

ASIAN TEXTILES

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Inside: Javanese batik, ethics of production, Yale University Art Gallery, Japanese screens; reviews, events, and more.

Contents

Textile puzzle	3
OATG events programme	4
Revisiting Javanese batik	5
Balancing popular expectations and commercial practicalities to provide sustainable employment: Panchachuli Women Weavers	11
Letter from America	18
Embroidered Japanese screens	24
Jackets from South Sumatra	26
Book review	28
Other Asian textiles events	30

Front cover: one of a pair of two-fold embroidered screens designed by Takeuchi Seihō, c. 1910–20, silk thread and gold paint on a silk ground within a silk brocade border and black lacquer frame with metal decorative mounts. Ashmolean Museum, Story Fund, EA2013.35

Back cover: a batik textile from Hadi Priyanto, Banyumas, Java.

Editorial

This issue of *Asian Textiles* brings offerings from all over the world, as we have temporarily extended our definition of ‘Asia’ to include Ruth Barnes’ new home at Yale University Art Gallery. Ruth’s description and photos of the Department of Indo-Pacific Art, where she now works, make it a tempting destination for a visit.

Back in the Old World, we have Fiona Kerlogue’s article about her study tour of batik producers in Java. Fiona describes her visits to workshops, where she encountered both modern and traditional designs and methods, as well as varying degrees of appreciation of the skills involved.

Olive Rowell has been exploring the balance between Western expectations and local practicalities in an Indian not-for-profit handloom factory, established as a much needed source of employment for women in a rural area where many men have left to seek work in the cities.

Readers are invited to comment on the ‘Textile puzzle’ opposite, and also to send in short descriptions of a favourite textile, see Felicity Wood’s piece about her Sumatran jackets. Book reviews are also welcome.

The Editor

Textile puzzle

OATG Chair, Aimée Payton, invites readers' thoughts and comments on another little-understood item from the Ashmolean Museum.

Objects end up in museum collections for all sorts of reasons and sometimes there is no information about their origins. We will regularly include objects from collections in and around Oxford which are a mystery to curators, who will welcome any insights that *Asian Textiles* readers can offer. If anyone has seen anything similar or can shed some light on these objects' origins based on the construction and stylistic details, please let us know. We will forward the information to curators, and will share any information with readers in the subsequent issue of the magazine.

The Department of Eastern Art at the Ashmolean is very grateful for the ideas that were sent in by readers about the tiger costume (see *Asian Textiles* no. 57) – some possible avenues to pursue! We would now like to know if anyone can shed any light on these unusual shoes. They are in a very fragile state, but the interesting thing is the mix of the Han bound foot shape and size, with the addition of a heel that is similar to Manchu women's shoes. Both styles would have been difficult to walk in, and bound feet much more so. It is strange that the two are combined here. It has been suggested that they are for the tourist market and were never meant to be worn.

(EA1975.28a+b)



OATG events programme

Dear Members

At the time of going to press there are still a few places available for the Clothworkers' and Fitzwilliam events, see below.

Unfortunately Ruth Barnes is not able to come to the UK this year and sadly will therefore be unable to deliver her talk to us.

Very good news is an event organised with Julia Nicholson at the Pitt Rivers Museum, see below.

Best wishes, Christine

Thursday 19 June

Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Carol Humphrey, Textile Curator, will show us Chinese textiles from the collection

11 am–1 pm, followed by lunch in the Museum café.

Maximum 12 people; places will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. This is a free event but names must be sent to the Museum in advance of our visit. To book, please email christine@fiberartgallery.com or phone 01865 556882

Tuesday 25 June

2–4 pm

Clothworkers' Centre, London

Sonia Ashmore, V&A Research Fellow, will talk to us about how the Indian Textile Collection was formed and used and will present a selection of textiles, followed by time to examine the textiles more closely.

Meet before 2 pm in the reception area through the original main entrance of Blythe House, 23 Blythe Road, London W14 0QX.

Maximum 18 people. There is a charge of £12 for this event, please make cheques payable to Oxford Asian Textile Group.

To book, please email christine@fiberartgallery.com or phone 01865 556882

Wednesday 30 July

2.30–4.30 pm

Pitt Rivers Museum, Parks Road, Oxford

Textiles behind the scenes and in the galleries

An informal tour of textiles in the Museum galleries with Faye Belsey, Assistant Curator, plus viewing and an introduction to a selection from the reserve collections with Julia Nicholson, Curator and Joint Head of Collections. Question and answer opportunities.

Maximum 24 people to allow for viewing the textiles at close hand. There is a charge of £10 for this event, please make cheques payable to Oxford Asian Textile Group.

To book, please email courtlandshill@googlemail.com

Revisiting Javanese batik

Fiona Kerlogue, Deputy Keeper of Anthropology at the Horniman Museum, London, describes a recent visit to Java, where she visited a variety of batik workshops in order to assess how well the traditional techniques are faring in a modernising society.

The batiks of Java are probably the best known of Indonesia's rich heritage of textiles. Indonesian batik was inscribed in 2009 by UNESCO as being of world heritage status, amid much celebration. This was followed in 2010 by a book *My Batik Story*, written by the first lady, Hj. Ani Bambang Yudhoyono, and in 2011 by the World Batik Summit in Jakarta, at which I was invited to speak. But the world of batik has changed enormously in the last few decades. Is batik still flourishing? Does it still carry the same significance that it did in the past?

In order to explore these questions I was awarded a grant last year by the Jonathan Ruffer Curatorial Grants scheme. This would support a visit to Java to make a preliminary survey and to film the process. My doctoral research was on batik from neighbouring Sumatra, but I had also undertaken some research on Javanese batik, especially along the north coast of the island in centres such as Indramayu, Cirebon, Pekalongan, Lasem and the Kerek district of Tuban, as well as in Madura, a smaller island off the northeastern coast of Java. I had touched on batik in the Central Javanese cities of Solo and Yogyakarta, but the centres at Pacitan, Banyumas, Garut and places in between were to me more or less unknown territory. The purpose of the research visit was to find out what was happening now on the ground, especially in those batik centres which I had not yet visited.

Compared with museum collections of batik in the Netherlands, for a long time the colonial power in most of Indonesia, there are relatively few examples of batik in UK museum collections, although the Victoria and Albert Museum has a good number of pieces in storage. An exhibition of examples from the Horniman Museum's collections is planned, probably for 2015. But probably the earliest batik cloths in European collections are two brought back from Java by Sir Stamford Raffles, almost certainly from the court of Yogyakarta in Central Java; these are in the collections of the British Museum. Dutch museums have much larger collections, but even there comparatively few batiks have a definite provenance and it takes time to build up a picture of the differences in styles from various centres. Although there has been cross-fertilisation of ideas between these centres, and considerable trade, the meanings and uses of batik have tended to vary enormously from centre to centre. Was this still the case today?

At the same time as I was planning my trip, the Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore was planning an exhibition on the batik altar cloths, or *tok wi*, used by members of the Chinese Indonesian community, especially in north coast Java. This was a form of batik which had hardly been touched on by researchers. I would only be able to set aside a few days at the start of the trip to consider this particular type of batik artefact, but I decided to visit two centres where I knew the cloths were still being made: Kedungwuni near Pekalongan, and Cirebon to the west.

