

# ASIAN TEXTILES

MAGAZINE OF THE OXFORD ASIAN TEXTILE GROUP

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**Inside:** the Islamic Arts Museum of Malaysia; the World Jewellery Museum, reviews and much more.

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**Front cover: Detail of a *telepuk* sarong from the Islamic Arts Museum of Malaysia**

**Back cover: Turkmen back ornament from the World Jewellery Museum, Seoul**

### ***Asian Textiles* is available online in full colour!**

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

In both cases, click on the link in the title line to the issue, e.g.: ‘**Access colour pdf of No 53**’. Enter the **username** and **password** given below, click ‘**login**’ and then, on the resulting page, click on the relevant link to download. The username and password are the same for all three issues in each calendar year.

OATG members, as part of their membership, are entitled to access to the pdf files for *Asian Textiles* for the previous two years.

Passwords for all full-colour issues to date are:

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*Asian Textiles* is published three times a year: in February, June and October.  
**THE DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS  
MONDAY 7th OCTOBER**  
Contributions should be emailed to  
[jasleen.kandhari@gmail.com](mailto:jasleen.kandhari@gmail.com)

## Editorial

Lecturing on Indian trade textiles at the National Textiles Museum of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur provided one of the new editors of *Asian Textiles*, Jasleen Kandhari, with the exciting opportunity to explore the rich collections of Malaysian textiles at the National Textiles Museum (NTM) and the Islamic Arts Museum of Malaysia (IAMM) in Kuala Lumpur. On the same theme, this issue includes a review of a new coffee-table book on the NTM, as well as a review by the Curator, Adline Ghani, of the current exhibition on display at the IAMM. In expanding the remit of *Asian Textiles* to include accessories and personal adornments as well as costumes and textiles from all parts of Asia, a review of the World Jewellery Museum in Seoul, South Korea has been included in this edition.

We thank the outgoing editor, Nick Fielding, for his hard work in producing previous editions of *Asian Textiles*, and include his farewell letter as well as his review of *A Little Known Chinese Folk Art: Zhen Xian Bao*. Regarding events, OATG member, Jennifer Glastonbury reviews the recent Indian textiles study day at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.

We look forward to meeting you at our upcoming events and to receiving your ideas about Asian textiles, costumes and accessories as well as exhibitions and book reviews, news and events.

The Editors

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## A message from Aimee Payton, OATG Chair

The Committee is delighted that we have had some wonderfully generous people offer their time to support the continuing work of OATG. I would like to welcome onto the team Christine Yates as Programme Coordinator, Sheila Allen our new Treasurer, Julia Nicholson joining us again as Member at Large, Michael Messham temporarily as Membership Secretary and Jasleen Kandhari is our new Co-Editor. We are still looking for someone to take over membership duties from Michael so please do talk to someone on the committee if you might be interested.

Jasleen and Jane Anson, who previously was the treasurer, have been gathering exciting things for this edition of the magazine. They do need your help, though! If you discover someone carrying out interesting research, please pass their name on as we're always looking for contributors. In fact, anything that you find relating to Asian textiles in any way will be of interest to other members, and the magazine and our new blog can help to share your discoveries. The blog is up and running, if you haven't seen it already, and Agnes Upshall, previously Membership Secretary, has been busy writing posts about all sorts of things including exhibitions from around the world and more locally. Links to the blog are on the website, which continues to be under the watchful eye of Pamela Cross who does a brilliant job of keeping our wonderful website up to date and colourful.

Many thanks to everyone for your input into the future of OATG. We have taken on board many of the suggestions put forward by members and we are enthused by your continued support. Please keep your ideas coming!



## OATG EVENTS PROGRAMME

Dear Members

I hope that many of you will be able to join these events, which are the first I have organised since being elected as Programme Coordinator earlier this year. Rosemary and Fiona have organised so many high quality events during their long time in office that I have a hard act to follow.

Some small changes I have made include moving the time of our lectures at the Pauling Centre to an arrival time of 6pm for a lecture start of 6.15pm and drinks will be served afterwards until 7.30pm. We extend an open invitation to join us for dinner in a local restaurant after drinks, which I know has been done before, and I hope that anyone who does not have to rush home will consider extending the evening and having further opportunity to socialise, usually with the company of the speaker.

I have received some kind offers of help from some members and I would like to encourage more of you to contact me if you have textile collections you would like to show/discuss, know of any speakers who our members may be interested to hear, or have any ideas for other events; I would really appreciate your input.

I look forward to seeing many of you at these new events.

Best wishes, Christine

Christine Yates, OATG Programme Coordinator

Email: [christine@fiberartgallery.com](mailto:christine@fiberartgallery.com), Tel. 01865 556882

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**Saturday 13 July 2013, 12 noon**

**Aimée Payton**

**Weird & Wonderful Textiles**

A 'show and tell' event In the Ashmolean Eastern Art Study Room

As most of you will know, Aimée is OATG Chair and the Eastern Arts Administrator to the Ashmolean Museum, and we are fortunate to have this opportunity to benefit from her research within the Ashmolean Collection.

This event is free, but is limited to 10 people per session (there may be an additional session at 1pm if demand requires it).

To attend, please email [christine@fiberartgallery.com](mailto:christine@fiberartgallery.com), or telephone 01865 556882

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**Saturday 31 August 2013****A privileged visit to the Nottingham home of our members Sue & David Richardson  
Itinerary**

9.30am leave Oxford by minibuss

11.30am arrive Nottingham, where Sue & David will give a talk on the textiles of Sumatra

Lunch provided in the garden (weather permitting)

After lunch we will be invited to look at a selection of textiles chosen from the  
Richardsons' vast collection.

3.30/4pm leave Nottingham

5.30/6pm arrive Oxford

The cost is £30 per person, which includes minibuss and lunch.

The trip is limited to a maximum of 15 people, so early booking is advised.

To reserve a place, please email [christine@fiberartgallery.com](mailto:christine@fiberartgallery.com), or telephone 01865 556882; payment will be requested on confirmation of your place.

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**Sunday 6 October 2013****Visit to the Textile Society Fair**

**Chelsea Old Town Hall, 10.30–16.30, King's Road, London**

Dealers from Britain, France and Italy will be participating at this exciting event. Top-quality English, European and worldwide textiles and costumes from 17th to mid-20th century. Good quality wearable and collectable vintage dress and accessories will also be on offer.

For details, please email [christine@fiberartgallery.com](mailto:christine@fiberartgallery.com), or telephone 01865 556882

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**Tuesday 8 October 2013****Synthetic Dyes in 19th-century Persian Carpets****A presentation by Dorothy Armstrong**

Dorothy is working for an MA in the History of Design with the V&A/RCA. Her presentation will look at the impact of Western innovation in dyes on 19th-century oriental carpet-making. The main focus of attention is colour, and the controversy which arose when the wide availability of synthetic dyes in the second part of the 19th century transformed the palette. She will highlight the diverse and sometimes unintended consequences both of resistance to and acceptance of the new dyes.

A group of people, including the speaker, will go on to a local restaurant afterwards (at our own expense). Please let us know if you would like to join us. Although you do not need to book to attend, it would be very helpful if you are able to email or phone to confirm attendance.

