

OXFORD ASIAN TEXTILE GROUP

Newsletter No. 18

February 2001



Indigo, resist-dyed, cotton crepe sash (*obi*), width 33 cm, Japan, c.1900. Detail showing repeating pattern of irises, wisteria and crane medallions. (WAG T.8816) See p. 4.

2 CONTENTS

Editorial	2	Letter to the Editor	16
Asian Textiles in The Whitworth Art Gallery	4	Museums Round-Up	17
A Gift With a Surprise	7	Books	18
Adventures in Search of a Cord	9	Videos	20
Braids and Tassels	11	Apologies	20
Reports of O.A.T.G. Meetings	13	Exhibitions	21
Obituary: Krishna Riboud	16	Lectures and Events	24

EDITORIAL

A question that always presents itself to the editor of a specialist journal is how strictly should he stick to his remit? If the specialism is Asian textiles, how far should he stray from Asia on the one hand or textiles on the other?

The O.A.T.G. outing to Bath in November (see below p. 14) took members to a costume museum without an Asian collection and an Asian art museum without any textiles! For my part I have included an article on *Museums in Budapest* (newsletter no.8, October 1997) because it was written by someone the Group had helped sponsor to go on a textile conservation course there, and two on shawls made in Paisley and Norwich, on the grounds that the origins of these manufactures were firmly rooted in India.

Again, we have had two articles on the Newberry embroideries in the Ashmolean (no.3, February 1996, and no. 17, October 2000) and are going to feature an exhibition of the same objects next time. These are mediaeval and later textiles from Egypt. Now, everybody knows that Egypt is part of Africa, but culturally it is seen as closer to the Middle East, most of which is in Asia, than to the rest of Africa. Again, these embroideries are Islamic and Islam is undeniably an Asian religion, the majority of whose adherents still live in Asia, so they can justifiably be included in an Asian textile newsletter.

But what about pre-Islamic Egypt? I have published an article on "Coptic" textiles in the Ashmolean (newsletter no. 12, February 1999). I was questioned about this, but Ruth assured me that the influence of these textiles on later Islamic ones was so strong that it should certainly be included. However, how far back can you take this? Did Tutankhamun's wardrobe have any inter-relationship with the Asian textiles of his day? I don't know, but I have featured the exhibition *Tutankhamun's Wardrobe* (see below p.21) because it seemed to me an important one and of interest to a wider audience than just Egyptologists. I should not be surprised if it turns many members' footsteps in the direction of Edinburgh this year.

It is not only Egypt that raises the question. I have mentioned exhibitions of textiles from as far away as Tunisia because of the Islamic connexion and a slender thread of contact with the Middle East. My policy is to include anything that has an apparent relation with Asian textiles, however remote, provided that I do not have to oust an undisputedly Asian textile item to make way for it. As for those things I am asked to include which have no apparent connexion at all, however interesting they may be, I reply with a regretful no.

PROGRAMME

**Tuesday 27 March
2-3 p.m.**

**Naga Textiles
a study session with Vibha Joshi**

in the reserve collection at the Pitt Rivers Museum
Numbers limited; please book through Arm Guild, address below

Vibha Joshi has a long-standing interest in Naga textiles, on which she wrote an article in the O.A.T.G. newsletter no.15 (February 2000). She is currently completing a doctoral thesis in Social Anthropology at Oxford University and will be undertaking a detailed study of Naga textiles for her post-doctoral research. She was a selector of Naga textiles for the 1998-9 Crafts Council touring exhibition *Handmade in India*, will be curating the Naga section of the 2003 exhibition *Tribal Art from India*, at the New Orleans Museum of Art, and has presented a number of seminars and talks on the subject.

**Wednesday 9 May
at 5.45 p.m.**

**Indian Painted Cotton and Chintz
by Rosemary Crill**

at the Pitt Rivers Museum Research Centre, 64 Banbury Road, Oxford
Members free. Visitors welcome, £2.

Rosemary Crill is Deputy Curator (currently Acting Chief Curator) of the Indian and South-East Asian Department of the Victoria and Albert Museum and wrote up the collections in the O.A.T.G. newsletter no.6 (February 1997). She curated the *Colours of the Indus* exhibition shown at me V.& A. and in Edinburgh during 1997-8, and has published widely on South Asian textiles, including the recent books *Indian Ikat Textiles* (1998) and *Indian Embroidery* (1999). Her talk will cover the history and development of a highly complex technique of painting and dyeing cloth for the domestic and export markets.

**ASIAN TEXTILES AT THE WHITWORTH ART GALLERY,
UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER**

The collection of Asian textiles at The Whitworth Art Gallery is wide-ranging but somewhat patchy, reflecting the interests of distinguished collectors and benefactors rather than the systematic pursuit of a rigorous collecting policy. This diversity, nevertheless, enriches the collection in unexpected ways.

Many gifts of textiles in the 1890s were from textile entrepreneurs anxious that Manchester should possess the reference collections necessary to inspire good design, a matter that was considered vital if Lancashire was to remain a leading centre of textile production and internationally competitive. Joseph C. Lee, the first Chairman of the Whitworth trustees, who was a partner in Tootal Broadhurst Lee and also owner of the calico firm Rossendale Printing Company, was an important patron until his death in 1894. Among his gifts were four purpose-made mahogany boxes packed with more than 800 specially mounted samples of woven Japanese silks each identified with a neat handwritten label on the back (see illus. below).. The labels indicate that the textiles date from the 1760s to the 1870s and, as several copies of a local Japanese newspaper, *The Progressive News* (*Kaishin Shimbun*) dating to 1885 were with the textiles, it appears that they were acquired about this time. Complementing these silks are other woven pieces, some of which have been cut and mounted in eight albums,, and also an 18th century kimono, 19th century painted hangings and embroidered gift covers (*fukasa*), a group of stencilled and paste-resist decorated silks and cottons which appear to have been intended for kimonos for the British market in the 1920s, and more than 90 samples of early 20th century resist-dyed cotton sashes which formerly belonged to the Calico Printers Association. Patterned with blossom, plants, birds and waterscapes, they form a rich source of Japanese iconography (see illus. p.l).



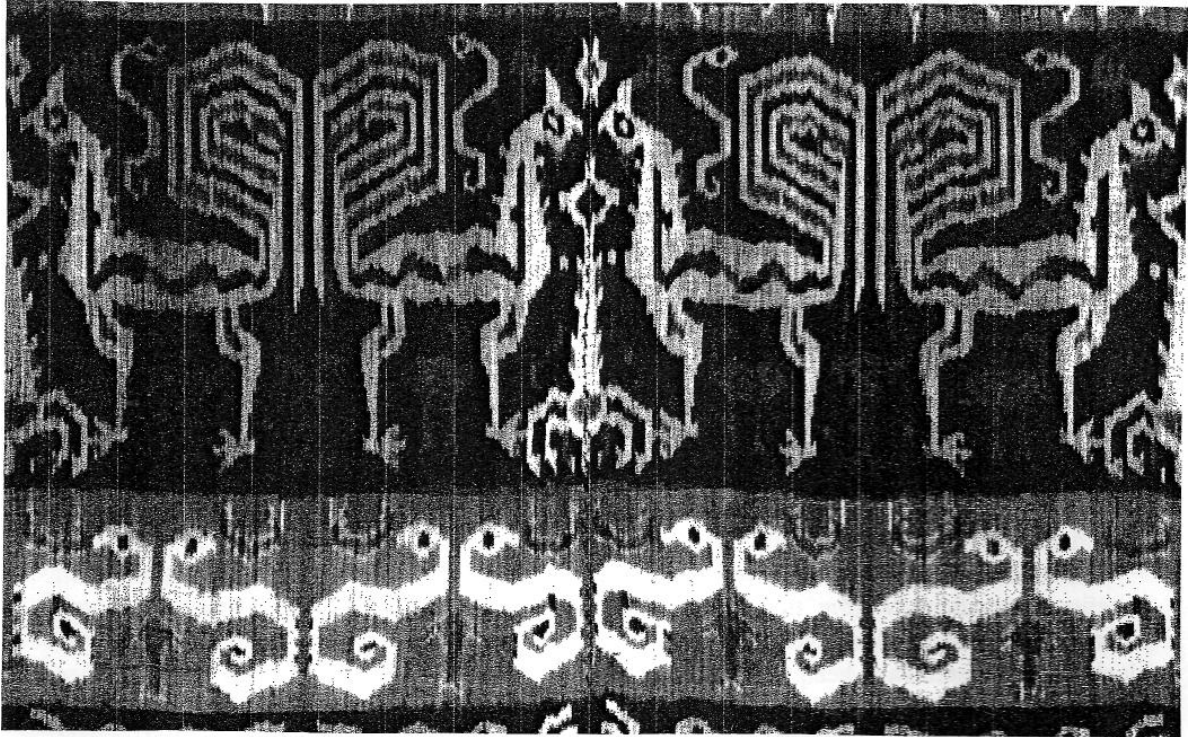
Figured cloth, woven from silk and gold thread, patterned with herons on a ground of rippling water, Japan, c.1780 (detail). Pattern repeat, height 13.5 cm, width 8.7 cm. One of the more than 800 samples given by Joseph C. Lee to The Whitworth Art Gallery in 1893. (WAGT.8816)

