OXFORD ASIAN TEXTILE GROUP

Newsletter No. 33 **February 2006**

Mid-nineteenth century white muslin jama from Rajasthan which has recently undergone conservation in the Victoria and Albert Museum conservation laboratory and is now on display in the Nehru Gallery (see p. 4)

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EDITORIAL

Pilgrimage seems to be in he air, what with the recent *Hajj* and its associated calamities, marked (the *Hajj*, that is, not the calamities) by exhibitions at the Ashmolean (see pp. 16, 20 and 23) and the Stitching website (see p. 26). The exhibition at the Ashmolean, of course, covers a much wider range than just the *Hajj*, exploring the concept in the interconnected religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam as well as four Indian religions that have their own connexions. All this recalled to mind my own experiences as a pilgrim.

Not that I regarded myself as a true pilgrim. In 1992 I attended a course on mediaeval art at the V.& A. and found that all my favourite examples dated from the Romanesque Period, and that most of them came from sites on the pilgrim route to Santiago de Compostella. Learning that the following year was a jubilee year (when St James' Day (25 July) falls on a Sunday) I decided to cycle there, visiting as many of the splendours as I could on the way. However, I determined to avoid the Jubilee itself, fearing too great a crush.

I set out from Beckley on Thursday 29 April 1993 at 11.42 a.m., and having lingered at several places and made some diversions on the way, arrived at the Cathedral of St James in Santiago on Sunday 20 June at 1 p.m. precisely, as the multitude was streaming out of noon mass into the dazzling sun. My older daughter accompanied me from Southampton to Le Mans, and my son and his wife for a few days either side of the Pyrenees; otherwise I cycled alone. I did not like Santiago much, but despite all its vicissitudes, was inspired by the journey, and called the talk I subsequently gave several times, *Travelling Hopefully.*

You probably think that these reminiscences have very little to do with textiles, and you would be right. The only textiles I saw were some stunning contemporary tapestries by Jean Lurcat at St Lo and Tours. I did, however, earn nearly £1900 in sponsorship, in aid of the Ashmolean Museum, of which I gave half to the Endowment Fund and half to the Department of Eastern Art. The latter was spent on a Persian Hamadan rug which used to be one of those on the floor of the Chinese gallery that visitors could walk on. I gather it is now in Conservation, but when the museum reopens in all its enlarged glory (complete with textile gallery), I hope you will all be able to go and walk on it again.

PROGRAMME

WEDNESDAY 15 MARCH at 5.45 p.m.

Sayma; The Kirghiz Art of Embroidery

The isolated nomadic tribes of Kyrgystan developed their own special embroideries and form of adornment for use in their yurts, and have held on to many of their patterns and technique; into the 20th century. The talk will present an overview of the little known embroidery tradition and ongoing research into materials and patterns

By Nicholas Fielding

As journalist and author, he has travelled extensively in Central Asia and recently made his first visit to Kyrgystan

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WEDNESDAY 24 MAY at 5.45 p.m.

Fibre-banana cloth: Japan's Folk Craft Movement, and the Creation of a New Okinawa

Examining the relationship between textiles and issues of regional identity, Dr Stinchecum's talk will discuss the influence of the Mingei movement on the revival of fibre-banana cloth production and the development of contemporary Okinawan identity

By Amanda Mayer Stinchecum

Textile scholar and author of numerous publications on Japanese and Okinawan textiles and culture. She is currently writing a book on cloth and cultural identity in Southern Okinawa

Both these events will be held at the Pauling Centre, 58 Banbury Road, Oxford
Refreshments from 5.15 p.m. Visitors welcome £2

For further information contact one of the programme secretaries:

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ROTATION OF TEXTILES IN THE NEHRU GALLERY OF INDIAN ART in the Victoria and Albert Museum

About one fifth of the objects in the Nehru Gallery of Indian Art are textiles. They represent an outstanding collection of over 10,000 textiles from India and South East Asia which includes indigo resist-dyed and block printed fragments dating from the 13th century and excavated at Fustat in Egypt, Mughal velvets and costume, Dacca muslins, brocades, ikats, embroideries, numerous examples of bandhani technique and an extensive and important collection of painted and printed chintzes made for the Western and Eastern export markets.

The Nehru Gallery was opened in 1990 and was the first primary gallery in the Victoria and Albert Museum to establish a regular programme of rotation for light-sensitive materials, primarily textiles and miniature paintings. The original concept was to rotate some objects every two years but this has slipped to three years because of increased demands on the textile conservation studio from other parts of the Museum. Apart from a gap of five years between 1997 and 2002 when work for the new British Galleries took precedent over all other projects, there have been five major rotations. Chintzes and costume are prominent among the types of textiles included in the rotations. The work necessary to display these objects has enabled the studio to review and develop the methods used in their conservation and to re-evaluate past treatments. This is particularly true for kalamkari chintzes which have specific degradation problems caused mainly by the application of iron mordants in their manufacturing process. The refinement of adhesive techniques to support areas of brittle cotton fibres on these very large objects has been a major development in the studio and has been published widely in textile conservation literature. Rotations have also provided a teaching tool for students and interns. The objects chosen have sometimes presented the right opportunity for development at exactly the right time in their studies. The most recent rotation, in July 2005, presented such an opportunity in the form of a magnificent white muslin jama which replaced a Mughal hunting jacket in one of the costume cases.

The jama is dated 1855 and was collected in Bharatpur in Rajasthan for the India Museum. This Museum, established by the East India Company in 1801, was disbanded in 1879 and objects were dispersed to both the British Museum and to South Kensington. The jama would have been an item of formal court wear and was worn with narrow legged paijama trousers. This particular example was tied on the left side of the chest indicating a Hindu rather than a Muslim wearer. It is remarkable because of its volume. It is made from an almost transparent fine even weave cotton muslin. The skirt is constructed of 277 individual panels resulting in a circumference at the hem of 65 metres. The bodice is made of a single layer of muslin with only one seam which sits slightly below the left shoulder. There is an embroidered motif at the nape of the neck. The sleeves are attached with triangular gussets under the arms and long straight sleeves with an opening at the wrist. It had never been on display in the Museum (Fig 1). The jama was extremely creased with ingrained soiling throughout. The front of the skirt was disfigured with a large prominent brown stain and there were other areas of brown and orange stains. There were tears on the bodice and in the skirt, most noticeably in the hem area where there were several areas of loss, presumably from wear. The bodice could no longer sustain the weight of the skirt.

Fig. 1 The jama before conservation

The most immediate need was to wet-clean the jama in order to reduce the soiling and staining and to re-align the weave where it was heavily creased. The size of the jama meant that the treatment had to be carefully thought through in advance. Textiles are generally weaker when wet and the skirt, with its 65 metre hem, would be particularly heavy.