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**Thursday 7 November 2013**

**Woven Elegance: the Evolution of Kashmir Shawl Art**

**A talk by Jasleen Kandhari**

Jasleen is one of the editors of *Asian Textiles*, and specialises in Indian textiles. Her talk will explore the stylistic developments of Kashmir shawl design, followed by a handling session of shawls from her own collection. There will also be an opportunity to visit the Ashmolean Museum's new Kashmir shawl display before the talk (4–4.30pm).

A group of people, including the speaker, will go on to a local restaurant afterwards (at our own expense). Please let us know if you would like to join us. Although you do not need to book to attend, it would be very helpful if you are able to email or phone to confirm attendance.

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Unless otherwise stated, talks are held at the Pauling Centre, 58 Banbury Road, Oxford, and are free to members, with a £2 contribution for non-members. Please arrive from 6pm for a 6.15pm start. Drinks will be served after the talk until 7.30pm and you are welcome to join us for a meal at a local restaurant afterwards.

## **Outgoing editor Nick Fielding bids farewell to *Asian Textiles***

Taking over as editor of *Asian Textiles* from Phyllis Nye was always going to be a tough assignment. Phyllis was a founder member of OATG in 1995 and soon afterwards produced the first OATG newsletter. Phyllis proved to be the perfect editor for the new publication, using her near-encyclopaedic knowledge of textile collections around the country to produce a newsletter that was, in the words of Ruth Barnes, 'informative, instructive and entertaining'.

Without the newsletter, OATG would have remained a small interest group in Oxford, putting on interesting talks, but largely confined to the academics and collectors who attended the first few meetings. Instead, the newsletter made its way to all kinds of far-flung places and acted as an ambassador for the group, putting us in touch with the scattered network of *textilophiles* that exists across the world.

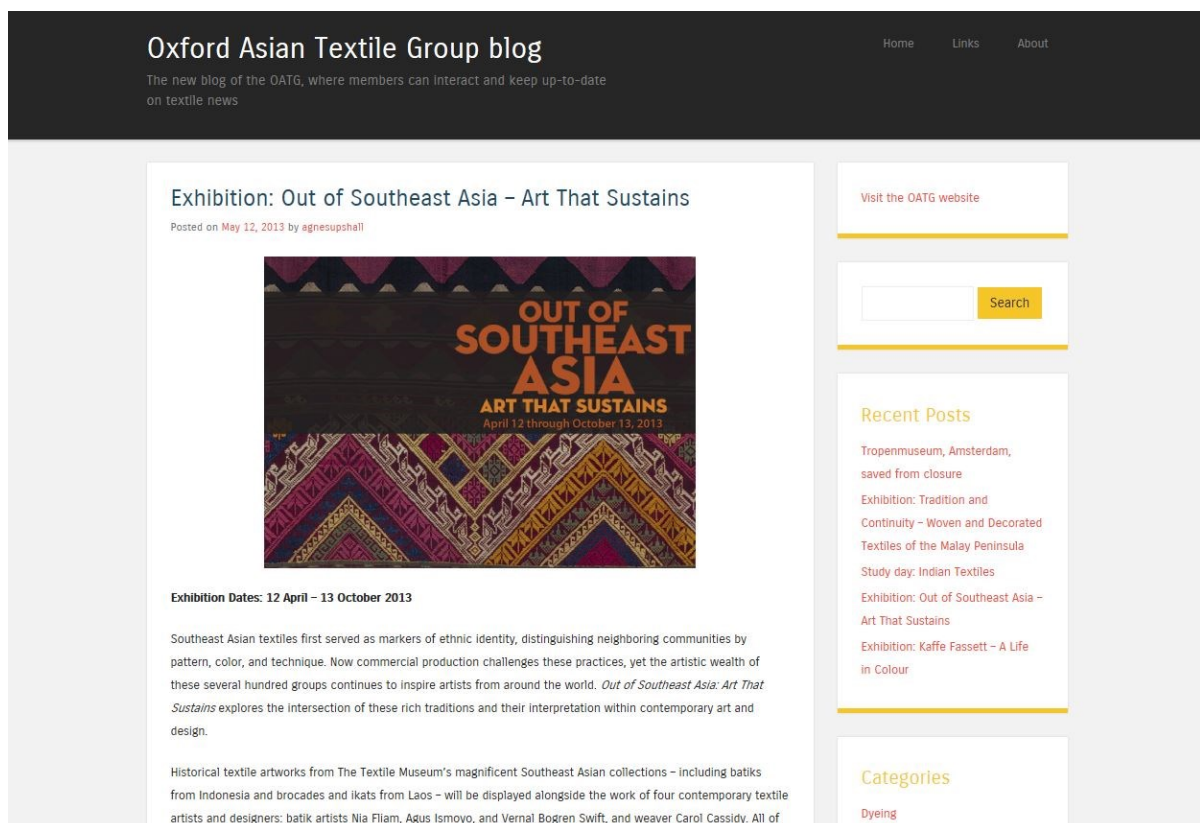
When I took over as editor in 2007, the newsletter was in need of a revamp. I was able to introduce colour to the front and back covers, which made them more interesting, and to give our esteemed publication a name. The magazine first appeared under its new name of *Asian Textiles* in February 2008. It was given an ISSN number and has continued to evolve. We put all the new editions online where the full colour pictures could be appreciated. Most importantly – for which we have to thank Pamela Cross and the volunteers who helped – we have also been able to put all the back editions online – an invaluable resource for anyone interested in this fascinating subject.

Now it is time for fresh blood. There are still so many subjects to be examined. Indeed, there are still several countries in Asia itself whose textiles we have never written about, and others we have only mentioned once or twice. I am particularly excited about the new blog that runs alongside the magazine and look forward to many more editions of our wonderful publication. Between us, in the 50-plus editions of the magazine so far, we have created a body of work that future scholars and enthusiasts will always be grateful for. And for me, it's been a lot of fun! Good luck to our new editors, Jasleen and Jane!

## New OATG blog

In addition to our thrice-yearly magazine, we now have a blog to enhance the group's online presence and act as a hub for news and reviews of Asian textile exhibitions, publications, and other relevant events. As such, the blog is designed to include:

- short abstracts of the main articles from the magazine (for the benefit of non-members, who may be attracted to join)
- notices of current or upcoming events, exhibitions and publications
- reviews of current or recent events, exhibitions and publications
- news items relating to Asian textiles, or related topics
- comments and discussion on any of the above (every post is open to your comments)
- anything else of a related nature that OATG members would like it to include: suggestions or content for inclusion are most welcome.



As this is a freely-hosted website, and not a print publication, it doesn't cost us anything to post content, which means we can afford to include a lot more, and of a more wide-ranging nature than in the magazine. So if you know of anything that might be relevant or of interest to other OATG members, please send it to me at [agnesupshall@gmail.com](mailto:agnesupshall@gmail.com), so that I can post it to the blog.

Part of the idea behind having a blog was to create an interactive environment where members can discuss and comment on content and interact with one another, so please do visit the site and add your thoughts or comments.

