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ASIAN TEXTILES

NEWSLETTER OF THE OXFORD ASIAN TEXTILE GROUP

NUMBER 41 OCTOBER 2008

The textile traditions of Sumatra

Also in this issue: The indigenous tribes of Taiwan, Textiles from Bali and Nusa Tenggara, the Indonesian Traditional Textile Society, the Tilleke and Gibbins textile collection and much more…

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Front cover picture: A newly married couple in Sumatra, with the bride wearing a heavy *suntiang* headdress. Pic courtesy David and Sue Richardson.

Rear cover picture: Young members of the Puyuma tribe during the Harvest Festival, Chulun village, Taidong District, in Taiwan. They are wearing traditional leg covers to show they are warriors. Pic courtesty Nicolas Grevot.

Asian Textiles is published three times a year, with deadlines on the first Monday in February, June and October.

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS

MONDAY 2nd FEBRUARY 2009

Contributions should be emailed or sent to Nick Fielding

— contact details on the back page

Editorial

Readers of *Asian Textiles* with an interest in southeast Asian textiles are in for a real treat in this issue. We have a great article by Hywel Coleman on the exhibition in Leeds on textiles from Bali and Nusa Tenggara. Hywel highlights the great diversity of textiles from this region.

David and Sue Richardson have also written on Indonesian textiles, concentrating on the island of Sumatra. Their article combines great knowledge about the textiles of the region with wonderful stories about the people they met on their travels. A second article on the same subject will appear in the next edition of *Asian Textiles*.

Our third article on Indonesia is written by Mariah Waworuntu of Himpunan Wastraprema, the Indonesian Traditional Textile Society. Mariah tells us about the history of the society and its aims of uniting textile experts and enthusiasts in the whole region of southeast Asia.

As if that were not enough, we also have a wonderful article about the diplomat and spy Lieutenant Colonel F M Bailey, written by Emma Martin at National Museums Liverpool. Emma notes that Bailey's wife was also a great textile collector and added enormously to the material that makes up the collection held in Liverpool. Much of this material was inspected by OATG members on their recent visit to the city.

We also have a superb article by Nicolas Grevot, whose website is dedicated to the indigenous hill tribes of Taiwan. His photographs well illustrate the extensive, albeit little-known, embroidery and beadwork traditions of these peoples, whose culture is under threat.

Finally, we are grateful to the Bangkok-based law firm of Tilleke & Gibbins for giving us an insight into their marvellous collection of textiles, many of them extremely rare and of great beauty. This must be the only law firm in the world that runs a world-class museum.

On a more mundane, but equally important, note we are looking for a volunteer to take over the job of OATG Membership Secretary. The task requires minimal computer skills, a few hours work each month and attendance at committee meetings where possible. Please ring Joyce Seaman on 01993 822208 if you are interested.

The Editor

TCC to relocate from Southampton to Oxford?

Following the decision by the University of Southampton last December to close the world-reknowned Textile Conservation Centre based in Winchester, it has recently emerged that discussions have been taking place with the University of Oxford's School of Archaeology about the possibility of a transfer of elements of the TCC's work to Oxford in late 2009.

A decision is due to be made by Oxford in the next month or so. If an agreement is reached it may be possible to offer the postgraduate programme in textile conservation and, possibly, the history of textiles and dress and/or museums and galleries as early as the 2009-10 academic year.

Anyone who would be interested in these courses should contact the TCC on tccuk@soton.ac.uk. For any other queries relating to the TCC please feel free to contact the Director, Nell Hoare (nell@soton.ac.uk).

The TCC staff and its supporting trust – The TCC Foundation – have decided to use the decision by Southampton University to close the centre to prompt debate around the challenges and opportunities facing the conservation sector.

The TCC commissioned the think-tank Demos to consider the whole issue of conservation. Demos has now produced a pamphlet written by John Holden and Sam Jones called 'It's a Material World – Caring for heritage and the public realm'.

The pamphlet will be launched at an event at the Banqueting House, London on 28 November at 10am. If you would like to attend, please email demoslau@soton.ac.uk.

OATG EVENTS PROGRAMME

Thursday 6 November 2008

AGM at 5.45pm

followed at 6.15 by

The Woven Archipelago: sustaining the traditional arts in contemporary Indonesia

William Ingram

William Ingram has worked for a decade with a network of 1200 traditional natural dye weavers and cooperatives across Indonesia , and is also an author and director of *Fabric of the Forest,* a film about weavers in Kalimantan.

Please note the meeting is on a **Thursday** rather than Wednesday as usual

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Wednesday 3 December 2008

Victoria and Albert Museum

Meet at 2.15 pm at the main entrance.