Most of the treatment took place within a large washing table (measuring 4 metres by 1.2 metres). The first stage of the treatment was stain removal. The stains were reduced (not entirely successfully) using a Laponite poultice (a synthetic “clay” made from sodium silicates) containing a reducing agent (sodium dithionite) and a chelating agent (triammonium citrate). Sodium dithionite is generally effective in reducing insoluble iron stains to a soluble state and tri-ammonium citrate “mops up” metallic ions by forming a bond with them. The soluble iron staining can then be rinsed out of the textile. The use of a poultice meant that the chemicals could be applied locally and precisely. The fact that the reduction was not entirely successful indicates that the original staining may not have been entirely composed of iron. One of the major problems in treating stains is identification. Aged stains have been further oxidised which often makes removal or reduction very difficult.

The wet-cleaning, using an anionic detergent with proven efficacy on cellulose fibres, was carried out on the following day and took a total of 10 hours involving three very long

washes followed by prolonged rinsing. The drying of the jama was also very labour intensive. The volume of the skirt meant that it needed to be completely supported on 2 large tables. It formed a circle with many folds of fabric. The bodice, already fragile and much weaker in its wet state, was supported by passing a PVC roller through its long sleeves. After using sponge rollers and acid free blotting paper to remove excess water, the skirt was dried by hand using cold air dryers (fig. 2). The volume of the skirt made it essential that it was not left damp overnight. As cellulose fibres degrade they produce a typical yellow brown discolouration. The degradation products can be highly water soluble. It is difficult to estimate, particularly on an object of this size, whether everything has been rinsed out. Products of cellulose degradation still remaining in an object can migrate during drying to form concentrated lines of discolouration, particularly within folds, and can be difficult to remove. It was also vital to prevent the thin transparent muslin in the skirt from sticking together on drying since releasing layers of muslin could have caused further damage.

Fig. 2 Drying the jama

The stain removal took approximately 3-4 hours and the wet cleaning and drying process carried out on the following day took over 14 hours – beginning at 7 in the morning and ending at 9.30 p.m. and involving a team of five conservators.

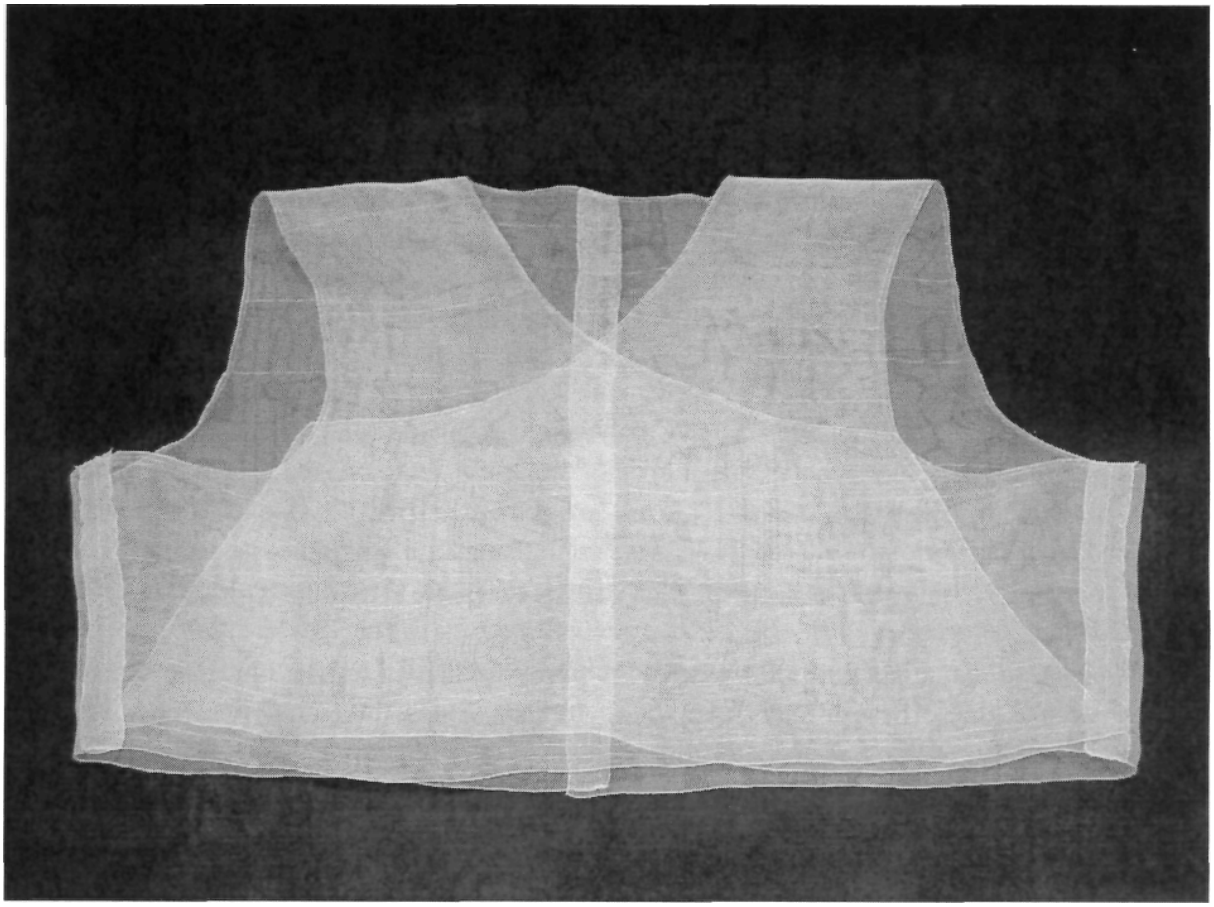


Fig. 3 The support for the bodice, made of double Stabiltex

The support of the jama provided an excellent opportunity to progress the work of a gifted first year MA student. In order to maintain the essential transparency of the jama, areas of damage were supported on to patches of a transparent plain weave polyester fabric, Stabiltex, which is widely used in textile conservation. Fine, virtually invisible threads are drawn from this fabric for stitching, usually using a couching technique. Since the main purpose of the conservation was to make the jama safe for display the bodice had to be strengthened to support the considerable weight of the skirt. The support of the bodice had to be transparent, to maintain the original nature of the garment, but also very strong to carry the weight of the skirt. Stabiltex was again chosen and an inner bodice, very marginally smaller than the original was constructed of double Stabiltex, following the same pattern as the original. This was an extremely challenging project. Stabiltex is notoriously difficult to handle, it slips easily and frays at cut edges. The student built on previously published methods of securing the edges of the Stabiltex fabric by using a running stitch of thicker polyester to outline the final shape of the support and then cutting next to the stitched line using a pyrograph (heated needle). This fuses the stitched line with the Stabiltex producing a neat firm edge resistant to fraying (Fig. 3).

When the jama was mounted for display the weight of the skirt was supported further by a narrow strip of Velcro stitched within the waistband. The waistband could then be attached to the mannequin to further reduce stress on the bodice (Fig 4 – see p. l). The whole treatment took just under 250 hours.