Visit it online at [oxfordasiantextilegroup.wordpress.com](http://oxfordasiantextilegroup.wordpress.com)



# Tradition and Continuity

**Adline A. Ghani, Curator of the Islamic Arts Museum of Malaysia (IAMM), writes about the current exhibition of traditional Malay textiles.**

## Introduction

Handwoven and decorated textiles have always held special significance in Malay culture, signifying refinement and prestige, upholding long-standing traditions and playing central roles in ceremony and ritual. Much has also been said of their beauty and intricacy, which attest to the meticulous skill and virtuosity of Malay artisans. Recognising the importance of these textiles as an art form and cornerstone of Malay cultural identity, the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia (IAMM) decided to put together an exhibition entitled *Tradition and Continuity: Woven and Decorated Textiles of the Malay Peninsula*. The exhibition, which was launched on 1st March 2013 by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Malaysia's fourth prime minister, was displayed to the public until 30th June 2013. Showcasing more than 50 Malay textiles from the IAMM collection, and highlighting works by select contemporary Malay textile artisans, the exhibition was also dedicated to the memory of Malaysian cultural icon, Azah Aziz, who passed away on 9th July 2012 at the age of 84.

To gain insight on the past, present and future of Malay textile arts, the IAMM worked closely with two Malaysian textile experts –Yang Mulia Raja Datin Paduka Fuziah Binti Raja Tun Uda, the first Director General of the Malaysian Handicraft Association (MHDC) and founding member of the ASEAN Handicraft Promotion and Development Association (AHPADA), as well as Associate Professor Dr Norwani Md. Nawawi of Universiti Teknologi MARA, a renowned textile designer, innovator and educator. In addition, a special segment of the exhibition showcased interpretive works by the alumni of the Prince's School of Traditional Arts (PSTA), London. *Tradition and Continuity* is, in fact, a link in a chain of cooperation between the PSTA and the IAMM. The last of their collaborative efforts was an exhibition held in London in June 2011. Entitled *Royal Weaves: Traditional Textile Arts of Malaysia*, it was organised by the British Malaysian Society (BMS) and the PSTA, in cooperation with the IAMM and Malay textile advocates. Among the contributors was the late Tengku Ismail Tengku Su, a cultural connoisseur of the royal family of Terengganu. Affectionately known as 'The Prince of Songket,' Tengku Ismail passed away in London just two months after the exhibition. He is remembered in *Tradition and Continuity* through the display of one of his woven masterpieces.

### **The beauty of Malay textiles and their development**

Traditional Malay textiles have evolved gradually since the 19th century. Initially, their production was patronised by the royal courts and nobility. Over time, they gained the support of new patrons – the government, federal and state agencies, corporate businesses and individuals. Through a continuous process of renewal and revival, complemented by the creation of new policies, programmes and projects undertaken by various parties, Malay textiles have been injected with new life. The adaptation and restyling of traditional manufacturing processes, the introduction and application of new materials, the training and upgrading of skills and the transfer of knowledge, have all led to innovative and creative output in form, function and style. The beauty of Malay textiles and the excellence of their craftsmanship has not diminished but rather, grown over time. This renewal can mostly be attributed to the craftspeople, who have a deep understanding of textile traditions and thus have been able to adapt and develop new ideas in response to the market's changing tastes.

### **Textiles under threat**

It is a harsh reality, but some of our beloved Malay textiles are under threat of extinction. Several factors have contributed to this. During times of war and social unrest, it became impossible for artisans to produce or sell their goods. The effect continued until well after the Second World War,

A view of the exhibition on display at the Islamic Arts Museum, Malaysia. (Photo: IAMM)



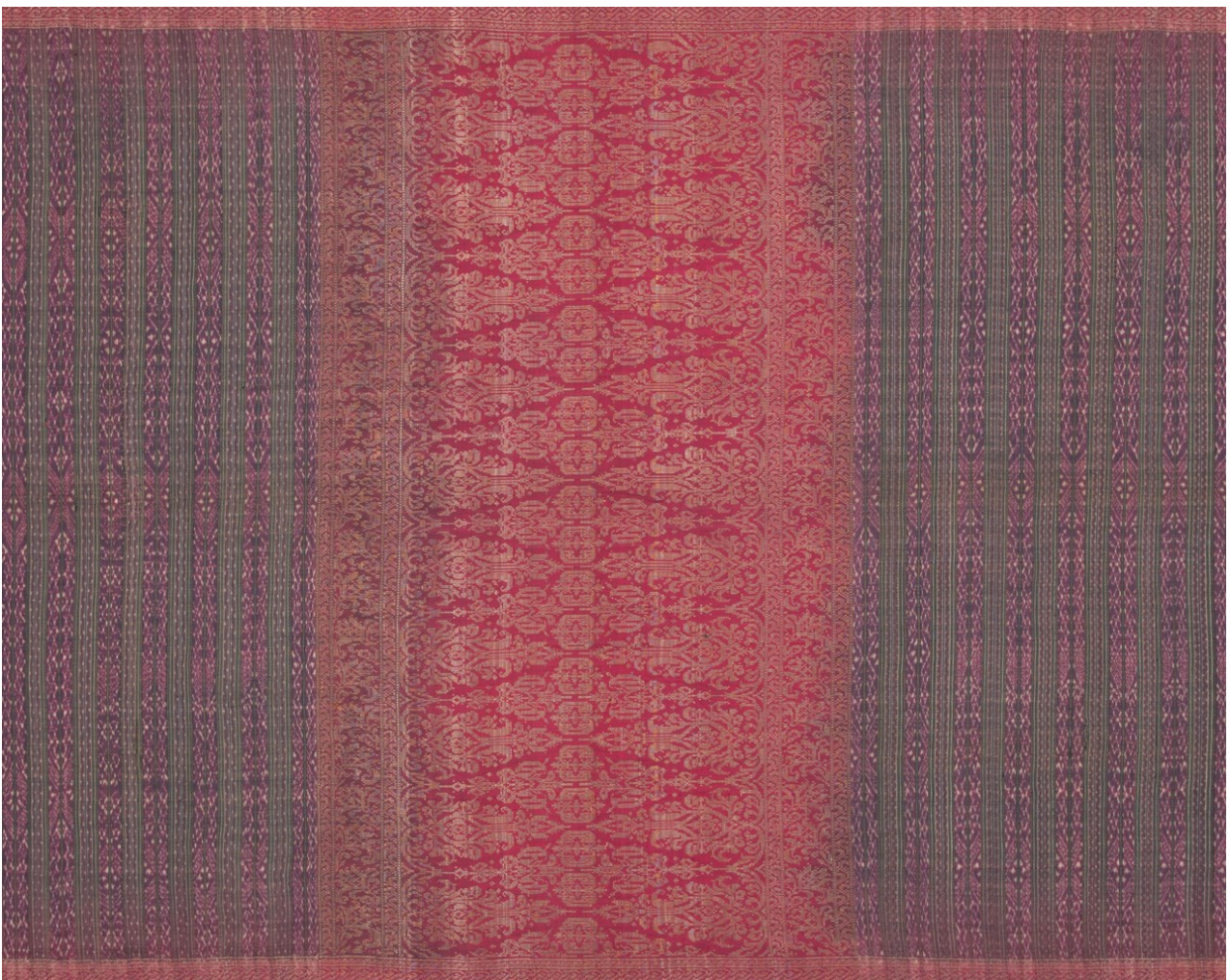


as imported materials like velvet, silk threads, metallic yarns and gold leaf became difficult to obtain. Many artisans were also forced to migrate and forge other livelihoods, due to the lack of patronage. Those who continued to practise their crafts did so by making certain sacrifices. For example, in the 1950s and 60s, many artisans used cheaper materials and reduced the use of metallic threads, yielding larger, less intricate patterns. The finer aesthetics of these textiles were under threat, but since the late 1970s, the Malaysian Handicraft Development Corporation (MHDC) has managed to prevent a downward spiral by supporting experienced craftspeople and recruiting new talents.

