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ASIAN TEXTILES

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Inside: Chinese ‘tiger braves’; a collector’s memoir; new textile displays in the Ashmolean; hands-on batik; Mongolian hats and more.

Contents

Front cover: Detail showing motif from *oyna halta*, a tool bag that is hung on the inside of a yurt. Most of these designs are pre-Islamic in origin, brought from southern Siberia and the shamanistic tradition when the Kyrgyz migrated about 300 years ago (see Nick Fielding's article on page 10).

Back cover: Ikat coat, Kashgar, 1801-69. Robert Shaw Collection, Ashmolean Museum. EAX.3987.

Editorial

Sadly, the sixtieth issue of *Asian Textiles* has coincided with the death of its first editor, Phllis Nye. It was Phyllis who launched the publication as a newsletter in 1995 and built it up to the form in which it exists today. She set high standards for the rest of us, being, as they say, 'a hard act to follow'. Ruth Barnes' tribute explains what made Phyllis so exceptional.

Appropriately for the OATG's Ashmolean origins, much of this issue's content relates to the Museum: Sarah Mitchell presents the intriguing results of her research on a Chinese tiger costume, while Sue Stanton describes the latest displays in the textile gallery. We also have members' accounts of two OATG events held in the group's new meeting place: the Ashmolean's education rooms.

Nick Fielding has written a mouthwatering article about his collecting travels, illustrated with photos of some of his beautiful acquisitions; less uplifting is his view that that era is now over. Some fruits of the collecting boom can be seen in the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology's Mongolian hats, which turn out to be far more than simple head-coverings.

Finally, Fiona Kerlogue of the Horniman Museum has sent the following comment on the Chinese boots shown in *AT* 58: 'I would say that the majority of bound foot shoes have a raised heel. Not one of our Manchu shoes has a raised heel, though some have a raised flat platform or a central element designed to raise the whole shoe, which is worn flat. So although the style of the heel is not typical, it not really such a mystery after all!' Thanks to Fiona for following up on this question.

The Editor

OATG events programme

Saturday 18 April 2015: An Indonesian Afternoon 1–4 pm

A **special Indonesian charity event for OATG members hosted by Mrs Sri Owen, aided by OATG member Nelly Andon**

The event will include:

- an Indonesian buffet lunch, some of which will be cooked by Mrs Sri Owen herself
- a small show of Indonesian fashion items made from tenun and ikat.

Mrs Sri Owen will be showing and selling some of her private textile collection and other Indonesian collectibles.

Mrs Sri Owen is famous for her Indonesian cookery writing and her involvement in food journalism with the BBC. She has written many cookery books which will be on show, and she will sign any books purchased during this event. A large percentage of the money raised from her books will also be donated to the charity.

The cost is £20/head, including non-alcoholic drinks. All proceeds will go to fund educational & women's empowerment projects in Indonesia through the charity Connect Indonesia (www. connectindonesia.org)

The charity is collecting reading glasses to send to women textile workers who are finding it difficult to see their fine work, and contributions of reading glasses of any strength would be greatly appreciated.

There is a limit of 20 people for this event, which will take place at Mrs Sri Owen's residence in Wimbledon Village, London.

For more details and to book, please contact Nelly Andon: email nelly@andons.co.uk;

phone: 0208 670 4848; mobile: 079 8262 1817

Saturday 8 August: OATG's 20th Birthday Celebration

A talk by our founder, Ruth Barnes: 'Dressing for the Great Game – the Robert Shaw Collection of Central Asian Garments in the Ashmolean Museum'

Since leaving the Ashmolean Museum, Ruth is now Senior Curator in the Dept of Indo-Pacific Art at Yale University. Her lecture will give an account of a remarkable collection of ikat coats and other garments from Central Asia, collected by the explorer Robert Shaw in 1868/69 on his travels from India to Yarkand and Kashgar. Their 'rediscovery' in the Ashmolean's Eastern Art Department and identification ultimately led to the founding of the Oxford Asian Textile Group.

Ashmolean Museum Education Room

2 pm drinks, talk 2.30, followed by questions and refreshments, including birthday cake. 5 pm finish.

OATG members free, non-members £3.

Asian Textiles is published three times a year: in February, June and October. We welcome input from members — send a review of a book you've read, or an exhibition you've seen.

THE DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS

FRIDAY 15 MAY 2015

Contributions should be emailed to: jane.anson@ntlworld.com

A tiger cap in the Ashmolean's collection

The Ashmolean's Department of Eastern Art Study Room and Collections Manager, Sarah Mitchell, sheds new light on the museum's curious tiger costume.

The function and provenance of the tiger hat EAX.3875.a (Fig. 3) have never been known by the Eastern Art department, and our departmental administrator – Aimée Payton – has invited comment from members of the Oxford Asian Textiles Group after noting its similarity to a military outfit depicted by William Alexander (Fig. 6).

A delve into Eastern Art department's archives has yielded little: although the tiger hat almost certainly belongs with a tunic and pair of boots also owned by the Ashmolean, the cap and boots (Figs 4–5) were accessioned separately to the tunic, and all were without provenance information; it's also clear from the Register entries that the origins of the pieces were unclear:

The boots (EAX.2248) are described as 'Tibetan?'; the tunic (EAX.3875) as a 'Chinese?-style jacket' with 'possibly Tibetan' material, and 'Chinese-style buttons'; and the cap (EAX.3875.a) has the brief entry: 'Matching cap in form of a tiger's head'.

Although the connection between the separate pieces was made by the Ashmolean on the basis of the visual similarity, the provenance and function of the pieces have remained a mystery. Previous suggestions made to *Asian Textiles* have included a child's outfit and, in the last issue, a theatrical costume in keeping with the Monkey King. The form, colour, and pattern of these theatrical costumes bear a remarkable similarity to the tiger costume; compare, for example, the character Sun Wukong, right.

Figure 1: *Sun Wukong [Beijing],* by d'n'c, (from 'Beijing', Flickr, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Despite the similarity between the theatrical costume and the piece in the Ashmolean's collection, a chance encounter with a travel autobiography, *The Face of China* by E. G. Kemp, indicates that the outfit almost certainly represents a military uniform from a Tatar regiment, *ten nai*, popularly called the Tiger Men, Tiger Braves, or Tiger Guards. In her book, Georgiana Kemp (1860–1939)

Figure 2, left: *Tiger Brave*, watercolour by Georgiana Kemp, from *The Face of China* [Public domain, via archive.org]
Figures 3–5, right: Cap (EAX.3875.a), Tunic (EAX.3875), and boots (EAX.2248), Ashmolean Eastern Art department

recounts her travels around China in 1893–1894 and 1907–1908 and accompanies her writings with illustrations. Alongside a watercolour called *Tiger Brave* (Fig. 2) – which illustrates to near perfection the outfit in our collection – Kemp describes her attendance at a military parade in Tsinssu, Shaanxi province:

We attended a review one day, and saw the old régime in its full glory … One regiment was a great contrast to the others — the celebrated tiger braves. They were clad cap-à-pie in yellow cloth striped with black, even the boots and cap being of the same material. The latter was most cunningly made, with little pink-lined ears which stood erect, and ferocious black eyes, and white fangs, and a red tongue hanging out. (Kemp, 1909, pp.84–85)

The existence of this tiger regiment is supported by other contemporary accounts which also describe Chinese infantrymen dressed in full-body tiger uniforms. William Alexander, for instance, describes how 'the Missionaries have denominated them TIGERS OF WAR, from their dress, which has some resemblance to that animal; being

Figure 6: *A Chinese Soldier of Infantry* or A Tiger of War, William Alexander, from *The Costume of China*, [Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons]

striped and having ears on the cap' (Alexander, 1805), and accompanies his description with a full-length illustration (Fig. 6). Kemp's description of a 'striped' uniform with anthropomorphic hat echoes those of Alexander and her contemporaries. However, her illustration – and the Ashmolean's outfit – differ somewhat. Whereas Kemp's illustration depicts a booted man dressed in a fabric with broken striations (much like the Monkey King illustrated in Fig. 1), the uniform is depicted in other 19th-century illustrations with shoes and long, unbroken stripes (Figs 6-8). I have been unable to account for the difference, but feel that Kemp's direct experience of the military parade leaves us in little doubt that Ashmolean's cap and accompanying outfit are of a military nature, and belong specifically to the Chinese regiment commonly called the Tiger Braves.

Amazingly, the autobiography also inadvertently reveals the likely provenance of the Ashmolean's outfit. Georgiana Kemp had many connections with Oxford University and much of her collection, including textiles and watercolours, came to the Museum when she passed away. In her book, Kemp explains that – after an unsuccessful attempt to purchase one of the uniforms – she had an 'exact copy made'. This suggests that the Museum's tiger outfit not only resembles Kemp's illustration but is, in all likelihood, the very one she had copied (Kemp, 1909, p.85). Unfortunately, and unlike many other textiles from the Kemp collection, there is no identifying label.

The tiger uniform in combat

Although Kemp describes the outfit as an 'exact copy' of the original, the soft printed cotton could not have provided physical protection in a combat role. Kemp explains that it was the fearsome nature of the soldiers' appearance that provided the men with their protection:

This alarming costume was supposed to render all further equipment unnecessary, and I asked one of the "braves" if he had no weapon, on which he showed me merely an ordinary knife stuck in his waistband. (Kemp, 1909, p.85)

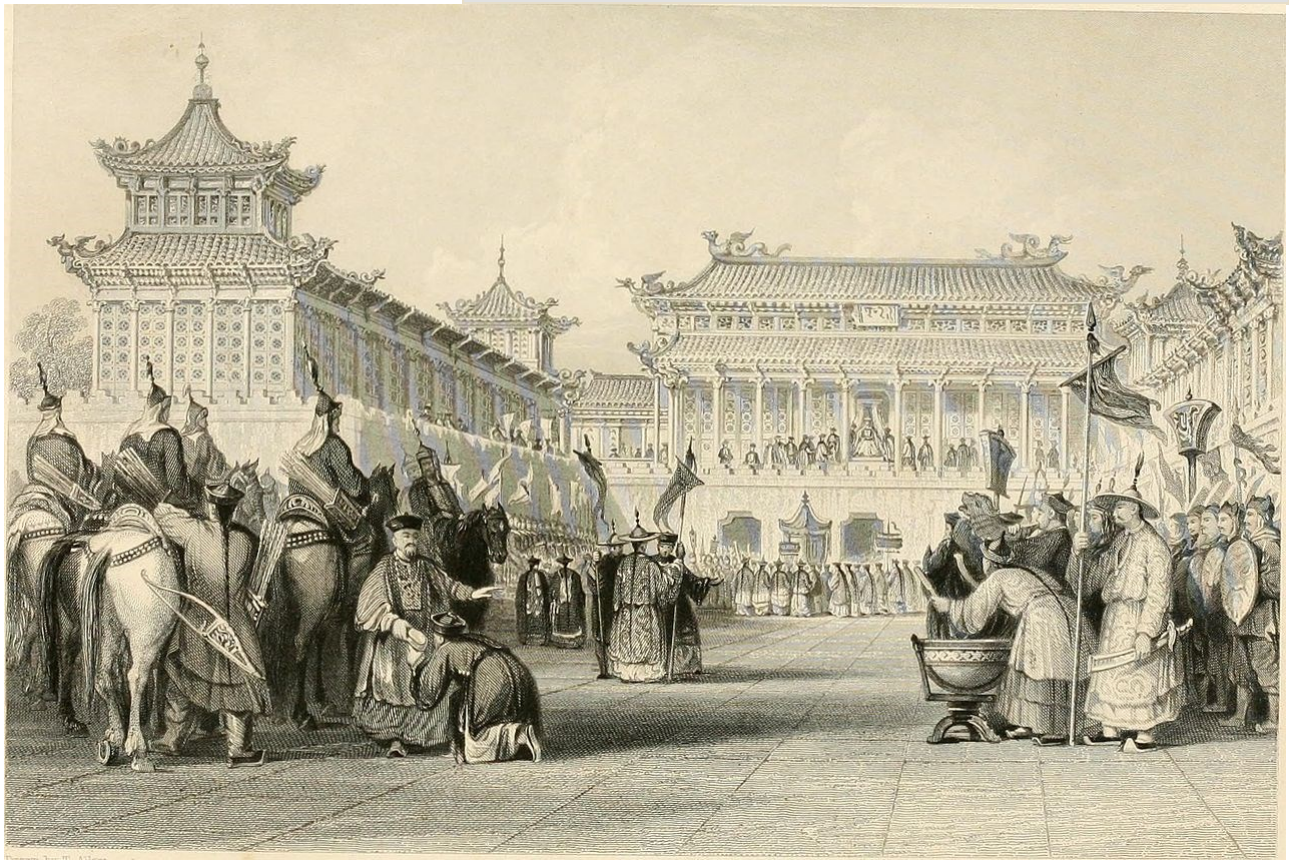

Figure 7: *Emperor Taou-Kwang Reviewing his Guards,* J. B. Allen, after Thomas Allom, from *China, in a Series of Views*, 1843, p. 66, [Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons]

It's clear that the tiger performed an *apotropaic*, or protective, function in Chinese society and tiger symbols appear on a range of art works including bronzes and ceramics. Alexandra Bonds describes how 'specific animals carried desired qualities and were embroidered onto items of clothing to endow the wearer with those attributes…' and both she and Beverly Chico explain that harnessing tiger imagery was a military tactic intended to generate fear in opponents (Bonds, 2008, p.106, and Beverly, 2013, p.100). The tiger, then, was imbued with strength used by armies to defend their soldiers and scare enemies.