Indian textiles are well represented. A gift from Thomas Wardle in 1890 comprised a selection of the silks he collected in India at the behest of the Prince of Wales for the Colonial and India Exhibition (London, 1886), which were also shown at the Royal Jubilee Exhibition (Manchester, 1887) and the Empire of India Exhibition (London, 1895). Wardle's special interest in silk production is illustrated by the variety of fabrics made from wild silks - muga, eri and tussur - as well as by luxuriant kinkhobs, ikat-patterned *mashru*, a *patolu* and embroideries from Sind and Kutch. Supplementing these are a few choice pieces of whitework, including two boys' or men's short-sleeved jackets from Uttar Pradesh, acquired by Dorothy Larcher, who went to India shortly after finishing at art school to help Christina Herringham record the renowned Buddhist frescoes at Ajanta, and later herself became a leading handblock printer of textiles. Pieces showing different printing and dyeing techniques - wrap-resist dyed turbans from Rajasthan, imitation tie-dyed shawls and blockprinted bedcovers for example - are among the textiles from the former collection of the Calico Printers Association. More recently the Gallery acquired a group of prestigious kinkhobs, saris and a kashmir shawl embellished with double-sided couching in gold and silver thread, which had belonged to Princess Catherine Duleep Singh, the daughter of the Maharajah Duleep Singh, the last independent ruler of the Punjab.

Since 1997 the Gallery has been attempting to fill gaps in its Indian collection and has benefited considerably from the advice of Professor Anne Morrell. As a consequence, embroideries, quilts and tie-dyed shawls from Kutch and samples and lengths of resist-dyed block-printed *ajrakh* have been acquired along with tools and documentation concerning the production processes. In addition Anne Morrell has given the Gallery a family heirloom - a 17th century Bengal quilt embroidered in natural yellow wild silk. It features a three-tiered medallion showing Portuguese warriors on foot and horseback hunting deer and lions and is edged with an outer border of flower scrolls and monkeys.

Textiles from Indonesia include a small group of ikats acquired by Lady Barlow when she toured the region in 1935 with the anthropologist Margaret Mead. Among them are two matching *hinggi* from Sumba (see illus. overleaf) and two weft-ikat *cepuk* cloths from Bali. Examples of Javanese batik are chiefly from production centres on the north coast of the island, although there is an exhibition piece of white silk patterned with foliage scrolls with the wax still in place, which was executed at the International Exhibition in Paris in 1889.

The transfer of textile holdings from the Manchester Museum to The Whitworth Art Gallery in 1968 added a range of interesting ethnographic material. It includes a notable group of textiles from Nagaland acquired by J.P. Mills when he was Assistant Commissioner at Kokokchung from 1917 to 1920. This town is situated on the edge of the region populated by the Lhota Nagas, about whom Mr Mills compiled a monograph which was published in 1922. However, the cloths also derive from other tribes, including the Angami, Ao, Rengma, Sangtam, Sema and Tangkhul. The village and status of the wearer of each cloth is recorded, indicating, for example, how many stone-dragging and mithan (bull) sacrifice ceremonies have been performed and the number of heads a warrior has taken. The most elaborate cloth is an *Asukedo-pi* brocaded with small squares of red animal hair and embellished with twelve circles of cowrie shells.



Warp-ikat patterned hinggi (man's ceremonial mantle) from East Sumba, Indonesia, early 20th century, Detail showing rows of peacocks and snakes. (WAG T.15044a)

Another important assemblage is a group of embroidered Miao garments (a pleated hemp skirt and four jackets) collected by Augustine Henry in 1896 to 1898 while he was stationed as a customs official at Szemao and Mengtse in southern Yunnan. Other textiles from China are mainly items of courtly clothing and accessories dating to the late Qing dynasty (1644-1911).

This summary can only hint at some of the riches in the Whitworth's collection of Asian textiles. Embroideries from India and China and Javanese batik are the subjects that generate the most inquiries and visits. However, the scope for research is much greater. Improvements to storage facilities and a more user-friendly collections database, which are currently being supported by the Designation Challenge Fund, should also soon lead to enhanced public access.

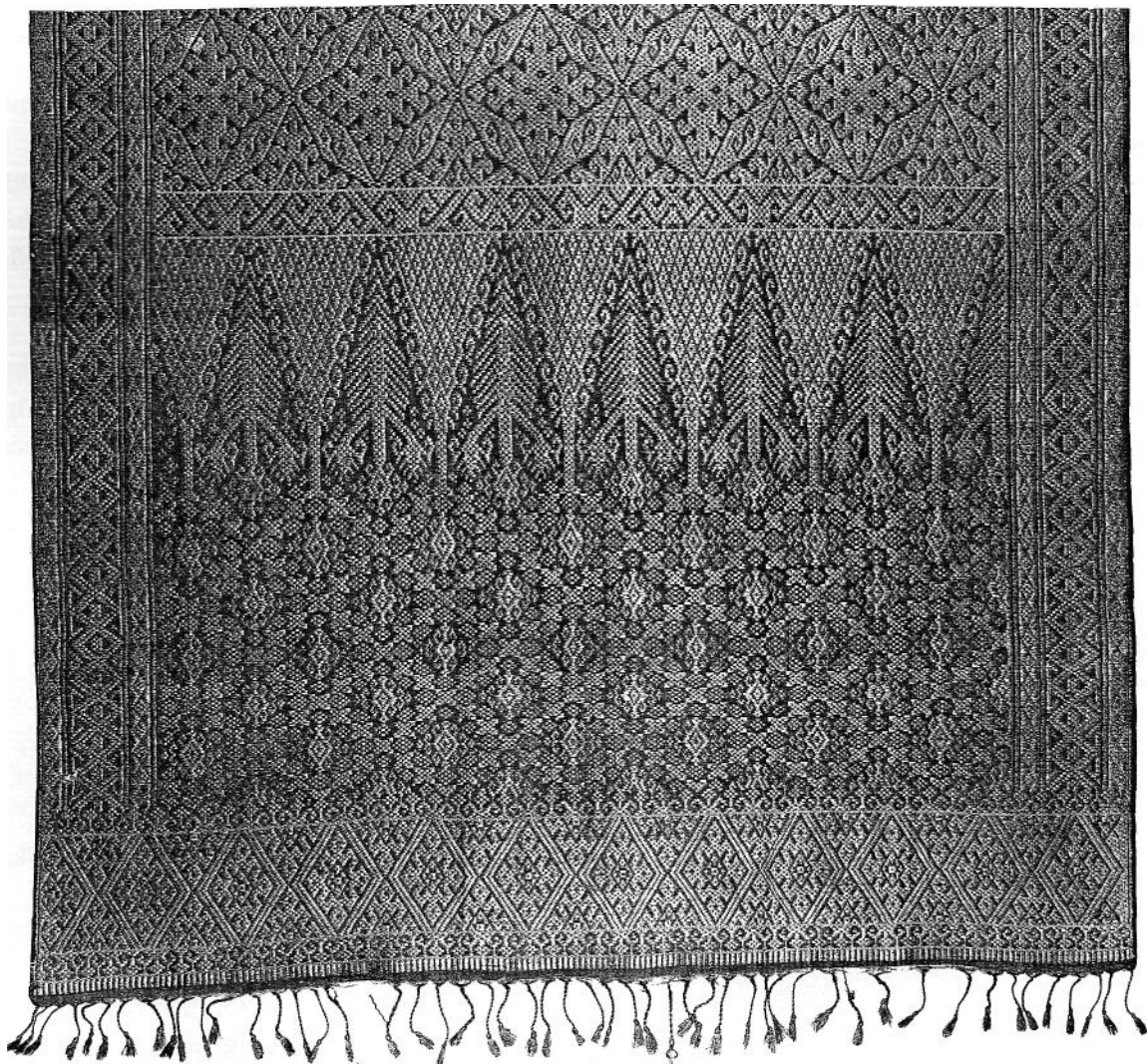
Frances Pritchard
Curator (Textiles, Access and Documentation)
The Whitworth Art Gallery

[An article on The Newberry Collection of Embroideries from the Middle East at the Whitworth Art Gallery appeared in the O.A.T.G. newsletter no. 15, February 2000. Ed.]

