for "tie". Both warp and weft Ikat is found, with weft usually being kept for silk.

Cambodian *Samphot* - waist cloth made in silk, ikat weave, weft only . c1900.

Warp Ikat is found in East Indonesia, Borneo and the Philippines and, in very simple form, in Sumatra and the Golden Triangle (the mountains overlapping Burma, Vietnam, Laos and Thailand, which were less subject to external influence).

Weft Ikat is found in the Royal courts and in the coastal regions that had Indian influences, e.g. Thailand and Cambodia. Double Ikat is found only in East Bali, where it is used for ritual cloths for young women. Batik silk was also used for rituals. Tapestry weaving is found in Burma with up to 100 shuttles used.

A supplementary weft technique using metallic thread is found in Songket, and is done by adding pattern rows between the structural, main tabby weave. This can be added by hand or by using pattern rods. In the *Pilih* ("to choose") technique the pattern yarns are wrapped round the warp threads as it goes along. A very rare supplementary warp technique is also used, for example in an East Sumba skirt cloth. See ***http://www.borneanart.com/EN/catalogue_tissue.html*** for some excellent images of techniques and motifs used in Borneo.

Batik is a well-known technique from this region, most famously in Java, but also in Sumatra. Hot wax is drawn onto cloth using a bamboo and copper "pen". The wax resists the dye and is boiled out at the end. The Hmong peoples also practise batik using different tools and patterns.

The Malaysians also have a crude form of the technique and this has led to some commercial disputes about the right to use the term "batik". "Rainbow" resist dye techniques and tie-dyeing are also found in the Philippines.

Batik sarong given to The British Museum by C.H. Beving, a textile industrialist who took a particular interest in the techniques and styles of cloth production developed around the world. He bought this cloth in 1911, at the height of batik production both in Indonesia and in Europe.

Gold thread embroidery is found in areas that were subject to overseas conquest, particularly in the Golden Triangle of the hill regions (Yao). There is also a lot of cross-stitch. The V&A has some Yao textiles but none with images on its website so this picture of a Yao woman is from Wikipedia:

In her second talk Fiona described how the patterns and use of space on South East Asian textiles reflect ancestral and kinship ties and symbols. One example is triangular patterning on Sumatran sarongs, which are also used as head-scarves and for rituals and ceremonies including weddings. The sarong is the simplest form of tailoring - the Pwo Karen sarong has two lengths sewn along the selvedges. Untailored cloths are also wrapped or draped around the body or head; tablet-woven strips are used for binding Buddhist texts.

Ethnicity is expressed through clothes people wear and there is also evidence of a strong trading culture. For example, an appliqued hat with red, white and black beadwork from the Philippines has amuletic significance, which can be traced back to Hinduism and representations of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Batak dancers in north Sumatra wear traditional cloths to perform.

Toba Batak dancers, North Sumatra,

Karen costumes reflect both marital status and ethnicity. Colour is included on marriage and there are distinctions between Pwo and Sgaw costumes. Young monastic novices dress in the finery of Gautama to go to the Wat to have their heads shaved before initiation. They wear a skirt-cloth and a woman's shawl before dressing as a monk.

Mangku priests in Bali wear white cloth for purity. At a Malay wedding the bride and groom dress as King and Queen for the day, while in Cambodia the wedding clothes reflect a matrilineal tradition. Hmong women wear hemp skirts and plaid scarves in the McCulloch pattern in the Bac Ha market, a hill area of Vietnam.

Weaving, especially with a continuous warp, is associated with a life force and therefore cloth is seen as very powerful for ritual, especially at birth and death. In Sumatra the first 40 days of a child's life are regarded as significant, a vulnerable time before its name is given. At a name-giving ceremony in Sumatra the cushion ends are made of velvet and there is a pile of 15 sarongs for a girl (7 for a boy).

A dragon baby carrier in five colours gives symbolic protection. A circumcision ceremony will include a protective bed covering and a sarong will be wrapped round a marrying couple. Skirt cloths are worn in a Javanese healing ceremony.