Textiles from Dunhuang at the V&A Museum

The museum possesses a fine collection of textiles from this Buddhist site on the Eastern Silk Road. Curator Helen Persson will show us some of this rarely-seen material and talk about her work with the International Dunhuang Project.

Numbers are limited so please contact Rosemary or Fiona by 27 November if you would like to go.

Early 2009

Plans are in hand for a **visit to Paris** early in 2009. We have been offered help in arranging visits to key textile museums and possibly the Gobelin factory.

We plan to travel by Eurostar and stay in a modest but convenient hotel in Paris. Please contact Rosemary or Fiona if you think you might be interested so that we can keep you informed.

Talks are held at the Pauling Centre, 58 Banbury Road, Oxford.

Refreshments from 5.15pm.Visitors welcome (£2)

Programme Coordinators: Rosemary Lee 01491 873276 rosemary.lee@talk21.com

Fiona Sutcliffe 01491 872268 j.v.sutcliffe@talk21.com

Patricia Lesley Baker 1942-2008

'Clinging on to the upper salon piano as the ship pitched and rolled in the September tropical storm, I gave the last talk of the China tour to the passengers, thinking wryly that the episode was symptomatic of my life since graduating in 1964.' So wrote Paddy Baker in 1994. She continued to be the consummate professional, enlightening and entertaining her audiences even while she knew her life was ebbing away.

Last December she was diagnosed with the re-occurrence of a cancer which had become inoperable but she told very few people, preferring to continue as normal for as long as possible. She had a stroke on 10 August and was admitted to hospital where she died on 26th August.

At the time of her death she was working on a revised version of her guidebook to Iran, on notes for teachers for the forthcoming Byzantine exhibition at the Royal Academy and, with me, on a book and related conference on 19th century Iranian textiles for the Victoria & Albert Museum. Her funeral took place at the West London Crematorium on Friday 19 September.

Paddy's degrees were in the history of the Islamic Middle East, in Islamic Art & Archaeology and in the History of Islamic Court Dress. From 1976-1987 she was Senior Lecturer in Art History, teaching Non-European Arts & Cultures and also Historian of Glass and of Ceramics at the West Surrey College of Art & Design (now Surrey Institute, Farnham). From 1987 – 2008 she was an independent lecturer and writer, concentrating on textiles and glass in the Islamic world.

In parallel to these activities she was often the Guest Lecturer or Course Director and/or Tour Manager on many trips with specialist travel agencies including Swan Hellenic Tours, Jules Verne, ACE Study Tours, Noble Caledonia, Prospect Art Tours and Serenissima. The countries she visited include Iran, China, Egypt, North India, Nepal, Thailand, Burma, South India, Turkey, Northern Cyprus, Georgia, Armenia, Central Asia, Jordan, Sudan, Yemen, Vietnam, Cambodia and Syria.

She had friends all over the world and within two days of her admission to hospital a friend of hers in Cambridge had heard the news from a friend in Armenia who had heard it from a friend in Uzbekistan who, in turn, had heard it from a friend in Singapore!

Paddy was always generous with her time and expertise and fought vigorously to ensure that the study of textiles was accepted as an academic discipline. She often despaired that the history of textiles and textile design were not afforded sufficient attention in courses on Islamic or Oriental Art. "From where", she used to say, "will the textile scholars of the future come if we do not teach the subject in universities?"

Paddy has left a large body of work in the form of articles and books . Her friends hope to organise a party-like lecture in her honour, perhaps in February or March in London and the V&A will take over the organisation of the two-day conference on 19th century Iranian and British textile design to be held in the museum on 21st and 22nd April 2009.

The book on 19th century Iranian textiles which she and I were writing for the V&A should be published in 2010, so, thankfully, we have not heard the last of Paddy Baker.

Jennifer Wearden

Further cuts and job losses at The Textile Museum

It is now clear that the Textile Museum in Washington is going through a substantial cuts programme. In addition to cancelling plans to expand its premises, the museum has recently eliminated the position of 'Curator of Western Hemisphere Textiles', including those of the Americas and the Andes. This is despite the fact that the TM has one of the premiere collections of Andean textiles, which has been extensively studied and published by many highly regarded scholars.

Over a span of three decades, Ann Rowe as the curator has prepared exhibits, organized Andean textile conferences, edited issues of the museum's journal, conference proceedings and catalogues, and written many other ground-breaking publications based on the collection. Her reputation as an expert and authority on textiles of the New World is global. Such unique contributions are usually rewarded by emeritus status, not by the termination of a position.

In addition to the cutting of the Western Hemisphere curator, the Library hours have been substantially reduced, the librarian (Mary Mallia) has resigned, and the photo archives coordinator (Jennifer Heimbecker) and shipping clerk (Diego Silva) have been let go, in efforts to reduce the budget deficit. With these particular cuts, the museum has lost key research support functions - collectively, more than half of the heart of a scholarly institution.

