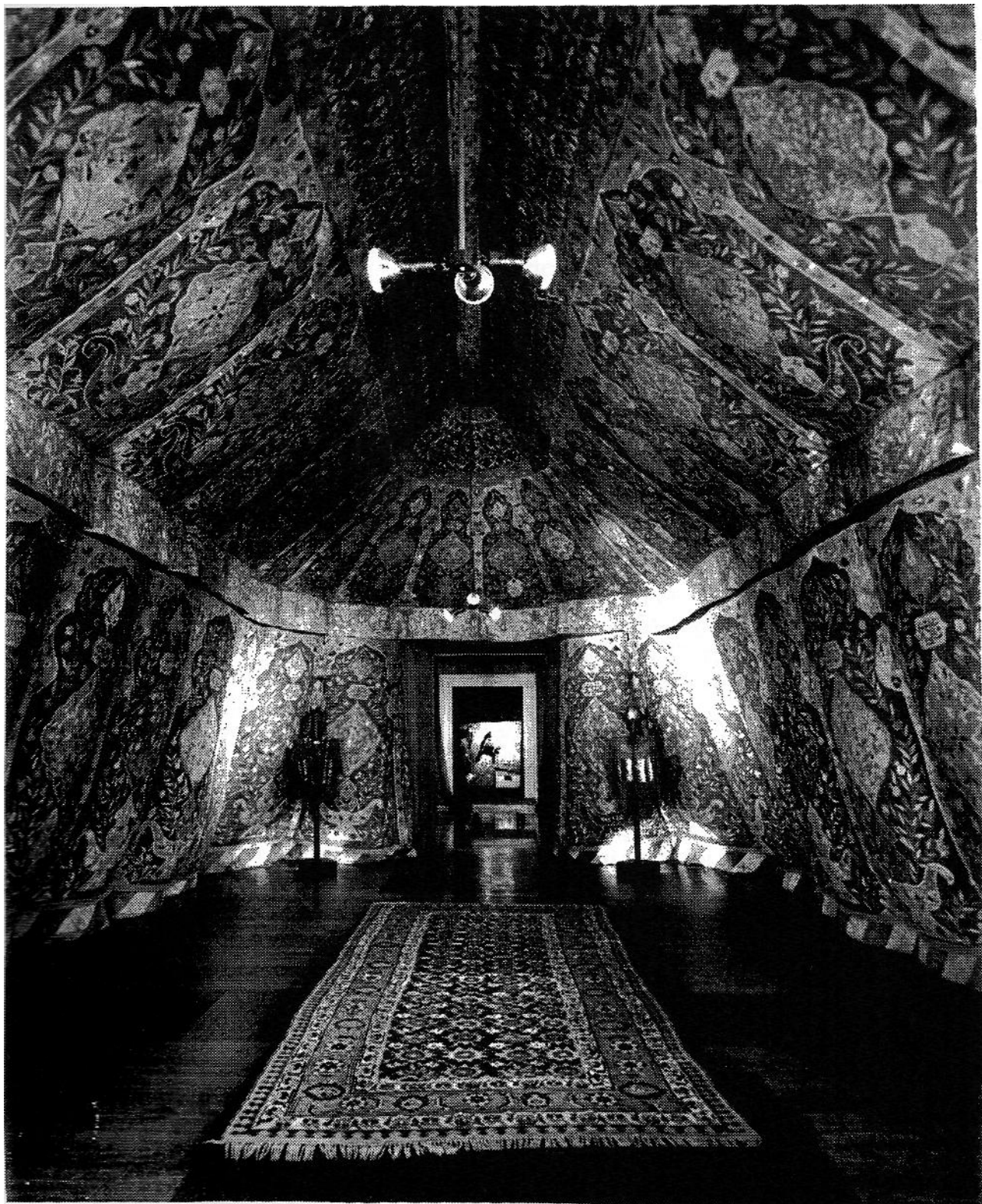


OXFORD ASIAN TEXTILE GROUP

Newsletter No. 20

October 2001



Blue oval tent, Turkey, 17th Century, Wawel Royal Castle, Krakow, Poland (inv. no. 896). See p. 13.

CONTENTS

Editorial	2	In the Shadow of Scheherazade	14
Programme	3	Reports of O.A.T.G. meetings	16
Chinese Textiles in the Chester Beatty Library	4	Museums Round-up	19
The Evolution of a Textile Thesaurus	8	Books	20
Turkish Tents	10	Exhibitions	21
		Lectures and Events	22

EDITORIAL

In an appendage to her report on Marianne Ellis' tour of the exhibition *A Stitch in Time* (p.17 below), Deryn O'Connor recounts how, to her consternation, "all the catalogues had sold out. How could I write my report?" Marianne kindly offered me hers, but I decided to write a plea to the Head of Department asking to be sent the copy which had been put out for visitors to the show, as the exhibition closed on the following day." Owing to both the Head of Department and Ruth Barnes being away, nothing happened for some time. Eventually Deryn received a complimentary copy with apologies from the Sales and Marketing Manager who wrote that there had been a delay at the printers in Singapore so that 200 copies of the book had been sent by airmail, the bulk following by sea, and it was one of the latter, which had just arrived, that he was sending her. He explained that "the book simply turned out to be more popular than we originally planned and we sold all 200 before the end of the exhibition." Deryn continues, "I encountered a similar situation last year at the Holburne Museum in Bath when I visited an historic embroidery exhibition. Perhaps publishers will soon realize what an interest there is for serious books on textiles at a reasonable price. The Ashmolean publication is an excellent example to follow."

It is also an example I am sorry that they did not follow themselves when they published, Ruth Barnes' magnum opus on the Indian printed textiles in the Newberry Collection. I felt at the time that the Museum was to be congratulated for publishing such an admirable and scholarly work, but at near £200 for two substantial volumes, it was more than the ordinary reader could afford or give shelf-room to. I had a similar experience at the V.& A. a few years ago where the only publication was a very bulky and expensive catalogue more suitable for a library than the general reader. In both cases it was a pity that these tomes could not have been supplemented by something comparable in size and price to Marianne's excellent book. In fact, I wrote along these lines to the V.& A. at the time, but they replied to the effect that they could not afford to publish cheaper versions of their catalogues because of uncertainty as to how well they would sell.

The British Museum are the more to be congratulated, therefore, on their modestly priced series *Fabric Folios*, of which two were reviewed in the last newsletter.

PROGRAMME

Wednesday 24 October

at 5.45 pm at the Pitt-Rivers Research Centre, 64 Banbury Road, Oxford

AGM of the Oxford Asian Textile Group

followed by refreshments and

at 7pm Joseph Fischer

Author of the book, *The Folk Art of Bali* and other books on textiles in Indonesia.

Originally a lecturer at University of California and has done doctoral work at John Hopkins University and the University of Chicago.

The Story Cloths of Bali

These embroideries are unusual in that they depict characters, scenes and symbols from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and indigenous Balinese and Javanese tales. The cloths are hung from the eaves of Hindu temples, inside houses and ritual village structures.

Members free: visitors welcome - £2

No booking needed for this event

Wednesday 7 November

Specially arranged visit to the Embroiderers' Guild

An opportunity to visit the headquarters of the Embroiderers' Guild at Hampton Court Palace, where the Curator, Lyn Szygenda, will have a selection of embroideries with special appeal to OATG members, drawn from the Guild's worldwide collection of over 11,000 pieces. Lynn will talk about the embroideries on show. There will be morning coffee and the Guild also has a well-stocked bookshop on embroidery and related subjects. Please book with Ann Guild.