Despite the powerful nature of this symbol, however, most 19th-century sources beside Kemp's also emphasize the armoured nature of the Tiger Brave uniforms. In *China, in a Series of Views*, for instance, the caps of the 'Tigers of War' are described as being formed with split bamboo, 'so compactly interwoven, as to be capable of resisting a violent blow' (Wright, 1843, p.54), and the various prints illustrated below depict the soldiers with at least a shield if not also a sword (see Figs 6–8). Modern accounts also describe the arms commonly used by the Tiger Braves, listing, among others, shields, sabres, and grappling hooks (Garrett 2007, p.29, and Boden, 2007, p.32), although the frightening nature of the uniform and the soldiers' shouting also usually features in descriptions of the regiment (see for example Boden, 2007, p.32).

Besides the combat role of the regiment, many 19th-century commentators describe the Tiger Braves as fulfilling the role of imperial protectors. The Tartar soldiers were, according to A. Haussman, 'infinitely more devoted than the rest of the army to the

Figure 8: *The 18th (Royal Irish) Regiment of Foot, At the Storming of the Fortress of Amoy, August 26th 1841*, J. H. Lynch, after M. A. Hayes, [Public domain, Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library)

defence of the throne and the support of the dynasty' (1853, p.88). Like Kemp half a century later, G. N. Wright also witnessed the Tiger Braves at a military parade, this time at the palace at Peking where 'an annual review of the Tartar guards is held, by the emperor in person as the new year opens'. Whereas in Lynch's print (Fig. 8), the soldiers are depicted at an Amoy battle scene, Wright describes their role as an enclosed one, claiming that 'they always reside in the Tartar city which is … separated by a lofty wall from the Chinese section of Peking' (Wright, 1843, pp.67–68).

It seems that contemporary accounts are not consistent in their descriptions of the geographic boundaries, role, uniform, and arms of these Tiger Braves. Perhaps the nuanced nature of these soldiers' customs was not fully understood by the European travellers whose accounts have come down to us today; perhaps there were in fact numerous regiments that incorporated the tiger into their uniforms for disparate purposes. As a non-specialist I have been confined to the English-language sources available, and these discrepancies unfortunately remain a mystery.

However, one thing is clear: although I have been unable to locate any English-language sources describing the origins of the Tiger Braves, archaeological finds suggest that tigers have long been associated with a military and guardian role. Sui and Tang guardian tomb figurines unearthed in Shanxi, Hebei, and Henan, for instance, have been found with tiger helmets, and animal and anthropomorphic Spirit Guardians of

the late Sui and Tang Dynasties often appear with tiger skins or leonine attributes (I-Tieng Hsing, 2005, pp.103–154, and Watt, 2004, pp.286–297, & 292). I-Tieng Hsing has suggested that the tiger helmet, originally accompanied by a club, is an attribute appropriated from the Heraclean 'warrior and guardian role' (I-Tieng Hsing, 2005, p.138).

The protective nature of the tiger has not been reserved for the military, and here we go full circle to the earlier suggestion that this hat could have formed part of a child's outfit worn at New Year. It was, and in some rural areas still is, traditional for boys of a month old to be presented with tiger outfits, including caps and shoes, embroidered with large eyes to scare away evil spirits. Larger outfits would be provided as the child grew and these would be worn on festive occasions such as birthdays and New Year celebrations (Beverly, 2013, p.100). The Pitt Rivers has an example from Guizhou Province (1989.16.7), and although described as a tiger hat, this red piece is embellished with seemingly unrelated symbols including flowers and bells. This seems typical of children's tiger hats, which usually include a range of protective symbols and embellishments, and are thus marked as distinct in style from the yellow military hats worn by adult soldiers.

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The great textile-collecting boom

Nick Fielding recalls his discovery of textile gems in the markets of Asia, but suspects that the collectors' heyday may be over.

Above: Pashtun baby's cap from the NW Frontier, India, bought in Islamabad.

Ever since I began travelling east as a young man in the 1970s, one of the greatest personal pleasures has been rifling through the bazaars and markets, looking for that little textile treasure I knew was there somewhere, even if I couldn't always find it. I never had a lot of money, so the more diligent I was, the better chance of a bargain. If only I could outwit the proprietor, with his (it was always a man) extraordinary ability to judge what I would pay, perhaps I would find something to add to my ever-increasing collection.

From those days I still have a couple of tiny hand-stitched silk purses or tobacco pouches made by the Hazara people of Afghanistan, tiny objects of wonderment, even now. Alongside them in the same market in Herat I found two triangular amulets intricately stitched with silver wire and probably meant to be sewn onto the front of a Kuchi nomad's dress. A couple of days later I came across an unusual hunting cloth, used by locals to camouflage themselves when hunting desert partridge.

And so it continued. In Kawkaban in North Yemen in the eighties I came across some beautiful children's bonnets looking like nothing so much as Victorian parlourmaids' head attire and quickly snapped them up for pennies. In the remote Kamchatka peninsula in far-off Siberia I found an Evenk hunter's belt, made from sealskin and American trade beads, the buckle crudely made from a piece of old brass, cut by hand.

India, Pakistan and, of course, Turkey were my happiest hunting grounds. On the Indian subcontinent you could

Left and opposite: Details showing motifs from *oyna halta*, tool bags that are hung on the inside of a yurt. Most of these designs are pre-Islamic in origin, brought from southern Siberia and the shamanistic tradition when the Kyrgyz migrated about 300 years ago.

Left: *Dastmal-e-mohr*, a handkerchief for wrapping a *mohr,* a small clay tablet impressed with prayers, originating from one of the Shi'ite shrines at Karbala, Iraq. The shrine portrayed on some of these cloths is usually the one dedicated to Ali at Mazar-e-Sharif in northern Afghanistan.

never be sure what would turn up. Maharaja's wonderful shop in Islamabad never failed to surprise. Strewn with colourful Central Asian suzanis, Kashmiri shawls, Afghan beadwork from Ghazni, wonderful white silk embroidery on cotton from Kandahar, any number of textiles from Sindh and Kutch, my heartrate tripled as I walked through the door.

Bale upon bale take up every square inch of floor and before long decisions have to be made – the Swati pillow case or the Waziri shawl? The Turkoman cap or supper? It was there that I purchased a battered, but gorgeous, girl's dress trimmed with cowrie shells and a hundred years old if it was a day.

Once upon a time, you could stroll through the Khyber Bazar and Shafi Market in Peshawar, where literally anything could be found. The same was true of Chicken Street in Kabul, where I bought *dastmal-e-mohr*, the little handkerchiefs embroidered by the Shia Hazara and in which they kept their prayer stones, made from the earth brought from the holy shrine at Kerbala in Iraq. Such places are off-limits now, the tourists are long gone and they are the sadder for it.

Still, there was always Samarkand, Bokhara and – although I have never visited – the great outdoor markets in Kashgar in Xinjiang and Ashgabad in Turkmenistan. Until the collapse of the Soviet Union at the beginning of the 1990s, these places were not easy to visit and even if you were able to get there, taking your hard-won textiles (particularly carpets) out of the country could be a nightmare. A carpet purchase necessarily involved a visit to the national carpet museum to get a special stamp verifying that the item was not of historic importance. Even that wasn't always enough and I certainly had one blazing row at the airport departure gate with an official who in reality wanted a bribe to let me through with my (newly made) rug.