National and international scholars, museum professionals and donors—and anyone else—who wishes to write to the director (Daniel Walker) and the President of the Board (Bruce P. Baganz) can contact them at the following addresses:

Daniel Walker, Director, The Textile Museum, 2320 'S' Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20008-4088
Email: dwalker@textilemuseum.org
Bruce P. Baganz, President of the Board of Trustees of The Textile Museum, 2320 'S' Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20008-4088, or
2101 Connecticut Avenue, NW, apt. 73, Washington, D.C. 20008-1760
Email: bpbaganz@earthlink.net

More of Sheila Paine's textiles go under the hammer

The second group of OATG member Sheila Paine's collection of textiles is to be auctioned at Dreweatts near Newbury on 11 November. Of particular interest to OATG members are: costume and ikat pieces from Central Asia, also an ikat *patola* from Indonesia; from India a temple hanging of Mochi tambour embroidery, a woman's shawl entirely of *chinai* work from Surat, a fine muslin and gold waist sash and two Punjabi *phulkaris*; costume from Pakistan, including the *jumlo* that set Sheila off on her travels to Asia; from Afghanistan several pieces that feature in Sheila's British Museum book 'Embroidery from Afghanistan'. There is also some magnificent and rare material from Tunisia and Morocco; some special robes from West Africa; and costume from Syria and Russia. Further information www.dnfa.com.

Weaving and beading from Taiwan's tribes

Nicolas Grevot became fascinated by the weavings and beadwork of Taiwan's indigenous tribes and has set up a website to record his research

Can collecting be a search for a culture's identity? Taiwan is certainly an unknown and a most fascinating island with an identity issue. As the Taiwanese balance their Chinese, Japanese and lesser known Austronesian cultural heritages, I have been contributing in my own way to the building of this new identity by creating a collection dedicated to the ancient aboriginal arts and textiles of this island.

Everything began for me 10 years ago, when I was visiting a shop selling Chinese antiques in Taipei. I was then shown for the first time in my life a garment from the aborigines of Taiwan. It was a man's tunic from the Rukai, an ethnic group close to the Paiwan, one of the 14 tribes officially recognized by the Taiwanese authorities.

I have to say that, at the very beginning of my 15 years stay in this island, I was more interested in its Chinese roots. But as the time passed, I learnt about the complexity of its culture, and the diversity of its identity slowly gripped me.

Coming from France, I saw Taiwan at that time as an island symbolizing a capitalist China and also as a laboratory to observe many surviving Chinese traditions that had disappeared on the mainland. Yes, the island is a living cultural heritage of its Chinese origin, but the strong influence of Japan, a close neighbor and a former colonial ruler of the island from 1895 to 1945, is still clearly felt everywhere in the insular society. If it is less obvious at first for the new comers, there is also another major cultural influence: Taiwan has in fact an old history associated with the civilizations of the Pacific.

What has long been supposed by the archaeologists and the linguists concerning the past of these populations is not anymore a theory thanks to new genetic discoveries: the ancestors of today's Taiwan aborigines have been proven through DNA testing to be at the origin in part of the Austronesian civilization. Austronesian languages are currently spoken by 300 million people in a major part of the Pacific rim - a vast area encompassing the Philippines, the South East Asian Islands, Melanesia and Polynesia, that spreads towards Easter Island, to the east, and New Zealand, to the south.

Recently, more research on pieces of jade excavated from many different parts of Asia have also brought some new ideas on the extent of the cultural and commercial influence of the original inhabitants of Taiwan, the exportation of its jade and the skill of its carvers.

Before its conquest by Koxinga in the 17th century over the then Dutch rulers that had put the island on the European maps, Taiwan had been for long inhabited by non- Chinese people whose descendants, the Taiwan aborigines, want today to be called *yuanzhumin* in mandarin. This name that they have chosen themselves means the 'original populations' and is used in Taiwan itself. In China, the 14 island aboriginal groups of Taiwan are officially considered to be one of the 56 national minorities and are collectively called *gaoshanzhu*, what can be translated by 'high mountains people'.

Today, aboriginal groups in Taiwan make up only two percent of the whole island population - over 400 000 persons from a total of 23 millions. But it is also true that more than three-quarters of the total island population has varying degrees of some aboriginal blood running through its veins.

While the aborigines have been vastly assimilated culturally during the last 50 years, losing

in the process most of their original culture, their communities remain located in remote rural or mountainous areas. They are not as successful economically as the rest of the Taiwanese population.