In the Malaysian state of Sabah the Bajau and Iranun of Kota Belud weave the traditional headgear called *kain dastar* which is also worn by almost every indigenous group in Sabah. These have been described as 'freedom fighter' head cloths - bullets are expected to bounce off! One website does indeed suggest that tests proved the fabric is impervious to metal scalpels and is also acid- and fire-proof. The symbols on these head cloths reflect Ottoman links and historical attempts (unsuccessful) to enlist Turkey's help against the Dutch. *Ikat kepala* is the Indonesian term for a head cloth; in the late 19th century a man's head cloth from Jambi, East Sumatra was made of naturally-dyed cotton, using hand-drawn batik.

Man's headcloth
[*ikat kepala*] late 19th century
Jambi, east Sumatra, Indonesia
Textile, cotton, natural dyes
Technique: hand-drawn batik

Genevieve Duggan's work on the Savu peoples in Indonesia has researched kinship ties, male and female descent groups and marriage rules. The islanders have a strong cultural link with the lontar plant and weavers divide themselves into two lineages: the Hubi ae or Greater Blossom use a lozenge motif, whereas the Hubi Iki or Lesser Blossom use a serpent motif. Tradition has it that the origins of this division lie in two sisters who fought over an indigo pot. The website *http://www.savu-raijua.com/textiles.htm* has some lovely pictures.

Gender relations are also expressed through textiles with emphasis on complementarity of the sexes. Weaving is a symbol of womanhood and weaving and dyeing are seen as The Women's Warpath, the equivalent of male head-hunting. In East Javan textiles the colours worn by women reveal their marital or maternal status. Red and white are used for women of marriageable age in the South; red, yellow, blue for mothers in the West; and black/dark blue cloth for grandmothers in the North and North West. These colours are also associated with the points of the compass.

Symbolism in textile motifs includes: the *banj* or ten thousand swastikas; the *ganggeng* or seaweed motif (on batik cloth from Madura); the Naga, a dragon or serpent; the Java, wings of the *garuda*, a Hindu symbol; ducks in a row; a skull tree; an areca palm trunk (for marriage – children are seen as staying close as the seeds of the areca palm do); bamboo shoots at ends of cloths or on facing edges of a sarong (West Sumatra – they are upright and flexible, which are seen as good human attributes; also bamboos grow in clumps, symbolising community); a python skin (used by the Kodi of West Sumba, seen as a life force and symbol of well-being; also used as male wedding earrings and seen as a symbol of female fertility). The size of a symbol denotes rank and, even where the people are Muslim, the symbols tend to be Hindu, which perhaps denotes an influence from the royal courts.

Historical Themes: Trade and Religion

In her third talk Fiona turned to the influences of trade and religion on South East Asian textiles. The first influence came from the coastal trade route between China, Malaysia (Malacca), Sumatra, India and Europe from the sixth century. Use of beads is one evidence of this. Before this sea route, trade took place overland via Vietnam (which had a mixed relationship with China) and Chinese textile influence can be found in Vietnam and in Thailand. For example, Thai prayer flags for the pagoda are red, black and white with yellow and motifs of elephants or supernatural life; they use a supplementary weft and include elements of ancestral honouring. Influences can also be seen in Buddhist ordination cloths and offerings, ritual cloths for men attending the temple, mats, altar decorations and stands, bindings for scriptures.

Ceremonial cloth, silk with woven warp and supplementary weft decoration gold brocade. Elaborate decorative border on three sides and its gold-on-white centrefold. The ends are decorated with finial motifs on a series of mauve, brown and green bands, set in a red ground which extends around the borders.

Chinese costumes were sent to South Eastern rulers and had an influence on local wear, for example in the shape of jackets and use of asymmetrical designs and materials, including imported silk. There were Chinese settlers as well, which reinforced these influences and led to ethnic sub-groups particularly in Malaysia and Singapore. In these groups women tended to keep to the Malay traditions whereas the men maintained the Chinese, including ancestral offering. In modern times, a more eclectic mix can be observed, for example a sarong and kabay (jacket) which includes the use of crochet and European influence in the shaping.