One consequence of the end of the Soviet era was that soon there was a flood of beautiful old textiles out of Central Asia to that great entrepot,

THE GREAT TEXTILE-COLLECTING BOOM

Istanbul. I recall flying out of Central Asia and into Istanbul in an aircraft jammed full of headscarfed ladies carrying huge shopping bags stuffed with textiles. They would leave the airport and make directly for the Grand Bazaar, where the dealers would fall upon them and divest them of their goods. The ladies would fill their bags with hairdryers, gaudily printed modern cloths, TVs and radios and head home on the next plane, only to repeat the journey as soon as they could afford it. It was a golden period.

Quite suddenly, nomadic-era textiles were appearing in the market in profusion – Lakai food covers, gun covers, puttees, Tadjik *bolimposh* canopies, camel trappings and tent bands, Kirghiz *ayak kap* (my personal favourites) tool bags, headbands and *saye gosh*, beautiful *khalats* and *chapans*. Sometimes you would come across an old textile backed with a Russian trade cloth or a hand-printed design from Bokhara, dating from the late 19th century. It was this massive influx of high quality, collectable textiles that fuelled the collecting boom of the nineties and noughties, an era when visiting Istanbul to see Mehmet Cetinkaya's shop or Cocoon, run by Sheref Ozen, was almost like walking through a museum rather than a shop.

At that time the Arasta Bazaar, close to the Blue Mosque, was the mecca for textile collectors. The dealers had fantastic inventories. They could provide everything. And the prices were reasonably good. The dealers bought cheap and the turnover was rapid, so there was no need to hike the prices. Of course, if you wanted a Daghestani *kaitag* or a particularly gorgeous ikat *chapan*, you would have to pay big money. But something a little less exotic wouldn't break the bank.

The business was so good that several of the dealers, Ozen included, set up businesses in Central Asia to encourage the production of *ikats* and *suzanis*, making sure that even after the

Top left, left and opposite top right: Motifs from *oyna halta* (see page 10).

Opposite below: Pillow cover from the Swat Valley, Pakistan; silk embroidery on cotton.

supply of old pieces ran out, there would still be something for the market and in the process probably saving these techniques from disappearing altogether. And thus it continued, a seemingly endless supply of remarkable textile survivals feeding a collecting boom that knew no bounds.

Alas, it could not continue. I don't know whether it was the end of the economic boom in 2008, but suddenly it was different. Dealers tell me they used to send buyers to scour the mountain villages and encourage hard-up households to empty their dowry chests. Inevitably, it was only a matter of time before the bulk of collectable pieces had gone through the marketplace to adorn a loft in Manhattan or a fashionable house in Mayfair.

The myriad of shops in the Arasta Bazaar slowly but surely began to offer newer textiles or switched out of textiles completely, choosing instead to sell that old mainstay – carpets – or even household goods. Today Arasta is a shadow of its former self. Once I would walk down that alley and the dealers would call out my name – delighted to see a returning customer and knowing that they would always have something enticing for me. No longer. It still has a flavour of the east, but by-and-large the stock has gone.

On my last visit a few months ago I made a point of speaking to the dealers and asking

them about the business. They confirmed that the old trade no longer exists. 'The 'Stans are empty,' said one of them. 'I don't even bother to send my buyers there anymore.' Sheref Ozen told me he is concentrating on his photography. He still sells some beautiful textiles, but the front window of his shop now displays a large selection of amusing felt hats, made in Central Asia specifically for the tourist trade. In the Grand Bazaar I asked a dealer to show me his Central Asian embroideries and we went through a pile that was more than a metre high. From those I found maybe two that were worth buying. The rest were a mixture of remnants and modern copies, or restitchings of old pieces, but using chemically dyed yarns.

No doubt there are still some places where beautiful old textiles still reach the market. The Indonesian islands continue to throw up amazing items and doubtless there are still reservoirs in places like Tibet, Burma, Laos, the Philippines and elsewhere.

But the great modern textile collecting era has probably gone. In most of the world, the age of handmade embroidery is no more. Should we be worried? I don't think so. The challenge now will be to hold on to what we have, these ephemeral objects, so often absent from history due to their fragility. At least we will have a chance to preserve, study and admire the wonderful collections built in recent years – before the next great textile-collecting boom once more sweeps us all off our feet.

Top: Motif from *oyna halta* (see page 10).

Left: A hunting cloth (*chireh*) from Afghanistan. For more information on this, see Nick's article in *Asian Textiles* no.40.

Mongolian hats

OATG blogger Agnes Upshall reports on an unusual collection of headwear in the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

In this article, I simply want to share a fascinating display of Mongolian hats from the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (MAA). When I visited the museum last year I was intrigued to discover some of the customs and traditions surrounding these hats, and I expect that *Asian Textiles* readers will be interested to learn about them, too. If anyone has any further information about Mongolian hats, or happens to have a Mongolian hat of their own that they'd like to share on the blog or in the magazine, I'd love to hear about it!

Status and identity

In the Mongol cultural region men's hats are functional as well as indicators of status and identity. In the past, social position was indicated by the kind of hat worn. Noble titles and ranks were also marked by different coloured buttons attached to the hat.

During the socialist period in Mongolia (c. 1921–1989), hats such as trilbies and berets became popular among men, while women tended to wear Russian-style headscarves.

Today, different Mongol groups, such as the Buriad, Halh and Oirat, wear costumes and hats as markers of ethnic identity on ceremonial occasions in the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation.

The hats displayed here are mainly worn on formal occasions. Cowboy hats are more common as everyday wear. They provide shade from the glare of the sun, but also indicate wealth and power, as younger men tend to wear baseball caps. Different styles of hats continue to distinguish higher-ranking monks from novices.

Hats and their owners

Beyond indicating status and identity, hats are literally held to be an extension of their owners. Through long use, a man's hat 'holds onto' some part of him. Like a man's belt, the hat is sometimes considered to be a vessel of the person's *süns* (soul).

Figure 1: Kazakh man's hat. 1987.1560, collected by Dr Caroline Humphrey. The Kazakh live in Mongolia's far west, in Bayan-Olgii Province. Collector's notes: 'This cap was bought in a dollar-shop in Ulan Bator, i.e. it was designated for tourist sale. But probably it does not differ from caps sold to ordinary Kazakhs. In the past, Kazakh men never went without some headwear, and this kind of cap was the most common; they were even worn overnight while asleep. Usually Kazakhs shaved their heads. Going out into the street, men would often put on another hat on top of the cap. The ornament round the edge of the cap in pink and yellow, is the *koshkar muiyz* (ram's horn), a favourite on many Kazakh domestic objects, such as felt rugs.'