### **Woven and decorated Malay textiles**

Of the different types of Malay textiles, *songket*, *tenun* and *tekat* remain popular to this day and are still widely produced and worn throughout Malaysia. *Limar*, *kelingkan* and *telepuk*, on the other hand, are less well known in modern times. Few traditional practitioners still exist, thus placing these traditions in danger of becoming obsolete. Below are brief introductions to these textiles:

***Limar*** is a single-weft ikat textile that was once woven principally in the East Coast states of Terengganu and Kelantan, as well as in Palembang, South Sumatra and Pattani, in present-day

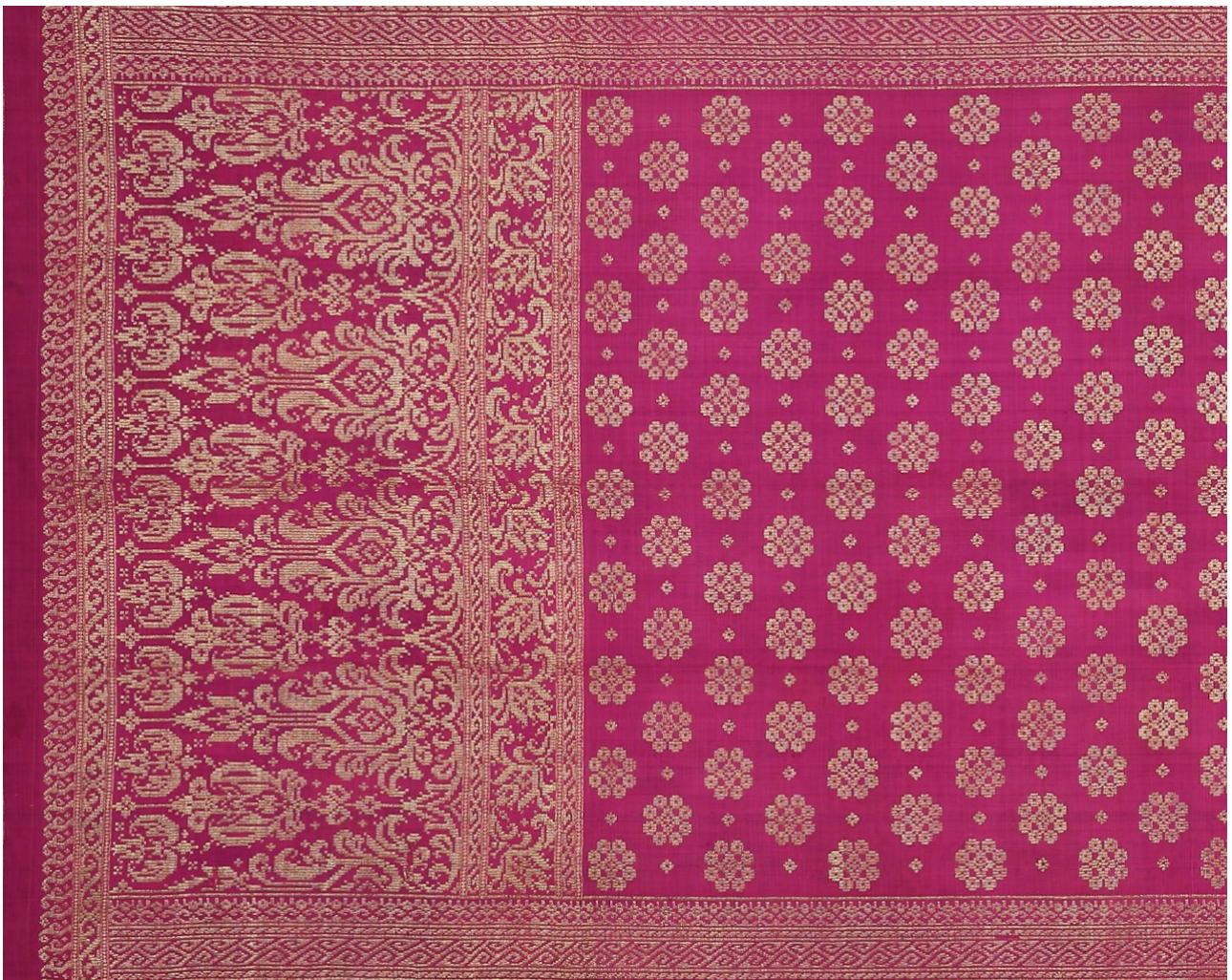




southern Thailand. Woven only of silk in plain or twill weave, *limar* is the preserve of nobility as it employs costly materials and its manufacture is especially tedious. Although captivating in itself, *limar* can be further enhanced with supplementary gold threads, creating *limar bersongket* or gold-leaf printing, producing *limar bertelepuk*. Despite its resplendent past, *limar* has become virtually obsolete in Malaysia. The Malaysian Handicraft Development Corporation (MHDC) has made efforts to revive *limar*, but it remains a challenge. Many *limar* practitioners have passed away and no written historical documentation exists on its traditional manufacture. At present, the most prominent *limar* revivalist is Hajjah Zainab Mamat of Kuala Terengganu, whose achievements have won her accolades like National Craft Master (2002) and the Heritage Entrepreneur Award (2005).

**Songket**, woven of silk or cotton, with supplementary metallic yarns, is the ceremonial fabric of choice for royal installations, formal and state functions, as well as Malay weddings. In the past, only royalty and nobility were allowed to wear *songket*, but by the mid-20th century, these rules had slowly relaxed. In Malaysia, *songket* is produced mainly in Terengganu and Kelantan, where

Opposite: Detail of a *limar* sarong, adorned with *songket*. (Photo: IAMM); below: Detail of a *songket* shawl. (Photo: IAMM)





it is kept alive by its current practitioners such as Che Minah Songket and Che Bidah Songket (Kelantan), as well as Wan Manang Wan Awang, Noriah Ashari, Lijah Abdullah and Habibah Zikri (Terengganu), to name but a few. Habibah was awarded the National Craft Master title in 2007. The efforts of the late Tengku Ismail Tengku Su, a dedicated *songket* connoisseur and conservator, the Tuanku Nur Zahirah Foundation, as well as research undertaken by Dr Norwani Md. Nawawi and Dr June Ngo Siok Kheng have also helped to bring *songket* development to new heights in recent years.