It is interesting to note that display methods devised for very large textiles in the Nehru Gallery at its opening in 1990 have become standard throughout the Museum. Likewise, methods of costume mounting were progressed considerably by work for the opening of the gallery and the principles used then are still in use today.

Linda Hillyer
Textile Conservator, Victoria and Albert Museum

DYES USED IN **ANCIENT TEXTILES FROM CHINA AND PERU**

Although searching for 3,000-year-old mummy textiles in tombs under the blazing sun of a western Chinese desert may seem more Indiana Jones than analytical chemist, two Boston University researchers recently did just that. Travelling along the ancient Silk Road in Xinjiang Province on their quest, they found the ancient fabrics and hit upon a research adventure that combined chemistry, archaeology, anthropology, botany and art.

The chemists, Richard Laursen, a professor in the Boston University Department of Chemistry, and Xian Zhang, a chemistry graduate student, have refined a technique that helps archaeologists and anthropologists to identify the plant species that ancient people used to make fabric dyes. Their technique has not only provided researchers with a new, more powerful, tool for analysing previously known dye types, it also has led to the discovery of at least one never-before described dye. In addition, the BU chemists have started a catalogue of plant sample characteristics for use by dye researchers around the world.

Historically, researchers have used a hydrochloric acid mixture to extract the delicate dyes from fabrics such as wool and silk. But according to Laursen, hydrochloric acid cleaves glycosidic linkages, the bonds that hold sugar-like molecules to many dye molecules. Without these sugars, researchers lose valuable clues to which plants were used to give the dyes their colour.

Keeping these clues intact is especially important when analysing yellow, flavonoid dyes, not only because such dyes are chemically more delicate than red or blue dyes, but also because they can be derived from a greater variety of different plant sources - from onion skins to pagoda tree buds.

Laursen and Zhang tested dye extraction methods using both ethylenediaminetetra-acetic acid (EDTA) and formic acid instead of hydrochloric acid. These “gentler” extraction

solutions leave the glycosidic linkages in place. The chemists analysed the dye extracts using a combination of high-performance liquid chromatography, mass properties, molecular weight, and exact colour absorption in nanometers.

The researchers have already put their new method to the test, even discovering a new type of dye component, a flavonoid sulphate, in textiles found with 1,000-year-old mummies in Peru.

"Nobody could have seen the flavonoid sulphate with the old method", says Laursen, "Every time we analyse something we find something new. It's really kind of exciting."

On a recent trip to China, Laursen and Zhang obtained textile samples from yet another mummy. The chemists were attending a Getty Conservation Institute-sponsored conference at Dunhuang, a town at the edge of the Gobi desert. A site near the town is honey-combed with caves containing ancient Buddhist art. While at the conference, the BU chemists joined an expedition into the Takla Makan (the name means "you go in but you don't come out") desert. Chinese researchers found the fabric at a Takla Makan burial site, and Zhang, a native of China, convinced a Chinese archaeologist to give her tiny samples of the 3,000-year-old cloth.

According to Laursen, the fabric and the person entombed with it, are of Indo-European origin, probably linked to ancient migrations west through Central Asia*. He plans a trip this spring to collect plants from Central Asia and nearby countries like Turkey, Iran and Uzbekistan, for a chemical comparison with the fabric's dye to find out more about the mummy's origin.

"The people in the area have a long tradition of making carpets and textiles", says Laursen, "there is very little known about what plants were used to dye them. We hope to fill this void by collecting as much plant material as we can".

The plant samples he collects will join hundreds of others in a dye "fingerprint" database that the BU scientists are creating for use by researchers around the globe.

"You get a characteristic spectrum of dye components," Laursen explains. "If we had this library, maybe we could figure out what was used in our Chinese samples. That type of information would be of use to archaeologists and anthropologists who are trying to figure out migration patterns and technologies of ancient people."

Boston University Press Release

*Readers who do not already know it are recommended to read Elizabeth Wayland Barber, *The Mummies of Urumchi,* Macmillan 1999, ISBN 0 333 73024 0. – Ed.

[I hope to include a follow-up article from the scientists themselves in a later newsletter. – Ed.]

TURKISH HAND-KNITTED STOCKING

Traditional hand-knitting is an outstanding part of Turkish handcrafts. Turkish textile handcrafts are classified in terms of weaving, printing, carpet, rug, embroidery, crochet and knitting.

Stockings reflect traditional Turkish folklore culture, and it is interesting to note that they have symbolic meanings. They are made in various styles, and the different approaches in question give stockings different meanings. Stockings also differ in terms of regions and use. Those differences are apparent in motifs, colours, shapes and compositions. Types of socks and stockings can be classified in terms of design as follows:

White Stockings

These have vertical bands, horizontal bands, all-over patterns. It is seen that these stockings mostly have geometric motifs, and they have patterns such as dog's footprints, waterway, watch chain, clerk' pinch, cage, men's moustache, caterpillar[(1)].

Black Stockings

These stockings are knitted in single black colour. Vertical bands extending from the legs downwards are embroidered during or after knitting the stocking. The stockings are not patterned. They only bear bands composed of lines and dots given during knitting, or embroidered afterwards[(1)].

Multi-coloured Stockings

Multi-coloured Stockings are formed by knitting the background using a mixture of different yarns. A multicoloured image is seen on the surface. Generally, all-over patterns are seen on it. The geometric style motifs were left just as samples[(1)].

Hennaed Stockings

They have organic patterns, organic patterns with horizontal bands, horizontal bands from organic patterns, organic patterns with horizontal bands and openwork. Almost all the motifs are formed by flower patterns. In general, motifs are used in the middle of the stockings without repeating the motif. Some of these patterns include branches, donkey, red cheeks, tree, bracelet, caterpillar, triangle, orphan girl, weeping willow, candle-sticks. On the horizontal bands, organic and geometric motifs have been used. In some samples, the openwork technique is also seen as well as the other motifs[(1)].

Stockings with Even Background

Geometric patterns and vertical bands are seen. Geometric patterns are arranged on top of one another in a vertical direction. Also organic patterns in vertical bands can be seen. Motifs are seen as geometric and organic. There are not any too complex motifs. On the plain-coloured background, the pattern has a simple appearance[(1)].

Stockings with Striped Background

Geometric patterns are distributed all over the surface. Geometric patterns are arranged on top of one another in a vertical direction. Motifs are mostly seen as geometric. There are no too complex motifs. On the striped-coloured background, the pattern has a simple appearance[(1)].

Fluffy stockings

The characteristic of these stockings is that the yarn is made piled and given a fluffy appearance. There is no a special method of pattern placement. Although all kinds of pattern characters are seen on them, the pattern is not seen very clearly because of the pile on the cloth[(1)].

Embroidered stockings

They have organic patterns, geometric patterns, organic patterns and vertical bands, geometric patterns and vertical bands, and geometric patterns and horizontal bands. In the embroidered stockings, mostly geometric patterns are seen. The patterns repeat themselves in the vertical direction. The pattern is repeated as a band along a vertical line[(1)].