To consider these people wholly as ‘mountain communities’ is not fully correct as not all these groups live in high mountainous locations. First, the Yami people (also known as the Tao), inhabiting the little Orchid Island, in the strait between Taiwan and the Philippines, have an oceanic culture. And while the small Kavalan and Sakizaya tribes are clearly categorized as plain aborigines, the Amis, the biggest aboriginal group by the number, is also often placed in the same category, albeit not officially. On the other side, the most well-known groups like the Atayal, the Bunun, the Paiwan and the Rukai can be legitimately called mountain tribes.

Living mainly in the northern part of the island, the Atayal people and the closely related Sedeq and Truku people, are most well-known for their weaving traditions and the excellence of their shell beadwork, while the Paiwan, the Rukai and the Puyuma, living in the southern half of the island, are more known for their wood carving traditions.

Most of the clothes of the Taiwan aborigines were made originally from ramie. Other kind of textiles were used later, as cotton, wool or velvet were obtained through barter with the Han people – the Chinese settlers. Basically, the structure of the cloth is a strip 30-40cm wide and around 1m long. Two or three of these rectangular pieces are sewn together to form a cloth, neck openings and other tailoring being rare, except among the southern tribes more influenced by their Chinese contacts.

Among the northern or the southern groups, whose traditions and social organizations are very different, the textiles, clothes and adornments have always been ways to distinguish the status of one individual from the other.

The best example of this is the famous ceremonial beaded tunics of the Atayal who were only worn by an important leader or a great warrior. This item was entirely covered with delicate beads fashioned individually out of clam shells (Tridacna). Sometimes, copper bells were added, the whole garment making a ringing noise when worn by a dancer.

The shell beads are strung together in strings and sewn on the men’s long tunics or the women’s skirts. These beads are not only used as decoration on garments, but they are also made into necklaces, that were both ideal gifts for dowry and means of barter for transactions. The favorite color of the Atayal is red (for the blood of the hunted human heads, it is said), and the inwoven designs are made of stripes, zigzags, chequers and triangle.

Taken last summer during the traditional Harvest Festival at the Rukai village of Dongxing (Taromak, in Rukai language), in the Taidong District of Taiwan, this shows young men dancing in their patterned jackets.

On the southern half of the island, in-woven designs are mostly found on mourning garments of the Paiwan, Rukai and Puyuma. These patterns are usually geometric, but we can also find human figures, a clear reference to the ancestors or simply to the heads taken from the enemy. In fact, headhunting was a very important ritual for all the Taiwan aborigines, except the Yami, in order to assert bravery and bring good luck.

The geometric patterns in zigzags or in diamonds shapes symbolize the snake, a favorite motive among the Paiwan group, as it is considered as their original ancestor. With a very strong social characteristic, this snake pattern can only be worn among the members of aristocratic families, the commoners being excluded.

The Paiwan group is also well-known for its appliqués, embroidery and bead works, with motives of human figures and snakes. Their beads are not made with shell but with glass.

I still own the first old Taiwan aborigines tunic I collected, ten years ago. I will always remember it as the one that ignited my passion for the Taiwan aboriginal culture. It is a blue and short Rukai tunic and, with its long sleeves and neck opening, it is cut like a Chinese garment. Could it be Chinese and Rukai at the same time? Taiwan's history of cultural influences has always been more complex than it appears – just like this Rukai tunic.

Nicolas Grevot's collection can be seen at ***www.formosatribal.com***

A couple of Rukai last year wearing traditional dress, Dongxing village (Taromak), Taidong District, Taiwan. Note : this man has the right to bear a white lily on the head symbolizing his courage in hunting

The law firm that started a textile museum

Linda McIntosh, consultant to the Tilleke & Gibbins Textile Collection in Bangkok, tells the remarkable story of how the firm came to assemble a beautiful and important group of Southeast Asian textiles

The Tilleke & Gibbins Textile Collection began in the late 1980s when Tilleke & Gibbins, the oldest surviving law firm in Bangkok, Thailand, moved into their former offices near Lumpini Park behind the American Embassy. David Lyman, the present Chairman and Chief Values Officer, desired a different look, a Thai theme, for the offices' interior design.

A passionate carpet collector since his law school days, Mr. Lyman readily agreed to the suggestion to use a local art form—hand-woven fabrics- to adorn the office walls. Others were initially less enthusiastic but were won over by the art's beauty, and the responses from clients and employees became very positive.

Soon, the firm began to acquire more weavings of the various ethnic groups living in Thailand and neighboring countries. The seeds for starting the Collection were planted in 1987, and as the number of textiles grew, especially with the acquisition of 70 rare Lao fabrics, the Tilleke & Gibbins Textile Collection was officially established a few years later under its first full time curator, Karen Bunyaratavej.

The mission of the Textile Collection is not only to decorate Tilleke & Gibbins' offices but to preserve Thailand's and other Southeast Asian countries' textile heritage for present and future generations. The Collection is available to the public for research and educational purposes. Interested individuals and groups are welcome to visit Tilleke & Gibbins to view the textiles on display, which are rotated every six months, and the Textile Collection storage room in order to view the Collection's storage and preservation methods.