**Tenun**, woven of silk or cotton, features mainly striped or chequered patterns. Traditionally, it was intended for use as sarongs, but today, *tenun* is also woven as yard fabric that can be fashioned into *baju kurung*, *baju kebaya*, *baju Melayu*, shirts and decorative items. *Tenun* weaving began as a cottage industry, mainly in Terengganu, Kelantan and Pahang. Royal patrons, such as Tengku Ampuan Mariam Sultan Ahmad Almuazzam Shah (1889–1975) and Tengku Puan Pahang Tunku Hajjah Azizah Aminah Maimunah Iskandariah binti Sultan Iskandar Al-Haj have helped keep the art alive. *Tenun*, now known as the Royal Weave of Pahang, was first introduced in the

Below: *Tekat*-decorated betel nut box. (Photo: IAMM) Opposite: Detail of a *kelingkan* shawl. (Photo: IAMM)





16th century by Tok Tuan Keraing Aji, a master weaver from Sulawesi who migrated to Pahang. His eleventh-generation descendant, Nortipah Abdul Kadir, is at present the sole recipient of the title of *Adiguru* (Master) of the Royal Weave of Pahang, bestowed by the Malaysian Handicraft Development Corporation (MHDC) in 2006.

**Tekat** – *tekat timbul* is a form of raised couched embroidery also known as *tekat suji*. It is the best known form of traditional embroidery in Malaysia to date. The materials needed to prepare *tekat suji* are metallic and cotton threads, velvet and cardboard. The latter serves as the ‘*mempulur*,’ which will raise the stitches. *Tekat* is used to decorate items associated with palaces and special events, such as coronations, weddings and the reception of royal guests. In most cases, *tekat* is embroidered on velvet to compensate for the weight of the embroidery and to emphasise the lavishness of the item. Besides *tekat suji*, there are two other forms of *tekat* – *tekat gubah* (couched embroidery) and *tekat perada* (gold paper applique). Today, some of the most prominent *tekat* experts in Malaysia are Azizah Mohamad Yusof, the National Master Embroiderer; Toh Pekerna Wati Datin Seri Zubidahtul Radthuan Muhammad Ali Piah and Yang Mulia Raja Nor Akmar Raja Bahari from the Perak Royal family.

**Kelingkan** is a Malay embroidery technique that uses metallic ribbon. In Sarawak, the same technique is known as *keringkam*. Before the embroidery work begins, the base fabric must undergo a starching process to stiffen it. Motifs may then be traced onto the fabric with a pencil. A





wooden frame is then used to stretch the fabric tightly, and metallic ribbon is sewn through the textile repeatedly, in a stitch known in Malay as *tikam tembus*. *Kelingkan* embroidery can be done directly onto a piece of fabric, or in a patchwork style, whereby the embroidery is prepared on a different cloth, such as gauze, but is then transferred onto another, more expensive fabric, such as satin or silk. Lastly, the embroidery is flattened with a smooth object, such as a stone or cowry shell.

***Telepuk*** is another method of decorating Malay textiles with gold, in particular gold leaf. This technique has existed in the Malay world since the ‘Golden Era’ of the Malay empires. First, the textile must undergo a process called *gerus* or calendering, where it is rubbed with beeswax and a cowry shell to produce a flat and shiny surface, before the gold leaf can be applied. Glue is then applied to a carved wood or metal block and pressed onto the textile. A piece of thin, gold leaf is then pasted onto the glued areas and left to dry. Once the glue has dried, surplus gold leaf is brushed off and the motifs appear. *Telepuk* is often applied to *destar* (men’s headdress cloth), *seluar* (trousers), sarongs and handkerchiefs. The application of gold leaf also serves to elevate the value of a piece of cloth from a humble fabric such as cotton batik, to something elegant and luxurious.



## The Legacy of Two Malay Textile Champions

While the *Tradition and Continuity* exhibition's concept was still in development several years ago, the IAMM invited Azah Aziz to lend her expertise to the exhibition catalogue. However, she was already ill at the time and was unable to take part. No one understood and championed the importance of Malay textiles and dress more than she did, and her passion for language, culture and the arts touched the lives of so many, inspiring generations of enthusiasts. The Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia has been very fortunate to have benefited from Azah Aziz's constant support and encouragement. As a renowned textile expert, she helped us identify many of the Malay textiles in our collection. In addition, due to her interest in the preservation of textiles, she entrusted us with several pieces from her private collection since 2008. These pieces were prominently featured in her monumental book on Malay textiles – *Rupa dan Gaya: Busana Melayu*.

The IAMM also enjoyed a cordial relationship with Tengku Ismail. He was particularly generous in sharing photos from his family album, which provided an intimate glimpse into the use of sumptuous textiles by the Terengganu royal family while he was growing up. Raised in the inner court of Kuala Terengganu, Tengku Ismail grew up where luxurious textiles were an integral part of daily life. Following his years of education abroad, Tengku Ismail returned to a Malaysia which was beginning to give way to the lure of modern development. His first impulse was to save the traditional houses in Terengganu from destruction. He then invited weavers from the surrounding villages to work with him on *songket* designs inspired by his family heritage. He began to promote *songket* as a hallmark of Malay culture and identity. His sensitivity to the subtle refinements of this art has enabled him to make innovations that are true to the tradition. His example has opened the way for many others to translate a traditional craft for use in a contemporary setting.

Following Tengku Ismail's untimely passing, The British Malaysian Society (BMS) and The Prince's School of Traditional Arts (PSTA) have jointly established an academic scholarship in his name. The Tengku Ismail Scholarship Fund is for a two-year MA programme in London, for a qualifying Malaysian student. The scholarship fund was raised from the proceeds of the Gala Dinner which was held in conjunction with the *Royal Weaves* exhibition. It is hoped that the scholarship will benefit a Malaysian student who, after the two-year course in the Visual Islamic and Traditional Arts at the PSTA, will return to share the knowledge and principles of traditional arts to aspiring artisans, craftsmen and designers in Malaysia.

### The Future of Malay Textiles

Today, in the 21st century, *songket* and *tenun* weavers in Terengganu, Kelantan and Pahang, as well as *tekat* embroiderers in Perak, are still practising their crafts. However, it can be argued that the handcrafted textile industry is neither declining nor rapidly expanding. On the other hand, certain forms of Malay textiles, namely *limar*, *kelingkan* and *telepuk* are in serious danger of disappearing for good, as very few artisans remain. Malay textile artisans have always crafted from their hearts and with their hands. In each handcrafted piece of Malay textile, we can see the intelligence and diligence of the craftsperson in carrying out complex calculations and creating aesthetically pleasing designs and well balanced arrangements. For Malay textiles to survive, research and development are a crucial, ongoing process, with efforts to find alternative ways to preserve and improve existing patterns and forms. We can all learn about the unique characteristics of Malay textiles and appreciate their meaningful existence.