Patterned stockings

These have organic patterns, organic patterns and vertical bands, organic patterns and horizontal bands, geometric patterns, geometric patterns and vertical bands, and geometric patterns and horizontal bands. The stockings are generally multi-coloured and intensively patterned. Considering the general of the previous samples, the patterns are geometric and organic patterns, and they are used by changing colours as background and pattern transformation[(1)].

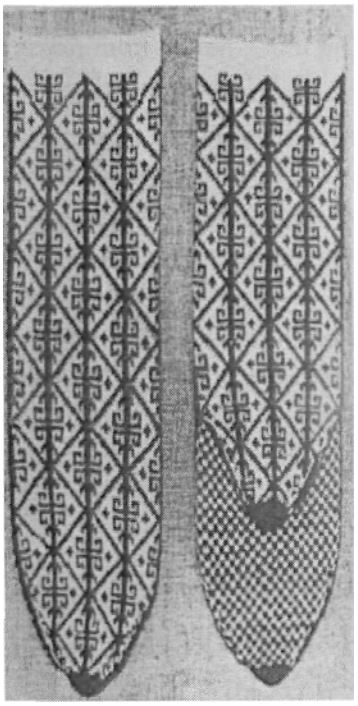
Stockings are used for showing both the wearers' position, social status and marital status, and protecting them against evil eye[(2)]. Socks and stockings are given different motifs in such a manner as to reflect the wearer's age, social status and marital status. For example, certain motifs indicate the male wearer's marital status: bachelors wear socks with a "junior rural lord" motif, while married men wear socks with a "senior rural lord" motif. Some other motifs reflect the wearer's profession. For example, farm caretakers, shepherds and headmen wear socks indicating their professions[(3)]. Figure 1 (overleaf) shows a sock designed for village headmen in Yenikoy region of Sivas.

Socks are made in such a manner as to contain certain motifs which are believed to protect the wearer against bad luck and the evil eye and to bring good luck[(3)].

Knitted socks and stockings are considered a valuable present in Turkish culture, and act as a symbol implying a certain thing. Each and every figure placed on a stocking implies an individual symbol[(2)].

Figure 1: A headman's sock, Yenikoy region of Sivas [3]

Stockings can be given as a present as part of the rural ceremony of asking a girl's hand in marriage. After the prospective groom's family formally proposes to the prospective bride's family, the latter might send a pair of socks containing a certain motif to the former's family if they accept the proposal. Said motifs differ depending on geographical regions. For example, such stockings sent to the prospective groom's family in the Sinop region contain a "palate" figure, and the stockings sent to the prospective bride's family as an answer carry a "ram's horn" motif. After the said stockings are exchanged, the families begin to prepare for the wedding[3]. Figure 2 (below) shows a stocking containing the ram's horn motif used in the Konya region.



In the past, stockings were considered a very important part of a trousseau, and it was usual for a trousseau to contain 30 to 40 pairs of stockings. They were exhibited to show the sender family's skills on the one hand, and were given to people who brought presents to return the compliment on the other. Stockings to be included in a trousseau had to be of a striking appearance and imposing, so that they were made increasingly attractive[(4)].

Motifs of stockings made for a bride differ depending on the region. In general, they are embroidered with thin braids covered with gilding wash. It reflects two meanings: the family is rich, and the groom and the bride are wished to live a rich life. For example, in the Ni-de region the bride is given a pink pair of stockings on the first day of the wedding, a white pair of stockings on the second day, and a blue pair on the third day when she is taken to the bridegroom's housed). Figure 3 shows a bride's stocking containing a 'mirror' motif, Balikesir region.

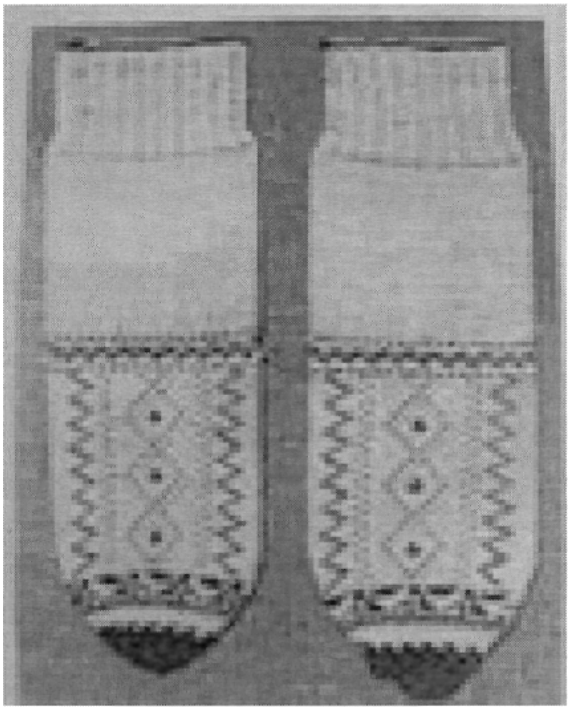


Figure 3: A bride's stocking containing a 'mirror' motif, Balikesir region[(3)]

Motifs of a groom's stockings differ depending on the region too. It is observed that every region has its own unique motifs. For example, the Shavak Turkmens located in the Erzincan, Tunceli and Elazi region make black stockings embroidered with thin braids for grooms. In Sivas region, socks are made without any open work design for grooms, so that it is indicated that the groom is wished to have a sound mind. When a prospective groom's family proposes to the prospective bride's family, the latter will send a pair of socks containing a spider motif to the former if they accept the proposal. The spider motif symbolizes a web and, in turn, nesting, so that the sender wishes a good household for the couple[(4)]. Figure 4 (overleaf) shows a groom's sock as made in Sivrihisar region, which contains a motif called "apple".

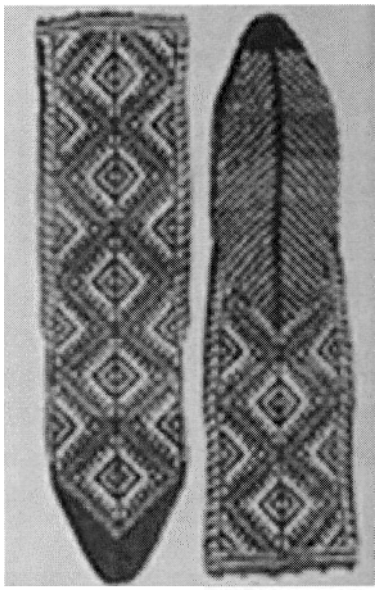


Figure 4: A groom's sock, Sivrihisar region[3]

Engaged couples give each other a pair of stockings containing a bird figure as a present. Said bird figures include a partridge's foot. The motifs in question symbolize the couple's happiness, implying that they would feel flying on happiness[4].

Socks sent to young males serving in the armed forces are knit in such a manner to contain "corporal" or "sergeant" motifs depending on their military ranks[2]. Figure 5 shows a sock containing a corporal motif, Sivas region.