Before the trip officially got under way, I was attending a conference in Jambi, in Sumatra, where I had friends of Chinese descent. While I was there I had a chance to visit a few Chinese temples to see how altar cloths were used, though in Jambi the cloths are embroidered, not batik, and most are imported via Singapore. My friends and many of their friends are Christians, so I wasn't able to see the cloths on ancestral tables in the home, but it did turn out to be a very useful visit. As I suspected, the

REVISITING JAVANESE BATIK

motifs on batik altar cloths in museum collections very closely echo the designs on imported altar cloths, with some differences, probably where the batik makers had misunderstood or misinterpreted motifs.

My Javanese trip started in Kedungwuni, near Pekalongan, where I visited the workshop of the late Liem Ping Wie, run by his daughter Priscilla in the workshop which still bears his name. Priscilla showed me a range of new *tok wi*, all in hand-drawn batik, the designs for which she had copied from books. These were mainly for sale at Chinese New Year. The workshop was also producing batik with horse motifs for the following year, the Year of the Horse. It was an airy and very busy workshop with



Liem Ping Wie workshop, Kedungwuni.

well-stocked shelves. Priscilla told me that her great grandfather had been Buddhist but that his daughter had converted to Catholicism and had married a Protestant man, since when her side of the family has been Protestant. This explained why she didn't know anything about the meanings of the designs on the altar cloths. One of her employees was making copper stamps for producing wax-stamped batik, a method which has been used in commercial production since the mid-19th century.

A large showroom, the 'International Batik Center', was set up on the outskirts of Pekalongan in October 2012. This caters for wholesalers; there are rows of hotels nearby. Here is exhibited batik for export, produced in large quantities at a number of large factories in the Pekalongan area: tablecloths, bedspreads and garments dominate the range. These are a far cry from the small workshops I was visiting, where some hand-drawn work is of exceptionally fine quality. In the factories, on the other hand, much of the production uses methods other than wax resist to produce the same effects. This is partly because Chinese imports of imitation batik are increasingly infiltrating the market, and Indonesian producers have to find ways of speeding up the processes in order to compete. Some fabrics are now screen-printed; others combine

printing with wax stamping to give some semblance of the genuine article. But to many Indonesian customers, the word 'batik' evokes not the process but the type of patterning, and they buy imitations in the belief that they are wearing the national cloth. The IBC displays posters bearing the legend: 'SAY NO TO PRINTING !!!' But few customers can really tell the difference. Few visit the Batik Museum in the town either, where they can see demonstrations and try their hand at the craft themselves.

From Pekalongan I took the train west to the coastal city of Cirebon, where I went to 'Lina's' workshop. The woman who greeted me is Indrawati, who runs this enterprise with her sister. She had a collection of altar cloths which had been passed down the family, and these were the main source of the designs she used. Indrawati is on the committee of the Harbour temple, and every Chinese New Year she makes ten altar cloths for them. These are hung at the various altars during the celebrations and are then taken down. She took me to the temple to see where they would be placed. Families would also buy cloths from her for their ancestral altars at home at New Year, but although Indrawati continued to make such cloths this was only a small sideline. Despite being on the committee, the significance of the motifs on the cloths was not of importance to her, the eight immortals being indistinguishable from one another, as were 'Fu Lo Shou', the three Stellar Gods. However, at another enterprise which was recommended I was surprised to be offered a printed altar cloth in imitation batik, which suggested that sales make this kind of production worthwhile.

The centre of the batik industry in the Cirebon area is not in the main town, however, but in the district known as Trusmi. The whole of Trusmi is full of showrooms, the most famous being those of the family of Ibu Masina, who until her death ran the most prominent workshop in the area. Connoisseurs of batik come to the workshops of her descendants and other enterprises, of which there are many, but the main thrust of the market is bulk production; fine quality batik, such as is worn for weddings, has to be commissioned.

The next leg of the trip took me across Central Java, again by train, to Yogyakarta where I spent ten days at the workshop and adjacent hotel of Batik Winotosastro. Here I filmed the batik process from start to finish. Hani Winotosastro, who runs the business, is a passionate believer in genuine wax-resist batik, and her workshop is light, cool and



Batik cap at the Winotosastro workshop.

REVISITING JAVANESE BATIK

clean. The work produced here is neat and of high quality, mostly a combination of wax-printed (cap), and hand-drawn (tulis). Her workshop also makes fine quality hand-drawn batik to order for special occasions. Here I was able to document quite a number of traditional designs, and the significance of motifs worn at ceremonies was still known. At one nearby supplier of accoutrements for weddings, Tjokrosuharto, booklets are available detailing many of these, and it is quite clear that the symbolic meanings and specific uses of a whole range of batiks was still common currency. Nevertheless, the assistants in this shop could not distinguish between 'real' batik, that is, produced by wax resist, either stamped or drawn on by hand, and the commercial substitutes produced by screen printing or other methods.

In Yogyakarta I was usually filming in the mornings, so had afternoons and a couple of days in between free, so I was able to make several side trips. One was to Solo, where I was disappointed at the lack of knowledge and the crowded workshops at the famous Danar Hadi museum and showroom. In the showroom itself the main feature was fashion garments, mostly not using real batik processes. Another trip was to the privately run Batik Museum in Yogyakarta, which has by far the best collection I have seen, but sadly little in the way of funds. It is well worth a visit. I also took the opportunity to visit other centres further afield, among them Bayat, Bantul and Pacitan.

South of Yogyakarta are the tombs of the sultans of Yogyakarta at Imogiri. It's a dry and rocky but quite scenic landscape, where the batik was traditionally made for the court. Several enterprises here produce good quality hand-made batik. Elsewhere I saw some very commercial enterprises producing low quality batik in quantity. Some of these places were selling screen-printed work, presumably bought in from elsewhere. Conditions in these places were generally poor; often only a couple of women were employed to do the second waxing on cap-printed cloth. Visitors were being shown this



Dirty and dangerous conditions.

work and told it was hand-drawn batik. For the men, who do the dyeing and the boiling out of the wax, conditions are often almost unbearably hot.

On one day I took the long road to Pacitan, on the south coast. The town had once been almost cut off from the rest of Java by the mountains. A narrow road now winds through the rocky outcrops and down to the sea, a journey of about four hours. Pacitan was once famous for work produced by a Dutch woman, Mrs Coenraad.

Now the woman who runs the largest batik enterprise is Ibu Rumini. She has a showroom in the pretty little town, but she was very guarded about where her employees worked and I wasn't able to see where the work was done.

Another hour's journey along the coast took me to an enterprise run by Ibu Puri. She, like many other producers, is experimenting with natural dyes as well as using the old chemical dyes. The quality of the colours is not as strong as in the late 19th and early 20th centuries before chemical dyes became the norm.

At the end of the period of filming I reluctantly took my leave of Yogyakarta and set off west across Java towards Banyumas, my next stop. Volcanoes form the spine of the island, with flat plains to either side, and the road is very good. The first enterprise I visited in Banyumas, Batik Banyumas Hadi Priyanto, was a revelation. The business has a well-appointed and well-run showroom producing a range of products, including baby slings depicting the animals of the Chinese astrological calendar. The family who run the business live in the house next door. This was the workshop where I saw the most beautiful fluid designs being drawn by hand. They are expensive, but clients come from far afield to buy them. They also make a unique textile here, part of the pattern being handwoven, the rest added in batik.