A GIFT WITH A SURPRISE

Sometime last spring I had a letter from an elderly German lady, Susanne Vogt, who claimed acquaintance with one of my Oxford friends. She wrote that she was about to move into smaller accommodation and therefore had to reduce her possessions. Among those to go were six textiles, about which she wrote, ". . . they are old and worn, but I cannot bring myself to throw them out". My friend from Oxford had seen them and had suggested that I might be interested in them. She did not know anything about the textiles' origin or age. Happy to be surprised, I agreed to receive them and, if suitable, accept them for the Ashmolean Museum.

The parcel that arrived contained six items, all immediately recognizable as Asian. Five were from Indonesia and one from Japan. They obviously had been used as furniture covers or table cloths, and did indeed have a much-worn look. Nevertheless they made an interesting little collection. Four of the textiles were from the Minangkabau in Sumatra, all of them with gold thread supplementary weft. Two of them are particularly sumptuous, with rich golden geometric designs (illus. below and on p.1 of O.A.T.G. newsletter no.17), They



Headdress *tangkuluak*, silk with gold supplementary weft, Minangkabau, Sumatra (Indonesia)
c.1900 (Ashmolean Museum, EA 2000.12)

would have been used by women as elaborately wrapped headdresses, worn on ceremonial occasions. For anyone interested in reading further about these cloths and their social significance, I recommend a look at *Walk In Splendour; Ceremonial Dress and the Minangkabau* by Anne and John Summerfield (see below p. 19).

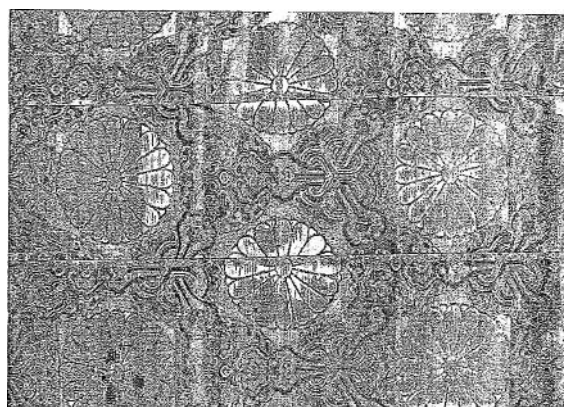
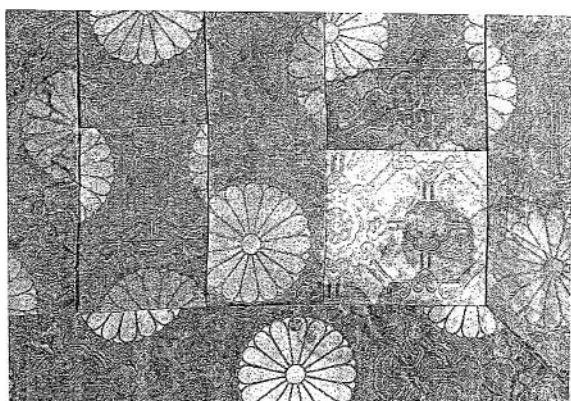
The fifth textile is a Javanese batik cloth with a difference: it retains the complete wax resist cover which had been applied prior to dyeing the fabric. It is of fine cotton with delicately drawn floral patterning in the style of Semarang on Java's north coast. It is a *batik tulis* (hand-drawn batik) rather than block-printed, and is a wonderful demonstration piece for the making of batik.

As attractive as these five cloths are, the real surprise is the last one. It is a Japanese priest's shawl (*ohi*) woven in fine gold brocade and brown, green and blue silk, with a 16-petalled chrysanthemum design (*mon*) linked by a distinctive trefoil-like lotus bud pattern (below) and probably dates from the late 17th or early 18th century. As is typical of these shawls, the silk fabric has been cut into rectangular strips which are then sewn together into a patchwork shawl. The shawl is worn as a shoulder cloth over a long robe (*kesa*) which is similarly patched.

The Ashmolean's Department of Eastern Art does not have many Japanese textiles, but there are four *kesa* in the collection, as our textile conservator Susan Stanton told me. I opened the relevant drawer and found myself looking at the first *kesa* (EA 1963.91): it was made of the same silk brocade with its pattern of chrysanthemum and linked lotus buds as the shawl that had just arrived. Two siblings had found each other! They are illustrated, somewhat reduced, below.

As the Editor mentioned in the last newsletter, the textiles formerly belonged to the German expressionist painter Christian Rohlf and his wife. They were probably bought in Berlin in the 1920s or early '30s. Frau Susanne Vogt is the niece of Rohlf's wife. We are grateful to her for her donation.

Ruth Barnes

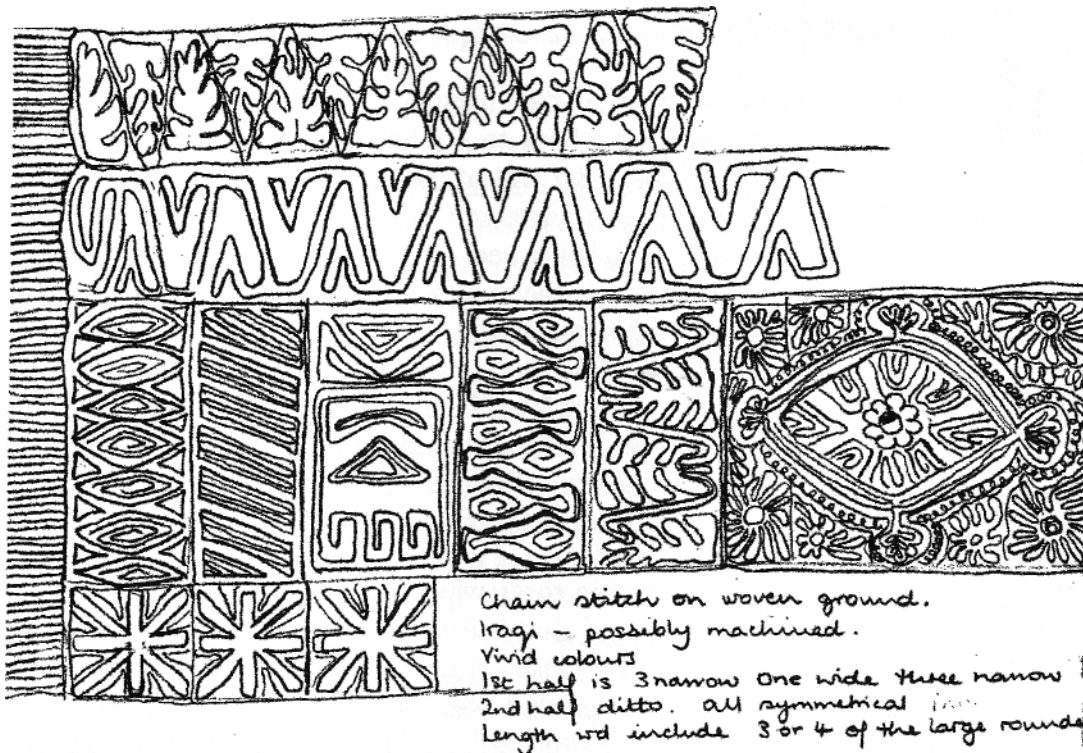


Details of: left, priest's robe, *kesa*, (EA 1963.91) and right, priest's shawl, *ohi*, (EA 2000.17), silk gold brocade, Japan 17th/18th century.

ADVENTURES IN SEARCH OF A CORD

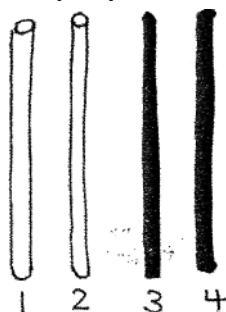
I have been interested in Middle Eastern embroidery since it became fashionable in the sixties and seventies. Recently I visited Jordan and had a chance to see some wonderful examples first-hand. I had been planning a trip to Petra ever since I saw my friend Carol's photographs. She and I had travelled together for over twenty years; however the year she went to Petra I was honeymooning elsewhere. But Carol's photos of Petra were so spectacular that Jordan went right up to the top of my must list from that moment.

Seven years later I set off for Jordan on a trip of my own, and arrived in Petra one warm March afternoon armed with a sketchbook and a 2B pencil. Petra must rank as one of the top heritage sites of the world. I don't necessarily recommend doing it solo for reasons which may become apparent as you read on. That afternoon I settled down among the gift shops near the Visitors' Centre. In browsing through the bags and carpets I became aware of some camel bags hung with interesting cords from which multiple tassels were suspended. I asked the man running the gift shop if he could show me how they were made. The answer, roughly translated, was "No, but I know a man who can". I carried on sketching carpets:

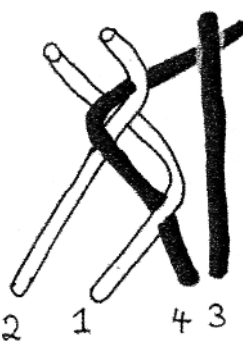
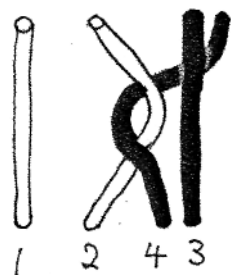


Several hours later this chap (it turned out he was named Mohammed) had arranged transport and announced that we were to set off for Taybet Zaman. This was good news and bad news. Setting off with a strange man in a big Mercedes is the bad news for reasons which are obvious. Going to Taybet Zaman is good news. It is a de-luxe hotel constructed to resemble a Jordanian village. It contains separate rooms each like a Jordanian house, a Turkish bath of international renown, several classy gift shops and a stunning view of Petra. What the guide books fail to mention is that it also includes a weaving studio.