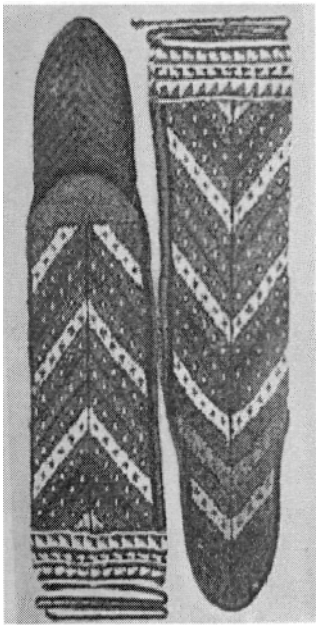


Figure 5: A sock knit with a corporal motif, Sivas region[3]

It is also observed that certain stockings are made and given as a present to make it easier for a woman to give birth to her child or to wish cure for a diseased[3].

Another type of socks and stockings are called herald, and are used for bringing news from a distant beloved one. For example, if a woman's husband is away from home due to military service or employment, she might send a pair of socks made in a certain way to him to herald her pregnancy or the sex of their newborn child. A "U" shaped motif indicates that the sender is pregnant, an "A" shaped motif indicates that the newborn child is a baby girl, an "I" shaped motif indicates that the baby is a boy[4].

Furthermore, colours are used as symbols too for socks and stockings sent by a person to another as a message. Each colour has its own unique meaning. Red means vitality, green means religion and nobility, pink and yellow mean frivolous, black means mourning, brown means a fall away and hopelessness. A pair of white socks means good wishing, a pair of black socks means ill wishing[4].In Aya region, for example, the socks and stockings called "blazed" contain a helical line extending from the heel to the leg. The colours and numbers of said stockings indicate how many children the wearer has, and how many of them are boys, how many girls. A pink line indicates a daughter, a black line indicates a son. Older people wear white, brown or camel coloured stockings[3]. As these examples indicate, Anatolian folkloric culture uses these symbols to express itself.

The traditional craft of hand-knitting is continued by a number of local people in the present, even if at a diminished level. It is also observed that this craft is undergoing a process of change. A review of the changes which traditional stockings have undergone in urban areas indicates that their motifs, colours, compositions and materials have changed[5].

It is observed that some handmade stockings to-day are similar to their originals, while others contain simplified motifs; that craftsmen now use a single motif or two different motifs rather than a collage of many motifs; and that the multicolour aspect is replaced with only two colours, one for the background and another for the motifs. Simplification is evident in compositions too, so that craftsmen use single motif compositions rather than place various different motifs in the form of lateral borders.

In order to help Turkish hand-knitting craft, which plays an important role in Turkish culture, to survive and to be relayed to future generations, new projects need to be developed, old products need to be preserved and stored, and new stockings should be made in the same styles as the original ones.

Dr Biret Tavman,

Marmara University, Istanbul

(References overleaf)

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4. Kirzio_lu, N.G., "Language of motives in Turkish villagers Socks", Culture and Art publication, p: 62-64, June 1992.

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PILGRIMAGE: THE SACRED JOURNEY

Textiles in the Exhibition at the Ashmolean Museum

Textiles are not a major focus in this exhibition, which runs in the Ashmolean Museum until 2 April. Only a few are on display, but our members may be interested to read a brief note about these.

I was especially happy to be offered a pilgrim's robe from Mecca. This is called an *ihram*, made up of two strips of white cotton towelling. These two pieces of cloth are unstitched; they cover the upper and lower body and are held together with a simple belt (not available for display). The dress is worn throughout the five days of the *hajj*, from when the pilgrim enters Mecca to his travels to the village of Mina and the culmination in Bid ul-Adha. This particular outfit was worn in Mecca during the *hajj* of *Dhul Hijjah*, the pilgrimage month, in 1425H, or January 2005. It was presented to the Ashmolean by Mohammed Rahman, specifically to be included in this exhibition.

The second textile is an English *Opus Anglicanum* silk and metal thread embroidery on a linen ground, made around 1500. It is called an "orphrey", or decorative border, showing saints and prophets. It is made up from two earlier pieces, probably "pillar orphreys" with scenes arranged vertically, rather than horizontally as they are now. Most figures can be identified by the objects they hold: among them are Mary Magdalene with a pot of ointment, St Paul holding a sword and a book, St Margaret standing on a dragon which she is spearing with a lance, St Apollonia with a tooth in pincers, St Philip and St Zita, both holding loaves, and St Barnabas carrying stones. Each of the saints was popular in medieval England. *Opus anglicanum* ("English work") is fine embroidery, often used on church vestments and other liturgical cloth. It was an important artistic export from England during the Middle Ages, highly sought by prominent patrons all over Europe. The great period of *opus anglicanum* production was during the 13th and 14th centuries.

Finally there is a large temple-hanging showing the Indian story of Rama and Sita. This painted cloth was made between 1880 and 1890 in the Srikalahasti region of South India. The story of Sita's abduction by the Demon King from Sri Lanka, and her eventual rescue and reconciliation with her husband Rama is told in strips similar to comic-books, all set around a large central panel. This panel shows Rama and Sita seated beneath three temple towers. Temple-hangings of this type have a didactic purpose and are hung up especially at Dewali, when the Ramayana is narrated in public by story tellers.

There are in addition a few small textile items in the form of protective bags or coverings, such as the embroidered linen pouch for a 14th to 15th century Egyptian glass bottle, as well as an early 20th century woollen prayer rug from Baluchistan.

I hope you have a chance to see the exhibition and enjoy it; for related events see *The Ashmolean's* What's On leaflet, which may be picked up in the Museum. There is also an accompanying book – see below, p. 22.

Ruth Barnes, Exhibition Curator.

REPORTS OF O.A.T.G. MEETINGS

Cloth that Lies: the Recycling of Clothing in India

On 26 October Lucy Norris of University College, London, spoke to the Group about her PhD fieldwork in Delhi, investigating how and why clothes are discarded and re-used.

The traditional saris still worn by married women are not usually bought, but given by older female relatives. So a woman's wardrobe reveals the extent of her family, and she remembers who gave her each item and when. As she gets older, she in turn gives clothes to younger female relatives. Saris, being auspicious, are almost never thrown away, but are either passed on, to family or servants, or else turned into bedspreads or quilts. Clothing may also be bartered, but middle-class women never discuss this, although the pots and pans received in exchange are displayed in the kitchen.

The itinerant women dealers who do the bartering sell the used clothes in the large Delhi wholesale market. The saris are sorted by colour and shininess. The better ones are washed, ironed, and sold in the Sunday market as second hand clothing, while the top quality ones are picked out to be transformed into western clothes and furnishings for export, or haute couture for wealthy Indian women.