Javanese batik shows different regional influences. In the central region it uses mostly indigo and dark brown whereas on the north coast brighter colours are used – red, blue and white – showing Chinese influence, with precise symbolism where the motifs used have clear meaning. These include a variant of the swastika; a floral pattern in very traditional pastel colours with one red panel; and a red, blue, white and black cloud motif, exclusive to Cirebon in North West Java, which shows a clear Mongolian influence. Chinese altar cloths in batik or silk embroidery use a phoenix motif and the red dye used is still in the control of the Chinese today. Satin stitch embroidery is another Chinese influence.

Another major influence on the region is India. The Angkor courts had Hindu names by the ninth century and influences are also seen in monastic carvings, dance and textiles. Artisans from Burma were captured and their influence is shown on the Borobudur reliefs in Java. The clothes on these sculptures possibly suggest a stability in design for costume and textile patterning.

Tinted plaster-cast from a series of sculptured stone panels illustrating the Gandavyuha along the chief wall of the second gallery in the great Buddhist stupa of Borobudur in the Kedu District of Central Java. 8th century

By the seventeenth century there is written evidence from European records of a demand for Indian luxury textiles, with a pre-existence of Arab, Portuguese and Chinese traders. The Dutch and English were looking for gold but quickly realised the importance of spices, especially pepper, cloves and nutmeg, and the need to have Indian cloth to trade.

A double ikat silk potala cloth has been preserved, red with white decoration; its 8-pointed star shape with a circle is very typical. Double ikat is found only in Bali, but warp and weft ikat is also found, with potala designs also being made in batik, copying woven patterns. Cheaper block-printed patterns were also produced as local imitations. Hindu-influenced motifs include Mount Nehru in gold leaf. Other Indian-influenced techniques include drawing out metal to bring out the thread and paisley designs.

Burmese pictorial textile hanging known as a *kalaga*. The owner would have used it either as a decorative wall hanging, a room partition, or as a screen hung outside the house on festive occasions. Late 19th century. Appliquéd with shaped pieces of coloured woollen fabrics, silver and gold cloth, silver and gold thread and sequins; supplementary details embroidered with coloured thread and painted; white cotton tape with metal loops sewn along the reverse of the top edge .

Islamic and Moghul influences are found from the fourteenth century and there is evidence of Indian Muslims trading in Sumatra in the thirteenth century. An Ottoman-influenced waistcoat looks Hungarian in style and includes a Star of Solomon motif. Other costume also shows an Ottoman influence: wide trousers for women, shawl cloths and sarongs for men. Satin, velvet, read and gold thread were used for a circumcision costume, which also has a cloud collar. Couched gold thread on velvet is also an Islamic influence as seen on a wall hanging.

There is evidence of some European influence from the late sixteenth to seventeenth centuries, although it is not huge. Melaka was Portuguese from 1511; they also traded in Timor. Cloth with an heraldic design has been found with a warp ikat and is probably Dutch. There was a Spanish and Christian influence in the Philippines from 1521, one example being an image of Christ dressed in a traditional *hingi*. Crocheted lace was the main European technique, introduced and found in the Dutch East Indies. On the north coast of Java settlers intermarried and women not socially accepted set up batik production. Motifs used have included bouquets, comic characters, dinosaurs and fairy tales.

European-influenced sarong. Java, ca.1930. This type of batik design, with the same pattern of bouquets depicted on both the body and head of the sarong has been very popular in Java since the 1920s. It was made in Pekalongan on the northern coast of Java.

Sandra Niessen has studied Batak textiles and found a pre-1884 jacket with embellishments of European cloth. Ethnic Karo identity was marked by plain indigo dyeing, with a shift from blue to red as Malay costume was copied. Red and gold became used for shawls and skirts, with indigo now used only for ritual cloths. There was also a German missionary influence on the Bataks with girls taught weaving but without any understanding of the motifs and designs of different groups; this led to a forgetting of traditions between the 1940s and 1980s.