MONGOLIAN HATS

Figure 2: Man's festive hat, made of blue Chinese silk, black and white lamb skin and Russian elastic. 1975.67, collected by Dr Caroline Humphrey. Collector's notes: 'This is a man's festive hat, probably from the Buryat minority in Mongolia. The name for hat in Buryat is *malagai*, and the black upturned rim is called *harabsi*. The *harabsi* should never be turned down … This hat is probably a summer one, but it is difficult to say since such hats are almost never worn these days in Ulan Bator. The tassel at the crown of the hat is called *ulaan zalaa* (red crest) and is regarded with great respect. According to a Mongol tradition the peak of the man's hat symbolises Sumber Uula, the World Mountain, and the thirty-two divisions of the peak (this Buryat hat has only fifteen) symbolise the thirty-two tribes of the "Blue Mongols". The red threads of the tassels are the rays of the sun, which light up the lives of the thirty-two tribes. The black rim symbolises the enemies which surround the Mongols. At the crown of the hat is a red thread tab, possibly for hanging up the hat.'

Hats should be treated with the utmost respect. One must not step over, or put on someone else's hat. Nor should one sit on, or cover a man's hat. This would be to disrespect the hat's owner and may even cause him harm.

Ways of caring for hats are varied. When indoors, a man will usually place his hat in a high position so that it will not be damaged. During wrestling matches a competitor's hat is carried by a special attendant-trainer, who stands near him, carefully holding his hat.

About the collectors:

Professor Caroline Humphrey was a founder of the Mongolia and Inner Asia Studies Unit at the University of Cambridge, and was recently made a Dame of the British Empire for services to scholarship. Further information on Professor Humphrey's work is available on her website: www.innerasiaresearch.org/CHsite/index.html

Professor Tseren is a university professor, based in Ulan Bator. For more information, see: http://amantuuh.socanth.cam.ac.uk/search/view_summary.php?Interview=081211B&Person=990068

Thanks to the MAA for allowing me to use their text, and thanks to researchers at the Mongolian & Inner Asian Studies Unit, University of Cambridge, and at the University of Aberdeen, for the original research.

Figure 3: Janjin hat. 2008.23. This hat is worn on formal occasions in Mongolia. *Janjin* means a general, or commander. The hat became popular after the leader of the People's Revolution of Mongolia, Sukhbaatar, wore it.

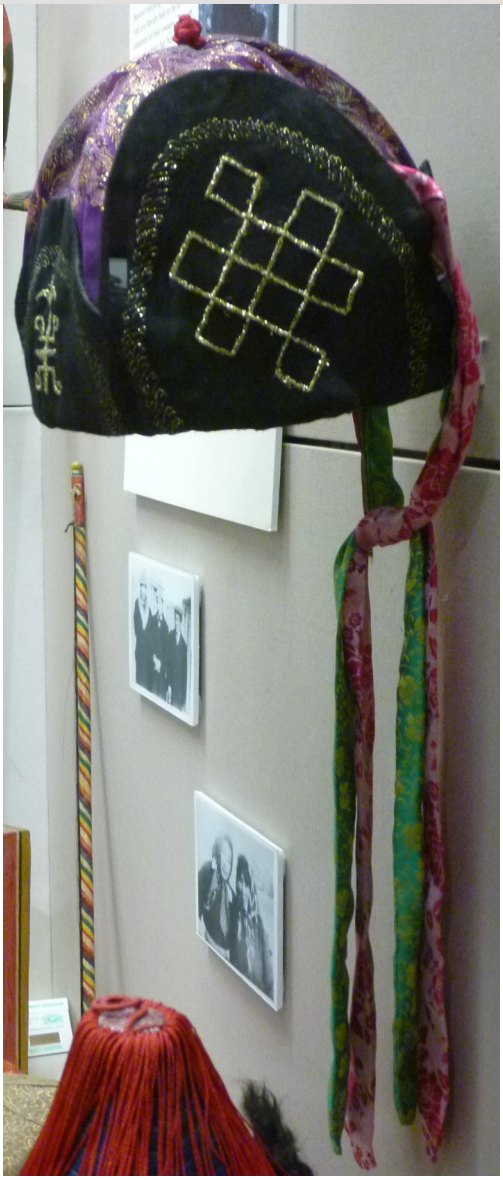

Figure 4: Torguud hat. 1995.307, collected by Prof. Tseren. The side flaps of this hat bear embroidered designs, as do the front and back flaps. Four long silk tassels, with embroidered floral designs, hang from the back. Purple cloth features multicoloured designs of Chinese influence. Flaps were worn down for warmth in winter and tied up in summer.

Figure 5: Buddhist woman's hat. 1975.66., collected by Dr Caroline Humphrey. Collector's notes: 'This is the hat of an old woman who has taken vows (called a *savgants*). The style is typical of the Khalkha Mongols. The hat is worn with the flap and two small red ribbons at the back of the head; the red rim is usually turned upwards and the hat fastened under the chin by the two long brown strings; when it is cold the red rim is turned down. The colours of the hat (yellow, red, brown) symbolise the Buddhist religion ... This hat originally had a sable (or other precious fur) lining the red rim, but this was removed before I obtained the hat. The pattern on the red silk, which is modern and currently (1975) on sale in Ulan Bator, is called *olzii utas* (the 'never-ending thread') and symbolises peace, happiness and longevity.' There are numerous kinds of hats among the Mongols. 'There are hats for each season, and each tribe has its own traditional hat forms. It is still considered impolite in Mongolia not to wear a hat, and the form of the hat is very indicative of social status. Now, 1974, it is most common, even in the countryside, to wear Russian-style fur hats with ear-flaps; but old people still normally wear the kinds of hats I have presented here.'

Figure 6: Ear muffs. 1975.68, collected by Dr Caroline Humphrey. The paisley material probably comes from Russia. Collector's notes: 'These are worn under a hat during outside work in the winter. The fur lining could be hare. The blue and gold cloth probably comes from China. Used by Khalkha Mongols.'

New textile displays in the Ashmolean

Sue Stanton, Textile Conservator at the Ashmolean, describes the textiles that are currently on display at the museum.

The requirement to restrict the light exposure on textile displays means that they have to be rotated every few years. This leads to a gradual supply of new textile pieces to be enjoyed on a visit to the Ashmolean.

In the past two years the Textile Gallery displays have been completely rotated. Most have been exchanged with similar items from the collections so that Ruth Barnes' original themes for the gallery continue to be illustrated. The spectacular red and gold Central Asian coat from the Shaw Collection has been replaced by another Shaw coat with a bold blue and white ikat design. It is complemented by caps and boots from the same collection. In the same case, a small display of Kashmir shawls takes the place of the early nineteenth-century Turkish-style costume worn by the Arabic scholar Edward Lane during his time in Cairo from 1825 to 1835. The new display includes two complete shawls and

Above: Boy's coat, northern India, late 1800s or early 1900s. EAX.2144.