## The World Jewellery Museum, Seoul, South Korea

**Asian Textiles historian and lecturer Jasleen Kandhari reviews a collection of traditional jewellery from around the world.**

In the heart of the Northern Village of Seoul in Bukchon, South Korea, a fascinating private museum displays all that glitters within an innovative design space. This is the World Jewellery Museum, the first museum in Asia devoted to jewellery and the result of forty years of passionate collecting by the wife of a diplomat, founder and director of the museum, Lee Kang-won, who exclaimed, ‘traditional jewellery is sculpted by powerful hands of time. Purchasing a traditional item of jewellery gives me the same fulfilment of pleasure as buying a painting by a renowned artist. The dream of establishing a museum grew naturally from the collection of masterpieces thriving with spiritual significance.’ She insightfully points out that unlike other works of art, the spirit of the wearer is infused into the jewellery created by the hands of the maker.



Exhibition area, WJM (photo: World Jewellery Museum, Seoul)

The fundamental mission of the World Jewellery Museum is to preserve, collect and exhibit works of jewellery in order to foster the understanding of history, society, art and the spirit of various nations, both through its permanent display and through exhibitions of traditional and contemporary jewellery that explore issues of identity and cultural exchange.

The history of jewellery stretches as far back as forty thousand years into prehistoric times, throughout which jewellery has served, like textiles, as a medium for expressing social status and identity through its symbolic elements, for talismanic protection, as a source of social and economic status, or as a form of personal adornment. Moreover, the artistic force of the maker enables jewellery to serve as a historic and cultural record right up to the present day.

With a collection of 5,000 pieces of jewellery from Africa, Asia, Europe, the Pacific, the Americas and pre-Columbian civilisations, the World Jewellery Museum's exhibition space is spread over nine galleries housed on three floors, utilising innovative design and spatial techniques to make the most of the relatively small space that is typical of buildings in this part of Seoul.



Main exhibition space, WJM (photo: World Jewellery Museum, Seoul)

Since conventional museum display cases do not fit into these small galleries, techniques to maximise the space are utilised, such as the use of 'light poles' in the Gallery of Beads and columns in the Necklaces and Earrings gallery and the Art Deco Forest gallery. This enables the museum to display two hundred and fifty multicoloured glass Venetian beaded necklaces and one hundred Art Deco jewellery pieces by draping them across three huge light poles. Highlights from these galleries include a decorative enamelled lapis lazuli necklace from Pakistan and a collection of butterfly brooches inlaid with semi-precious stones from France and Italy.

In the Ring DNA gallery, glass panels with LEDs are installed inside the frames to show the rings which are individually





Omani wedding necklace  
(photo: World Jewellery  
Museum, Seoul)

framed by laser-cut acrylic cases. Interestingly, a silver ring inlaid with cornelians from the Mali Tuareg nomads in the Sahara desert on display symbolises the male and female forms in its triangular shape with a rounded hoop and was also worn as a hair ornament.

The galleries are based on the function of the jewellery as opposed to the country of origin or the historic period, so as to convey the cross-cultural influences reflected in the design and concept of jewellery. On entering the museum one is presented with the Jewellery Garden, a personal selection by the Director of nine highlights encased in glass cubes, including a Turkmen back ornament in the shape of a heart to ward off evil spirits, a Tibetan tinderbox used as a talisman and jewelled hairpins from Africa.

The lighted circular windows of the Amber Wall contain an array of amber items including necklaces from the Czech Republic to Morocco, amber coins from East Africa and amber prayer beads worn as talismen by men in Somalia. Likewise, the Bracelet and Anklet wall displays silver, bronze and ivory ornaments worn by tribal people from Africa and Asia as symbols of power or

wealth, or as protective charms. Whilst the El Dorado and Emerald gallery showcases 10th–16th-century gold and emerald figurines, rings and pendants from the pre-Columbian civilisations, the Altar of the Cross displays a large range of Ethiopian Coptic silver, gold and wooden crosses with intricate openwork. The Modern Jewellery gallery brings the museum forward into the 21st century with its Dialogue in Time display of two hundred and fifty collection highlights including jewellery and design works by contemporary artists.

In addition to the permanent exhibition space, the museum puts on a series of temporary exhibitions on the second floor, curated by the Deputy Curator, Elaine Kim, the daughter of Mrs Lee. I saw the exhibition of the jewellery of the Miao, an ethnic minority group who dwell in China. Possessing a completely oral tradition with no written language, the Miao's traditions are expressed in their jewellery with fifty different forms, some of which are extremely heavy, such as the layered ring necklaces that weigh up to five kilograms each. A complete set of Miao jewellery, including large silver back ornaments, was on display along with festive neck rings weighing up to ten kilograms, engraved with dragons, phoenixes and floral motifs. An interesting exhibition feature was the life-sized cardboard cut-outs of individuals of the Miao tribe, which were adorned with silver necklaces. The importance of such a museum displaying traditional jewellery from cultures across the world cannot be ignored, especially in the light of the demise of traditional craftspeople and the loss of symbolic meanings in the face of the advent of globalisation and modernisation.



Turkmen back ornament (photo: World Jewellery Museum, Seoul)



## OTHER ASIAN TEXTILES EVENTS

**Tuesday 6 August 2013**

### **Asian Textiles Summer School at the Ashmolean Museum**

with Jasleen Kandhari, Textiles Historian & Co-Editor of *Asian Textiles*

Sumptuous and vibrant, textiles from Asia are a visual feast. This summer school explores the designs, techniques and rich textile traditions from the Kashmir shawl and Japanese kimono to Chinese costume, Malaysian *songket* and Tibetan tiger rugs, followed by afternoon tea. A handling session will be included as well as the opportunity to view the new Kashmir shawl display at the Ashmolean with the speaker.

*Venue: Hedley Lecture theatre, Ashmolean Museum of Art & Archaeology, University of Oxford*

*Date: Tuesday 6 August 2013, 10.30am–4pm*

*Cost: £40, £35 (conc.) including afternoon tea*

*Bookings in advance essential: [www.ashmolean.org/events/](http://www.ashmolean.org/events/)*

*[www.oxforduniversitystores.co.uk](http://www.oxforduniversitystores.co.uk) - Ashmolean Education's online store*

*Education Dept 01865 278015*

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**Monday 14 October 2013**

### **Victoria & Albert Museum Handling Session: Zoroastrian Textiles in the V&A Collections**

with Rosemary Crill, Senior Curator for South and Southeast Asia, and Moya Carey, IHF Curator for the Iranian Collections, V & A

This guided session is designed to complement the Everlasting Flame exhibition and SOAS conference on Zoroastrianism. Two curators from the Museum's Asia Department will discuss a selection of 19th- and 20th-century Zoroastrian textiles and costumes from Iran and India.