Modern Times: industry, development and markets

In her final talk Fiona discussed the increased pace of change from the second half of the twentieth century. Different factors were at work: commercialisation, independence, tourism and nation-building. The demand for textiles remained high, with a growing middle class. Political moves towards independence disrupted trade, leading to hunger and a loss of textile traditions; however government help and outside influence grew as new nation states were built.

There was commercialisation of the batik industry in nineteenth century Java, which led to

production in dark dingy workshops, removing it from the domestic context as compared to Malaya and Sumatra. This led to masculinisation of the work with the use of flying shuttle looms, new materials, markets and styles. Couturier textiles also developed, again the work of men. At the same time there were development initiatives that aimed to increase women's incomes via textiles.

One example was the Easter Weaving Room established in the Philippines in 1906 by Charles Henry Brent, a US Episcopalian. Girls were taught to weave there from 1911. Cambodia saw many foreign NGOS seeking to build tourist market outlets. At the same time traditional weaving practices continued despite allegations that they were destroyed during the Pol Pot regime. In Indonesia the *kebaya* blouse became an emergent national and provincial dress, with the government trying to encourage people to forget ethnic traditions. See Victoria Cattoni's fascinating article on the kebaya here: *http://coombs.anu.edu.au/SpecialProj/ASAA/biennial-conference/2004/Cattoni-V-ASAA2004.pdf.*

Kebaya blouse from Java

In the Golden Triangle, there has been a commercialisation of Hmong textile art, supported by the US in Laos through production of non-representational ornamental designs in money purses, blouses etc. Figurative designs have now become traditional and story cloths are especially popular with tourists. As part of the Pagoda initiative in Phnom Penh local groups in Cambodia are actually thriving and making traditional textiles. The Malaysian Ministry of Cultural Heritage seeks to promote such textiles as 'craft' but this can be problematic; there is also desire to create a proper textile market. In Bali there is the 'Thread of Life' initiative, of which members of the OATG will be aware from William Ingram's talk about this in November 2008.

Fiona considers that tourists have a varied influence on textiles. There is a general interest in buying textiles and there have been specific textile tours to the region since the 1980s. Traditional cloths have been produced with new designs and colours for a tourist market; other textiles are not traditional and have been popularised for tourists. Items in Bali have been made out of fabric woven elsewhere. Fiona's view was very strongly that a tourist market is not a sufficient outlet to preserve textile traditions and that developing local markets is also necessary.

Southeast Asian textiles - Suggested reading list

General

S Fraser-Lu (1988) Handwoven Textiles of Southeast Asia. Oxford University Press.
Robyn Maxwell (1990) Textiles of Southeast Asia. Oxford University Press.
M. Gittinger and L. Lefferts (1992) Textiles and the Tai Experience in Southeast Asia. The Textile Museum, Washington.

Indonesia

M. Gittinger (1979) Splendid Symbols: Textiles and Tradition in Indonesia. The Textile Museum, Washington.
B. Hauser-Schlaubin et al. (1991) Textiles in Bali. British Museum Press.
John Gillow (1992) Traditional Indonesian Textiles. Thames and Hudson.
Anne and John Summerfield (eds) (1999) Walk in Splendour: Ceremonial Dress and the Minangkabau. Fowler Museum of Cultural History. UCLA.
Roy Hamilton (ed.) (1994) Gift of the Cotton Maiden: textiles of Flores and the Solor Islands. Fowler Museum of Cultural History. UCLA.
Fiona Kerlogue (2004) Batik: Design Style and History. Thames and Hudson.
Sandra Niessen (2009) Legacy in cloth: Batak textiles of Indonesia KITLV Press, Leiden.

Malaysia

Grace Selvanayagam (1990) Songket: Malaysia's Woven Treasure. Oxford University Press.