The old lady whose husband had established the business invited me in to the house for tea. She also showed me her collection of old batik, which I photographed piece by piece, recording the design's name, as I had in Yogyakarta. Both she and her son were determined to maintain the production of high quality batik made using traditional methods,



Hadi Priyanto workshop, Banyumas.

REVISITING JAVANESE BATIK

though here batik is not at a standstill. New designs give new life to the form, and Indonesian collectors from the burgeoning community of wealthy connoisseurs, especially in Jakarta, are keen to buy. To me it was encouraging to see this aspect of collecting. Too many have in the past focussed on purchasing old heirloom cloths, which does nothing to keep the industry alive. Many of these are exported illegally; an export licence is required to take any item over 50 years old out of Indonesia. As a signatory to the UNESCO convention, the UK prohibits importation of such items. I collected several examples, most of them brand new, to document current production.

From Banyumas I moved on by road to Tasikmalaya. The journey was through teak plantations and wet rice paddies interspersed with small towns and villages. The first place I visited in Tasikmalaya was run by a man called Deden. From the showroom I was led to the workshop. This was not an ideal workplace, with poor conditions and the emphasis on quantity, not quality. It was in many ways reminiscent of photographs of batik production from the early years of the 20th century, but less well organised. Pay is low in such enterprises, and workers generally receive piece-work payments rather than a regular wage.

I also visited a small showroom in the home of Pak Enung, who had won an award for his natural-dyed batiks. He also worked in his own rice fields. I documented his motifs, but as in other places I felt that the quality of the natural dyes left much to be desired. On the whole Tasikmalaya was disappointing in terms of its batik. Although Pak Enung's products were made with natural materials, many places were still using naphthol dyes, which the government is attempting to phase out because of the pollution they cause and their detrimental effect on health.

The last stop on my journey was Garut, a hill town in the mountains of west Java. The journey took me through some fine scenery. In Garut I went first to Batik Garutan. Here the showroom was very busy with customers, and there was a good range of products for sale, chiefly ready-made fashion garments, which is the real growth area for batik. I was able to record a large number of motifs, and was taken by a very friendly woman to see the workshop at the back. The workshop was airy and well lit and there was a good atmosphere. It turned out that several workers were members of her family. One woman had her child with her and it was clear that they were happy in their work. The batik workers were still making traditional motifs from the area.

In another smaller business in the town I was again shown the family collection which included many pieces decorated with well-known traditional Garut motifs. Most of these were still in production for traditional items such as skirt cloths, but as elsewhere the shift to western-style fashion wear was evident.

What does the future hold for batik? There is no doubt that the UNESCO inscription has raised the profile of batik in Indonesia, and that traditional batik designs are immensely popular, especially in Java. However, these seem to appear mostly in fabric which has not been produced in the traditional way. Most customers cannot tell the difference between batik produced with wax resist and imitations produced by other more mechanical methods. For the type of clothing people generally wear, hand-drawn batik is in any case not appropriate, though it is making its way into the top end of the fashion industry, where the patterns and styles have a distinctly Indonesian flavour. To preserve the skills and knowledge of traditional batik, and to ensure that in the future it does not become ossified and static, it is important that those who wear batik for important occasions, whether weddings, name-giving ceremonies or high-status society events, know how to distinguish fine quality work from mass production. The same goes too for connoisseurs and collectors. Only by perpetuating this knowledge can the market for the best of Indonesian batik survive.

Fiona Kerlogue is the author of the book *Batik: Design, Style, and History* (Thames & Hudson, 2004).

Balancing popular expectations and commercial practicalities to provide sustainable employment: Panchachuli Women Weavers

Olive Rowell is working for an MA on Modern India at King's College, London. In the following article she examines the balance between ideals and realities in a project offering work to women in a remote part of India.

The creation of employment in rural India is an issue that has attracted much debate as the population continues to grow and migration from the rural areas to the already overburdened urban ones increases. The scale of the issue is illustrated by Amitabh Kunde when he writes 'By any conservative estimate, India will have about 400 million additional persons in the labour force by the year 2050' (Kunde, 2011:49.51). This means the existing problem in the countryside, where over 70 per cent of the population live, will become more acute, with a need to find at least another 280 million rural jobs.

Clearly there is an urgent need to provide additional employment in rural areas to encourage people to stay in their own communities rather than migrate to the cities. It is my contention there is potential to provide jobs through the use and commercial development of traditional textile techniques (the production of textiles by hand, without the use of electricity, which can, but need not, be carried out in the domestic setting). This is a practical option as it requires low investment and does not require a reliable power source. In many cases the basic skills already exist and can be developed to produce commodities for trade. I therefore enrolled on the MA in Modern India at King's College London, which included an internship at Panchachuli Women Weavers (Panchachuli) in May 2013. Whilst many of my observations did not match the image created by the company and portrayed in the media, the discrepancies are understandable in the context of the need to satisfy domestic and international expectations in order to gain market share, meet the requirements of local people and provide sustainable employment. This article explores the need to balance popular expectations and the commercial practicalities of such an organisation with developmentalist discourses relating to social work, feminist empowerment and sustainability.

Panchachuli today is a not-for-profit company established in 2005. However, it began in 1987 as the NGO *Jan Jagaran Samiti* (Society for the Employment of the Population), creating sustainable employment and benefitting people in the remote district of Almora, Uttarakhand, which has faced large-scale male migration. It has grown from two looms in a rented space, in 1987, to owning land and achieving international recognition and esteem in 2013.

Panchachuli's success has largely relied on the astute decisions, networking and negotiations of its founder, Mukti Datta, who has a cosmopolitan background. Probably her most important decision was to establish the business in the handloom sector, followed by identifying the opportunity of a niche market for luxury commodities to satisfy the demands of an elite Indian and Western clientele. This is supported by sound financial acumen and an unerring pursuit of quality at all stages.

The decision to enter the handloom industry is likely to have been multifaceted, including historic legacy, political prominence; local sources of raw materials and low investment. For Datta it was essential that the local people were prepared to readily accept it as an alternative to their traditional means of living, as she needed their support during her campaign to have the Binsar forest declared a wildlife sanctuary.

PANCHACHULI WOMEN WEAVERS

The women of the area had depended on subsistence agriculture and animal husbandry for their living, which was disrupted for many with the creation of the sanctuary, and there was a need to provide them with an alternative livelihood. The forest was declared a sanctuary in 1989, and it appears Datta faced little opposition locally as she had started to provide alternative sources of income which were socially and physically more desirable.

The role of handloom in symbolising social and political importance is longstanding. Most notably *Khadi* (hand spinning and weaving) was the prominent feature of Mahatma Gandhi's campaign for independence. The legacy lives on and today *khadi* remains symbolically important in the wardrobes of most politicians, including Sonia Gandhi, who has a reputation for wearing handloom saris. The political importance of handloom is also emphasised by having a dedicated Development Commissioner within the Ministry of Textiles. There also is positive political input into handloom including taxation benefits, as there is recognition of the opportunity for employing large numbers in rural communities. The government does not tax the industry and:

individuals who earn their living do not require a permit to set up a firm, nor are they required to file income tax papers (Bhagavatula, 2010:255).