Thursday 6 December 2001

6.30 for 7pm

CHRISTMAS PARTY

by kind invitation of Joyce Seaman,

at her home, 5 Park Town, Oxford

(Free parking in street after 6.30 pm)

Cost £5 Please book with Ann Guild.

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

CHINESE TEXTILES IN THE CHESTER BEATTY LIBRARY, DUBLIN

The Chester Beatty Library, home to a rich collection of manuscripts, miniature paintings, prints, early printed books and works of art from countries across Asia, the Middle East, North Africa and Europe, is the result of a lifetime of collecting by its founder, Sir Alfred Chester Beatty (1875-1968). Beatty, an American mining magnate, became involved with the arts of East Asia early in his collecting career. A childhood interest in minerals is said to have attracted him to Chinese snuff bottles carved from precious stones, and by the early years of the twentieth century he had built up substantial collections of Chinese and Japanese decorative arts. It was during a trip to east Asia in 1917 that Chester Beatty began collecting Chinese textiles, and, although textiles never became one of his major collecting interests, he did go on to create a fine, if small-scale, collection over the years. There are now eight dragon robes and four embroidered chair covers in the collection, as well as eight textile scrolls and wall hangings of various sizes and a number of smaller pieces, such as embroidered sleeve and robe facings.



The core of the Chinese textile collection is the group of dragon robes (*long pao*). Dragon robes would have been worn by the Chinese emperor, the imperial family and court officials for ceremonial functions and were elaborately decorated with the imperial emblem of the five-clawed dragon and other auspicious symbols of authority and religious significance. One of the finest of the Library's robes is the fleece-lined, *kesi* tapestry-weave robe in imperial yellow illustrated above. The other robes date from the mid-eighteenth to the early twentieth century. They include both *kesi* and embroidered examples in colours

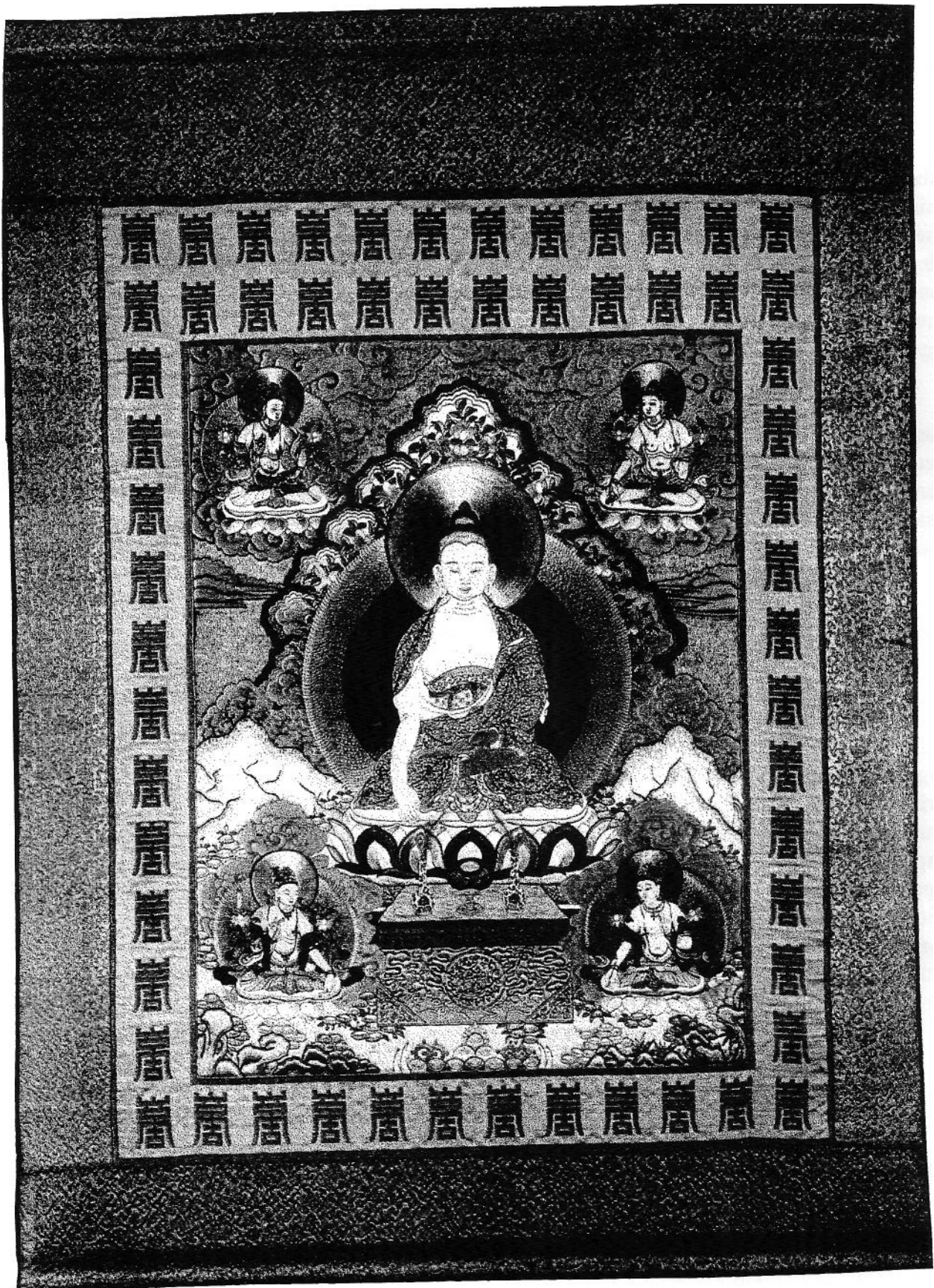
ranging from blue to apricot, as well as a magnificent brown eighteenth century robe embroidered entirely in gold- and silver-wrapped thread, couched on to the body of the garment (CBL C 1957).

Chester Beatty's first dragon robes were purchased from the Peking-based art dealer S.H. Kuhn during Beatty's visit to China in 1917, as were the four yellow satin throne covers in the collection. Rooms in the imperial palace or in wealthy homes would have been furnished with wooden furniture, often decorated with covers, textile hangings and sometimes removable cushions. Each of the Chester Beatty examples is elaborately embroidered - and in one case appliquéd - with auspicious designs, including the lotus (symbol of purity and perfection), the bat (symbol of happiness because of the Chinese pronunciation of the word *fu* which also means happiness), and the character *shou*, meaning long life (CBL C 1059-61).

The largest textile in the collection is a nineteenth-century silk-embroidered panel, measuring 236 cm high by 166 cm wide, depicting two phoenixes standing on a rock beneath a peach tree (CBL C 1066). The peach is another symbol of longevity, while the phoenix is often associated with the Empress of China. The quality of the embroidery, mainly executed in satin stitch with fine gradations of colour in imitation of brushwork, is of fine enough quality to suggest that the piece may have hung in the imperial palace.