Thailand

Susan Conway (1992) Thai Textiles. British Museum Press.

Burma

E. Dell and S. Dudley (eds.) (2003) Textiles from Burma. Philip Wilson Publishers.

Cambodia

Gillian Green (2003) Traditional Textiles of Cambodia: Cultural Threads and Material Heritage. River Books.

Philippines

Roy Hamilton (1998) From the Rainbow's Varied Hue: Textiles of the Southern Philippines. Fowler Museum of Cultural History. UCLA.

The illustrations for this article come from the Victoria and Albert Museum, with the exception of the Batak sarong (British Museum), Batak dancers (superstock.com) and man's headcloth (National Gallery of Australia).

An away-day to the Horniman Museum

On Wednesday, 24 August, OATG members joined with Friends of the Pitt Rivers Museum on a visit n to the Horniman Museum in Forest Hill, South London. We were welcomed by representatives of the Friends of the Horniman and also by Fiona Kerlogue, Deputy Keeper of Anthropology, who gave us a short talk about the museum's history and the ethnographic collections.

Fredrick John Horniman, the founder of the museum, a Victorian tea trader, had collected artefacts and natural history specimens from around the world. Although at first they were on show in his own home, he eventually opened a purpose-built museum in 1901. Horniman's aims were that the museum should be for recreation, entertainment, and instruction.

The displays in the Centenary Gallery were arranged under four headings. The introductory section, *The Gift: The Horniman Family,* showed items that illustrated how Fredrick Horniman had collected exotic and beautiful pieces that would both amaze and educate. *The New Museum: Illustrating Evolution* showed how objects were displayed after the move to the new museum. Academics such as Alfred Cort Haddon had advised on these displays, and items were arranged to demonstrate the ideas of the time about cultural evolution.

The third section, *The Material Culture Archive***,** demonstrated the later idea that differences in culture were due to adaptations to different environments. The final section, *Scholars, Travellers and Traders*, showed examples of material collected in recent years. As at the Pitt Rivers Museum, the collections at the Horniman are, in general, displayed by type [rather than by country of origin, ethnic group, or materials, for instance]. However, it is noted in the display text that in the modern world, with newspapers, TV, internet, mass production, re-cycling, etc., there is so much blurring of boundaries that it is increasingly hard to make defined, clear-cut categories.

After lunch in the café it was then time for Fiona's second talk: an introduction to the current exhibition: *Bali: Dancing for the gods*. The exhibition had been prompted by the fact that Beryl de Zoete, a dance critic, had visited Bali for two extended periods in the 1930s, and on her death in 1962 her collection of photographs and film of Bali was given to the Horniman. De Zoete had met Walter Spies, considered to be 'the father of Balinese tourism', and they had decided to produce a book* together, De Zoete contributing most of the text, and Spies producing most of the photographs.

A German musician and painter who had grown up in Russia, Spies had been working in Jogyakarta in the 1920s as a court musician and had later been invited to Bali by the ruler of Ubud. He was responsible for making extensive photographic records of Bali. The island was fast changing – even then – as the result of tourism, and changes have continued until the present day; but, because of its strongly rooted culture, the dance tradition continues today, though sometimes in an altered form.

Fiona explained that dance is considered an offering to the gods, hence the title of the exhibition. Many Balinese art forms, including dance, had come to Bali over 400 years ago, when Islam arrived in Java and the Hindu court moved to Bali. Since then many dances have developed in their very distinctive Balinese forms. Among the dances described were the graceful *Legong dance*, performed by girls as young as eight years old, their bodies tightly bound with gold brocade; the *Baris dance*, the dance of the energetic male warriors; and the masked *Topeng dances*.

The battle between *Barong*, the lion-like character representing good, and the evil 'witch', *Ragda,* is a classic performance in Bali. I had not previously realised that the *Kecak dance* [known as the Monkey Dance], also representing a battle between good and evil and telling the story of the role of Hanuman's monkey army in the rescue of Sita, had been developed by Spies.