Thus it avoids much of the notorious Indian bureaucracy. Clearly the development of textiles in rural areas remains high on the political agenda, and as such it is important to understand why Panchachuli has succeeded where others have failed.

Handloom is also attractive as it requires relatively low levels of investment: the equipment is readily available, inexpensive, and simple to produce and does not require much maintenance as it has no mechanical parts. Moreover it does not need a reliable source of electricity, the supply of which is erratic in Almora, as in most rural areas of India. Panchachuli also benefitted from a relatively local source of raw materials, with wool available in the Almora district and, a few years later, cashmere from Tibet as trade routes were re-opened. This meant the business could start on a small scale and grow organically.

When the NGO was established, there was no precedent for successful commercial production of handloom in the area although, as in the rest of the country, domestic weaving was taking place. There is evidence that previously other organisations were established locally, although according to Sinha they appeared to be failing. However



The factory now relocated in the building previously the hospital.

this means there was an indigenous skill base from which to draw labour, although it was not capable of producing quality items suitable for the market identified. Datta recognised this problem and knew of the women master weavers belonging to the Bhotiya tribe, close to the Tibetan border, whom she recruited to teach the skills to people in Almora.

Panchachuli has received much acclaim nationally and internationally for the contribution it is perceived to make in relation to popular developmentalist discourses. These are the Gandhian discourse on social work (*samaj sevaa*), feminist empowerment and sustainability. These have been recognised by Panchachuli and carefully negotiated and promoted through the use of websites, the printed catalogue, YouTube, editorial coverage in the print media and personal interviews with Datta. However from my observations the reality does not always accord with the image.

The organisation has extensively promoted social work as being at the centre of its operation. The four acclaimed areas of work are: the provision of medical care through the hospital, a leprosy centre in Almora which had the support of the Ministry of Welfare and the German Leprosy Relief Association, educating girls and the provision of rural employment. The hospital is now closed and I observed no evidence of the second and third, which were never referred to. This does not say they do not exist, but implies they are not part of the business in the factory, which is entirely focused on the production and selling of commodities. There is a possible explanation in that all social work may be conducted by the original NGO *Jan Jagaran Samiti*. Yet all the publicity indicates it is an inherent part of the work of Panchachuli and I have found no evidence to support the latter claim.

There is no doubt the highly acclaimed Dena hospital is closed. There is photographic evidence that the factory is located on the site it occupied and I observed a redundant operating table in one of the outside rooms. When I enquired about the canteen facility (a separate building near the entrance gates), I was told this was not for the factory but had previously been a facility for visitors to the hospital. There had been many benefactors involved in the original development of the hospital, which included the support of the local community as it was built on land donated by the *gram sabha* of Matena Village, where it is located (Joshi, 2008). The main source of funding originally came from Dena Kaye. Later the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust funded a surgery unit (Joshi, 2008). According to Kaye (2006), it was the 'best equipped hospital in the state'; it had an x-ray machine and sonography. I was unable to establish the reason for its closure. There were several suggestions that it was due to a shortage of staff because of the remote location. However this is in contradiction to Kaye's comments in 2006:

The committed staff hail from all over India and love working here because 'the Dena hospital puts the patient first' (Government hospitals are notoriously unhygienic and 'free' care requires bribes on every level).

The hospital ran successfully for ten years, despite the poor infrastructure at the site, which remains a problem today with an inadequate generator and water which has to be delivered daily by tanker. The closure of the hospital appears to have been kept out of the media and is apparently not known by some of Panchachuli's partners, as it remains featured on the MyMela and Panchachuli UK websites.

In respect of education it is said the organisation has built five primary and two junior schools, which they leave to be run independently. It appeared the majority of children in the area were attending school, as there was a constant flow of children in uniform and a plethora of school buses. However there was no indication of the company's current involvement in education, although Datta was also successful in recruiting donors in this field. Again Datta has used the provision of education to great effect in her interviews. However in *The Liberator of Kumaoni Women – Mukti Dutta* (sic) (Joshi, 2008), there appears to be an anomaly in that she said 'the idea is to provide vocational training to students in areas like computer accountancy and textile designing

PANCHACHULI WOMEN WEAVERS



The water pump in the local village (there is no piped water), with school buses in the background.

so that they can stand on their own feet after completing schooling'. I acknowledge it is early days, but there were no signs at the factory of student participation and Datta remains in charge of design. Whatever the true extent of Panchachuli's direct participation in schooling, there is no doubt that by providing people with regular and reliable wages more children are educated, as it is a recognised priority for the poor to focus on improving the lives of their children.

The provision of employment is the most important of all the social benefits and the one for which there is absolute proof. However, the number of people working with the organisation is not clear and varies between accounts. The website states it 'employs over 800'. It goes on to say there are 'two further centres nearby', but they were never mentioned and I saw no evidence of commodities derived from any other source than the factory. The size of these units would have to be quite large to accommodate the additional 500 women to comply with the quote as it claims 'around 300 women' work at the factory. From my observations this appears overstated. The maximum number employed at the factory in all roles is approximately 170. This figure is based on the two company buses, which hold a maximum of 55 people each, and a similar number arriving on foot. Although the numbers employed are initially disappointing, the exaggeration is explicable in terms of the need to achieve maximum media impact. Moreover the important statistic is that the number of people in the local community directly benefitting from this employment is probably nearer 1,000. Further benefits arise from the additional local trade generated by the company and its employees and from the visitors attracted to the area as Panchachuli attracts tourists, academics and representatives of the state.

In relation to Panchachuli, expectations of its role in female empowerment are implied by the company name. These are heightened by the publicity received in editorials and its own promotional material. The website and catalogue create a similar account of the company's role in empowering women:

[It] was conceived a decade ago and the dream of empowering hundreds of women ... the training of over 800 women (catalogue).

Panchachuli is promoted as a women's cooperative, which implies female empowerment. However in 2005 when the funding from the Kaye Foundation stopped, it was registered as a not-for-profit company under section 25 of the Companies Act, 'which governs companies with a clear objective and whose profits are utilised to further that objective' (Joshi, 2008). Yet in 2011 the organisation was still promoting itself as a women's cooperative in the video *India – Weaving Empowerment – Almora*. Datta wants to promote the image of a women's cooperative, as she said in her interview with Joshi

(2008) 'Panchachuli is a recognised brand name now and stands for women's empowerment'. My observations suggest it has a hierarchical structure with Datta at the helm, although she was not present at the time of my visit.

Although the name suggests a female workforce, the reality is mixed gender, in terms of manual labour and management. Starting from the top, the person in control during Datta's absence was a man, described to me as the Chief Executive Officer. In contrast, the holder of the title 'managing director' is female, however she was referred to as 'production in charge' and frequently undermined by the CEO. There were also at least two further men with managerial roles, in contradiction to the statement 'exclusively managed by women' (Kaur, 2006). Further men were employed, some in quintessentially traditional roles such as drivers and in the finishing department for washing and pressing. A number of the weavers were also men, who from my observations worked as part of the team on an equal basis with the women, but were referred to as 'master weavers', although the original master weavers recruited for training were women. This is possibly due to the conventional perception of weavers as being female on account of it being traditionally a domestic occupation. The men may need the title of 'master weaver' to make their job reputable in the public sphere.