*Venue: The Clothworkers' Centre for Textiles and Fashion Study and Conservation, Blythe Road, Kensington Olympia*

*Date: Monday 14 October 2013, 11.30am–12.30pm*

*Organisation: The Asia Department of the V & A, and the Department of the Study of Religions, SOAS*

*Cost: Admission free, only 18 places*

*Bookings in advance essential from 1st July: Louise Hosking, [lh2@soas.ac.uk](mailto:lh2@soas.ac.uk); [www.theeverlastingflame.com](http://www.theeverlastingflame.com)*

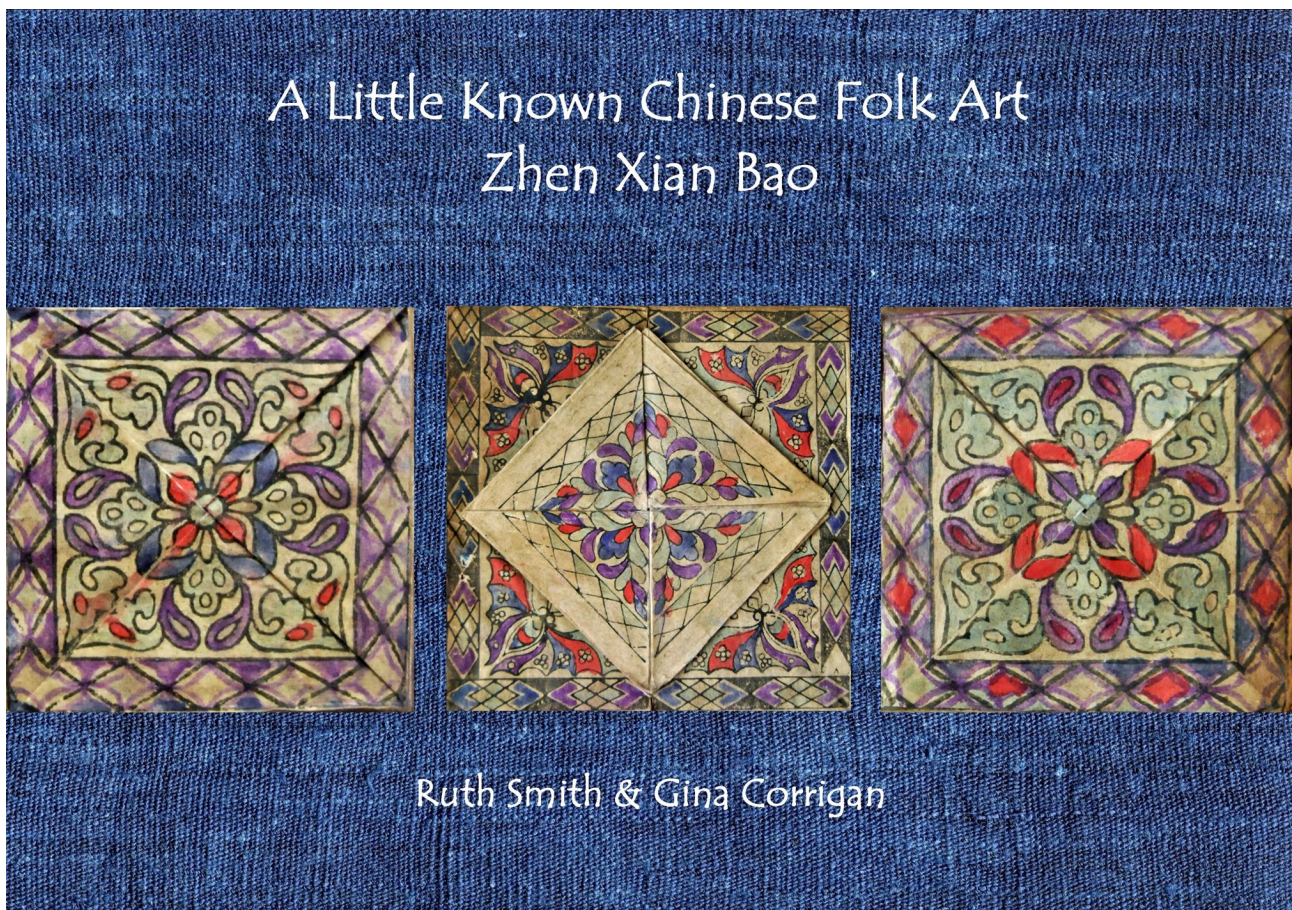
## Reviews

Former *Asian Textiles* editor Nick Fielding reviews a remarkable record of an exquisite but ephemeral art form.

Ruth Smith & Gina Corrigan, *A Little Known Chinese Folk Art: Zhen Xian Bao*, Occidor Ltd, 2012, no price, 140pp.

The authors of this fascinating book are well known to OATG and their enduring interest in textiles from south-west China has already resulted in several excellent books. This book, profusely illustrated by Gina Corrigan's superb photographs, is about the small boxes/wallets made for holding sewing equipment, particularly in Guizhou Province.

The *zhen xian bao* studied in this book are mostly made from folded paper – an unusual form of folk art that is declining quickly with the advent of modernity in these remote regions. Most have covers made from printed or embroidered cotton. Instructions for making similar containers are included at the front of the book. It is primarily the Miao and Dong minorities that make *zhen xian bao*. The folded paper results in dozens of little compartments in which needles, thread and other decorative elements can be stored.



The history of these remarkable little objects – the earliest examples of which are about a century old – is not easy to discover. First, the objects themselves are made of paper and don't last very long. The minorities themselves have no written records and even specialist ethnological museums in the region hold few examples in their collections. Thus the authors have had to rely on examples found locally in markets. Dating often relies on the contents – including newsprint





patterns, photographs and handwriting. Sometimes the motifs used give a clue to dating and origin. Did they develop from paper-folding techniques learned from the Han Chinese, or was there another origin? As yet there are no clear answers.

In the traditional areas of Guizhou, embroidery is still hugely important in the festivals and rituals of local people, and almost every woman has a store of patterns for shoes, apron bibs, baby carriers, etc. The authors illustrate every stage of the production of *zhen xian bao* from paper-making, decorative woodblock printing, painting, appliqué, papercuts and calligraphy. The results are wonderful.

Nick Fielding





**Jasleen Kandhari, Co-Editor of *Asian Textiles*, reviews *Muzium Tekstil Negara*, a new book about the National Textiles Museum of Malaysia.**

The National Textiles Museum of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur explores the rich diversity of the textile traditions of Malaysia through the collection, research, documentation and display of the national textile collection. The museum effectively showcases the techniques of production of Malaysian textiles and a comprehensive display of Malaysian textiles, costumes, accessories and personal adornments in five gallery spaces within a building attractively constructed in the Islamic style.

The new coffee-table book published this year richly illustrates the splendour of Malaysian textiles embracing the multi-ethnic society of Malaysia to include stunning examples of textiles produced by the Malays, Chinese, Indians, Orang Asli and the indigenous tribes of Sabah and Sarawak, from glittering *songkets* and decorative collars or *Marek Empang* to the Royal Pahang handwoven cloth and Pua Kumbu of the Iban tribe of Sarawak.

Each gallery features as individual chapters in the book, starting with the Pohon Budi gallery which exhibits the evolution of textiles from prehistory through to their growth through trade with lavish illustrations highlighting the traditional techniques, materials and tools of Malaysian textile production in detail for weaving, embroidery, batik-making and beading work. A fascinating array of embroidery techniques are presented ranging from the gold thread embroidery popular in Perak called *tekatan*, the traditional form of embroidery from Turan in Sabah called *linangkit*, silk embroidery as embellishments on the blouse or *kebaya* of the Nonya and the art of *kelingkan* embroidery, used by Malays throughout the country.