The textiles are stored following international museum collection standards, and UV filters are placed on the office lights to prevent damage to the displayed fabrics – light is the major enemy of textiles. Researchers also utilize the Collection's resources since each textile is photographed and documented and the data are stored in a museum collection software program.

The Collection presently consists of approximately 1,800 textiles. The majority of the textiles originate from diverse countries comprising mainland Southeast Asia: Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Burma or present-day Myanmar, and Vietnam. Insular Southeast Asian textiles, such as those from Malaysia and a few Indonesian islands, are also represented in the Collection, but the focus is closer to home: Thailand.

Exceptions include Indian trade textiles made for the Southeast Asian market, specifically Siam or present-day Thailand, and other non-Southeast Asian textiles include a few examples from

Archival care is taken seriously at the Tilleke and Gibbins collection

ethnic minority groups living in southern China. Ethno-linguistic links connect these minority groups with the peoples living in neighboring Southeast Asia.

As stated above, the focus is on cloth from the various ethnic groups living in Thailand, especially from Tai cultures. The ethnic Thais belong to the Tai branch of the Tai-Kadai ethno-linguistic family. The Lao, the dominant majority of Laos and most populous ethnic group of northeast Thailand, also belong to this branch, which is composed of numerous subgroups, such as the Tai Phuan, Tai Yuan, Tai Lue, Phuthai, Tai Dam, and Tai Yai or Shan. The Collection has a solid foundation of this diverse material culture of the Tai groups.

Textiles originating from non-Tai groups living in Thailand are also represented in the Collection. These cultures include the Khmer and related linguistic groups such as the Kui. The Khmer are the dominant ethnic group of Cambodia. The Kui live in the southern provinces of northeast Thailand that border Cambodia. The Khmer and Kui weavers are particularly known for their weft ikat-decorated silks.

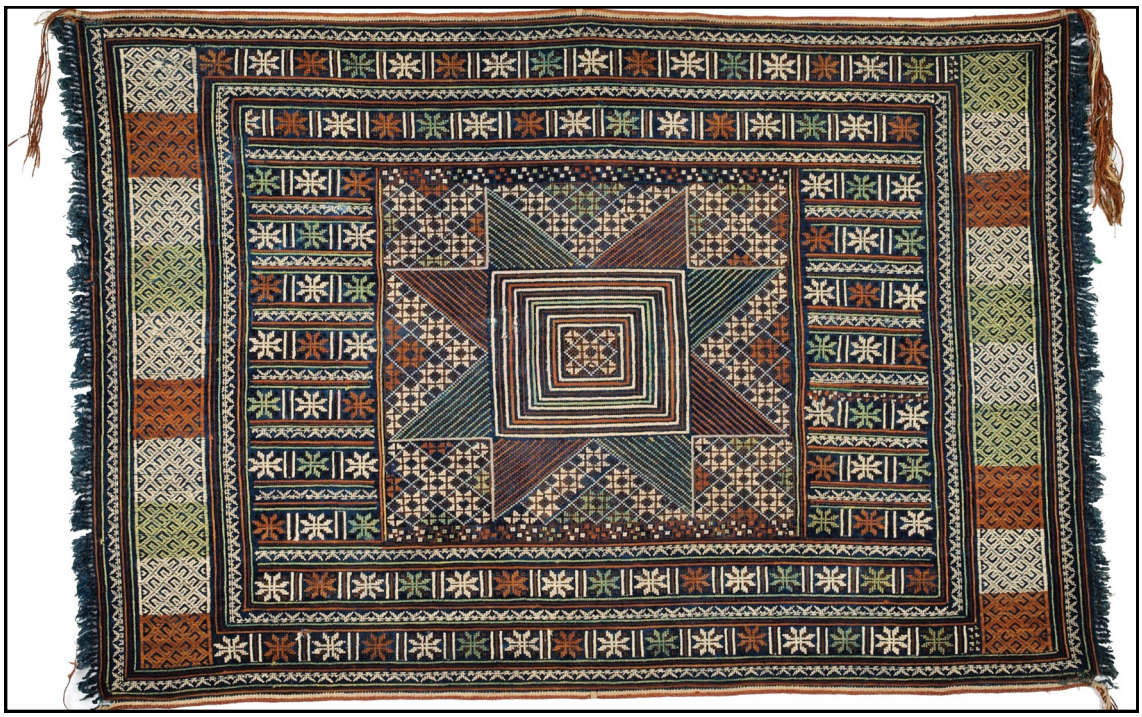
The Collection holds fabrics from other minority groups, including the Malay, Cham, Hmong, Karen, Akha, and Mien. The ethnic groups comprising Thailand's population also live in neighboring countries, and the textile trail follows these branches into Laos, Vietnam, Burma, Malaysia, and southern China.