Apart from such domestic pieces, the Library has an interesting group of Buddhist textile hangings. The oldest is a very fine Sino-Tibetan embroidered hanging scroll, or *thangka* (Tibetan for "rolled up thing"), dating to 1518 and showing a Mahasiddha, one of eighty-four Indian or Tibetan sages thought to have played an important part in transmitting the doctrines of Tibetan Buddhism (CBL C 1069). He is shown seated on a lotus throne, holding a thigh-bone trumpet in his right hand and a bowl and chopper in his left. The hanging is beautifully embroidered, with particularly fine detail in the Mahasiddha's spiral earrings, bracelets, armlets and anklets and also in his hair. Inscriptions on the lower border around the image (in Tibetan and Chinese) include the date and a reference to Bao An temple. As early as the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) in China, a number of Tibetan and Nepalese Buddhist monks lived in Peking under imperial patronage, and Tibetan Buddhism continued to thrive throughout the Ming and Qing dynasties, with Tibetan images very fashionable among upper class devotees of Buddhism throughout the period. The piece would probably have been made for a Tibetan Buddhist temple, or for a Tibetan Buddhist temple in China, as would the hanging scroll illustrated overleaf.

This well-preserved *thangka*, also in Sino-Tibetan style, shows the Sakyamuni Buddha embroidered with coloured and gilt threads in satin stitch and couching of the highest quality. It is actually one of a set of three hanging scrolls, of the Past, Present and Future Buddhas, commissioned by the Qianlong Emperor (r.1735-95) in 1778. Mahayana Buddhism, the type of Buddhism that was most popular in China, is characterized by its belief in the Buddha as a transcendent principle, of which the historical Buddha, Sakyamuni, is only one manifestation. In other words, the Mahayana Buddhist pantheon consists of a host of Buddhas and Buddhist



deities, and this triad of Buddhas, sometimes known as the "Buddhas of the Three Generations" (*Sanshifo* in Chinese), symbolized an infinite lineage of Buddhas stretching into the past and into the future. An inscription on the back of the hanging in Chinese, Manchu, Mongol and Tibetan (four of the principal languages of the Qing empire) relates how the emperor ordered a high-ranking Tibetan *lama*, the Kutuko Fu (Huthok-thu in Tibetan) of Awanpechul, to commission this scroll for ritual purposes. One of the other scrolls in the set, Maitreya, the Future Buddha, is in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (T.31-1950).

Also connected to the tradition of portraying the Buddhas of the Three Generations, is a large, eighteenth century wall hanging in *lampas* weave, bought by Chester Beatty at auction in 1960, relatively late in his collecting career (CBL C 1062). The hanging depicts a Buddhist paradise with three seated Buddhas at the centre of the composition, accompanied above and below by groups of *apsaras* (celestial beings), *Luohan* (enlightened beings, sometimes described as "Buddhist saints"), and *Lokopalas* (the four celestial kings believed to guard the four cardinal directions). At the top of the hanging is woven a five-character inscription in seal script, which reads *Wuliangshou zanfo*. This literally means "Venerable Buddhas of Infinite Life" and usually refers specifically to Amitayus, Buddha of Infinite Light. Here, however, it appears to refer to a particular *sutra*, the *Visualization Sutra*, which was translated into Chinese in the fifth century and encouraged devotion to the Buddhas of the Three Generations.

This image, which would probably have been displayed on the wall of a temple, or taken out for special ceremonies outside the temple, may be one of a series of images commissioned by the Qianlong Emperor for use as gifts to high-ranking Buddhist teachers of Tibet and Mongolia. Research has revealed several other works based on the same design and using similar *lampas* weave, suggesting that it probably formed part of a set (e.g. Victoria and Albert Museum no. T 230-1965 and Musée Historique des Tissus, Lyons, no. 28590).

Other textile hanging scrolls in the Chester Beatty Library include a *kesi* depiction of the Birth of Guanyin, Bodhisattva of Compassion, probably from the early Kangxi period (1662-1722) but in eighteenth century Japanese mounts (CBL C 1063) and a Daoist *kesi* woven hanging scroll showing the God of Immortality riding on a crane amidst clouds, surrounded by Daoist immortals, probably dating from the eighteenth century (CBL C 1067).

The Chinese textiles were brought to Ireland in the 1950s when Chester Beatty retired to Dublin and built a Library there for his collections. When he died in 1968 he bequeathed his collections in trust for the benefit of the public, and for over thirty years they remained in their original home in the Ballsbridge suburb of Dublin. In autumn 1999, however, the Library was moved into larger, more accessible and more modern premises in Dublin Castle in the city centre. With its purpose-built exhibition galleries and specially-designed showcases, the move has provided an excellent opportunity to present this fine, but often overlooked, aspect of the Chester Beatty Library to a wider audience.

Dr Clare Pollard
Curator of the East Asian Collections

**THE EVOLUTION OF A THESAURUS OF TEXTILE ARTS TERMINOLOGY: the Lloyd
Cotsen Textile Documentation Project at the Textile Museum,
Washington, D.C.**

I was delighted when Phyllis Nye invited me to write an article for the O.A.T.G. newsletter, as it presented an excellent opportunity to introduce the Lloyd Cotsen Textile Documentation Project to those who have not heard of us, to explain what we have been up to, and to convey my excitement about the unfolding of the latest version of our publication - a *Thesaurus of Textile Arts Terminology*.

In 1997, the *Thesaurus* was entitled a *Lexicon* and envisioned as a print product. Four years later, it has evolved into the *Thesaurus* in a state-of-the-art Web-based format.

As anyone familiar with textile documentation, description and scholarship can attest, the field is rife with multiple terms used to designate the same object, process or technique. The primary goal of the Lloyd Cotsen Textile Documentation Project is to develop and offer as a scholarly contribution to the textile arts community a thoroughly researched and peer-reviewed *Thesaurus* as an authority file of preferred terms and their relationships to other terms in the textile arts.

Funded through 2002 by a generous grant from the Cotsen Family Foundation, the entire process of the Lloyd Cotsen Textile Documentation Project has been one of evolution, discovery, redefinition and progress. Originally conceived as a print hierarchy displaying the relationships of textile arts terms in outline format, the *Thesaurus* is emerging as an interactive electronic database incorporating scope notes, the complete bibliographic history of authorizing the term, and links to visual examples of the terms. To mould the terminology into a rational organizational syntax, the database also contains hierarchies and relationships determined by our textile experts and scholars. The *Thesaurus* is a recommended controlled vocabulary derived from study, discussion and documentation of the objects within The Textile Museum's holdings. In addition to the Museum's curatorial expertise, eighteen scholars from around the world have participated in the Project to date. Four scholars have agreed to come to The Textile Museum in 2002 to share their areas of expertise. All Cotsen Scholars and Fellows are listed below; they include two members of the Oxford Asian Textile Group.

Ann Pollard Rowe, The Textile Museum's Curator of Western Hemisphere textiles, is heading up the *Thesaurus* development in the areas of textile materials, processes, structures and techniques as well as Western Hemisphere objects.

Having guaranteed the reliability of the textile expertise offered, as Project Director I set out to ensure that the logic and rationale of the body of knowledge met the highest international standards. A Consultative Board of experts in lexicography, thesaurus development, and information management was formed in 2000. This group includes Denise A.D. Bedford, M.A., M.L.S., Ph.D, librarian and thesaurus developer, World Bank; Mary Cooper, M.L.S., President, Cooper Information, David A. Luljak, M.A., M.L.S., Ph.D.,

lexicographer, CIS/Reed Elsevier, Jessica Milstead, D.L.S., Principal, JELEM, Inc., and Dagobert Soergel, Ph.D., Professor, College of Information Studies, University of Maryland.