In relation to direct feminine empowerment one must also consider the intense competition for jobs with Panchachuli. Datta says 'We currently have 1,000 applications' (MyMela, 2012). Against this background the employees will be compliant to the company's wishes and have only limited bargaining power.

Despite the inaccurate claims in relation to the popular discourse, there has been female empowerment. Many women have left their villages and are socialising with others for the first time. They have gained respect in their families as wage earners, giving them some independence and the right to make choices. During my visit to another organisation I was told that when younger girls are employed their 'earning capacity' is recognised and they are allowed to marry later, 'possibly even into their late twenties'. Wages are paid direct into workers' bank accounts, ensuring the employee has reasonable control of their pay. A reliable and regular income would not have been available in the past, due to the dependence on subsistence agriculture and forestry.

Although from my observations the reality on the ground was different from the expectations created by the company, female empowerment should also be considered in context of local expectations. Rebecca Klenk, who attended a three-day workshop at the Lakshmi Ashram had

expected to hear women talking about relationships between environmental decline, women's lives and economic development. [However many of the participants thought they needed] more handicrafts training in weaving, spinning and knitting, and sewing for rural women ... participants did not identify themselves as over-worked women inhabiting a deteriorating environment [and they were not concerned about] 'sustainable' forest resource ... rural women's concerns were strongly focused on income generation and education (Klenk, 2004:68–70, 69)

Klenk appears to be surprised that she heard primarily about the ability to earn money rather than the environmental issues she had anticipated. However it is clear that the main priority for the local women was to learn a skill that gave them the opportunity to earn money, as this would allow them to improve their economic position. This leads me to conclude that, whilst Panchachuli has presented a misleading view through the media in respect of female empowerment, it has given the local people what they want.

There is little doubt Datta is aware of the need for the company to control its own destiny, and this is likely to be behind the decision to establish a not-for-profit business in preference to a cooperative. Another reason may have been that because of the large amounts of money being channelled into cooperatives, the government controls both production and sales. This would not be acceptable to an entrepreneur who instinctively wants to control the business. Moreover Datta has provided the essential link, as the

PANCHACHULI WOMEN WEAVERS



All goods are labelled with woven labels and a hand-painted personalised tag cleverly personalising the item and playing to the developmental discourses.

weavers have little true perception of their customers. The only access they have is from brief visits to the factory and the romanticised vision conveyed by television. Without Datta's international savvy and commercial sense, they would have no idea what products would attract potential customers.

Popular discourse suggests that women themselves should be encouraged to become entrepreneurs, but this has to be a gradual process. The process has begun for the people employed by Panchachuli, as they have had the confidence to join an organisation. The potential can be illustrated by an embroiderer in the district of Bhuj, whom I met in June 2011. She had been the community designer for a local NGO, and during the time she worked for the organisation she gained knowledge of the market and the confidence to subsequently set up her own village cooperative earning more money for herself and the local women. This opportunity must surely exist for some of the Panchachuli workers in the future.

The 'sustainability' discourse is a very broad subject with many different interpretations. Whilst these issues originally developed in the West, they are slowly being introduced into the culture of the urban Indian middle class. Panchachuli has recognised the power of these influences in the consumer market and negotiated its way through them to give the impression, particularly in the West, that it is fully compliant with them.

Panchachuli places great emphasis on sustainable fibres, in that they are locally sourced and biodegradable, and on the use of vegetable dyes. Its catalogue stresses the sourcing of the fibres 'in terms of raw materials used (local wool, Tibetan pashmina, local natural fibres like nettle and oak tussar)'. However this is somewhat misleading as most of the wool now comes from either Australia or New Zealand, as it is finer and much softer and so produces a better product. The local wool is coarse and only suitable for a few knitted accessories such as hats, scarves and socks. The local natural fibres of nettle and oak tussar are prominent in the promotional material and are given a romantic cachet. In reality they are not very commercial as they have limited applications, and in the case of nettle, limited availability. The Himalayan nettle from which the fibre is produced does not yield a reliable crop: for the last two years it has failed completely. This belies the website's claim that 'The plant grows in large quantities in the region each year'. At the time of my visit, although I wanted to buy something for the novelty value, there was nothing available. However I was able to handle a knitted sample which was quite harsh and stiff, limiting its use, and was

rough on the hands of the knitter. When used for stoles it requires lining with a softer, skin-friendly fabric, which requires additional skilled labour as this is done by hand.

Oak 'silk' as it was described to me, is made from oak bark. It is aesthetically appealing but again has limited use and is not suitable for apparel. The herringbone version is woven with a lambswool warp and is purchased by other traders to produce ethnic-style furnishings. It was not sold at either of the Panchachuli shops I visited. The use of these innovative fibres has attracted a lot of attention, thus making it desirable to be seen working with them, even if they provide little financial benefit.

A similar picture is presented in relation to the use of vegetable dyes. All the promotional material suggests the company uses these dyes only. In line with international trends the UK company places great importance on vegetable dyes. However, commercially it is necessary to use chemical dyes to produce the bright colours demanded for the domestic market. Today it would be impractical for the company to use vegetable dyes at the factory as there is no natural source of water, which is required in large amounts, thus it is neither practical nor economic.

Panchachuli's success supports my contention that there is an opportunity for the use and commercial development of traditional textile techniques to provide sustainable employment in rural areas, which would encourage people to stay in their own communities rather than migrate to the cities. However for this to be developed it is important to understand what has made Panchachuli successful. There has been a need to compromise between the expectations of potential Indian and international customers and commercial practicalities in order to meet the needs and requirements of the local people. It is recognised that many development projects fail because of ignorance of the specific local conditions. Datta has the local, national and international knowledge which she has utilised to build a bridge between the needs of the local people, the company and national and international expectations.

Ultimately Panchachuli must be judged by its success in fulfilling the wishes of the local people by teaching them a skill with which to earn a living. This has largely been achieved by the unwavering drive of Mukti Datta, who has focused on providing luxury, high quality commodities and finding markets in which to trade whilst exercising astute financial acumen at all times.

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Letter from America

OATG's founder, Ruth Barnes, describes life since leaving Oxford.

It is four years since I said farewell to my many friends in OATG and left Oxford for New Haven and the Yale University Art Gallery, to take up a senior curatorship in the Gallery's recently endowed Department of Indo-Pacific Art. It has been an incredibly busy and intense time for me, and the years have flown by! But you are often in my mind, and today I have finally made some time to write you about what I have been up to for all these years.

Yale's Art Gallery is a bit like the younger sibling of the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, where I worked from January 1990 to December 2009. The Yale Gallery was founded in 1832 as a museum within Yale University, explicitly for the teaching of art and its history. This makes it the oldest university art museum in the western hemisphere. The founding collections were more than 100 paintings with scenes from the American War of Independence, given by the American patriot-painter John Trumbull.