The Collection also houses textiles originating from ethnic groups not represented within Thailand's borders. The civilizations forming Thailand over the centuries did not exist in a vacuum but interacted with their neighbours. The inclusion of textiles from other Southeast Asian groups is, therefore, logical. Burmese, Intha, Naga, Kachin, and Chin textiles from Burma, or Myanmar, are well represented . There are also examples from minority peoples living in southern Laos and the central highlands of Vietnam. These geographically isolated cultures are the Jarai, Rhade, Katu, Ta-oi, and other groups.

The textiles in the Collection range from high status court textiles to household items, with the philosophy that all are an art form. Utilitarian items, such as blankets, curtains, and mattress covers, are often elaborately decorated with intricate designs. Many of these comprise a bride's trousseau and are meticulously decorated with symbols of beauty for the joyous life event.

Other types of textiles include clothing for everyday use and special occasions. The materials depend on the intended use and the owner's status. Court textiles are often made of costly, imported materials, such as gold and silver-wrapped thread.

Khmer ceremonial hanging



Mien bride's headscarf

Hand-woven or hand-adorned cloth maintains a prominent role in the religions of Southeast Asian cultures. Textiles function as religious offerings, tools to demarcate sacred space, and as conduits between the natural and supernatural.

The Collection houses many examples of woven materials associated with shamanic rituals and Buddhist ceremonies, for example. It is vital these textiles are preserved since most of their production has declined or even ceased. Funeral banners, both shamanic and Buddhist, are religious textiles that are quickly disappearing so the Collection houses different examples of this type in order to preserve them for present and future generations' appreciation and learning.

The Collection regularly loans textiles to local, regional, and international exhibitions in fulfilling its mission to preserve textiles as art and as an educational tool. In Bangkok, Tilleke & Gibbins' textiles have been exhibited at the Jim Thompson Centre for Textiles and the Arts at the Jim Thompson House Museum in Bangkok. When this Foundation hosted its first international symposium on Southeast Asian textiles in 1999, a special display of the firm's textiles accompanied the event at the Shangri-La Hotel.

Other exhibits have been: *Power Dressing* (2003); *Tied Together* (2004); *Status, Myth, and the Supernatural* (2005), and *Weaving Paradise* (2007).

Examples from the Collection have also been part of exhibitions held regionally and internationally. *Invisible Hands* was the first temporary exhibition held at the National Museum of Laos-Luang Prabang in 2005, and Tilleke & Gibbins gladly participated with the loan of textiles. International loans include *Weaving Tradition: Carol Cassidy and Woven Silks of Laos* held at several locations in the United States, such as the Museum of Craft and Folk Art in San Francisco.

To accommodate its growth needs, in September 2008 Tilleke & Gibbins relocated to seven floors of the Supalai Grand Tower near the Chao Phraya River in the newly developing Southeast corner of Bangkok. This has also allowed the Collection to expand with the firm. The storage facilities have been enlarged to accommodate additional shelving and a larger workspace to care for the fabrics and more of the Collection will be on display throughout the offices.

The present curator, Wipawee Tiyawes, is busily arranging the Collection in its new home. As the Collection's consultant, Linda McIntosh is writing a book highlighting some remarkable examples of the firm's heritage textiles. This will be published in December 2008.

Tilleke & Gibbins International Ltd, 20th-26th Floor, Supalai Grand Tower , No. 1011 Rama 3 Road, Kwaeng Chongnonsi, Khet Yannawa, Bangkok 10120.

Himalayan textiles from a Great Gamer

Emma Martin, Head of Ethnology at National Museums Liverpool, writes about the remarkable textile collection of the diplomat and spy F. M. 'Eric' Bailey

National Museums Liverpool (NML) is England's only national museums group based entirely outside London. It is home to a diverse range of collections and buildings reflecting Liverpool's status as the second city of the Empire in the 19th century.

The Tibetan collection at NML is considered to be one of the finest - and most comprehensive - in the UK, with nearly 2,500 items. The collection focuses on cultural Tibet, with pieces from Tibet, Bhutan, Sikkim, Ladakh, and Nepal.

Rather than the accumulated material of a single donor, this fascinating collection includes objects from a number of collectors, many of whom were stationed on the India-Tibet border as political officers for the British India government in the early 20th century.

Exhibition on Tibet at the Walker Art Gallery in March 1953. It was opened by Lieutenant Colonel Bailey

The donors include Colonel (later Sir) Francis Younghusband (1863-1942), John Claude White (1853-1918), Sir Charles Bell (1870-1945), Hugh Richardson (1905-2000), and Lieutenant Colonel F. M. 'Eric' Bailey (1882-1967), many of whom were stationed on the India – Tibet border as Political Officers for the British India government in the early 20th century.