But - how to mitigate the bad news? I decided to get Mohammed to call in at my hotel so that I could pick up my camera. Once inside, I told the receptionist that I was setting off to Taybet Zaman with Mohammed. I would probably be a few hours. I was a bit nervous. I thought I could cope, but I just wanted someone to know where I was going. The response was a "Que?" worthy of Manuel at Fawlty Towers. "English not too good." Oh dear! I hesitated, but finding out how cords are made is worth a risk, so I took a deep breath and set off anyway.



Unfortunately for me, the weaver was still on siesta and the workshop was locked. Mohammed was kind enough to wait. I managed to make use of the time sketching the view of Petra, but Mohammed droned on incessantly, trying to persuade me to take a Turkish bath. "No thanks, I don't need one." ... "No, honestly, I'm fine, thank you." Eventually the weaver turned up, but he had no idea what cords I was talking about. I frogmarched the poor man into the gift shop where the same cords are being used (made from perle thread) as dainty adornments for caftans. Aha! So we take one apart and find it is a simple four-strand plait. He did vaguely show me how to do it, but he wasn't very sure. I found the answer in a book by Barbara Pegg I borrowed from Reading library on my return home (left).



Anyway, despite the hanging around, Mohammed was gracious. He drove me back to my hotel and dropped me outside. That would have been the end of the story had it not been for the fact that I was keen to share my photographs with Carol on my return and asked her to bring hers along to compare. Lo and behold, in amongst the photos of the tombs, Carol had a picture of a young Jordanian man and his two sisters. Could it really be Mohammed? "Oh yes," said Carol. "He was so kind he invited me to dinner at his house." Well, seven years later there he is, still courting the English ladies. So if you decide to go, look out for Mohammed who runs a gift shop near the Visitors' Centre. He used to work at Taybet Zaman and is on good terms with the weaver there!

The adventure initiated in me an interest in cords which seems to have intensified. In order to complete a bag I am making for City and Guilds Embroidery, part 1, I made a simple *kumihimo* braid using a kitchen stool which my husband had "modified" by drilling a two-inch diameter hole in the top. I was dead impressed with this. He then further excelled himself by cobbling together a weight from a film canister filled with pennies suspended from the cord by a barbless fish-hook. I found Auntie Beryl's old wooden cotton-reels to make bobbins and set about teaching myself *kumihimo*. Amazingly, the four-strand *kumihimo* braid has the same appearance as the four-strand plait the Jordanians use to hang the tassels on their camels!

A Saturday afternoon Skill Share day was held by the Braid Society around the same time. Jennie Parry was making some extremely beautiful flat *kumihimo* braid on the square type of stool with pegs all round; a chap called Ziggy was doing nifty things with a lucet;

someone else was looping braid off a simple clamp (five loops) and, oh my goodness! the split-ply work displayed on the table was utterly spectacular. Finally there were the little tassels, Jennie Parry had brought with her the most amazing collection of Uzbek braid/tassels/loop arrangement embellished with beads and tassels. She suggested I guess how the tassels were made as she had not had a chance to check out her own theory and did not want to mislead me with untested speculations. I reckon they were made of rolled fabric densely stitched with spiral buttonhole stitch,

Needless to say my C.& G. bag project will be decorated with camel braids and my attempts to replicate Uzbek tassels.

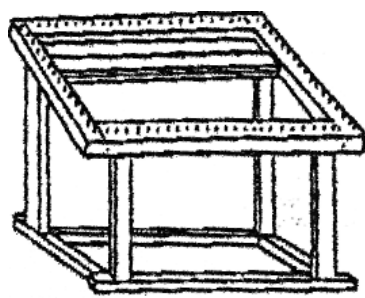
Karen Malik

BRAIDS AND TASSELS

A little more information would seem to be useful to readers of Karen Malik's article.

She visited the annual Braid Society Skill Share Day in Banbury (see below 2001 dates). At these events members bring equipment and skills to share with the public and other colleagues, some quite sophisticated, others dependent on no more than a secure anchor post and one's own fingers.

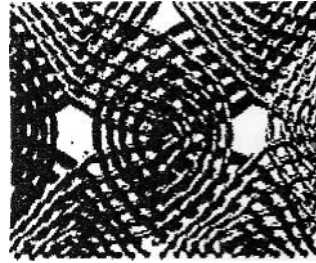
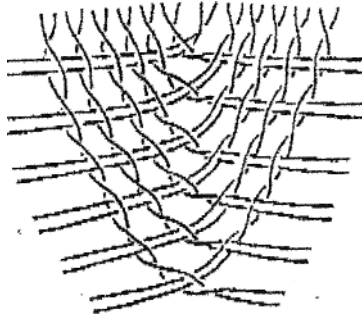
Karen mentioned that I was working on a square type of stool with pegs round it. Some readers may be thinking this was possibly a *taka dai* (for oblique interlacing structures). In fact I had taken two *kara kumi dais*, one on which to work and one for teaching. This is the least familiar of the Japanese braiding devices used here and works in a very different way from all the others (*maru dai* - the round stool, *kaku dai* - the square stool, the *aya takedai* with the bamboo "feather" supports, and the *taka dai*, with the sliding bobbin separators).



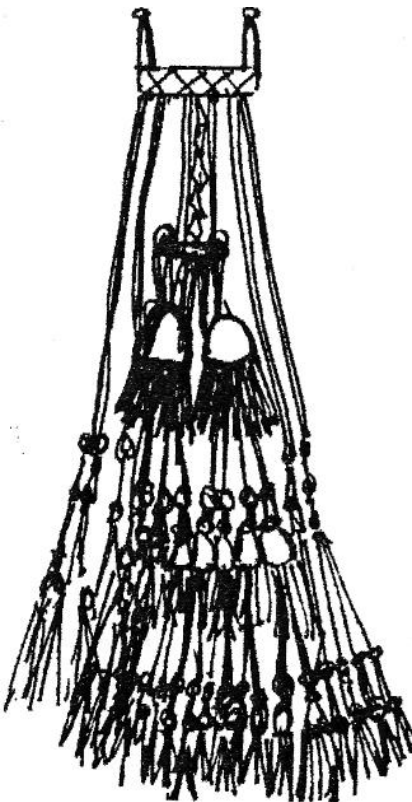
The *kara kumi dai* is a neat light-weight device, composed of a square frame with small dowel pegs spaced at inch intervals round the top and set on short legs. The braid is kept in position between two horizontal bars of wood. The bobbins are small flat discs, each weighing approx. 3 gms, the "warp" threads are attached to a leader thread. The *kara kumi dai* is used to make flat braids. Traditionally used by the Japanese as temple offerings, the experts may work with several hundreds of bobbins, the braid taking several years to complete. Unlike the other Japanese equipment, the work can be removed and rolled up quite easily. I am intrigued by the possibility of mixing different qualities and thicknesses of yarn to produce undulating surfaces. (I am no purist, though I do believe in the need for acquiring the discipline of good technique.)

The braids and methods of doing *kara kumi* braids is quite different: the braid is made in working sections (very like making bobbin lace), then those working threads are lifted, in a bundle, right out of the way, and the next group is spread out over the square frame, separated by the pegs around the edge. Instead of the bobbins maintaining a uniform even

tension on the threads, here the very light bobbins act as thread carriers only, and there is much manipulation of the braid. It is necessary to tension each thread tightly with the fingers to obtain a firm structure. The travelling (working) pair of threads either twine round, or are twined by, their immediate neighbouring pair, always with the twist in a clockwise direction. Pairs are taken alternately from left and right. Lace makers recognize the "spider" structure; the pathway of these threads is very similar (see diagrams below). Even when worked in self colour, beautiful repeat shapes are reflected by the light, also revealing the perfect tensioning of the threads.



In 1999 we had the largest gathering of *kara kumi dais* under one roof outside Japan - a total of four at a class taken by Edna Gibson at my house in Leicester.