The collections quickly grew to include Ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean material, European paintings, Pre-Columbian art and artefacts collected during Yale's South American excavations, and a superb collection of prints and drawings. Arts from Asia and the Islamic world are now also prominently represented, and Yale's collection of coins and medals was eventually transferred to the Gallery. A department of African art was added in the early 2000s, and most recently my new department of Indo-Pacific art was inaugurated in 2009. 'Indo-Pacific' is intentionally vague: at present the department's holdings are based on the cultures of maritime South-East Asia, but eventually the collections may include the arts of the Pacific.

The department was the brainchild of Thomas Jaffe, who was an undergraduate student at Yale in the late 1960s. Among his fondest memories were the classes he attended in the Gallery, with the opportunity to learn from the actual handling and close inspection of objects in the collections. After leaving Yale he worked as a journalist, and spent some time in Hong Kong. He started collecting ethnographic art from South-East Asia and the Pacific in the late 1970s. By the early 2000s, he had one of the best collections of its kind in North America, with highlights

Thomas Jaffe with some of his Borneo sculpture.





Ship's Cloth (*Tampam*), Lampung, South Sumatra, 18th century. Cotton, supplementary weft. Robert J. Holmgren and Anita E. Sperus Collection, Promised gift Thomas Jaffe, YUAG ILE2006.4.121.

from Borneo, the Batak of North Sumatra, the Philippines, and eastern Indonesia, including Sulawesi, Timor, Flores, and the Southern Moluccas. He also realised that he had to make some long-term plans for his collection, as he was running out of room even in his spacious New York apartment!

Looking back to his own experiences in a great university museum, he decided to give his collection where it would be accessible to students, visitors, scholars, and amateurs (in the true, best sense of the word), to be studied and appreciated. The obvious choice for him was the Yale University Art Gallery. Thomas Jaffe also realised that his own collection, though of high quality, was not broad enough to be the sole

LETTER FROM AMERICA

Crown, Central Java, 10th century. Gold, crystalline stone.
YUAG 2008.21.109.

foundation of a department with a viable regional focus. If he were to found a new department based on maritime South-East Asia he would need to add a substantial textile component. He did not have a particular interest in textiles, but he had friends who did. He approached Robert J. (Jeff) Holmgren and Anita Spertus, who in the 1970s and 80s had brought together a significant collection of Indonesian textiles. While many European museums had important and well-documented collections in specific areas, the Holmgren-Spertus collection excelled in its breadth and consistently high quality. In 2002



they had divided the collection and sold half of it to the National Gallery of Australia, but kept the other half. Tom Jaffe now offered to buy this part, to add to the founding collections of the planned department. At a stroke this future department – at the time still ‘pie in the sky’ – gained an entirely new dimension.

At this point Jeff Holmgren heard that Hunter Thompson, a Canadian collector of early Indonesian gold, primarily from Java, was looking for a

Woman's skirt, Poso, possibly Minahasa, Sulawesi, 16th century. Cotton, warp ikat. Robert J. Holmgren and Anita E. Spertus Collection, Promised Gift Thomas Jaffe, YUAG ILE2006.4.86.

home for his collection of almost 500 pieces, and he contacted him and suggested the new department at the Yale Art Gallery. Hunter Thompson liked the idea of making his collection available to further studies, and leaving it to an active university museum also appealed to him. His donation (in 2006 and 2007) meant that the still-dormant department already had three core collections of outstanding quality. The addition of the Javanese gold, most of it dating from the 8th to the 13th centuries, added considerable historical depth.

So that is the background. When I was approached to be the first senior curator and launch the new department, I was well aware of some special challenges. As you will remember, when I left the Ashmolean in December 2009, the Museum had just completed its spectacular rebuilding project and had opened with full fanfare. Now guess what: when I took up my new appointment, the Yale Art Gallery was in the midst of a huge renovation project, with the grand opening planned for December 2012. I had less than three years to install a permanent gallery for a new department, whose collections were a complete mystery to me when I arrived. Moreover, they were either in deep storage, quite inaccessible during the renovation project, or still in Tom Jaffe's apartment in New York.

But I had a great deal of help from my new colleagues, as well as financial support from Tom for my pleas to get the collections all in one place. Within a year of my arrival, a study storage facility was created at Yale's newly acquired West Campus, a short drive from the main campus. I could finally begin to plan the permanent gallery display. I also had committed myself to an exhibition of the Javanese gold, to coincide with the publication of a revised edition of the collection's catalogue. 'Old Javanese Gold' was on view throughout the spring and summer of 2011, and the Gallery hosted an international symposium in May that year.

Apart from being professionally very busy, there were personal reasons for a hectic life. For the first two years at Yale, my husband was still teaching at Oxford. Just after my move to New Haven it became clear that my mother could no longer stay on her own in Germany, so six weeks after my job started I flew to Germany to find a home for her and help her move. A happy reason to return often was the birth of our first grandchild. But all in all, we crossed the Atlantic more often than we cared to count!

2012 was probably one of the most difficult years I have ever experienced. My mother died that winter, and I had to clear out and sell my parents' house in Germany, an emotionally and physically draining situation. At the same time our house in Oxford went on the market, and we were looking for a home in New Haven. We found a beautiful house in the leafy East Rock neighbourhood of New Haven, close to the

At Yale's West Campus, with Thomas Jaffe and a curator from the Quai Branly Museum in Paris.



LETTER FROM AMERICA

University. But house purchases are rarely without hiccups, and ours was on the way. Three days before we were to exchange contracts I noticed that the payment for our Oxford house, which should have gone into our US account, had ended up in the UK account. The only way the transfer could be made at such short notice was for one of us to arrange it in person, so my husband took the next overnight flight to Heathrow, then the bus to Oxford, stepped into the bank, made the transfer, took the next bus back to Heathrow, and was on the plane back to New York that afternoon. The next morning we exchanged on our new home.

In early September the installation of the permanent Indo-Pacific gallery was scheduled to start. Shortly after the walls were painted and the first objects came in, a big moving van arrived at home, and by the end of the day we were surrounded by 300+ tea chests and gigantic boxes full of china and books. Both at work and at home, everything was in motion and nothing was where it should be!



The new Indo-Pacific Gallery, 2012.

But there came a time when everything fell into place. Bookcases were built at home, and the displays in the gallery worked even better than I had hoped. The textiles looked jewel-like, the sculpture had a powerful presence, the colours were just right. If you have ever had the chance to put together an exhibition, you know how creative an experience it is, and how inspiring the collaboration with colleagues can be at this time.

Textile Photography Project: colour proofing.

I remember this well from my final weeks at the Ashmolean, and the experience was repeated now. At times like this I am the happiest person in the world, filled with gratitude for having such a wonderful job.

The official opening of the Yale Art Gallery in December 2012 was a huge success, much acclaimed and nationally reviewed. The Indo-Pacific gallery received particular attention. Holland Cotter wrote in the *New York Times*:

The major news, though, is the debut of the Indo-Pacific gallery. If you need one irrefutable reason for a visit, this is it... The installation is enrapturing, as intricately patterned as the Indonesian textiles and Borneo carvings that fill it.

And what has happened since? Many gallery tours, study days, special visits to the textile store have kept me busy, But this is the good kind of 'busy'. We had a major photography project last spring and now have digital images of all of our textiles. You can see these now on the Gallery's new website. Yale has an open-access policy for its collection images, and you can download them for free in both a low- and high-resolution format. There are plans for a textile study centre at the spacious West Campus storage facility, where Yale has recently established a joint conservation centre and research laboratories for material analysis and preservation of heritage.