Serendipity brought the collection to Liverpool in the second half of the 20th century, arriving as it did, in the aftermath of the Liverpool Blitz, which had destroyed the museum in 1941. Hearing about the terrible damage to Liverpool Museum and its collections, the director of Newbury Museum wrote a letter in 1950 asking if Liverpool would be interested in loaning an interesting collection from Tibet that had once belonged to Sir Charles Bell.

Luckily for Liverpool Museum, a tenacious woman called Elaine Tankard was then the museum's Keeper of Antiquities and she

Royal dancer's head-dress from Bhutan

very quickly recognised the importance of the collection. So much so that she not only secured it for the museum, but used it as the centrepiece for a groundbreaking exhibition simply called 'Tibet', which was opened by Lieutenant Colonel F.M. Bailey (he was always known as Eric) at the city's Walker Art Gallery in March 1953. Over 50 years since that first exhibition many of the finest pieces from the Tibetan collection are once again on permanent display in the new World Cultures gallery at World Museum Liverpool (formerly Liverpool Museum).

Lieutenant Colonel and Mrs Bailey, strong supporters of that first exhibition, also went on to become life-long donors to the museum. They accumulated an extensive collection during Lieutenant Colonel Bailey's long and eventful career in the Himalayas, beginning with his participation, as a young officer, in the Younghusband Expedition to Tibet (1903-04).

However, it was in the 1920s when he took the post of Political Officer for Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet (and also some-time British spy in Central Asia) that he focused his collecting activities on the textiles that make up such a large part of the Bailey collection in Liverpool. These interests are revealed in pieces such as a royal dancer's head-dress from Bhutan , a Chinese silk temple hanging from Tibet and a Bhutanese official's hat.

This focus on textiles was in no small part due to his wife, Mrs. E. Bailey, who took a great interest in the patterns and designs used by Himalayan craftsmen. The extensive collection of Bhutanese and Tibetan patterns meticulously traced onto paper, reflects Mrs. Bailey's interest in the process of making. She spent time with weavers, and painters explicitly asking for details of how pieces were made and designed. A wonderful illustration of this comes in the form of a group of letters between Miss Tankard and Mrs Bailey discussing Miss Tankard's success at creating Tibetan tablet weaving, which had been based on Mrs Bailey's instructions.

'*After two evenings practice, following your instruction, I have produced about eighteen inches of your plain chequer garter pattern with brown and white lined edge. I shall leave the variations for later more ambitious efforts…*'

Miss Tankard to Mrs Bailey, 19th May, 1965

Unfortunately, neither Miss Tankard's apparatus nor the weaving have found their way into the museum's collections.

However, an exceptional group of textiles did make it, including the attire for Bhutanese royal or high ranking women and a complete outfit for a Tibetan official—opposite- both of which were seen by OATG members during their recent study visit to World Museum, Liverpool. These two groups of textiles were not just collected as souvenirs, but clearly from Mrs Bailey's notes and recollections they were enthusiastically worn at several events . in Sikkim and Tibet.

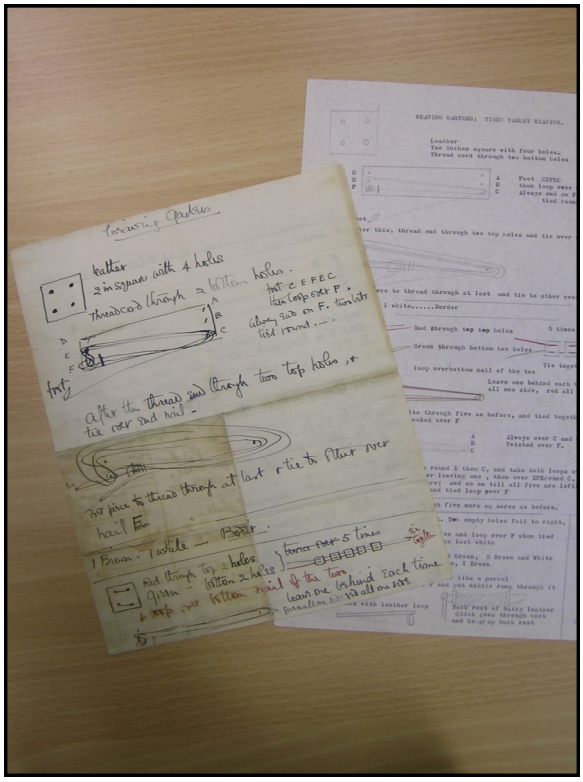
The rest of this article will focus on the Tibetan official's dress, identical to those worn by the Tibetan government and is likely to have been acquired by Bailey when he and Mrs Bailey visited Lhasa in 1924.