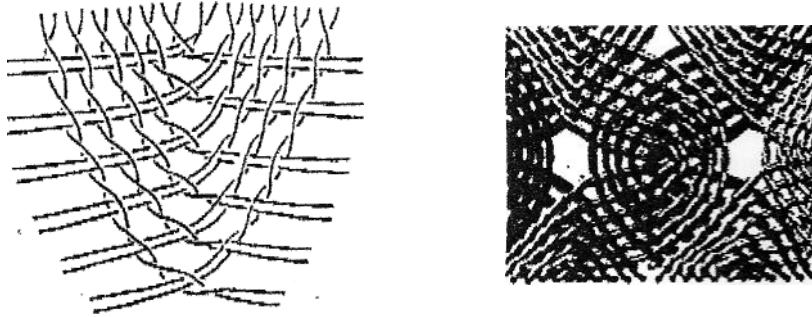


Karen also referred to my collection of decorative braids and tassels from Uzbekistan. The braids on these are narrow, often a fancy coloured one has two plain ones sewn either side as borders, the structure is an oblique interlacing. For some time I had suspected that these were made by manipulating loops on the fingers from hand to hand (a diagnostic feature of this can be a mirrored error). The count of 10 or 14 elements is also a clue at times, since this would be worked as five or seven loops, which fit our hands so well. I had recently bought a wonderful addition to my collection of these, and had been thrilled to find the evidence of the end loops still visible. This was exciting, but then, so were the wonderful tassels and embellishments at the end. Some have the appearance of bells covering the tassel skirt: they are made from a length of handmade braid that folds round and back readily because of its structure - a flat woven tape would not be able to produce this at all. The tassels have decorative features that I still have yet to reproduce, but which I suspect are of detached spaced button-hole stitch origins. It was these that caused much discussion and examination that day.

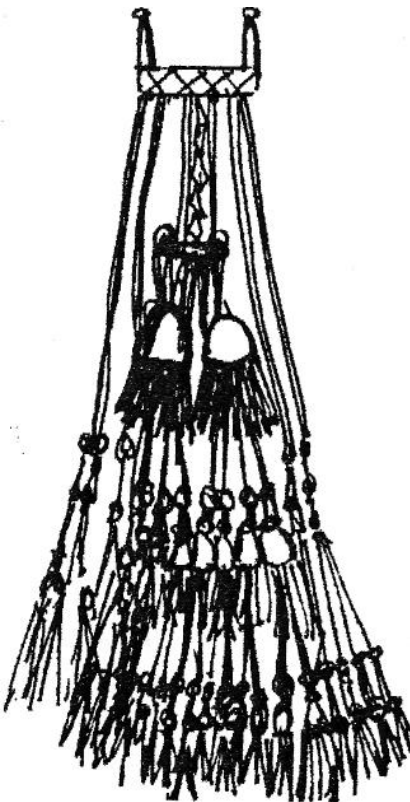
Jennie Parry

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Jennie Parry

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REPORTS OF O.A.T.G. MEETINGS**Professor Anne Morrell: The Calico Museum**

Those attending Professor Anne Morrell's evocative talk following the A.G.M. on the evening of 18th October had more than one of their senses assailed as she gave us an engrossing introduction to her work at The Calico Museum of Textiles in Ahmedabad, North Western India.

Beguiled by Indian textiles, and especially embroideries, since her childhood in southern India, Professor Morrell has over the years become an expert in this field, well known to many members of O.A.T.G. through her publications. Since retiring as lecturer at the University of Manchester last year, she has been able to devote more time to her work with The Calico Museum.

Through slides, tapes of bird song and wafts of frangipani scent, Professor Morrell provided a virtual tour through the Botanical Gardens in which the Calico Museum is located, into the Museum buildings themselves. Formerly the home and textile mills of the local Sarabhai family, the buildings now house one of the finest collections of Indian textiles in the world. The area around Ahmedabad is especially richly represented with exceptional phulkari and lively appliqué, for example. Slides of the gallery curated by Professor Morrell showed not only the textiles but displays of the technologies which produced them.

As the introduction of mechanization means the disappearance of many of these techniques, Professor Morrell sees their documentation as one of the most important aspects of her work. Using video, she records the processes still being practised in the local communities and collects examples of the tools used in the textiles' manufacture. Through video we were able to see the skilled work of local glass blowers, creating the thin mirrored glass which is then snipped by hand into the familiar mirror discs often used to decorate the embroidered textiles from this area.

Despite the potential loss of many of these pre-industrial techniques, Professor Morrell was hugely optimistic about the continuing textile production of the Ahmedabad region and the place of the Calico Museum in recording and explaining its traditions and future. We were fortunate to have a glimpse into this fascinating world and be reassured that while change is inevitable, thanks to the work of Professor Morrell, the past will not be lost completely.

Lorraine Rostant

[It is greatly to be feared that, in view of the recent terrible earthquake, what is written above is already history. I am sure the sympathy and compassion of all readers goes out to the people of Gujarat, an area that figures so large in the world of Asian textiles. Ed.]

The Visit to Bath

On the morning of 11 November 2000, ten O.A.T.G. members gathered in Bath. We were treated to an excellent guided tour of the Museum of Costume. There followed an adjournment for lunch and conversation. We reassembled at the Museum of East Asian Art for a talk and guided tour by the curator, Michelle Morgan. Here endeth the formal part of this report.

The nine who travelled from Oxford for the day had to contend with aquatic motorways and witnessed a vehicle ablaze. As one of the farther-flung members of the Group, I decided to arrange a study week-end in Bath for myself around the O.A.T.G. meet. On the Friday I spent six hours sketching in the Museum of Costume, focussing on Tudor and metal-thread embroidery.

For me, as an embroiderer, it was a real treat to see Tudor extravagance and excellence at first hand. Colour photographs and much reading was insufficient preparation for the brightness of the colours, the fineness of stitching, and, above all, the sheer density of surface decoration. The rule seems to have been: if a space is too small for stitching, sew on a silver spangle!

Our guide on Saturday, Geraldine Marchand, gave us many insights into and anecdotes about the nearly 400 years of costume on display. She delightfully intimated how bustles could be used to indicate the wearer's mood: annoyance, seduction, etc.

I have to admit that for the greater part of our time in the Museum of East Asian Art, I was concentrating on Chinese neolithic bronzes. Listening with one ear, whilst rapidly making annotated sketches, is not the best grounds for report writing. Here are a few of the facts I gleaned: about 1000 of the 1300 jade, porcelain and metal objects are on display. At the time of our visit, the lecture room exhibition explained Chinese primary colours, using items from the collection. The hall and stairwell housed a second temporary exhibition linking the collection and the community.

Sunday morning saw me in No.1 Royal Crescent searching for Georgian embroidery.

Thank you to all involved in organizing and presenting these museum visits. As a more distant O.A.T.G. member, I find day activities are more feasible than evening meetings, and lunches are a great opportunity to get to know other members.

Gwvneth Watkins

The Christmas Party

The annual Christmas party was held this year at the home of Dymphna Hermans in the Warden's Lodgings, All Souls College, in the High Street. A very pleasant evening was spent by all the members present, about fifteen to twenty people. Everyone participated in

bringing a variety of Christmas food and fare, which was served and enjoyed in the dining-room under the most spectacular chandelier ever seen and overlooked by a variety of serious portraits of previous incumbents.

Each member had been asked to bring a textile example of which they were particularly fond or proud and to show and explain them at the end of the evening. The following is a list of the pieces shown and to whom they belonged:

Dr Sybille Haynes showed a jobyakata - a batik bedspread with a silk lining. It was approximately sixty years old and came from a princely family. Fiona Sutcliffe brought a banjara hat from central India, an ikat coat from Samarkand and Tibetan saddlebags. José Allen brought a very interesting piece of velvet plush which was made in 1770 by a family cottage industry in Oxfordshire where the men did the weaving. Dymphna Hermans produced an ikat coat from Istanbul and an embroidered Palestinian dress. Anne Guild showed a piece of Indian appliqué. Alison Smith brought an Iranian sea sirjan saddle bag. She was also wearing a hand-knitted jacket, made by herself, using the design woven into the saddle bag to decorate the jacket; it was very impressive. Joyce Seaman had an ikat hanging and a Japanese stencil. Sheila Paine was wearing a beautiful silk Chinese coat in a cream colour and brought a Turkeman bag made out of pieces of men's embroidered trousers. Birgitte Speake showed Khiva slippers and told a lovely story of how she found a family in Uzbekistan who showed her their work. Felicity Wood showed a tapestry weave which was part of a headdress of a head hunter from Timor, and Rosemary Lee brought a Hindu hair-piece which is plaited into the hair at the back of the head; it came from the Sindh province of Pakistan. All in all the examples shown during the evening were so varied and of such interest that everyone spent a long time looking and admiring them, bringing the Christmas party to a very successful close.

Many thanks to Dymphna for hosting such an enjoyable end to the Textile Group's activities for the year 2000.