Not only has the quality of the knowledge base been assured, but the original text-based, print version has advanced to Windows-based technology to meet the demands of scholars in the twenty-first century. The version of the *Thesaurus* to be introduced to the textile arts community at the conclusion of this phase of the Project will be launched from The Textile Museum Website and will include links to full records for each term, a display of its full hierarchical placement in the scheme of the data, and illustrative images.

While the Lloyd Cotsen Textile Documentation Project is embracing the potential of technology, it is not disregarding the needs of those who do not have either the means or the desire to access such state-of-the-art publications. The Project has arranged to accommodate those who require or prefer a print *Thesaurus*.

Sometimes stalled, frequently seemingly unattainable, the progress of the *Thesaurus* is heady stuff. The projected launch date is early 2003. For those interested in previewing and offering peer review, a URL may be obtained upon request.

The initial effort, reflecting the areas of The Textile Museum's collections and expertise, is envisioned as the first step in developing a comprehensive *Thesaurus of Textile Arts Terminology*, and we enthusiastically invite other individuals, institutions or organizations to contact the Project at The Textile Museum to discuss future collaborative efforts to expand the scope of the *Thesaurus*.

Cotsen Scholars and Fellows

Lisa Aronson, sub-Saharan textiles
 Dr Ruth Barnes, Eastern Indonesian textiles
 Stuart (Ed) Carter, Guatemalan textiles
 Peter Collingwood, textile structures
 Joyce Denney, Japanese textiles
 Dr D.C. (Dee) DeRoche, textile-working equipment
 Dr Mary Dusenbury, Japanese textiles
 Marianne Ellis, embroidery techniques and terminology
 Kathleen Epstein, embroidery techniques and terminology
 Rens Heringa, Indonesian batik
 Daesirae Koslin, design and pattern terminology
 Miriam Milgram, Balkan and Eastern European textiles and costume
 Milton Sondag, structure in Burmese textiles
 Dr Elena Tsareva, Central Asian carpets
 Dr Angela Vylker, classical Mamluk, Mughal and Chinese carpets
 Yoshiko Wada, Japanese textiles
 Jennifer Wearden, embroidery techniques and terminology
 Verity Wilson, Chinese textiles

Cotsen Scholars for 2002 include Dr Mary McWilliams, Persian textiles and garments, Kate FitzGibbon, Central Asian textiles and garments, Dr Eunice Maguire, Coptic textiles, and Milton Sondag, Islamic textiles.

Sonja Nielsen
Project Director, Lloyd Cotsen Textile Documentation Project
The Textile Museum



**The Sultan's enclosure in a city of tents pitched at Okmeydani for the circumcision feast of 1720.
Detail from a miniature illustrating the Surname-i Sultan Ahmed III, c. 1720. (Topkapi Palace collection.)**

TURKISH TENTS

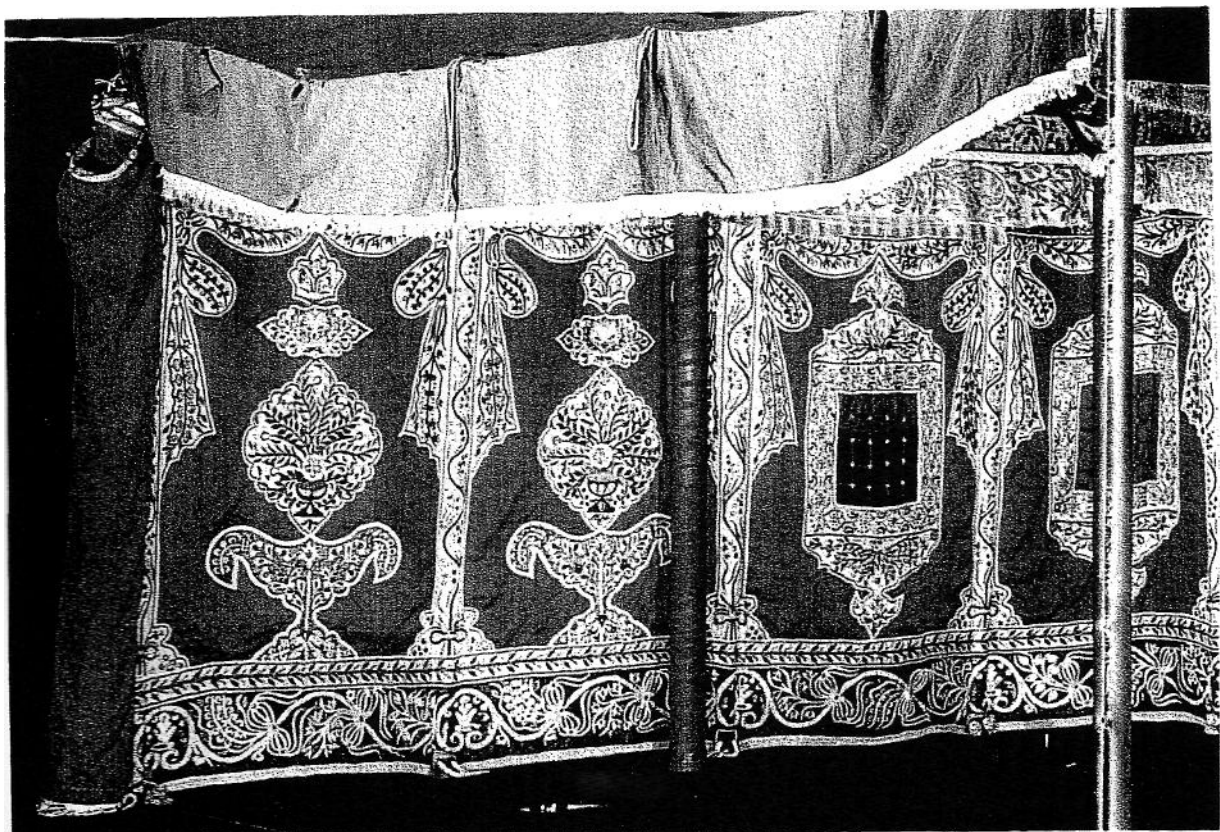
I first became interested in Ottoman military tents when we were living in Vienna in the early 1960s and was fascinated by some splendid specimens in the Arsenal, despite its name one of our favourite museums. After we left Vienna, however, the interest lay dormant until reawakened by a visit to Istanbul earlier this year, a visit that happily coincided with a major exhibition of Ottoman tents, including some that had never been exhibited before.

The Turkish peoples originated among the nomadic tribes of Central Asia, and their tents were very similar to the domed yurts still used in those parts. From there the Seljuks in the 13th century and the Ottomans in the following one overran Anatolia, bringing their tents with them. As they became established and ceased to be nomads, they congregated in what

were in effect tent cities before turning their minds to building in brick and stone, and it has been said that the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul is simply a tent city translated into stone. Even then, the Ottomans continued to operate in vast tented complexes on military campaigns or celebratory occasions until the early 20th century, and these have, conversely, been described as canvas copies of the Topkapi!