Western clothes are recycled differently. To protect local industry, only damaged clothing may be imported, so unsold Oxfam donations are slashed by machine, and enter India as "mutilated hosiery". There is a great demand for wool, and the dealing in the wholesale textile market is aggressive. The buyers take the clothes to Panipat north of Delhi, where they

are sorted by colour, and useless bits (linings, buttons, etc.) are manually removed. The fabric is pulped, spun into thread without re-dying, and woven into blankets, blazers, and carpets. The carpets still use a vase and flower motif originating in the 1st century A.D. The textile is never washed, so it is oily, gritty and smelly! Another product, of better quality, is a tartan suiting material, which is made into clothes and exported to the West.

There were fascinating slides, and we were shown examples of western clothes made from old saris and of blankets made from discarded western clothing. We look forward to a future exhibition on this theme at the Horniman Museum.

Mary Coulton

Silk and Empire: A Unique Collection of Indian Silks at the Whitworth Museum and Art Gallery, Manchester

Brenda King gave a fascinating lecture on the history and development of this unique collection.

Thomas Wardle, son of Joshua Wardle a leading fabric dyer of imported Indian wild (tussore) silk, came from Leek in Staffordshire. Tussore silk retains its dull colour due to gum cover on each strand, even after dyeing.

At University, Thomas Wardle studied chemistry and on completing his degree and armed with his chemical knowledge, he returned to the family firm. In 1870 he developed a formula which removed the protective gum cover from the silk. Once removed the strands were able to absorb the dyes which gave greater brightness to the fabric and opened the way to use by the fashion industry. The technique was developed in large dyeing vats using organic dyes which were imported from India.

Not to be outdone, his wife, a skilled embroiderer, opened an embroidery school in Leek at this time. George Wardle, Thomas Wardle's brother, managed William Morris's company in London and through him, Morris heard of this experimental work in Leek. Morris travelled to Leek to learn more of the process and so began a successful collaboration of dyeing and design skills.

In the Indian pavilion at the Paris Exhibition, Thomas Wardle demonstrated his technique for dyeing tussore silk gaining much publicity for both fabrics and designs. Thomas Wardle's success continued and eventually he became chief supplier to Liberty's in Regent Street, London. Some 800 of his sample books can be studied at the Silk Museum in Macclesfield.

More of this fascinating work and story will be found in Brenda King's book, *Silk and Empire* which is reviewed below (p. 20).

Pilgrimage: the Sacred Journey

Although containing not many textiles, it was considered appropriate that the Group should be offered an outing to this exhibition at the Ashmolean Museum, because its curator was no less a person than Ruth Barnes, Chairman of the O.A.T.G.. Due to popular demand, members had to be divided into two groups, the first being shown around at 2 p.m. and the second an hour later. Given the space, it was a good idea, as with too large a group it would have been difficult to view the exhibits properly.

We were welcomed by Ruth herself, who conducted the gallery talk. She told us of the background to the exhibition, which was the idea of the High Sheriff of Oxfordshire, Ian Lang, and financed by him, his contribution to making sense and understanding of what is going on concerning religious issues at the present time. Although the exhibition was fairly small and only a few textiles on show, there were many exquisite exhibits on display.

The layout of the exhibition had been divided into five components: Departure, the Journey, Sacred Space, the Central Shrine, and the Return. Pilgrimage is a journey away from daily life and familiar places. The journey embraced Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and the Sikh religion.

We started with Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, stories told on the road to Canterbury. This illuminated manuscript had been lent by the Bodleian Library, as were all the illuminated manuscripts on display. In the same case was a wonderful fifteenth century relief of the three Magi in alabaster. Next came the Jewish bible and the Koran, the first time the latter has been seen outside the Bodleian.

I was highly amused to see a particular item under the section Journey, this being, I suspect, the first account/description/record, equivalent of our modern day Lonely Planet travel book. The record, or book, was by a William Wey who, in 1470, recorded his three pilgrimages, one to Compostela in Spain and two to Jerusalem, giving good advice on what to see and places of interest, where to stay the night at reasonable cost, where to eat, and so forth, good advice that a traveller needs.

Few textiles, as mentioned before, were on display; however there was a fifteenth century Opus Anglicanum orphry showing saints and prophets. From around the thirteenth century English ecclesiastical embroidery in particular was much sought after, as the design and technique was of such high standard. By the mid-fourteenth century, Opus Anglicanum became known as Facon d'Angleterre. Also on display was a large temple hanging of the Ramayana epic, nineteenth century, the story of Rama and Sita his wife who was abducted. Painted by hand in a technique called *kalakari* in south India, it was like a cartoon strip telling the whole story with the narrative below each scene. The last textile was a small nineteenth century tribal prayer rug from Iran depicting the tree of life. (See Ruth Barnes' article above, p. 16.)

Anne Johnson

BOOKS

Silk and Empire

Brenda M. King, *Silk and Empire,* Manchester University Press 2005, 24 x 16 cm, 17 b & w figs in text, 14 col illustrations, ISBN 0 7190 6700 6, hb, £55

British India continues to stimulate a wealth of publications in many fields ranging from historical inquiry, political analysis and studies of economics and trade through to personal diaries and memoirs which illuminate social life. One of the most accessible and visually attractive results of the complex relationship between India and Britain is seen in textiles where a rich indigenous tradition and modern technology fused to produce fabrics which were purchased by an increasingly discriminating British middle class eager to furnish their wardrobes and homes well. *Silk and Empire,* a densely written account of the mutual impact of design in textiles, is a distillation of Brenda King's Ph.D. thesis, appropriately published by Manchester University Press in its series *Studies in Imperialism* which explores the interplay between Britain and her former colonies. Now, as a lecturer in Design History and Museum and Heritage Studies, Brenda King's approach to her subject is different from that of the classic economic historian or specialist in Indian ethnography and linguistics. She has refreshingly combined her design-orientated expertise with an exploration of as yet little researched archival material in the north of England to produce a valuable survey of the importance of India's silk production to 19th century Europe, a subject which surprisingly has still been overlooked in favour of cotton and jute.

Admiration for the brilliance of India's silks was expressed practically in the exhibitions and collections of 19th century Britain which played a crucial role in introducing them to the public. Indian silks were exhibited at the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in 1851 and in the Colonial and Indian Exhibition and the Royal Jubilee Exhibition held respectively in London in 1886 and in Manchester in 1887. Well-documented collections were formed for the new museums and design institutes which were founded after the Great Exhibition to provide reference sources for the textile industry. Here the group of silks, representing all techniques of weaving, dyeing and decoration, collected in India from 1885 to 1886 by Thomas Wardle (1831-1909), a silk dyer of Macclesfield, Cheshire, and Leek, Staffordshire, now in the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, forms the core of Brenda King's book, supplemented principally by studies of comparable material in the Macclesfield Silk Museum and the archives of the Nicholson Institute of Leek.

She has organised and discussed these rich sources in two main sections:

Part 1. A summary of the Anglo-Indian silk trade and the global context of silk production in four chapters –

The state of silk manufacture in England from 1830 to 1930.