Anne Brau



Sybille Haynes (far right) showing her jobyakata to (right to left) Fiona Sutcliffe, José Allen, Alison Smith, Ruth Barnes and ? I am sorry I cannot make out the identity of the half person on the extreme left. Photograph by Rosemary Lee.

OBITUARY - KRISHNA RIBOUD

We have just heard of the death last June of Krishna Riboud, a key figure in the study of Asian textiles and founder of the Association pour l'Etude et la Documentation des Textiles d'Asie (A.E.D.T.A.). Born Krishna Roy in Dhaka in what is now Bangladesh, she left for America shortly after the end of the Second World War. In New York she met and married Jean Riboud, a hero of the French Resistance who was working in an American bank. Accused of "entertaining suspected left-wing intellectuals", they left the U.S.A. rather than suffer the persecution of the McCarthy era and settled in France. Mme Riboud, although now firmly wedded to the West, did not forget her native country and made many long visits to India, where she started to collect and study textiles, becoming an authority in the field. As a result she was asked by the Director of the Musée Guimet to examine the textile fragments from Dunhuang in the Museum's collection. This led to a much wider and deeper study of these important pieces in the Hermitage, the British Museum and elsewhere. In 1979 she and her husband founded A.E.D.T.A., an institution devoted to technical and historical research on Asian textiles, whose scholarly publications are probably well known to all members of O.A.T.G..

Editor

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I am an Austrian artist (metal-sculpture/jewellery). One of my main fields of interest is textile techniques in metal from all over the world. The technique I am most interested in is well-known in the Middle and Near East. Turkish artists from the region of Trabzon (I've been informed that this specific technique is women's work) are using it for the fabrication of belts and jewellery, mainly in silver wire, creating a lovely, flexible, fabric-like structure. I've tried to figure out how to make such a metal-woven (?) band, but until now without success. It seems to be a sort of interlocking process with an endless thread, without weft. I found a picture of a Lebanese belt in Arline Fisch's book *Textile Techniques in Metal*, and have allowed myself to scan this photograph (see opposite page). I hope it gives you an idea of what is meant.

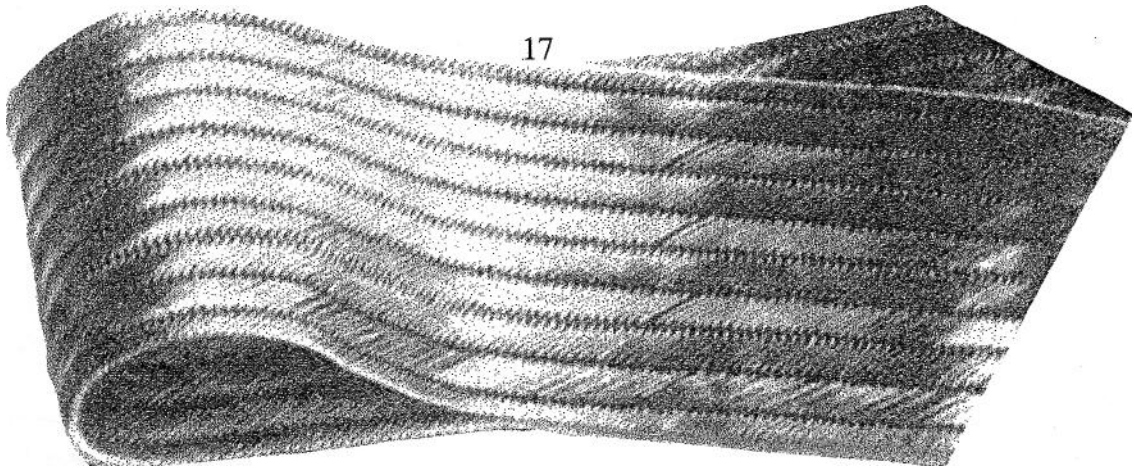
Anything would be of great help to me: people I could get in touch with, research centres for traditional crafts, books, articles (I also speak fluent French), etc. I need detailed information about structure and process of fabrication. It would also be a great pleasure to me to attend a workshop of Turkish goldsmithing. It goes without saying that I will take over eventual costs.

I should be very grateful if any of your readers could give me some kind of answer.

Yours sincerely,

SIGRID SCHNEIDER

E-mail: sigio2@gmx.at



Lebanese belt illustrated in *Textile Techniques in Metal* by Arline Fisch, an exhibition of whose woven jewellery is, coincidentally, being displayed at the Textile Museum, Washington, D.C, later this year.

MUSEUMS ROUND-UP

The Whitworth Art Gallery is not the only museum to benefit from the generosity of Professor Anne Morrell (see above p.5). During her recent visit to Oxford (see above p. 13) she donated a teaching collection of Indian block-printed sample books to the Ashmolean Museum. The samples demonstrate the sequence of printing contemporary cotton textiles. All were recently made by a family of block-printers in Dhamadka, Kutch (Gujarat). They perfectly complement material collected by Ruth Barnes when she visited the same workshop in 1994 and was given a series of named pattern samplers. In addition, Anne later sent several complete textiles to the Ashmolean made and sold by the same family.

You will see elsewhere (Exhibitions, below p.23) that Shamiana, the ceremonial nomadic Mughal tent is coming to rest at last after being on the move since 1997, and its panels dispersed to the groups who made them. But obviously the roots of the project extended back several years before the exhibition took to the road. It started as a result of the inspiration and hard work of Shireen Akbar, who was appointed to the staff of the V.& A. in 1991, and expanded first into a national and then an international project. It became, perhaps, one of the most successful of V.& A. initiatives and it would be a pity to let it die completely. It seemed to Julie Cornish of the V.& A. Education Department that the Internet was the natural step for continuing the links formed by the project and encouraging new ones across the world. So she is setting up a website which will provide information on the history of the project; display all the artwork and information about the groups involved; offer guidelines on how groups can set up their own projects; and additional information on textile techniques, the V.& A.'s South Asian collections and forthcoming educational projects run by the V.& A.. For those interested in exploring digital artwork, the website will have an activity which will provide a great opportunity for groups in any part of the world to collaborate in the creation of online digital artwork.

The National Museums of Scotland have recently been given a rare ritual outfit worn by members of the Mandaean sect. This little-known religious community comprises the last living representatives of Gnosticism, which probably originated in Palestine and flourished throughout the Middle East during the first centuries A.D.. Until recently concentrated in southern Iraq and south-west Iran, political upheaval in the area is leading increasingly to their dispersal to other parts of the world. Mandeans believe in one God, whose symbol is

flowing, "living" water, and cleanliness is an important part of their ritual. During their baptismal rites - in flowing water - both priests and laity wear white ritual dress of the kind that has been given to the N.M.S..

The National Museums of Scotland have also received a generous gift from Victoria, Lady of Finavon, to enable a number of important and fragile textiles in the collections to be conserved. Conservation has already begun and the pieces will form the centrepiece of a major exhibition, *Textile Treasures*, to be held in the Royal Museum later this year.

On the other side of the North Sea, the former Museum of Ethnology in Rotterdam, which has been closed for many months for expansion and rebuilding, reopened under the name of Wereldmuseum Rotterdam amidst great high-jinks on 25 November last. I hope to include fuller information in a later issue.

Editor

BOOKS

Monisha Ahmed, *Living Fabric: Weaving in Ladakh Himalaya*, Orchid Press, Bangkok, Thailand, 2001 (forthcoming), ISBN 974-8304-77-9 approx. 160 pp, many illus.

The author, a member of the O.A.T.G., has spent several years on field research into traditional weaving among the nomads of eastern Ladakh, and this will be the first study of the subject ever published. Both women and men weave, each on a different type of loom and for different purposes, the men weaving only tents, saddle bags and coarse blankets while the women make finer textiles with a wide variety of uses. As in many communities, textiles have religious, ceremonial and social significance as well as practical functions. Monisha traces the relationship between livestock, weaving, social and symbolic structures to understand the multiple contexts in which wool-oriented activities are pursued.

Gary Dickinson and Linda Wrigglesworth, *Imperial Wardrobe*, Ten Speed Press, Berkeley, Calif., 2000, ISBN 1-870076-07-9, 22x24 cm, 204pp, 100 col. & 78 b/w illus, £60/US\$89/HK\$685.

New and revised edition of a comprehensive work on the court costume of the late Qing period, this book gives concise descriptions of every garment in the official wardrobe, placing them in their historical and cultural context.

Robert D. Jacobsen, *Imperial Silks: Qing Dynasty Textiles in the Minneapolis Institute* (2 vols), 1184 pp, 270 co.; & 330 b/w illus., slipcase, Minneapolis 2000 US\$195.

Catalogue of the most comprehensive collection of Qing textiles outside China.