Right: English lady's surcoat made of Kashmir shawl pieces, mid-nineteenth century. EA2000.39.

a surcoat made from a third shawl. The first shawl dates from early in the 1900s and is similar to one worn by a young woman in a painting hanging adjacent to the display. It was painted by Gioacchino Serengeli in Paris between 1807 and 1810. The second shawl dates from later in the nineteenth century, when the stylised *boteh* designs became more elaborate and filled the whole field of a shawl. At over 3.5m long, it would have been draped over the full skirts that were fashionable in the period. The surcoat made from a cut-down shawl represents the end of the period when Kashmir shawls were the height of fashion in Europe. At the end of the nineteenth century the fashionable silhouette became more tailored and the new narrower skirts could not support a shawl several metres long, so the expensive shawls were sometimes made into a more modish garment. The example on display is trimmed with silk fringes made in

NEW TEXTILE DISPLAYS IN THE ASHMOLEAN

Kashmir shawl with flowers and buta, early nineteenth century. EA1958.74.

the exact range of colours woven into the original shawl.

Also in the Textile Gallery, the robes once belonging to T.E. Lawrence have been re-displayed after going on loan to several international exhibitions. They are now exhibited with additional Lawrence pieces loaned to the museum from All Souls College: a gold dagger, a gold and sapphire ring and leather sandals.

Elsewhere in the museum two large silk festive banners have been hung in the Later China gallery. These twentieth-century pieces have elaborate fringes and are decorated with embroidery of auspicious figures and inscriptions.

Finally, the Eastern Art Department has added to its textile holdings through a piece transferred from the Museum's Western Art Department. This is a large Indian chintz hanging dating from 1770–80. It has a typical palampore design of a chinoiserie-style tree growing from a stylised rock with a border of scrolling flowers and leaves. It is similar to a piece from the V&A illustrated in Rosemary Crill's book *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West* (plate 21, IM.226-1921). The Ashmolean piece is not on display (it measures 321 x 231cm). Its new accession number is EA2014.131.

Batik workshop at the Ashmolean

Making the most of OATG's new link with the Ashmolean Museum's education department, a group gathered there for a practical workshop in batik. Sue Richardson describes the day.

Above: Angela Lenman, who taught the class.

Right: careful use of a hairdryer to dry the dyed fabric without melting the wax.

Below: applying wax to preliminary designs, using the canting.

On Saturday 6 December 2014, David and I joined a batik workshop at the Ashmolean Museum. The instructor was Angela Lenman, a member of the Batik Guild. On our arrival we were greeted with the bad news that the Security Team were concerned that the vapours from the hot wax would set off the Museum's alarm system. Luckily this was resolved by using the wax at a much cooler temperature than is ideal, and also only using two pots of wax, which were put as far away from the sensors as was possible. We were just relieved that the workshop was able to go ahead.

Angela gave a brief introduction to the concept of batik and showed us a few of the many examples she had brought for inspiration. Most of the day, however, was hands on.

We started by pinning small pieces of fabric onto frames, stretching them as tight as we could. Work on this first piece was all about learning to use the various tools – stamps, brushes and canting (small pipes filled with wax, with a tube that acts as a nib). Most of us were fine with the stamps and brushes but struggled with the canting: it was all too easy to get unintended blobs of wax from the bottom of the canting onto your cloth. I decided to think of these as design features rather than errors!

The other difficulty several of us had was getting our heads around the idea of how the waxed areas would appear in a finished design. After practising the use of the various tools, we also lightly cracked the wax over some areas to give a veined effect. Angela prepared several dye baths and we placed our cloths in these, then dried them carefully with a hairdryer. We had to ensure this didn't get the wax too hot, or it would melt and ruin our designs. We then added more wax to certain areas, thus sealing the colour below, before dyeing and drying again.

Having grasped the basic principles, we then moved on to much larger pieces. It was interesting to see the variety of designs produced by our small

BATIK WORKSHOP AT THE ASHMOLEAN

Left: the waxed fabric is immersed in dye, lightest colours first, followed by darker ones.

Right: dye can be applied to small areas with a brush.

Below left: painting dye over a waxed design.

group. Several people decided on geometric shapes, some on naturalistic images and some very abstract designs. I used a textile produced by the Ngada people of Flores in Indonesia as my inspiration and used the canting to draw the horse motifs. Again my main issue was unintended blobs of wax, but we managed to remove or soften the effect of these by judicious use of a pin. I drew lots of lines at each end, which would remain white; I then used a fine brush to paint brown dye in between these. Before immersing the cloth in the blue dye I had to cover each brown line in wax, which took much longer than I anticipated, so I wasn't able to leave my cloth in the dye long enough to get the really deep blue I was after.

This was a thoroughly enjoyable workshop. It gave all the participants a much greater understanding of the batik process, and more importantly, respect for batik artists. Next time I see a hand-produced batik I will really appreciate the work that went into it.

Above and opposite: some of the participants and their finished batik pieces from the workshop.

BATIK WORKSHOP AT THE ASHMOLEAN

If there is a technique you would like to learn, or if you have a skill that you could share with a group, please contact Christine Yates to discuss: christine@fiberartgallery.com

Show-and-tell, 24 January 2015

Following the success of the first show-and-tell event last year, a second was held following January's AGM. Agnes Upshall describes it.

We held our second show-and-tell session following the AGM at the end of last month, this time in our new meeting venue: the Education room at the Ashmolean Museum. There were so many beautiful and unusual textiles on show that day, and I'll try to share them here for those who couldn't come to the event.

Figure 1: Marion's collection of shoes, including Chinese shoes for bound feet, and a pair of boots that belonged to a Korean Mandarin.

Marion Maule brought a selection of interesting shoes with stories to tell (Figure 1). As well as two excruciatingly small pairs of nineteenth-century Chinese shoes for bound feet, she showed us a pair of boots that had belonged to a Korean mandarin in the eighteenth century. (It turned out that Marion had acquired these boots along with the rest of this man's entire outfit – right down to his opium pipe and underpants, we learned – when all she really wanted was his fan. The outfit had originally been collected to be worn as fancy dress.) The boots were exceedingly heavy, and were the same for the left and right foot, so would have had to be worn into shape.

Nick Fielding brought a wonderful ornate face-covering for a Bedouin woman (Figure 2), from Sinai, Egypt. It was a seriously weighty garment, given the Ottoman coins that were attached to it in their hundreds, not to mention the beads, pieces of amber, agate, pebbles and sea shells. The fabric background looks as if it may have been dyed with saffron. Despite its elaborate appearance, apparently this would have been an everyday accessory.

Figure 2: Nick modelling his face-covering for a Bedouin woman.

Figure 3: Delia's printed 'ikat' textile, bought from the Pitt Rivers Museum shop.

Felicity Wood brought three lovely Indonesian ikat textiles (two sarongs and a man's shouldercloth) from Savu, made from handspun cotton, which she bought in Denpasar, Bali, in the 1980s. The fabric was being sold to be made into jackets, and was simply piled up in a shop in stacks labelled 'Small', 'Medium' and 'Large', so Felicity bought several to decorate her house. Delia Ayers also brought some Indonesian textiles, one of which she had bought at the Pitt Rivers Museum shop several years ago (Figure 3). On closer inspection, it appeared that this textile had in fact been printed to look like ikat weaving, as it was paler on one side.