Design in the English silk industry and competition from France, including a useful analysis of the curricula of the art and technical schools in the north of England.

An overview of silk textile production in India stressing the quality of fabric, range of

design and the excellent manual skills in weaving, embroidery, printing and dyeing.
The state of sericulture in Indian from the early 19th to the early 20th century.

Part II The most original part of her research, the contribution of Thomas Wardle in three chapters –

His background and development through a small business to an appreciation of traditional Indian textile techniques and designs.

His travels in India and his role in modernising its silk industry. His collecting and exhibiting of silks with a detailed account of three major international exhibitions and the collections of the Whitworth Art Gallery.

Indian textiles in the context of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Wardle taught William Morris (1834-96) to dye yarn and print cloth.

Her conclusion sums up the main points discussed and stresses the importance of continued research into the documentary sources of the north of England supplemented where possible by work in Indian archives.

A meticulously classified and detailed bibliography of primary and secondary sources, plus two excellent glossaries of English and Indian textile terms, and thoughtfully chosen illustrations makes this book an essential reference work as well as a thorough study of a fascinating chapter in the story of Anglo-Indian relations.

Jennifer M Scarce
University of Dundee

Principles of Weaving

M.A. Harm & E.G. Thomas, *Patterns or Culture: Decorative Weaving Techniques,* Leeds University, 2005, 21 x 14.5 cm, 80 pp, numerous diagrams and line drawings, pb, £5

Reading this 80-page monograph, produced to accompany an exhibition with the same title, on its own presents more questions than answers.

It does give value for money. For just £5 there is a vast amount of information, from the principles of interlacing, through weave structures and loom types to theories about the origin and development of patterns. A compact history, but where are the textiles? Apart from the cover, an unidentified floral fabric, there is not a drawing or a photograph of a decorative textile to be found. The descriptions are concise, yes, but I want to *see* the early-eleventh-century elephants in their Byzantine silk that required 1,440 manipulations for the production of one repeat. How fortunate that I have a copy of CIBA Review 117 to see the tablet-woven girdle of Rameses III, and can read about the attempts to recreate it in Barber's *Prehistoric Textiles.*

Interesting though the bibliography is, there are few recent titles and most of these "in house". The authors have drawn heavily on technical publications, particularly Oelsner (1952) and Watson (1925) for structural diagrams. As a weaver, I often refer to these classic textbooks, but what will the target audience of teachers, museum professionals, archaeologists and anthropologists make of "centre-warp-stitched double-cloth"? (For an explanation of this technique, plus inspiration and the sheer joy of colour I recommend Ursina Arn-Grischott 1999.) I can't say that I would recognise "a wooden box-like container holding a bobbin of thread" as a shuttle, either.

Perhaps this monograph sits well with the other 35 titles in the *Ars Textrina* series, but the formality of the language and the lack of photographs seem out of keeping in a 21st century publication about a visual art-form.

Melanie Venes

Shorter Notices

Ruth Barnes & Crispin Branfoot, Eds, *Pilgrimage: the Sacred Journey,* Ashmolean Museum, 2006, 28 x 22 cm, 132 pp, 108 col. illus., ISBN 1 85444 215 5, pb, £14.95

As you will have gathered from elsewhere in this newsletter, there are not many textiles in the exhibition which this book accompanies. It is not a catalogue and, although there are nice pictures of some of them, they are better and more fully described in Ruth's article above (p. 16). The book comprises interesting articles on various aspects of pilgrimage in Christian, Jewish, Muslim and four Indian religions with a plethora of good illustrations.

Rosemary Crill (Ed.), *Textiles from India : The Global Trade* (Papers Presented at a Conference on the Indian Textile Trade, Kolkata, 12-14 October 2003), Seagull Books 2006, 30 cm, pp. xvi+388, figs., pls., ISBN 1905422172, US$ 35.18 or Rs. 1495

For hundreds of years, textiles from India have travelled the globe, clothing the world, from kings and queens to the common man. Indian textiles have been traded in Europe, America, Africa, and the Far East, often passing into ritual and religious custom. They have included the most exclusive and expensive festive fabrics as well as the common cloth used for daily wear. Their global history from the medieval period up to the present day is captured in this lavishly illustrated collection of wide-ranging essays by scholars from four continents. So we read about shawls from Kashmir making their way across Asia, brocades especially woven in Benaras for Buddhist rituals in Tibet, the muslins of Bengal, block prints and chintz, perennial favourites in Europe, and the unique Indian embroideries at Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire, in a major contribution to the study of this fascinating aspect of India's cultural and economic history.

Oliver Impey & Joyce Seaman, *Japanese Decorative Art of the Meiji Period*, Ashmolean Museum, 2005, 21 x 14.5 cm, 112 pp, 52 col. plates, numerous small col. details in the text, ISBN 1 85444 197 3, hb, £11.95

Of the 52 representative pieces from the Ashmolean's extensive collection of Meiji Japanese art depicted and discussed in this small volume, only three are textiles. Two of these are screens and the third is the silk hanging embroidered with cranes and wisteria referred to by Mary Dusenbury in her article in memory of Oliver Impey in the last newsletter (p. 20). There are many delectable items among the non-textile pieces, half of them ceramics and the rest metalwork, cloisonné and lacquer. The quality of colour in the illustrations could have been better.

New Books Not Seen

Chung, Young Yang, *Silken Threads: A History of Embroidery in China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam,* Abrams, New York, 2005, 29 x 23 cm, 464 pp, 275 col. & 75 b/w illus, ISBN 08 1094 330 1, hb. £45

The most comprehensive historical reference and guide to the origins, aesthetics and cultural context of embroidered textiles in East Asia published to date, covering some areas of study that have never before been treated in western languages. The book is superbly illustrated, with good notes and bibliography.

Michael C. Howard, *Textiles of the Highland Peoples of Burma,* Vol. 1, *The Naga, Chin, Jingpho and Other Baric Speaking Groups* (Studies in the Material Culture of Southeast Asia, No. 70, White Lotus, Bangkok, 2005, 29 x 20.5 cm, 354 pp, 264 col. illus., ISBN 9744 80066 6, pb., $80.

Beverley Jackson, *Shanghai Girl Gets All Dressed Up,* Ten Speed Press, Berkeley, Calif, 2005, 25.5 x 25.5 cm, 160 pp, fully illus., mostly in colour, ISBN 15 8008 367 6, pb, $30.

Shanghai in the 1930s and the emergence of the *cheongsam.*

Sappho Marchal (trans, from French by Merrily Hansen), *Khmer Costumes and Ornaments of the Devatas of Angkor Wat,* Orchid Press, Bangkok, 2005, 20.5 x 15 cm, 128 pp, 44 b/w plates & numerous line drawings, ISBN 97 452 4057 5, pb, $16.95

EXHIBITIONS

Treasured Textiles: Cloth and Clothing Around the World

Weave, print, dye and stitch. This special exhibition, which will be on view at the Pitt Rivers Museum from 22 May until 22 April 2007, takes textile techniques as its theme, explored in a world context. Examples will range from costume from Macedonia decorated with gold-coloured braid to indigo-dyed *a dire* cloth made in Nigeria.