Anna Jackson, *Japanese Textiles in the Victoria and Albert Museum*, V.& A., London, 2000, ISBN 1 85177 3169, 30x25 cm, 114 pp, 150 col. illus., £25/US\$37/HK\$285

Following her book on Japanese Country Textiles, the author widens her field to cover all embroidered and printed Japanese textiles in the V.& A., puts them in context and discusses their symbolism and techniques.

ed. Mary Hunt Kohlenberg. *The Extraordinary in the Ordinary: Textiles and Objects from the Collections of Lloyd Cotsen and the Neutrogena Corporation*, Harry N. Abrams, N.Y., 1998, 280pp, 269 col. illus., ISBN 0810913968, US\$60

Lloyd Cotsen, former chairman of the Neutrogena Corporation, started by collecting with Japanese art, later adding folk art and textiles to his interests, and his collection is now housed in the Folk Art Museum of Santa Fe, New Mexico. This catalogue represents a selection from it. Although there are an equal number of textiles and of other objects in the collection, the book is heavily biased in favour of textiles. These come not only from the Far East, South-East Asia and Western Asia, but also from Europe, the Mediterranean, Africa and the Americas. Each geographical region is covered by an essay, and other chapters include one on the evolution of the Japanese cottage textile industry by Reiko Mochinaga Brandon, the textiles of south and South-East Asia by Mary Hunt Kohlenberg, and the history of weaving in western and Central Asia by John T. Wertime.

Hans König et al, *Classical Chinese Carpets, vol.1: Lion Dogs, Hundred Antiques*, Textile & Art Publications, London, 1999, 348x250 mm, 96pp, 52 illus, ISBN 1-898406-30-8, £48/US\$78

The first of a series of projected books on Chinese Carpets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries up to the accession of the Qianlong emperor in 1735, this volume deals with two of the most popular designs. Hans König provides a general preface and Michael Franses contributes introductions to the book and the series, including a brief history of knotted pile carpets from Han times onwards. He also discusses the illustrated examples in great detail. Hwee Lie The (lion dogs) and Gary Dickinson (100 antiques) discuss the techniques and iconography of these designs,

Sookmyung Women's University Museum, *Korean Embroidery*, 163pp, 155 col. illus., text in Korean with English captions, Seoul, 2000, US\$50

A comprehensive survey of the embroidery of the Choson period (1392-1910).

Anne and John Summerfield, *Walk hi Splendour: Ceremonial Dress and the Minangkabau*, Los Angeles: Fowler Museum of Cultural History, U.C.L.A., 1999, ISBN 0-930741-73-0

This is a splendidly illustrated publication published to coincide with an exhibition of the same name at the Fowler Museum of Cultural History. It expands the Museum's already well-established series of publications on textiles. The text is based on many field trips carried out by the authors.

Guide to Asian Textile Collections

Compiled by Winnie Nelon, *The Guide to Asian Textile Collections*, 2nd edition, Textile Society of Hong Kong, 2000, ISBN 962-86077-1-5, US\$20, HK\$150 + p.& p.

A chunky little ring-bound volume ideal for slipping into handbag or pocket, this is an invaluable work of reference, containing information about almost 200 museums and 170 shops world-wide with an interest in Asian textiles. Each entry includes a brief description, opening hours, how to get there, entrance fees for museums and a contact address and

telephone number, and there are blank pages on which to add your own notes. In the U.K. only nine museums are listed for England (including the Ashmolean and the Pitt Rivers) and one - the Royal Museum - in Scotland, and about a dozen shops.

I have negotiated with Winnie, to send a bulk order for O.A.T.G. members and so save on postage. If any of you would like a copy, please get in touch with me (address at foot of page 24) and I will let you know the cost when it has been worked out.

While on the subject of ordering books, I have heard from Felicity Wood that she would be willing to order more copies of *Cut My Cote* by D.K. Burnham from the Royal Ontario Museum if there are still people wanting them. Please contact her at 2 Frenchay Road, Oxford, OX2 6TG, Tel. 01865 554281, Fax. 01865 512927, e-mail: Felicity.Wood@tesco.net

Editor

VIDEOS

My attempts to find out about videos have not been too successful, but I have discovered Yarn Barn - Victorian Video who have a catalogue of "how to do it" ones, devoted to a range of crafts, among them being:

Kumihimo (105 mins, \$29.95) by the well-known local braid-maker and O.A.T.G. member, Rodrick Owen. The video instructs you in how to build a braiding stand and read patterns, gives you several projects and shows you the vast variety of braids available to make.

Yarn Barn's address is: 930 Massachusetts, Lawrence, KS, 66044, U.S.A., tel.1.800.848.0284, www.victorianvid.com

If any of you have any useful - or even useless - information about videos that might be of interest to members, the Editor would be pleased to hear of it.

APOLOGIES

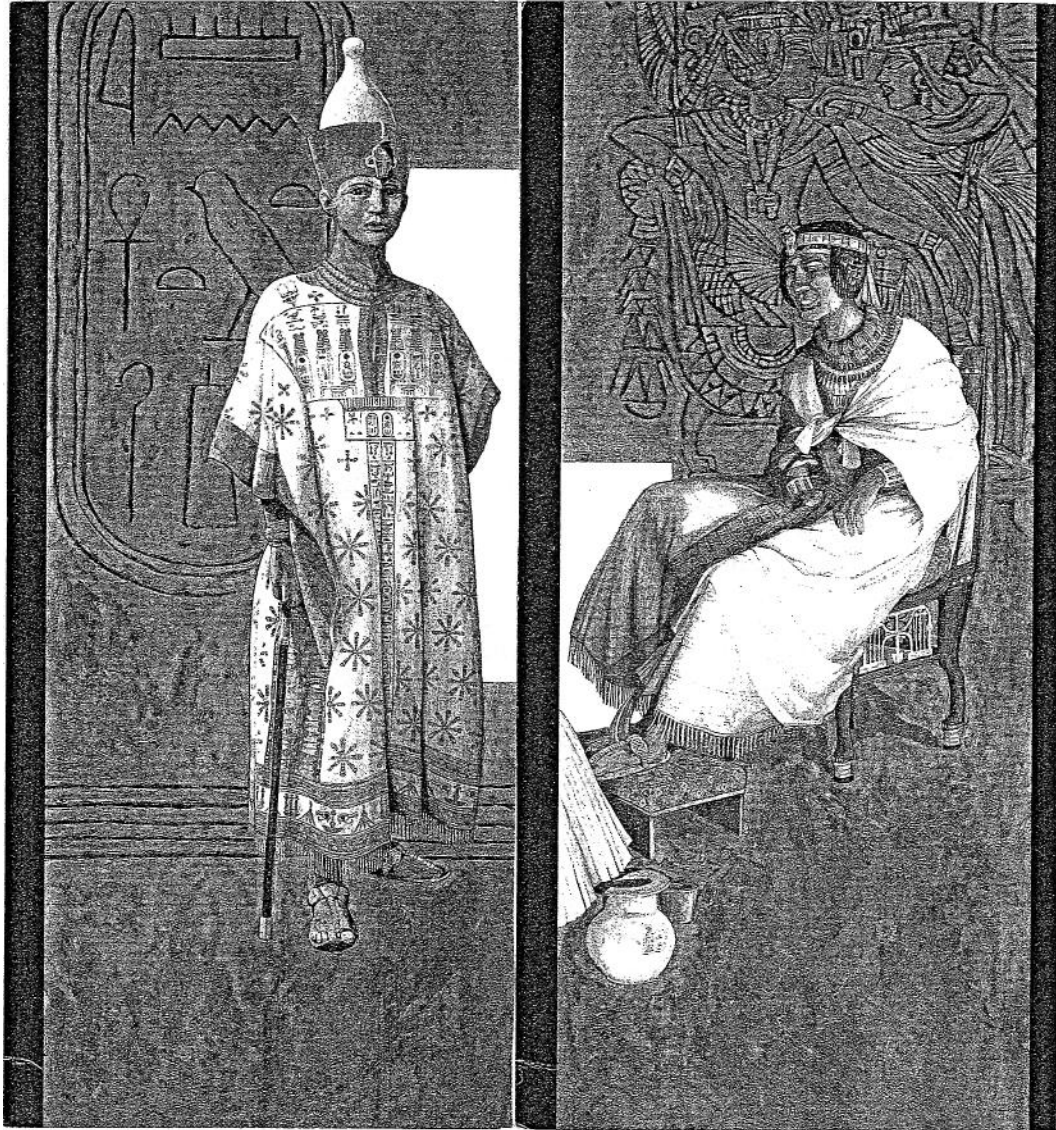
In the last newsletter (No. 17, October 2000), there was an article headed *Textile Arts for Immigrant Women in Oxford*. It has been pointed out to me that many of the women involved in these projects are in fact second or third generation Oxford residents, for whom the term "immigrant" is inappropriate. I can only express my regret for this unfortunate misunderstanding, and say how sorry I am if the use of the word has caused distress to anyone concerned.