In these tented cities the janissaries were housed in modest tents, while the ruling classes occupied grand tent complexes. Central to all was the imperial complex surrounded by a *zokak*, a fabric screen wall (illustrated p10). Just like the Topkapi, the imperial tent would contain not only the Sultan's quarters, but a tent for sessions of the Council of State, a treasury tent, a tent for sacred relics and a pavilion of justice - not to mention tents for the kitchens, baths and loos. The tents and their furnishings were made by a special corps of *mehters* (tent-makers) who were also responsible for their maintenance and storage and for transporting, pitching and dismantling them.

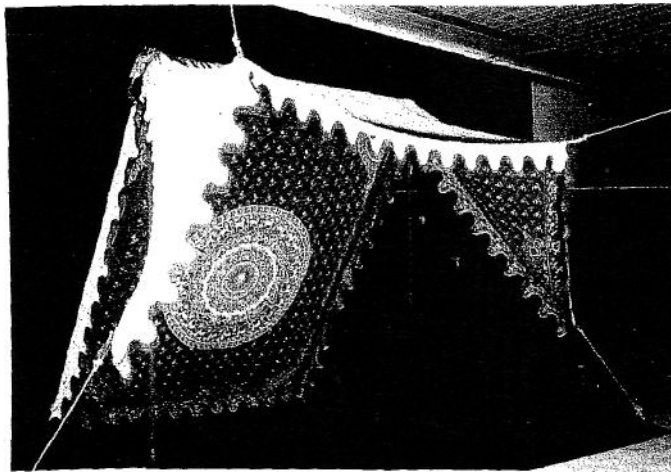
Forts gradually gave way to other forms until by the end of the 16th century all tents were of the pole type, either with a single pole and conical roof or with two or more poles and a pitched roof. The number of roof sections was equal to the number of wall sections and these were aligned when the tent was pitched. The roof and walls were fastened together by means of toggles and loops (like a duffel coat) which were concealed and protected by a double valance along the edge of the roof. Nearly all tents comprised an inner and an outer shell, the inner one being of tent cloth or satin and highly decorated. The outer one was usually made of heavy canvas dyed verdigris green reinforced with slanting woven bands, and similar bands covered the seams and supported the toggles and the rings to which the tent ropes were attached; in other words, wherever there was a point of strain.



The inner shells of the tents were decorated in ways closely akin to the tiled interiors of buildings, with columns, arches and panels executed at first in appliqué only, but later with the addition of other embroidery techniques. The Sultan's tents from the 19th and early 20th centuries have a great deal of heavy embroidery in couched gold and silver thread. The floor was carpeted and the furniture was mostly in the form of cushions and pillows. There was also a curtain which was drawn across the opening to hide the interior from public gaze when the tent was open. All these soft furnishings were elaborately decorated with needlework of various kinds.

The most magnificent tent in the exhibition I saw was a late 18th century two-poled tent with both shells crimson, the outer of broadcloth and the inner of satin. Most of the panels were decorated with traditional vases supporting floral medallions and separated by columns with looped-up draperies in appliqué. Some of the panels contained windows instead, with grilles worked in silk and gold cord, and a blind that could be rolled up behind (illustrated on the previous page).

The exhibition also contained some *sayeban* (misleadingly translated as "marquees"), a kind of ceremonial canopy under which the sultan would sit to hold audience. These usually comprised a roof held on four poles with a sloping back wall but open at the front and sometimes at the sides. The one illustrated below comprises a verdigris outer shell and red broadcloth inner shell ornamented with couched appliqué medallions on a field sprigged with flowers in satin stitch.



I am sorry that if you go to Istanbul now you will not see this magnificent exhibition, but do not despair: there are some very nice tents, although of more modest size, on permanent display in the Military Museum, and if you go at the right time you will have the added pleasure of a music and drill display by the *mehters*

The tents that so excited me in Vienna all those years ago were among the 50,000 left behind with a great many other things by the retreating Ottoman army following the unsuccessful siege of Vienna in 1683. I doubt whether many of the 49,090 or so that are not in Vienna still exist, but several are to be found scattered through other collections in central

and eastern Europe - notably Dresden - and there is even one in Stockholm, though none, so far as I have been able to discover, in the U.K.. The largest number (21 now, though nearly a thousand at the end of the 18th century) and finest examples are to be found in Poland, and I am indebted to Dr Magdalena Piwocka, curator of the collection at the Royal Castle of Wawel in Krakow, for information on and illustrations of them.

According to Dr Piwocka, although the "Vienna tents" were the most prestigious, not all the known tents came from this source; indeed, many were imported from Turkey (and Persia) earlier and were popular among the aristocracy for those kinds of event for which marquees (in the English sense, not the Turkish) are used to-day. Others were the legacy of other campaigns, or even made in Lvov, where there was a thriving "eastern" tent industry, but because of the prestige value they were often attributed to Vienna. Among tents formerly in Polish collections were the Sanguszko tent with appliqués made from figured Persian velvet, of which fragments survive in museums at Boston, Massachusetts, and Lisbon, and others appliquéd with silk on silk or embroidered with pearls.

The Wawel Castle collection includes two particularly splendid tents, a three-poled one, dating probably from the 16th century, and the blue two-poled one illustrated on p.1, dating from the early 17th century, both of which can safely be attributed to the relief of Vienna. At 17.90 m length for the blue tent and 24.20 for the red one, they are the largest known specimens anywhere. Made of cotton cloth with silk, satin and gilt leather appliqué, the blue tent has panels containing vases topped with floral medallions similar to those of the red tent in the Turkish exhibition, each with a gilt leather cartouche with cut-out inscription above it, and set within architectural niches rather than between draped columns (detail below).



Unfortunately neither of these nor any of the other very interesting tents in the Wawel Castle collection can be seen at present as they are undergoing restoration and conservation, and it is likely to be years rather than months before they are returned to display. I hope to let you know when they are. Perhaps the Programme Secretary will be able to arrange an outing to Krakow!

Phyllis Nye

IN THE SHADOW OF SCHEHERAZADE: The Influence of Orientalism and Exoticism on Western Dress

Stories by Scheherazade in *Alf Laylah wa Laylah*, commonly known in the West as *The Arabian Nights*, left the impression of the East as exotic, romantic and violent. The very title of the Costume Society's symposium, held at Oxford, from the 6 to 8 July, brought an enthusiastic response from delegates. The subject itself gave rise to excited anticipation.

At the opening session in the Ashmolean Museum, we were welcomed by Ruth Barnes, Research Fellow in Eastern Art and Chairman of the Oxford Asian Textile Group. There was an opportunity to see the exhibition, *A Stitch in Time: Mediaeval Islamic Embroideries*, and hear Ruth describe the background to the collection made by the Egyptologist Percy Newberry between 1890 and the 1920s, these finds showing the impact of the Orient. She was followed by Marianne Ellis, who is to be congratulated on her meticulous studies of *Embroideries and Samplers from Islamic Egypt*, describing garments and their functions graphically observed in her book of the same title. Practical considerations on conservation were given by the Ashmolean's Textile Conservator Susan Stanton, making the observation that as reduction in handling textiles was preferable, Marianne's book was advantageous.

Returning to Wadham College, the residential centre for the Symposium, music and movement proved an instructive and entertaining element when Kathy Selford of the Middle Eastern Dance Group amazed delegates with her demonstrations of "lip tremble", "eye wobble" and water dance. Penelope Woolfitt's clear description of cutting and constructing oriental trousers underlined her advocacy of their comfort for all shapes and sizes! Committee members displaying elegance and humour were excellent models.