I am planning a big temporary exhibition for this autumn, 'East of the Wallace Line – Monumental Art from Indonesia and New Guinea'. It will show many of our spectacular textiles from Sulawesi, Flores, Timor and Sumba, alongside sculpture from the Moluccas, Flores, and western coastal New Guinea. Long-term plans include an Indonesian textile exhibition for 2016, possibly to coincide with a major conference. Maybe OATG would like to organise an international excursion on this occasion? Start saving up for it now!

ruth.barnes@yale.edu

The Gallery's website link is <http://artgallery.yale.edu/>

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Photographing Sulawesi ceremonial banners (*roto*).



Embroidered Japanese screens

Clare Pollard, Curator of Japanese Art at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, describes a new acquisition at the museum.



These charming, early 20th-century Japanese screens are signed by the influential Kyoto-based painter Takeuchi Seihō (1864–1942) and appear to be a typical example of the Nihonga (literally ‘Japanese painting’) style. Nihonga, which used traditional Japanese artistic conventions, techniques and materials, emerged in the late 19th century in response to the newly popular Yōga, or Western-style painting. On closer inspection, however, it becomes apparent that the sparrows and the artist’s signatures and seals are in fact delicately worked in fine silk embroidery on a silk ground. The artist’s original brushwork has been recreated in extremely fine silk thread with a high sheen that captures beautifully the softness of the birds’

feathers and the movement in the wings of the birds in flight.

This is actually one of many embroidered ‘paintings’ based on designs by Takeuchi Seihō, who from 1889 worked as a designer for Iida Shinshichi of the Takashimaya Company, one of Japan’s leading producers of ornamental textiles.¹ Many ornamental textiles of this period were destined for the Western export market, as this was the era of Japonisme. After Japan was opened up to the West in the late 19th century, Japanese makers and merchants made great efforts to understand foreign tastes and artistic concepts, in particular the Western distinction between ‘fine’ and ‘decorative’ art – a notion that was unfamiliar to Japanese artists and artisans. Many Japanese textile producers at the time believed that their goods would sell better if they were regarded as ‘fine art’, and so began using formats such as wall hangings, screens and framed panels that were designed to be displayed as works of art. Pictorial sources such as Nihonga, oil painting, photography and lithography were used for design inspiration, and Nihonga painters like Seihō were employed as designers of ‘art textiles’.

Numerous albums of photographs documenting Takashimaya’s textile products are preserved in the Takashimaya Historical Museum. These contain several photos of embroideries based on Seihō’s designs, including versions of these sparrows in both screen and framed panel formats. There also exists a painted original of this subject in a private collection in Japan: a pair of six-fold screens dating from around 1912, with a similar gathering of curiously upright sparrows on the left looking up at more sparrows in flight, set against a similar background of plain gold leaf.

Seihō first trained as a painter of the Shijō School, known for its refined brushwork, ink and wash techniques and emphasis – unusual in Japanese art – on

sketching from nature. Animals and birds were among his favourite subjects. In 1900, on the occasion of the Paris Exposition Universelle, Seihō was sent to Europe by the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture and Trade and the city of Kyoto to observe the state of the art world in the West, and collect materials for art education. He travelled around Europe for six months after the exhibition, visiting museums, galleries, art schools and zoos. He also encountered the works of Western artists, including Turner, Corot and Constable.



On his return, he developed a new painting style that combined aspects of Western

realism, such as fixed point perspective and naturalistic modelling in light and shade, with the refined brushwork and soft washes of traditional Asian painting styles. In a lecture he gave on his return to Japan in 1901, he explained how he felt a 'spiritual link' between Western and Asian and painting² and the attempt to combine realistic, Western-style depiction with the more subjective Asian approach of expressing the 'true nature' of his subjects formed the basis of his work for the rest of his life. In these screens, for instance, even though Seihō's brushwork has been translated into needlework, the realistic depiction of the individual sparrows is enhanced by the abstract background to capture the very essence of sparrows in flight.

The screens, acquired to commemorate last year's exhibition 'Threads of Silk and Gold', complement the Ashmolean's spectacular



embroidered screens of cormorants fishing by firelight, also based on a design by Seihō.

¹ Seihō's association with the textile industry was long-standing. His family ran a successful restaurant near the Nishijin textile district of Kyoto and he was married to the daughter of a Nishijin textile family.

² 'A Speech by Takeuchi Seihō', *Kyoto Bijutsu Kyokai zasshi* 110, August 1901, quoted in Nakamura Reiko, 'The Experimenter Takeuchi Seihō', in Nakamura Reiko and Yoshinaka Michio, eds., *Takeuchi Seihō: Kindai Nihonga no Kyojin* (National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, 2013), p. v.

Jackets from South Sumatra

Following the success of January's 'show and tell' event, readers are invited to share their favourite textiles via the magazine.

Here, Felicity Wood describes her three Sumatran girls' jackets.

Most of the Asian textiles collected by my husband George and myself were given to the Pitt Rivers Museum about ten years ago. However, I kept just a few, including three exquisite little jackets which hang on the wall behind my sofa. They were worn at festivals by young unmarried girls of the Kauer people from the Lampung region of south Sumatra and were probably last made at the end of the 19th century. They are made from striped hand-woven cotton fabric. I like them especially because one can see how the whole garment was planned at the weaving stage – the front and back, and each sleeve being the 'loom width'. The wide stripe on the mid-section of the sleeve corresponds with the panel that runs down the middle of the back. This back panel was patterned during the weaving process by means of supplementary weft, often using metal thread. Other decoration – embroidered scroll designs, tiny mirror pieces, and nassa* shells for instance – has been added after the completion of the weaving. The completed jackets have been lined with imported cotton cloth. I love this very successful mix of materials and techniques.



JACKETS FROM SOUTH SUMATRA

The jackets are quite short (mine range from 27 to 32 cm) and would have been worn with a *tapis* (woman's sarong) which was tied above the breasts. I learned from Gittinger's book, *Splendid Symbols* (p.87), that, because of their weight, traditionally the jackets would have been carried and then put on just before the wearers arrived at the event.

*small cowrie-type shells



Do you have a favourite textile that you'd like to tell other readers about? Send us 200-400 words about it, plus a photo or two.