I also owe the Braid Society in general, Jennie Parry in particular and an unknown number of you an apology for sending you off to Hampton or ringing her last October about an event which actually takes place next October. I had wondered why it was called *Splitterati 01!* Details in the next newsletter.

Editor

21
EXHIBITIONS

Tutankhamun's Wardrobe



Since 1992 an international team headed by Dr Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood, under the aegis of the Stitching Textile Research Centre, Leiden, in co-operation with the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, has been carrying out research into the textiles and clothing found in the tomb of the Egyptian pharaoh, Tutankhamun. Because of widespread interest in the project, the Stitching, together with Leo Helms, exhibition designer, and the Textile Museum, Borås, Sweden, decided to create a travelling exhibition about the king's garments. Opening in autumn 1999 at Borås, it has since been travelling about Europe, where its last port of call is the Royal Museum, Edinburgh, before it crosses the Atlantic. With any luck it will be back here at Leeds in 2005. Watch this space!

Some of the themes explored in the exhibition are the discovery of the tomb and recording of the textiles; clothing and textiles during the Amarna period; and colour and symbolism on royal clothing.

Because of the extremely fragile nature of the garments, no original textiles are included in the exhibition. Instead, there are more than twenty-five replicas showing the garments as Tutankhamun would have seen and worn them. The size and appearance of all the replicas is based on actual items, including loin-cloths, sashes, tunics, socks, gloves, leopard-skin robes and sandals. In order to give an impression of their design and opulence, they are decorated with beads, embroidery, appliqué and gold.

The aim of the exhibition is two-fold: first it highlights the lavish nature of the textiles and garments, while putting them into a social context. Secondly it shows how the various elements - technical analysis, written as well as visual evidence - have been combined to build up a picture of Tutankhamun's wardrobe.

The original textiles are housed in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo. The Museum has no textile conservation facilities and at present there are no funds available for building suitable workshops. One of the major aims of the exhibition, therefore, is to raise money in order to provide these much needed facilities. It is not only the Tutankhamun textiles that would benefit from them: the Museum houses a unique collection of textiles and garments which date back over 5,000 years. Many of these textiles are in poor condition and need help quickly.

An illustrated popular book by Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood, Director of the Project, accompanies the exhibition, as well as a detailed catalogue of all the textiles and garments found in Tutankhamun's tomb.

Tutankhamun's Wardrobe will be on display at the Royal Museum, Edinburgh, from 31 March to 1 July. I am told that related lectures and events are "in the pipeline" but details will not be available for another month or so. Tel. 0131 247 4219

Other Exhibitions

Court and Conquest

at the Brunei Gallery, London, until 23 March. Costumes designed by Judy Levin for an American production of Handel's *Tamerlano* juxtaposed with the Orientalist, Ottoman and Timurid works of art - textiles, armour, miniatures, jewellery - that inspired them. A related series of lectures on Thursday evenings at 6.30 includes on 1 March *Turquerie: Fashion and Fantasy in the 18th Century* by Dr Aileen Ribeiro, costume historian, Courtauld Institute of Art, and on 22 March *Reflections on the Costume Design for "Tamerlano"* by Judy Levin (designer). Tel. 020 7898 4915

Silk Roads: Glimpses of Central Asia

at the Royal Museum, Edinburgh, until 1 July. This display brings together a range of contemporary items - costume, dowry cloths, puppets, wood and lacquer - from Uzbekistan. Tel. 0131 247 4219

The Silver Studio Then and Now: a Design Practice at Work

at the Museum of Domestic Design and Architecture, Barnet, from 6 March to 24 June. The Silver Studio (1880-1963) was a leading influence on the contents of the British home during its lifetime, many of its designs being inspired by oriental influences. The exhibition will include over 60 original designs, textiles and wallpapers, with accompanying documentation. There will be a related study day on 19 May as well as practical workshops for adults and children and Easter and half-term activities for children. Tel. 020 8362 5244

Shamiana: The Mughal Tent

30 panels will be on display at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (tel. 0121 303 2834) from 17 March to 20 May.

This will positively be your last chance to see this wonderful exhibition. After showing at Birmingham, all Shamiana textile panels still on loan to the V.& A. will be returned to the groups who made them. It has been a very successful exhibition tour with a wide cross section of venues and communities benefitting from seeing these beautiful contemporary works of art. When the panels have been shown in towns where groups made one of the panels it has been a lovely opportunity for the groups to celebrate their achievements with their local community. There will, however, still be a link with the exhibition through a new website (see Museums Round-Up above p. 17).

Textural Space: Contemporary Japanese Textile Art

From 28 April to 23 June at the following venues: the Surrey Institute of Art and Design, Farnham (tel. 01252 722441), Brighton Museum and Art Gallery (tel. 01273 290900), Maidstone Library Gallery, Rochester Art Gallery (01634 727777). Some of the most stimulating and inventive work by contemporary Japanese textile artists will be seen in England for the first time. The works are a mixture of floor-standing 3D and wall hung pieces, and many of the materials used are surprising in the context of textiles. An associated exhibition of miniature textiles by the same artists will be shown at the Beardsmore Gallery, London from 3-31 May (tel. 020 7485 0923). A selection from the exhibitions will subsequently go on tour to other centres in England, about which there will be details in the next newsletter. The whole project has been organized by the Surrey Institute of Art and Design as part of the *Japan 2001 Festival* of which also more in the next issue.

Embroideries from Islamic Egypt

at the Ashmolean Museum from 6 June to 22 July. A selection from the Newberry collection timed to coincide with the publication of the catalogue by Marianne Ellis. More information about both exhibition and book in the next newsletter.

Overseas Exhibitions

A Calligrapher's Art: Inscribed Cotton Ikats from Yemen

at the Textile Museum, Washington, D.C, until 29 April. Striped ikat cotton textiles were an up-market export from Yemen to Egypt in the 9th and 10th centuries. The largest number surviving is in this museum. They have been embellished with Arabic inscriptions applied in gold leaf or embroidered. Tel. (202)6670441

Quilt-en-Sud 2001

at St Jean-de-Luz, 8-10 June. An exhibition and sale of traditional Syrian patchwork and appliquéd textiles from the Bedouin and rural world and some contemporary works, complemented by a series of photographs from the A.E.D.T.A. collection showing the textiles on location in their daily use. It was customary for the Bedouins to choose their wives for their skill in making appliquéd and patchwork cushion covers, wall hangings etc, which had a talismanic significance. Coats for special occasions could also be appliquéd. Further information from Valerie Lebevre at A.E.D.T.A., tel. (33)01.45.67.94.01

LECTURES AND EVENTS

Wednesday 9 May at 6.30 p.m. - *Pakistan: Embroidery of Desert and Mountain*, talk by Sheila Paine for the launch of her new book *Embroidery from India and Pakistan* (about which more next time), at the Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, London. Bookings: Asia House, tel. 020 7499 1287, non-members £7, concessions £4.

Saturday 9 June, 12 noon to 6 p.m. - *Living Japan: Arts in Practice*, free family event at Brookes University, Headington Hill Hall. Crafts, music, food, etc.

Braid Society See and Share Days

Members £3, non-members £5 at all venues

Saturday 24 March at Clarence Street, Bolton, contact Jean and Granville Thornton, tel. 01782 511572

Saturday 9 June at Mill Arts Centre, Banbury, contact Robert White, tel 01793 497196
(likely to have tablet weaving and ply split braiding)

Wednesday 4 July at Staplehay, Taunton, contact Paddy Bakker, tel. 01823 425345

Wednesday 11 & Thursday 12 July at Sacrewell, near Peterborough, contact Jan Rawdon Smith,
tel. 01733 312649 (emphasis on maru dai, taka dai and ply split braids)

Course

The British Museum is offering a new postgraduate diploma course in *The Classical and Decorative Arts of Asia* commencing this April. Taught by leading international academics and museum curators, the course provides the student with an in-depth study of the classical and decorative arts of Asia, setting them in their historical and religious contexts. The lecture programme is supported by field trips to other museums, galleries and private collections. Contact Dr Heather Elgood, Education Department, The British Museum, tel. 020 7323 8144

Tours

Gina Gorrigan is offering: *Remote Xinjiang* - Kazak and Mongolian Cultures and Textiles, Desert and Mountain Landscapes, 23 June to 15 July; and *An Adventure to Guizhou Province* - South-west China Batik and Miao villages, 24 October to 10 November with guest lecturer Rita Trefois. Contact Gina on 01243 587239.

Sheila Paine will be taking her usual **textile tour of Central Asia** 23 September to 9 October. Contact Paul Craven, Steppes East, Cirencester, tel. 01285 651010

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

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE - MONDAY 4 JUNE

Contributions should be sent to the Editor
Phyllis Nye, Hewel Barn, Common Road, Beckley, Oxon, OX3 9UR, U.K.
Tel/fax. 01865 351607 e-mail: phyllis@nyes.org.uk