Fiona Sutcliffe showed us an Uzbek hair-covering plait (or *soch pupak*) that she bought in a market in 1998, on a trip to Turkmenistan with Sheila Paine. Fiona even brought the diary she had written on that trip, and read us an excerpt to put us in the right frame of mind. Aimée helpfully modelled this accessory, which gave a good impression of how it would look when worn (Figure 4). Made of long cords with tassels at regular intervals, and wrapped with brightly covered fabric and beads, it would have been plaited into a woman's hair, no doubt to stunning effect.

This was by no means all! We also saw two woven Miao textiles of Christine Yates's, two Chinese textile fragments with dragons on, belonging to Christi Hassel-Shearer (one of which was very similar indeed to the Fitzwilliam dragon robe, illustrated in *Asian Textiles* no.59) and a range of fascinating textiles from Jane O'Brian, who had picked up a 'lucky dip'-style collection of Chinese and Japanese

Figure 4: Fiona's Uzbek hair-covering plait, kindly modelled by Aimée.

Figure 5: Jane's Chinese and Japanese textile collection.

textiles from an auction, and brought them along to see if anyone could shed any light on them (Figure 5).

Priscilla Church brought an embroidered V-shaped yurt decoration, with long fringes, which would have been hung from the top of a pile of bedding. Although she bought it in the Swat Valley, she thinks it actually originated in Central Asia, possibly in Kyrgyzstan. Judith Condor Vidal showed us some interesting Bangladeshi textiles, one of which was made from nettles, and Sheila Allen brought a lovely woven cotton belt with geometric patterns, which she bought from a Nuristani refugee family in the Kalash Valley, northern Pakistan. Nicky Mullinger brought along a couple of Asian textile lengths: one bought in Beijing, and the other (from Myanmar) in a Headington charity shop (proving that these days you really don't need to go as far as Asia to pick up authentic Asian textiles!).

Big thanks to Christine for organising another brilliant show-and-tell event, thanks to Aimée for chairing it, and thanks to everyone who brought along a textile to show or who just came along to enjoy the event. It was a great afternoon!

Phyllis Nye

In late February we heard with great sadness that Phyllis Nye, one of OATG's founding members and our first Newsletter editor, had died on the 18th of the month. Phyllis had moved from Oxford to Southbourne, Bournemouth, in 2003 to be closer to her son Philip, but her contacts with Oxford and the OATG remained close. She even continued to edit the Newsletter for five more years, until Nick Fielding took over from her in 2008.

In early 1995 the Ashmolean Museum's Department of Eastern Art had an exhibition of some spectacular garments which had only recently been identified as coats presented to the English explorer Robert Shaw during his travels in Central Asia in the late 1860s. For decades they had lingered in a large chest in the department's organic storage room – like many other textiles in the Ashmolean, they were a neglected part of the Museum's holdings. When I mentioned the finds, and their historical significance, to Julian Raby, then lecturer in Islamic art at the Oriental Insitute, he advised: 'Start a group of Friends, to give the collections more exposure!' That same day, I met Phyllis on the Museum's forecourt. She was one of the most dedicated guides in the Eastern Art Department, with a special interest in the Islamic and East Asian collections. I mentioned Julian's suggestion, and she immediately seized on the idea. There in front of the Ashmolean, we found ourselves planting the seeds for the Oxford Asian Textile Group. She said we would need a newsletter, and offered to take it on.

And what an editor she was! We started out with just five pages in the first issue. But Phyllis developed a format that remained in place for the time of her editorship. The content rose to 20 and eventually 30 pages and more, and she introduced a cover image to illustrate a key article in each issue. She had a wonderful network of connections, and she was always open to expand that. It was not easy to get out of writing an article for Phyllis once she had decided that that was just what our members wanted to read about! In the early years she made it her goal to introduce the many hidden textile treasures in Oxford collections on the first pages of each issue, and soon this was expanded to cover collections elsewhere in the UK and even abroad. Her own articles were always beautifully written – her style was precise, concise, and yet filled with evocative atmosphere where appropriate. She hated gimmicky expressions, and she was a stickler for proper grammar and syntax. Reading her editorials was a pure pleasure.

She made the newsletter one of OATG's leading attractions, and we soon had quite a few overseas members who could only take part in the group's activities by reading about them. Phyllis created a content that went well past the local, reporting on Asian and Islamic textile events, research news, and collections from all over the world. Her formidable personality and strong opinions were always tempered by her common sense. In the early days she often worked on the Newsletter in the Ashmolean, and she was the only person I knew who argued with the computer she was working on.

Phyllis had a rich and rewarding life, with several years spent in West Africa, where her husband Peter was teaching Forestry. They both loved long bicycle trips through Britain, and Phyllis even cycled all the way to Santiago de Compostela when she was well into her sixties. The last years in Oxford were hard for them both. They had lost one of their daughters, and Peter suffered a severe stroke. Phyllis realised eventually that they had to move to where more help was available. She accepted this with fortitude, and was characteristically positive about her new life. Let us take this opportunity to celebrate her wonderful companionship, her energy, and engagement with, and curiosity about, the world around her.

Ruth Barnes

Non-OATG events and exhibitions

8 October 2014—19 April 2015, Textile Museum of Canada, Toronto

From Ashgabat to Istanbul: Oriental Rugs from Canadian Collections

The history of Canadian collecting practices and cultural context of the Oriental rug production will be visualized in a beautiful display of over 70 distinctive rugs, horse and camel decorations, and tent bands and bags from Central and West Asia – regions well known for the richness of their rug weaving traditions developed by diverse cultures and peoples. With its rich cultural content, *From Ashgabat to Istanbul: Oriental Rugs from Canadian Collections* will be a window into their complex and ancient traditions.

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4 October 2014—6 September 2015, Horniman Museum, London

Revisiting Romania: Dress and Identity

The exhibition highlights the elaborately decorated textiles, costumes and artefacts used in Romanian peasant homes to showcase women's skill and industry, to display a family's social connections and to express national pride. It reflects the fascination and enchantment felt by visitors on seeing the textiles of Romania, explores the way in which the upper classes adopted peasant clothing, and looks at how the meaning attached to textiles – particularly costume – was manipulated under the Ceausescu regime to promote national unity.

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26 January—28 March 2015, Tiraz Centre, Amman, Jordan

Golden Threads of Bethlehem

Bethlehem’s cultural heritage narrated through its traditional costumes. The Tiraz Centre is proud to host its first exhibition. For details, see http://tirazcentre.org/en/events/golden-threads-bethlehem

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5 February—16 August 2015, British Museum, London

Shifting patterns: Pacific barkcloth clothing

In the islands of the Pacific, cloth made from the inner bark of trees is a distinctive art tradition. Probably brought to the region at least 5,000 years ago by some of the first human settlers, its designs reflect the histories of each island group and the creativity of the makers. Spanning the region from New Guinea in the west to Rapa Nui (Easter Island) in the east, the exhibition will show a selection of 77 garments, headdresses, masks and body adornments from the Museum’s collection. Dating from the 1700s to 2014, the pieces on display include those worn as everyday items and ceremonial costumes linked to key life-cycle events such as initiation and marriage.