Next day, Julia Nicholson, Curator, Pitt Rivers Museum, produced images from its vast and dense display, including a "witch in a bottle", and protective cap for a sore toe! Costume had not been divorced from its cultural context, the collection was wonderful, but not pretentious. Her talk was followed by a visit to the Museum where a choice of categories provided wide interests. The exhibition *Transformations* illustrated the gift for invention using recycled materials.

The Fall of Constantinople in 1453 brought Turkey into Europe, cultural links provided mainly by traders and artists. Continuing in the theme *Fashioning the Orient: Images of the*

Odalisque from Boucher to Ingres, Aileen Ribeiro, of the Courtauld Institute of Art, described how the West took delight in "Turquerie" in literature, the theatre, music, costume and portraiture. With the Ottoman Turks as major players in Europe, and Istanbul as a desirable centre, Middle Eastern dress had an appeal for many Europeans, and Aileen's talk was appropriately followed by Jennifer Scarce on *Europeans in Middle Eastern Dress*. A delightful slide of Princess Victoria depicted wearing an *oya* decorated turban, and James Silk Buckingham and his wife in Arab costume, were among slides chosen by her to illustrate her subject.

Pamela Golbin, Curator, Palais du Louvre, described how Paul Poiret built the foundation of 20th century fashion, taking from the rich cultures of the Mediterranean, Central Asia, the Orient and Neo-Classicism to produce rich dress. He was in fact the "Sultan of Fashion".

An introduction of gentle humour accompanied Diane Maglio's investigation into *Luxuriant Crowns*, men's Victorian smoking caps. The speaker, Adjunct Professor of Fashion, Institute of Technology, New York, explained how the "man in black" by day could by night be transformed with a feeling of opulence by the wearing of his silky gown, cap and slippers.

From Egypt came the influence on revival jewellery. Shades of the sphinx, scarab beetles, mysterious mummy unwrapping, and designs from the Tomb of Tutankhamun provided inspiration for the geometric forms of Art Deco as expounded by Shelley Foote, from the Smithsonian Institute, Washington.

"Clothes are malleable", so Verity Wilson, Curator, V.& A., reflected on *Borrowing Other People's Dress*, with reference to Western modes and Asian clothes. The image of the Empire was to be seen, as white men dressed as warriors, dragon robes used as uniform in China became "dressing-up" garments, and Japanese gentlemen adopted western dress.

Chintz, the fabric so desired and admired by the West was used by the seafaring community of Hinderloopen in Holland for dress, cross-stitch braids anchoring Friesland to chintz. Lou Taylor, of the University of Brighton, emphasized the fact that this was a wealthy little community of traders, lower bourgeoisie, not having a "peasant" culture. With the Napoleonic wars came decline and poverty, but a 19th century revival lifted Hinderloopen from such poverty. Chintz and dress became Europeanized.

Visions of Lucille, Lady Duff Gordon, designer for an aristocratic clientele and theatre, illustrated her portraying the imagined East. Victoria Steele, University College of Los Angeles Library, described this as an "East of the Mind" dazzling desires of the West. It was an imagined place; no-one had ever arrived there.

Lise Skov, Syddansk University, described how Hong Kong contemporary designers were using Chinese motifs "with a difference", and with popular appeal making clothes "unlike grandma's", chinoiserie with Hong Kong identity.

On the last afternoon came five students from Reading College of Art competing for the Costume Society Fashion Award, presenting a delightful array of clothes, the design brief based on the theme of the Symposium. Shimmering chiffons, floating fabric, beads and glitter delighted the eye - how difficult to select a winner from so many stars! Congratulations to Tristan Melle to whom the award was made.

Jayne Sanderson of Joss Graham Oriental Textiles, designer and teacher, used splendid slides to illustrate how workshops and seminars organized by "Nation Indian Design" were working with young people pursuing a career in textile design. A grand finale was presented by Joss Graham, when an opportunity to view or buy treasures was provided at his Oriental Bazaar.

Scheherazade is a romantic, magical and evocative name. Delegates were charmed and delighted to be in her shadow, if only for a brief time, and appreciative of those who had made it happen.

Freda Chapman

REPORTS OF O.A.T.G. MEETINGS Pakistan: Embroidery of Desert and Mountain

Sheila Paine's talk on 20 June covered the embroidery of two areas of Pakistan which present a great contrast to each other. The first of these, the Makran, lies bordering the south coast of the country, south of Afghanistan and just east of Iran, and is an area of barren desert cut off from the sea by dangerous mountains. This is the area where Alexander the Great struggled to lead his army back to the Greek world. There are no big cities; most people live in oases and eat dates and fish. It is one of the few regions where traditional dress is worn every day. The people live in mud and palm leaf huts, men and women in separate quarters, and the main decorations are displays of dowry crockery and embroidered cloths covering storage trunks in which clothes are kept.

Many of the women embroider their own costumes and also do embroideries for sale under a government-supported scheme, while the men embroider on leather shoes and gun fittings, using an *ari*. Materials and threads are brought to the villages by pedlars, who stock only the colours normally used, so the embroideries are in a restricted colour range - red, burgundy, dark green, dark blue, black and white. Embroidery is applied to the front part and the sleeves of dresses in different combinations of vertical lines, using some or all of the following stitches: rubar, chakan, chain stitch, couching, mohsum, interlace and tanab. As many of the women in this community are slaves, the gold jewellery which they wear over their embroidered dress on their wedding day is borrowed and then returned.

The second area covered in the talk was the Pallas region in a side valley of the Upper Indus. The area forms part of Kohistan and the people, who are all very poor, live by subsistence farming and logging. The villages have no piped water or electricity.

Embroidered garments are not worn every day, and even on festival days when some can be seen, it is difficult to record, as photography of women is not allowed. The style of the embroidery relates to that of Swat and, in fact, many of the men go to Swat to find work and bring back embroidery materials from the bazaars there. The embroidery is done in silk on a black background using a combination of geometric and naturalistic plant forms. Many of the designs are strongly amuletic, and further amuletic protection is added in the form of coins and buttons. The items embroidered range from wedding shawls and plait covers to gun cases and cartridge belts.

The area is affected severely by the custom of blood feuds, which keep the men confined indoors and mean the women and children have to undertake all the food production. Further social change has come about with the opening of the Karakoram Highway, which has led to more contact with the wider world, more education for women and the introduction of television. All these factors have brought about a decline in traditional embroidery, and in fact most of the traditional costumes produced in the past have been sold.