Fiona had made several collecting visits to Bali. Not only did she collect costumes and other artefacts, but she had also made a lot of film recording. All the time she was liaising with the exhi-

bition designers. Thus when the exhibition came together, visitors were able to see not only the wonderful dance costumes but also film of the dances in performance. We learned a great deal about the collecting process: how the masks on display had been specially commissioned because the 'real ones' are sacred, how Fiona had to wait five hours for the Minister of Culture to arrive before filming the Baris dance, how gold head ornaments had been commissioned in silver plate and were thus affordable, and how very fortunate she had been to be able to buy some double ikat cloth, *geringsing*, only made in the 'Bali Aga'[pre-Hindu] village of Tenganan.

Having heard Fiona's talk about the exhibition, we were far more able to appreciate all that we saw on display. She had explained that she hoped that the exhibition would help visitors to see 'behind the objects' and that it would also illustrate the dynamism of Balinese culture. The costumes were displayed on mannequins with specially commissioned hand and feet – anyone who has visited Bali will appreciate that no clumsy Western hands and feet would have looked right! Each set of dance costumes was accompanied by contemporary film, and thus one could see that it was a truly living culture. In parallel, the black and white photographs taken by Walter Spies in the 1930s were also shown.

As well as the displays associated with dance, there were also some single-case displays illustrating other aspects of Balinese life. It so happened that Emslie Horniman, son of the Museum's founder, had visited Bali in 1925 and had collected a figure of Dewi Sri, the goddess of the rice harvest, plaited from *lontar* palm, and this was displayed in a 'rice' case.

In keeping with Horniman's original aims, the exhibition included several sections designed to appeal particularly to family visitors. There were information panels with explanations about expression in dance, about fans, and how to tie a head cloth, for instance. There was also an invitation to try out some shadow puppets, and there was a corner for trying on some *topeng* masks.

Although I had visited Bali several times during the 1980s, and had naturally been to dance performances, I was bowled over by these stunning costumes. It is difficult to explain but what one might have taken for granted when in viewed situ seemed the more amazing when seen within the Horniman. (In Bali *everything* is so beautiful one wonders if the Balinese themselves are aware of that) An excellent day out and we are most grateful to Fiona for giving us two talks and for answering questions in the exhibition space afterwards. We are also very grateful to the Horniman's Friends for helping with our visit.

Felicity Wood

A *topeng* performance representing an old courtier who is trying to maintain his dignity. The patterns on the costume are made with applied gold leaf. Photograph by Walter Spies. Image number: 397-1850. Copyright and courtesy Horniman Museum.

****Dance and Drama in Bali***,
Walter Spies and Beryl de Zoete
Originally published 1938
Reprinted as a paper back, 2002
ISBN 962 593 880X

Changing fashions for *abayas* in Qatar

Christina Lindholm's lively and stimulating OATG talk on 3 August based on her PhD on Qatari *abayas* began with a brief history setting the context for her work. Qatar is a small Gulf state, about the size of Wales, with a barren landscape, no natural resources, mild pleasant winters and very hot summers. Historically, it was peopled by nomadic Bedouins whose only income was seasonal pearl fishing. So for centuries, Qatar was an isolated and impoverished country, unknown and ignored by the rest of the world.

Originally Ottoman, the country has been ruled by the Al-Thani family since the 1800s, becoming a British protectorate until 1971 when it became independent. The depression in the 1920's and the introduction of cheaper Japanese cultured pearls in the 1930's led to severe poverty and many of the 27,000 Qataris leaving the country to find work in India and surrounding states. The late 1930's saw the discovery of oil, which was further developed after World War II, leading to an explosion of the population, both returning Qataris and expatriates.

In 2002 natural gas was discovered, resulting in Qatar becoming one of the richest countries in the world, now with a population of 1.5 million, of which 300,000 are indigenous Qatari's. Most Qataris are Wahabi Muslims, a conservative sect that follows early interpretations of Islam.