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13 June 2015—31 January 2016, Victoria & Albert Musem, London

Shoes: Pleasure and Pain

This exhibition looks at the extremes of footwear, presenting around 200 pairs of shoes ranging from ancient Egyptian gold sandals to contemporary elaborate designs. It considers the cultural significance and transformative capacity of shoes, and will examine the latest developments in footwear technology. Examples from famous shoe wearers will be shown alongside a dazzling range of historic shoes, many of which have not been displayed before.

We are currently looking for shoes to be included in the exhibition: a pre-war pair of elevated decorative geta for geisha or maiko (okobo) and a pre-war pair of three-teethed geta for oiran (koma). If you have any of these in your wardrobe / collections, please contact Lucia at l.savi@vam.ac.uk or by phone ext. 2604.

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3 October 2015—10 January 2016, Victoria & Albert Museum, London

The Fabric of India

The highlight of the V&A's India Festival, this will be the first major exhibition to explore the dynamic and multifaceted world of handmade textiles from India. It will include a spectacular 18th-century tent belonging to Tipu Sultan, a stunning range of historic costume, highly prized textiles made for international trade, and cutting-edge fashion by celebrated Indian designers.

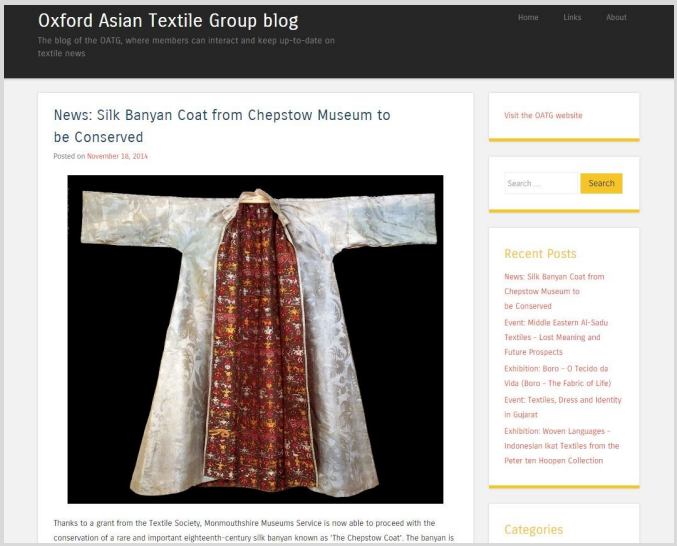
Showcasing the best of the V&A's world-renowned collection together with masterpieces from international partners, the exhibition will feature over 200 objects ranging from the 3rd to the 21st century. Objects on display for the first time will be shown alongside renowned masterworks and the very latest in Indian contemporary design. The astonishing skills and variety evident in this incomparably rich tradition will surprise and inform even those with prior knowledge of the subject, and is sure to delight visitors.

Don't forget to look at OATG's blog for news and information about exhibitions and events

Keep up with Asian textiles news, events and more on the OATG's blog, at oxfordasiantextilegroup.wordpress.com. The blog is regularly updated with information about exhibitions, talks, textile fairs and news items from around the world, so no matter where you are, there's always something new to find out about.

OATG members and visitors to the blog are encouraged to share their thoughts and ideas on the blog by leaving comments for others to read. Similarly, if you know of something you think others might find interesting, leave a comment for me, Agnes, and I'll share it online.

Agnes Upshall, OATG blogger



The AGM, 24 January 2015

A group of 18 members and nine non-members gathered in the Education Centre of the Ashmolean Museum on Saturday 24 January. Since before Christmas the lecture meetings have also taken place in this room. A summary of the minutes follows for those members who were unable to attend.

- The Chair, Aimée Payton, welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the committee for their continuing enthusiasm.
- The acting Membership Secretary, Michael Messham, was happy to report that he would shortly be handing over to Leena Lindell. As Leena will be paid as a freelancer, Michael urged everyone to change their standing orders to the new rate, rather than have her chase members who are still paying the old subscription rate. Michael would be giving Leena a database that was as up to date as possible. Further to this he urged all members who had changed their email address in the past year to inform the Membership Secretary.
- The editor of *Asian Textiles*, Jane Anson, spoke briefly. She welcomed contributions from members such as photos, articles and ideas to help keep the magazine vibrant and interesting.
- The Blogger, Agnes Upshall, said that the blog was widely used. She regularly trawls through various sites for useful information. She suggested that members use Facebook and Twitter to extend the range of the blog.
- The Treasurer, Sheila Allen, reported that the account was in credit. Our move from the Pauling Centre to the Ashmolean means that we will save the room hire fees. (We are not charged for the use of the Ashmolean room.)
- The Website Manager, Pamela Cross, in her unavoidable absence, reported that the website continued to provide access to all editions of *Asian Textiles* in searchable PDF format all the way back to the initial edition in 1995 of the OATG Newsletter.
- The Programme Co-ordinator, Christine Yates, reported on a year of interesting activity. Since last year's AGM she has arranged events not only in Oxford but also in Cambridge and London. There are also plans for a 20th anniversary birthday party in August; Ruth Barnes will attend. Christine felt sad to announce that she intends to step down from the committee at the next AGM due to other commitments.

The meeting ended, Aimée invited everyone into the adjacent room for refreshments and chat. There then followed a fascinating 'Show and Tell' session.

A note from the Treasurer

Unfortunately many members do not seem to have been made aware of the increase, so that a majority of payments by standing order have been made at the old rate of £15. I would be grateful if you could check your bank statements and send me a cheque for £10 if you find that you have only paid £15 so far (cheques to Sheila Allen, OATG Treasurer, 19 Southmoor Road, Oxford, OX2 6RF please). Also could you ask your bank to change your standing order to the new amount please?
I apologise for the inconvenience but look forward to receiving your cheques so that we can continue to produce a high quality magazine and put on interesting events.

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MEMBERSHIP OF OXFORD ASIAN TEXTILE GROUP

(includes three issues of *Asian Textiles* magazine)

Subscriptions were due for renewal on 1 October 2014

OATG membership runs from 1 October to 30 September, and subscriptions for 2014–15 are now overdue. Membership costs £25 for individuals, or £35 for a joint subscription. If you pay by cheque, please make the cheque out to OATG, and write your name clearly on the back. If you haven't already renewed your membership for this year, we look forward to receiving your subscription soon, at the address below.

Alternatively, you could set up a banker's order, which is a great help to us as it cuts down on admin. You can download a form from the website and send it to your bank.

We depend on your subscriptions in order to keep our programme of lectures running, as well as for the printing and postage of *Asian Textiles* magazine. We do hope you would like to continue your membership of OATG.

Any queries, please contact:

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