Helen Adams

A Stitch in Time: Mediaeval Islamic Embroideries

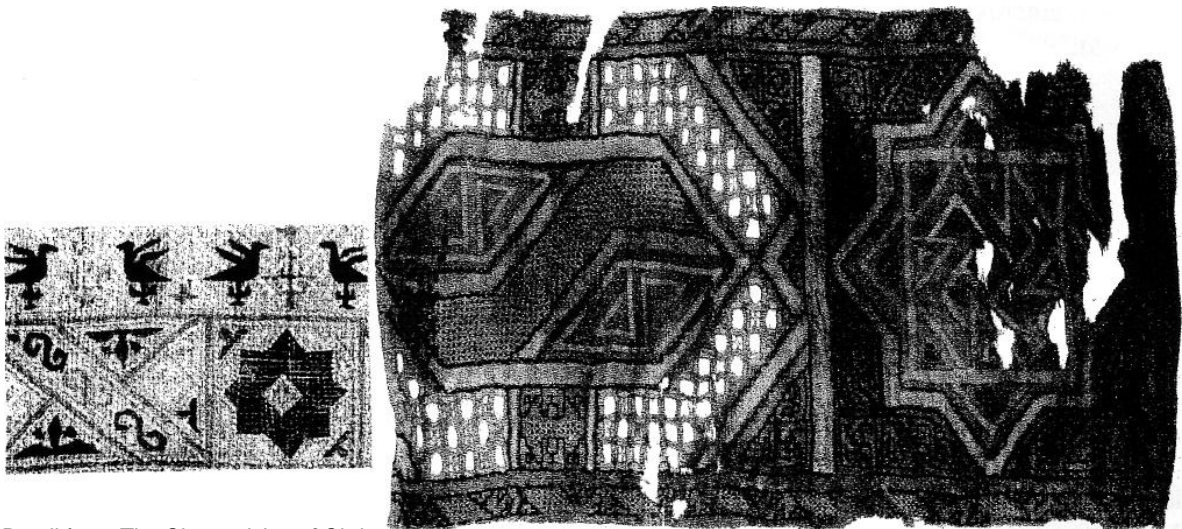
On 21 July a small group of O.A.T.G. members visited the exhibition of this name at the Ashmolean Museum. It was an occasion when it was invaluable to be taken round a display by the person who had researched it and, in this case, is both an historian and a practising embroiderer since childhood.

It was the last but one day of the exhibition, which I had not visited before. I arrived late in the morning and looked round the exhibition, getting what I realized, when meeting Marianne Ellis in the afternoon, was a very superficial view. However I was captivated by the world of fine abstract patterns embroidered in monochrome, chiefly dark indigo, but also red and black, on wonderfully fine undyed linen. This refined art of pure pattern, where neither the interaction of colours nor the lyrical element of naturalistic motifs were involved, seemed to me riveting. There were a few pieces from a kindred world of stitched Arabic writing, whose meaning was lost on me, but whose beauty was unforgettable. Although the gallery was small, there was room also for a few long hangings of Greek island embroidery, whose large scale and solid slabs of strongly coloured silk embroidery were in great contrast to the defined intricacy of the other patterns where the stitching stepped delicately across the neutral linen.

Marianne helped me to understand and open my eyes when she took us round at 2 p.m.. She explained that most of the small samples on show had been cut from functional objects: shawls, tunics and other items of clothing, or light furnishings, such as curtains and cushions. The stitching would probably have been done by men who were professional embroiderers. The Arabic writing had been embroidered on so-called tiraz robes which were

made for presentation to important people. The translation of one inscription read "In the name of God, praise be to God".

Marianne's knowledge is at several levels. First she has an intimate, friendly relationship with stitches, and one feels that she goes into the mind and hand of the embroiderers. She did not blind us with stitches but made it clear that most was counted work, and she referred to pattern darning, running stitch, double running stitch, as examples of this. There was also drawn-thread work and appliqué. Secondly she is very knowledgeable about the world of Islam. She related some patterns to decorative motifs on architecture, and she told us of a late 15th century painting in the National Gallery of the Circumcision of Christ by the Venetian painter Marco Marziale which depicts a tablecloth with a design similar to a Mamluk piece in the exhibition, both of which are illustrated in the catalogue (see below). The Ashmolean piece is a particularly fine example of embroidery with several different stitches and areas of openwork.



Detail from *The Circumcision of Christ*
(National Gallery, London)

The earliest piece exhibited was dated 901 A.D. from the Tulunid period. Others were from the succeeding Fatimid and Ayyubid periods, but most were from the Mamluk period, 1250-1517. With all her experience Marianne obviously has by now instinctive abilities to date Islamic designs, but definitive dating of certain items has been confirmed by the radiocarbon method.

One of the larger pieces of embroidery was a page of sample designs done probably for instruction. Marianne said that she has found another embroidery which depicts one of the designs in the sampler. This emphasizes the wealth of variations among the patterns. Marianne then explained that the designs related not only to the local Islamic community but influenced a wider world. This explained the presence of the Greek island embroideries in the exhibition although they are of a later date, none having survived from the mediaeval period. Another important line of influence was through pattern books for embroidery compiled in the 16th century for western Europe, thus involving our own British heritage.

The book accompanying the exhibition, written by Marianne, is entitled *Embroideries and Samplers from Islamic Egypt* and is excellent. Every item is illustrated in colour and one can almost feel the cloth and the stitching. Each example has an illuminating text giving both hard facts and comment setting the context. Readers will notice that there are indeed some naturalistic motifs and more variations in colour than I had been aware of at my first viewing.

Deryn O'Connor

Weaving from the Womb

Monisha Ahmed gave a talk under this title on textiles, gender and kinship in Rupshu, Eastern Ladakh, on Thursday 6 September. I was unfortunately unable to attend myself, and the report I commissioned has failed to materialize, the first meeting of the Group not to be written up in the newsletter. My sincere apologies to Monisha and to you all.

Editor

MUSEUMS ROUND-UP

Hurrah! The V.& A. will cease charging for admission from 22 November - apart from some special exhibitions.

Of an exciting new acquisition at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Julia Nicholson writes, "Throughout its history the Museum has acquired collections of contemporary artefacts. In recent years these have mostly been commissioned from the Museum's students during their anthropological fieldwork. Most of the Museum's doctoral students spend many months or years living with the communities they are studying. This offers a wonderful opportunity to collect material in use as well as to provide information on the social and technical context.

"This is the case with the costume and textiles collected by Monisha Ahmed in Rupshu, Eastern Ladakh, which arrived at the Museum a few weeks ago. They complement the Museum's other material from Ladakh, which is mostly from areas further west. As those of you who heard Monisha's talk for O.A.T.G. last month will realize, she has great depth of knowledge of this area, particularly of weaving and the way that it reflects gender differences. Indeed, weavers in Rupshu often compare a textile growing on a loom to the development of a child in the womb.

"Included in the information that Monisha has provided with the collection, she explains the significance of different patterns. On one saddle-bag, for example, the striped design (*yud*) represents a mark of identification for an individual, often passed from father to son. Each man has his own *yud* and the one on this bag reads from right to left, 'one sheep's eye, one straight line'. Through this depth of information we can look beyond the simple

appreciation of the visual and the technical qualities of costume and textiles to get an insight into the people who made and used them."

The British Museum has received an award from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to enable it to create a new digitised database to make its collection of paintings from the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas at Dunhuang accessible both to the public and to scholars working in the field of Chinese Central Asia. It is hoped that in future textiles and other material from Dunhuang can also be made more widely accessible by adding them to this digital resource. This will be a great boon, because the objects themselves are too fragile for display in the galleries, and for conservation reasons viewing items from the collection by arrangement has also to be limited.

Editor

BOOKS

Ruth M. Green, *A Brief History of Jewish Dress*, Safira Publications, Autumn 2001, ISBN 0 9521141 2 7, £8.99

Covering Jewish dress from Biblical to modern times, in both Asia and Europe, this book is introduced by a distinguished rabbi and illustrated by Zena Flax.