Former *Asian Textiles* editor Nick Fielding reviews Patricia Rieff Anawalt's new book, *Shamanic Regalia in the Far North*

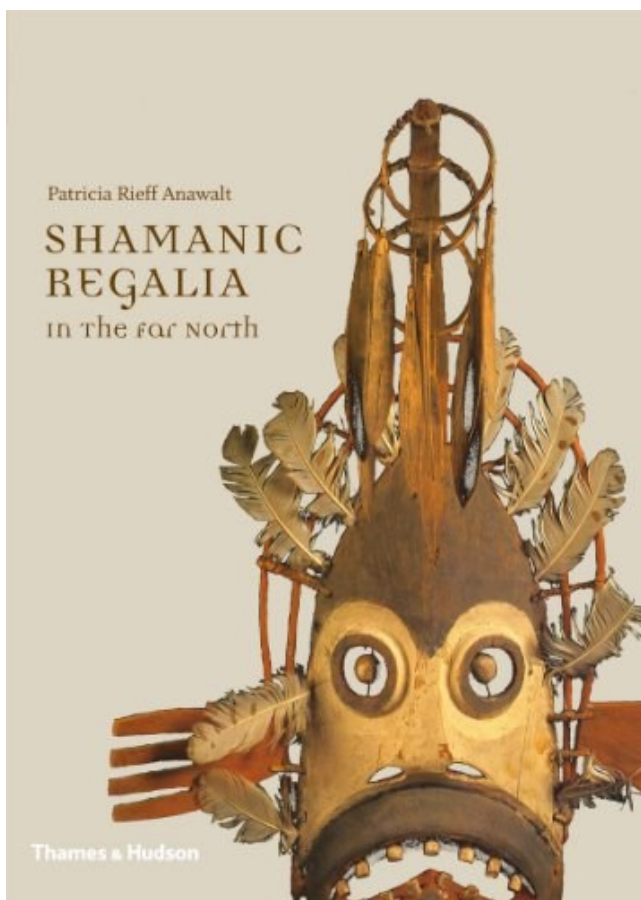
From the earliest times when European travellers began to penetrate Siberia and the north-western corner of the Americas, the clothing and accoutrements of shamans have been a subject of great interest. Pallas, von Strahlenberg, the eccentric John Dundas Cochrane and Peter Dobell all included engravings of shamans in full regalia in the accounts of their travels. Peter the Great himself was a great collector of their clothing and ritual equipment, much of which can still be seen today in St Petersburg's Ethnographic Museum.

To date, however, shamanism has generally been studied as a religion, indeed quite possibly humanity's first religion. It has captured the attention of ethnographers, religious historians, anthropologists and sociologists, but seldom – until the present volume – have the extraordinary physical expressions of shamanism – the masks, coats, drums, drum beaters and all the other objects – been the centre of attention. For this we owe a great debt of gratitude to Dr Anawalt, who is Director Emerita and founding director of the Center for the Study of Regional Dress at the Fowler Museum, UCLA, Los Angeles.

Today shamanism is undergoing something of a revival, particularly in Siberia and Central Asia. I myself have seen shamans perform in southern Siberia and there is little doubt that shamanism, despite the terrible persecution of the Soviet era, continues to exert a powerful influence over the tribal populations of these regions.

Their clothing cannot be separated from their beliefs. Practitioners (male and female) believe that they are literally torn apart on initiation and rebuilt by their protecting spirit. The metal 'ribs' sewn to their coats are a reminder of this traumatic experience. Looks are important – a charm-laden coat is central to the rituals. Weighing as much as 20 kg, the clanging metal pieces are designed to attract friendly spirits.

Dr Anawalt takes the reader through a history of collecting, noting the importance of the American Jessup North Pacific Expedition of 1897–1902 and the collections amassed by Russians such as P.E. Ostrovskikh and D.A. Klementz. The real joy of this book is found in the wonderful photographs of objects from these collections – drums and drum beaters, staffs, reindeer-skin gloves and leggings, breastplates, aprons, headwear. A Sel'kup shaman's coat is covered in a row of anthropomorphic



metal figures that are his army, whilst the hemline has a row of metal frogs – the shaman’s helpers.

The shaman’s coat itself had to be symbolically brought back to life in the spring. A blacksmith would be called upon to infuse magical power into the pieces he had created, and older shamans would create figures out of reindeer skin to be used to repair and reconstruct drums and regalia. Massive round mirrors were sewn to the coat to reflect evil forces, whilst vents on the front of the coat represented the entrances to the three worlds of the universe.

This book is a great guide for anyone who wants to know the basic history of the ethnographic study of shamanism. Even so, it has some surprising gaps. Not a mention of Maria Czaplicka, the Polish-born anthropologist whose *Aboriginal Siberia* (1914) is amongst the best books on the subject of shamanism – and who, incidentally, was the first female lecturer in anthropology at Oxford’s University and is buried in Oxford’s Wolvercote Cemetery. Nor is there much discussion of the patterning and embroidery techniques used on the garments and objects under study. Much more needs to be done on this, particularly to show the clear links between the Siberian patterns of the Turkic people of Siberia and the Turks of Central Asia. Nonetheless, a beautiful book.

Patricia Rieff Anawalt, *Shamanic Regalia in the Far North*, Thames & Hudson, London, 2014, ISBN 978-0-500-51725-3, £19.95.

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 12 SEPTEMBER 2014**

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

Increase in subscription rates

It was voted at the AGM in January that in order to keep up with the rising cost of postage, from 1 October 2014 annual subscriptions to OATG would rise to £25 for individual membership and £35 for joint membership.

Would members who pay by standing order please remember to notify their bank of the change?

Thank you.

Corrections and clarifications

On page 2 of the February issue, the caption to the front cover image should have read ‘collection of Chinese Textiles and Clothing Culture Centre, Fu Jen Catholic University’, not ‘...Taiwan National University’, and on page 7 the upper picture is from the collection of Taiwan National University, not Taiwan National Museum.

On page 27 of the February issue, a caption said that Marion Maule was photographed holding a *furoshiki*. She was, in fact, holding a *tenugui*.

Other Asian textiles events

1 March—5 September 2014, Amsterdam

Expedition Silk Road, Treasures from the Hermitage

More than 250 treasures from the Hermitage are waiting to be discovered in Amsterdam. For details, see:

http://www.hermitage.nl/en/tentoonstellingen/expedition_silk_road/inleiding.htm

15 June 2014

Bradford-upon-Avon Rag Market

Church House, 29 Church Street Bradford-on-Avon Wilts BA15 1LN

Elizabeth Baer Tel: 01225 866136 <http://www.elizabethbaertextiles.com>

1—2 July 2014

Textile Bazaar

Hellens Manor, Much Marcle, Ledbury, Herefordshire HR8 2LY

Bailey Curtis Tel: 01453 823375 Email: bailey@baileycurtis.com

September 2014 (dates to be confirmed)

Textiles & Jewellery from Asia and Africa

7 Churton Place, London SW1V 2LN Open 11 am—6 pm daily

Barbie Campbell Cole & John Gillow 0207 8347474

www.barbiecampbellcole-textiles.com or www.barbiecampbellcole.com

Until 8 September 2014, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, USA

Fired Earth, Woven Bamboo

More than 60 ceramics and baskets from the Snider Collection are complemented by contemporary Japanese quilts and fabric screens. For more information, visit the museum's website:

<http://www.mfa.org/exhibitions/fired-earth-woven-bamboo>

2 October 2014—4 January 2015, British Museum, London

Power and Protection: Religious Practices in Burma and Thailand

There will be gallery talks on 28 October, 12 November and 5 December at 13:15 in Gallery 91.

Don't forget to look at [OATG's blog](#) for news and information about exhibitions and events:

<http://oxfordasiantextilegroup.wordpress.com/>

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MEMBERSHIP OF OXFORD ASIAN TEXTILE GROUP

(includes three issues of *Asian Textiles* magazine)

Membership subscriptions were due for renewal on 1 October 2013

OATG membership runs from 1 October to 30 September, and subscriptions for 2013–14 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, 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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* note: from 1 October 2014 subscriptions will be £25 for individuals, £35 for joint members