Sleeve panel of satin stitch embroidery featuring a seated person between two birds with butterflies and moths above and below. Miao peoples, China. (1992.24.8)

The cloth and clothing for the exhibition have been selected from the Pitt Rivers Museum reserve collections to focus on how textile techniques contribute to design, decoration and adornment. Textiles from Asia are particularly rich in a range of decorative techniques and a section of the exhibition will explore how patterning is created by resist dyeing techniques. Resist-dyed batik cloths from Indonesia are shown alongside a range of other resist-patterned cloths, including *ikat* textiles from India, Borneo and Japan.

Embroidered textiles are also well represented in the exhibition. A fine satin-stitch embroidered panel (illustrated above) features a seated person between two birds with butterflies and moths above and below. This finely worked piece was made in a Miao village Guizhou Province, China in the mid 20th century.

The Pitt Rivers Museum reserve collections include over 700 textiles from Nagaland in the far North East of India. These are particularly significant in the wide range of materials used, including red-dyed dog hair and nettle fibre used in weaving as well as bright yellow orchid stems added as overlay patterning.

The exhibition will include some of the vibrantly decorated clothing collected in Central America in the 1930s by textile enthusiast Elsie McDougall. These garments are often simple in their shape, such as women's upper garments *(huipil)*, but are gloriously decorative

in colour and design, with complex patterning developed through brocade weaving on a backstrap loom. Other ornament has been added through appliqué or embroidery and often a combination of several techniques is used. This collection made by Elsie McDougall now at the Pitt Rivers Museum has been used as a core reference tool for identifying later collections of Central American Amerindian clothing.

Julia Nicholson
Joint Head of Collections, Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford

An Exhibition Celebrating the Work of Alison Smith

In collaboration with O.A.T.G., the Oxfordshire Museum at Woodstock is mounting a display of the work of this former member of the Group and active Friend of the Museum, a talented knitter and knitwear designer, who sadly died in October 2004. The exhibition will run from 14 May to 4 June. Tue. to Sat, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Tel. 01993 811456).

Examples of her experiments in colour and pattern and the development of her designs from such items as kilims, wall-hangings and an Uzbek hat are demonstrated in her wonderful workbooks, in which she recorded and illustrated the inspiration, progress and development of each garment she made. Some of these will be on view beside the pieces they refer to, as will, in some cases, the actual artefacts that inspired them.

Other Exhibitions in the U.K.

Palace and Mosque – 100 historical and contemporary items from the V.& A's Islamic collections, including textiles, carpets and other decorative arts, are on show at the Millennium Galleries, Sheffield, until 17 April. Among the carpets on show is the early 16th century "Chelsea" carpet, an outstanding 5m long example of Iranian weaving. For workshops in connexion with the exhibition see below, p.27. Tel. 0114 278 2600

Madder Modes – For some cultures red is the colour of celebration, for others of mourning; it has developed many difference of meaning and significance over time and place. This exhibition at the Harris Museum, Preston, until ? explores the hidden meanings of wearing red. Tel. 01772 258248

Fashioning Kimono – a display at the V.& A. until May of boldly patterned and brilliantly coloured kimono reveals the dynamism of early 20th Century Japanese textile design. Tel. 020 7942 2000

Egyptian Landscapes – Fifty years of tapestry weaving at the Rameses Wissa Wassef Art Centre, Cairo, are portrayed in this exhibition, which is on at the Brunei Gallery, SOAS, London, until 17 March. Masterpieces from the permanent collection are on display as well as stunning new pieces.

100% Cotton – Cotton has been grown, used and traded by people for thousands of years. Its fibres have been spun and woven in many different ways and connect people around the globe. This exhibition at the Merseyside Maritime Museum, Albert Dock, Liverpool, until 4 June explores how cotton has been grown, used and traded, and why a plant from the tropics became so important to Liverpool and the North West. Tel. 0151 478 4499

Overseas Exhibitions

Seldom Seen: Director's Choice from the Museum's Collections - The Textile Museum, Washington, D.C., until 30 July. Tel. 001 667-0441

Woven Gold: Metal Threads in Textile Art - Abegg-Stiftung, Riggisberg, Switzerland, 30 April to 12 November, +41 31 8081201

Last Chance to See ...

Pilgrimage: The Sacred Journey – at the Ashmolean Museum, ends 2 April. Tel. 01865 278000

China: The Three Emperors, 1662-1795 at the Royal Academy (not many textiles) ends 17 April. Tel. 020 7300 8000

Contemporary Clay and Contemporary Cloth (Japanese) at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Mass, ends 9 July. Tel. 001 617 267 9300

And One You Can See at Home

Dressed in Ihram – A digital exhibition about *Hajj* clothing mounted by the Stitching Textile Research Centre, Leiden, on their website: www.texdress.nl This exhibition describes both the purity for the mind, body and soul which all Muslims should be in when they become participants in the *Hajj*, as well as the actual clothing worn by the pilgrims as they carry out the various rituals of the *Hajj*.

LECTURES AND EVENTS

Rug and Textile Appreciation Morning – led by Phyllis Kane at the Textile Museum, Washington, D.C., Saturday 4 March at 10.30 a.m. Tel. 001. 667-0441

Saturday & Sunday 25 & 26 March, Workshops in connexion with the *Palace and Mosque* exhibition at the Millennium Galleries, Sheffield. Tel. 0114 278 2600

The Spirit of Syria – In May of this year O.A.T.G. member, Denise Darbyshire will lead a "cultural tour with a difference" to convey the spirit of Syria in a way not usually found elsewhere. Archaeologically stunning, architecturally beautiful, Syria is breath-taking and you will be treated as guests throughout the itinerary, including private receptions in wonderful surroundings. **Aspects of Syrian textiles will be covered.** Denise works with the Education Department at the Ashmolean Museum and would be happy to give you more information. Please contact her by e-mail: denise.darbyshire@tiscali.co.uk

Asian Textile Tours - led by O.A.T.G. member Gina Corrigan will visit the Minorities of South West China in May, Tibet 13 July-1 August and Myanmar in November. Contact Steppes Travel, tel. 01285 651010

Textiles and Text: Re-establishing the Links Between Archival and Object-based Research - Conference to be held at the Textile Conservation Centre, Winchester, Tuesday to Thursday, 11-13 July. Sessions will consider how research can inform our knowledge of textiles and dress, in terms of their production, consumption, dissemination and deterioration, and how the study of extant objects can offer unique insights into these contexts. The conference will also examine what tools can be used to investigate textiles produced by cultures that are not predominantly text based, and how scientific and photographic analytical techniques can provide clues which cannot readily be gleaned either from objects or written sources. Papers will cover a wide geographical remit and a broad chronological span. Tel. 02380 597100 (Conference Secretary)

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