Philippa Scott, *The Book of Silk*, Thames and Hudson, September 2001, ISBN 0 500 28308 7, 256 pp, 31 x 24 cm, 274 illus, 180 in colour, pbk £24.95

A reissue in paperback of the book first published in hardback in 1993, this volume follows the history of silk from its origins in China, spreading over the centuries through Asia into the West, and finishing with a survey of silk in the modern world. There is also a "compendium of information"¹ covering such subjects as terms and techniques, conservation, museums collections and a bibliography.

SUBSCRIPTION REMINDER

Members are reminded that subscriptions were due on or before 1 October - £10 for individuals or £15 for two or more people living at the same address and sharing a newsletter. Send your cheque or apply for a banker's order form to Joyce Seaman, Membership Secretary, at 5 Park Town, Oxford, OX2 6SN, e-mail: mjseaman@hotmail.com The next issue of the newsletter will be a special Japanese number, so if you do not wish to miss it, renew your subscription now.

EXHIBITIONS

Acknowledged Sources - Interwoven Cultures

Work by two contemporary textile artists at Nottingham Castle Museum until 4 November, of whom one, Dawn Dupree, has travelled extensively, most recently to Japan, which has influenced her work for this exhibition. Tel. 0115 915 3700

Land of the Dragon

Artefacts from the Himalayan kingdoms, Mediaeval to 19th century, including Tibetan rugs and textiles, at the Gordon Reece Gallery, Knaresborough, 9 October - 3 November. Tel. 01423 866219

NUNO: Tradition and Innovation (J)

Textile exhibition at Livingstone Studio, London, N.W.3, 6 October to 3 November. Tel. 020 7431 6311

On the Wings of a Dragonfly: Japanese Gossamer Weaving (J)

Exhibition of fine silk weaving by Michiko Uehara, with demonstrations of how to take filament from cocoons, at the Town Mill Gallery, Lyme Regis, 13-18 November. Tel. 01297 443579

Precious Paisleys

at the Aberdeen Museum and Art Gallery November to January 2002. This touring exhibition by the Paisley Museum comprises a number of shawls of both Kashmir and Paisley origins, demonstrating the crossover influence between these textile traditions. Aberdeen is probably too far away for all but dedicated shawl-fanatical members to visit, but it is a touring exhibition and I hope to be able to announce venues farther south in a later edition. Tel. 01224 646333

Eastern Inspirations

Readers will remember that last year at this time the Costume and Textile Association for Norfolk Museums announced a textile competition on this theme. The works entered for this competition will be on view at King of Hearts, 7-15 Fye Bridge Street, Norwich, 3-8 December. Tel. 01603 766 129

Overseas Exhibitions

From Amu Darya to the Potomac

A selection of Central Asian pile bags dating from the 19th century and earlier, from private collections in the Washington area and the Museum's own collections, at the Textile Museum, 2320 S Street NW, Washington, D.C.. until 24 February 2002. Exhibits include bags made for different purposes, including *chuval*, *torba*, *bohche*, *mafrash*, *khorjin*, *balisht* and *ok bash*, and are all drawn from the Turkman, Baluch, Uzbek and Kyrgyz ethnic groups. Tel. 001 202 667 0441, ext. 17

Last Chance to See -

Bonnets, Birds and Tuppenny Baubles at the Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock, ends 14 October

Spliterati 01 at the Tosn Hall, Bampton, Oxfordshire, ends 21 October.

The Great Wave (J) at the Cecil Higgins Art Gallery, Bedford, ends 28 October



Two-leaf screen, stencil-dyed silk by Serizawa Keisuke

Serizawa, Master of Japanese Textile Design, (J) at the Royal Museum, Edinburgh, ends 4 November.

Fabulous Creatures from the Desert Sands at the Abegg-Stiftung, Riggisberg, ends 4 November

Textural Space (J) at the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, ends 18 November (but it will be on show again in London next April: details in the next newsletter).

Beadwork at Carrow House, Norwich, ends 14 December

Japanese Kimono (J) at the Victoria and Albert Museum ends December

Tales from Japan (J) at Lotherton Hall, Leeds, ends 31 December

Details of all the above were in the last issue of the newsletter.

(J) = part of the Japan 2001 Festival.

LECTURES AND EVENTS

13 & 14 October - **Handling Indian Embroidery**, demonstration in the Nehru Gallery, V.& A. Tel. 020 7942 2197

13 - 21 October - **Cultura: The World Art and Antiques Fair** - at the Messe, Basel, Switzerland, includes an Asian Art section. Jacqueline Simcox (London) will be exhibiting Central Asian textiles, and Eberhart Herman (Switzerland) carpets. Tel. +41 61 227 87 87

15-20 October - **Dussehra**: To celebrate this Hindu festival the Royal Museum, Edinburgh, is laying on a series of events including workshops and demonstrations by a group of practitioners of traditional crafts from Bengal. Tel. 0131 247 4219/4422

16-21 & 23-28 **October - Chelsea Crafts Fair**, Chelsea Old Town Hall, King's Road, Chelsea, Tuesday to Friday 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., Saturday and Sunday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Completely different exhibitors each week. Tel. 020 7278 7700

19 October - **Islamic and Indian Costumes and Textiles** - Auction sale at Christie's, 85 Old Brompton Road, South Kensington, London, SW7 3LD, Tel. 020 7859 9060

21 October - **J-ART** displays and, at 11.30 a.m., fashion walk (J). V.& A. Tel. 020 7942 2197

22 & 23 October - Try **Kumihimo Braidmaking** in the Toshiba Gallery at the V.& A., 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2-4 P.m. (J) Tel 020 7942 2197

5 November - **Taisho Mode Kimono**: fashion show at the British Museum. Tel. 020 7229 7348 (J)

27 November - **Thee Ainu of Northern Japan**, talk by Jane Wilkinson to the Friends of the National Museums of Scotland in the Royal Museum Lecture Theatre. Guests welcome, £3. Tel. 0131 247 4422

29 November - **The Paisley Pattern**: themed guided tour in the Royal Museum, Edinburgh, at 3 p.m. Tel. 0131 247 4219/4422

2 December - **100 Years of Qi Pao/Cheong Sam**, a celebration of the contribution of these Chinese dresses to a century of fashion, at the V.& A., including a fashion show, display and talk by Dato' Jimmy Choo, shoe designer. Tel. 020 7942 2197

4 December - **Eastern Journeys on the Indigo Trail**, talk by Jenny Balfour-Paul for Asia House, at 6.30 p.m. in the Raymond and Beverley Sadler Room, Clore Education Centre, British Museum . Jenny writes that this includes several journeys made since she spoke to the O.A.T.G. in 1998 and also mentions modern revivals. Tickets from Asia House, tel. 020 7499 1287, £7 ((£4 concessions), or e-mail: enquiries@asiahouse.co.uk

ENCLOSURES

Enclosed with this newsletter are copies of the agenda of the A.G.M., the Treasurer's financial statement for the year ended 30 September 2001 and the minutes of the last A.G.M., as well as a leaflet about the Costume Society, with whom we had a close relationship during their symposium held in Oxford earlier this year.

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

**THE NEXT ISSUE WILL BE A SPECIAL JAPANESE NUMBER
DEADLINE - MONDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2002**

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