The chapter on the Pelangi gallery highlights the textile diversity of Malaysia's multi-ethnic groups. The evolution of batik production in Malaysia is explained from the original *kain pelangi* with the *Minah Pelangi* textile pattern of the late 18th century produced using the tie-and-dye technique through to the patterned batik *Kotah* using wooden blocks as the printing tool. This was followed by the introduction of batik production using wax from Java to Terengganu and the subsequent refinement in textile patterns with the hand-painted batik *conteng* and hand-drawn batik *canting* using a metal stylus. The four categories of traditional textiles of Sabah are presented in this chapter ranging from woven and knitted textiles to textiles made from the bark of the *tarap* tree and personal adornments as identifying markers of communities like the embroidered *kain pis* headgear. Exquisite handwoven ikats of Sarawak and the stunning Nonya embroidery on couched



velvet or Chinese silk satin by the Baba and Nonya communities of Malacca, Penang and Singapore are explained here. The arrival of Indians in Malaysia, mainly the Sikhs and Tamils, heralded the influence of Indian fashion on local Malay costume including hand-woven *sarees*, *kurta* or trousers, *dhotis* and *lehengas*, although brocades and cotton textiles from India were imported from the 15th century with Indian motifs like the peacock and *boteh* designs being adapted for local use.

The chapter on the Teluk Berantai gallery covers the breadth of Malay heritage costumes and textiles and their motifs for instance, the predominant motif of the Malay songket, the *teulk berantai* of interlocking bays symbolises intimacy and unison. Gold thread embroidery or *tekatan*, embroidery applique or *kelingkan*, woven ikat or *kain limar* and *kain gerus*, fine cotton or silk imprinted with floral motifs using gold leaf or gold dust are all included. The rare scripted *kain berayat limar* textile is intriguing as it's the only scripted textile produced in Malaysia with Islamic calligraphy. Verses such as the *malabus alfiat* are woven to bestow good health on the wearer.

The Ratna Sari gallery features a dazzling array of jewellery items and personal adornments from a range of ethnic groups such as silver ceremonial headgear worn by Iban maidens to fine gold filigree pendants and gem-encrusted earrings worn by the Peranakan Chinese and Malay women. This chapter also illustrates the fully attired male and female mannequins on display in the galleries, adorned in the traditional costumes of the Baba Nonya and the Indians, the Malay ceremonial costume of Cik Siti Wan Kembang, the seventeenth century legendary princess of Kelantan, and the traditional costumes of the Orang Asli Mah Meri, Iban and Murut, complete with bark jacket. The final chapter provides a visual feast in presenting the textile treasures of the museum, the *Pusaka*.

This lavishly illustrated book provides an excellent and comprehensive survey of the diversity of the rich textile traditions of Malaysia, as displayed in the National Textile Museum of Malaysia.





## Indian Textiles study day

**OATG member Jennifer Glastonbury reports on the Indian Textiles Study Day at the Ashmolean Museum on 29th May 2013, with Indian textile historian and Co-Editor of *Asian Textiles*, Jasleen Kandhari**

OATG members who attended this sell-out study day were treated to a full and varied programme encompassing lectures on India's regional textile variations and its export textiles, a handling session of treasures from the speaker's personal collection, a viewing of items from the museum's reserve collections and a guided tour of the most prized examples currently on show in the galleries.

The first illustrated lecture dealt with the variations in textile technique and style in the regions of India, highlighting the distinctiveness of each region. The country's rich textile heritage dated back to 2700 BC, with evidence cited of weaving and dyeing of cotton and linen from that time. In Punjab, embroidered *phulkari* had pride of place at all important occasions of a woman's life and reflected conceptual beliefs through the depiction, in dense formations of short darn stitches on strips of cloth sewn together, of scenes of everyday life as well as geometrical designs. *Phulkaris* have been given a new lease of life in modern dress, and are worn with evening dress and for Bollywood-style events. The whistle-stop *tour d'horizon* then took in Uttar Pradesh (flowers and





leaves worked in white thread on white fabric, most famously done in Lucknow and called *chikan* embroidery); Benares (brocades for saris called *kinkhab*, woven with a warp and weft of different materials – silk and metal); Gujarat and Rajasthan (tie-dyed *bandhani* with the fabric being pinched and resist-tied before dyeing, producing characteristic yellow and white dots on deep red); East Bengal/ Bangladesh (quilts called *kantha* with decorative figurative textiles showing animals and fish, seven layers of exquisitely woven muslin quilted together and embroidered on the surface); the Coromandel coast (painted and printed cloths for export, chintzes in the 17th and 18th centuries).

The second lecture gave a detailed overview of Indian textile export production from the 17th century, pointing to the East India Company's important role and that of Western explorers in identifying, adapting and exporting Indian furnishing fabrics, shawls, quilts, sashes and pile carpets to the West, Africa and the Middle East. What started out as luxury items for aristocrats to decorate their English country houses gradually became more affordable furnishings for more modest people like Samuel Pepys! The Clive Collection at Powys Castle was mentioned as possessing a fine array of examples including a tent-panel, dress chintzes and bed-quilts from the early period.

The wife of Clive of India was credited with starting the fashion for Kashmir shawls in England: these were produced from very fine wool and usually had a Paisley design. Sir Walter Scott's wife was said to have had a five-guinea shawl in her wedding trousseau in 1797. (For details of the production of Kashmir shawls, see Jasleen Kandhari's article in *Asian Textiles* number 52, June 2012.)

A highlight of the study day was the opportunity during the handling session to feel the speaker's most luxurious so-called 'ring' shawl made of the finest *shahtoosh* wool: as the antelope from which the wool comes is now an endangered species, these shawls are sadly no longer made.

In the viewing session in the study room, participants saw three 19th-century shawls from Kashmir, one curiously embroidered over the woven pattern in just one corner – there was much speculation as to the reason for this. An ancient fragment of an Indian block-printed textile with elaborate trees, from the Ashmolean's Newberry collection, was displayed for the first time. And there were fascinating sets of swabs showing the sequence of resist and mordant printing on cotton from Gujarat, including one set showing the complicated dye sequence for producing red *ajrakh* cloth.

The guided tour of the Indian textile exhibits in the galleries included an exceptionally fine 17th-century knotted millefleur Mughal carpet from Kashmir, made of goat-hair with a silk-like texture.

At the conclusion of the day Indian tea was served with sweet and savoury delicacies while participants, inspired by the day's discussions, planned their future textile travels to India.

Jennifer Glastonbury

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## MEMBERSHIP OF OXFORD ASIAN TEXTILE GROUP

(includes three issues of *Asian Textiles*)

**Membership subscriptions were due for renewal on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2012.**

OATG membership runs from 1<sup>st</sup> October to 30<sup>th</sup> September every year, and subscriptions for the year 2012–13 are now due. Membership costs £15 for individuals, or £20 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, then we look forward to receiving your subscription soon, at the address below.

Alternatively, if you would like to set up a banker's order, that would be a tremendous 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 and trips running, as well as for the publication 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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The Textile Society's

# London Antique Textile Fair

Sunday 6th October 2013

10.30 - 16.30 (trade from 09.30)

Chelsea Old Town Hall, Kings Road, SW3 5EE

Admission: £6 - Concessions: £4 - Trade: £10



[www.textilesociety.org.uk](http://www.textilesociety.org.uk)