Traditionally the women wore a long loose dress, with a round neck and simple long sleeves, over an underskirt or pantaloons. Outdoors they always wore a *r'as abaya*, a cloak made from a squared piece of cloth, worn draped on the head and held closed by hand. It was always black, usually cotton or wool, rarely or simply decorated, unless it was for a special occasion, in which case it would be made of silk and decorated in gold metallic *Zari* braiding, normally done by local Indian tailors. They also wore a *batula*, an indigo dyed face mask, beaten to give it a shiny metallic appearance and held in place by the teeth, resulting in some elderly Qatari women having permanently blue stained faces!

The *r'as abaya* was ubiquitous and strongly associated with religion. Qataris hold strong beliefs around honour and shame, and particularly that the good name of the family rests with the women. Only by avoiding being seen by men outside the immediate family can women's honour be retained. Over time, exposure to the outside world resulted in stricter interpretations of the Qu'ran , and the *ras abaya* developed into the *abaya*, a full length, all encompassing black gown, worn with a long rectangular scarf, a *shayla*, wound around the head and worn at all times when outside the home.

These covered the woman completely and allowed her to move around

outdoors without attracting the unwanted attention of men. Unadorned, this garment remained little changed in style until the 1970's when exposure to the outside world led to a more secular society and the adoption of western dress by some women.

However, the late 1980's saw an increase in Islamism and women adopting the *abaya* again and by the late 1990's they were worn by all women, but in a more modern form. This *abaya* is more like an outer dress or light coat pulled over the head, worn with a *shayla* and sometimes a *niqab*, a cloth veil to cover their faces. Again, wearing them was closely linked with beliefs of Islam and family honour, although nowhere in the Qu'ran does it say women must be covered.

By this time many Qatari women were wealthy, well educated, widely travelled career women, and like all fashionable women, they were keen to express individuality and modernity through their dress. They didn't however, feel the need to adopt western dress, instead choosing to retain the *abaya* as an expression of their beliefs and as a means of showing their wealth and modernity.

Nowadays it comes in many forms and women will have many different *abayas* for different uses - casual ones for work and play, more ornate ones for social occasions. They can be very elaborate, often reflection other cultures, such as kimonos, and containing beading, detailed embroidery and cutwork. Sleeves became a feature – sometimes very long and decorated, sometimes puffed and beaded and *shayla's* often have matching embroidery.

Also, they are no longer restricted to garments that pull over the head, covering all undergarments. Some are open down the front, held in place by merely a clasp, and revealing the (often European) fashions worn underneath. Decoration is no longer restricted to the front neckline and can now be seen on all parts of the garment and often incorporating logos from western fashion houses. The most elaborate garments can cost many thousands of dollars.

This notion of them as fashion spread and in 2009 an Haute Couture Abayas show was held in the George V Hotel in Paris where the British designer Bruce Oldfield showed an abaya with braided diamond borders worth £177,000.

Although widely worn inside the country still, many Qatari women discard them when travelling abroad, preferring instead to wear western designer clothes.

Having taken us through a fascinating historical journey of Qatari *abayas* from religious symbol to disposable fashion garment, Christina raised the question of why this change has come about. Far from taking women out of the gaze of others, they are now designed to attract attention.

So what is happening? Why have their clothes become more elaborate and fashion statements? There is a number of possible answers. Women are not longer isolated and have become aware of clothes as 'fashion'; all Qatari women are now educated and can read for themselves, discovering that the Qu'ran doesn't say they should wear black robes, just that they should be modestly dressed; the Emir of Qatar's favourite wife, often photographed in fashion magazines and newspapers, is a powerful role model for showing the world that Qatari women are modern, fashionable and sophisticated; or perhaps, like the Victorians, they now have wealth of their own and they use dress as an expression of that wealth.

Exactly which of these reasons has driven the change is not clear. And how will this be in the future? Will the *abaya* be a statement of fashionable, independent attire, a folk dress or a symbol of religious beliefs? Only time will tell.

Anne O'Dwyer

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