An official would have had two sets of attire, one for summer and one for winter. The outfit in the museum's collection was one intended for the summer months and is similar to those worn by Tibetan officials in thephotograph on p16 taken in Calcutta in 1911. The outer layer, which can be seen opposite, is a golden yellow silk brocade robe, which is a Lhasa man's version of the *chuba,* a Tibetan full length robe that is worn tightly around the body and secured with a sash or belt. Any excess cloth from the robe would be pleated or bunched to the back and a pouch formed at the front, over the sash, which becomes an incredibly useful integral pocket, while the sleeves were always extended far beyond the hands for warmth.

The rich yellow of the robe relates both to the imperial privileges of the Chinese Emperor's circle and the deep golden yellow of the Tibetan *sangha* or monastic community, but in Tibet this combination of colour and type of robe was only worn by the lay government officials.

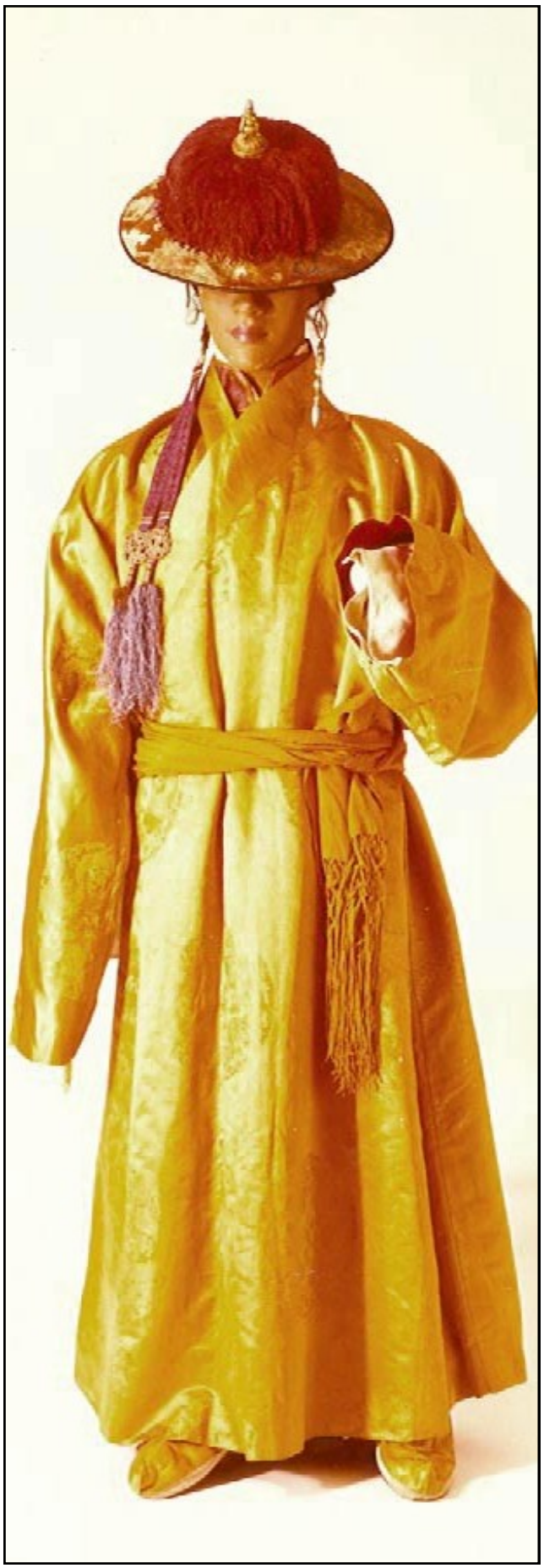
Beneath the silk robe a whole series of layers can be found, firstly, a dark green paisley patterned full length cotton robe that echoes the shape of the outer robe.

The cotton used in this robe tells us a great deal about the trading relationships Tibet was engaged in before and after the Younghusband expedition of 1903-04. Rather than this paisley patterned cotton coming from India or indeed Manchester, this trade cloth appears to be from Russia, an important trading partner for Tibet. Cloths incorporated into Tibetan dress reflect the international nature of Tibetan trading, with brocades coming



Top: Tracings of Tibetan textile patterns made by Mrs Bailey.

Bottom: Mrs Bailey's instructions for tablet weaving.



Summer costume for a Tibetan official

from as far afield as France, Japan and China, while Indian cottons were regularly traded across the Himalayas. Underneath this inner robe is a Chinese styled red silk brocade waistcoat to be worn over the pale coloured silk shirt and finally cotton lined leggings.

Alongside the robe and its undergarments the official's outfit would not be complete without a variety of external pockets and accessories, the design of which is heavily influenced by Chinese styles (see next page). Purses, spectacle cases and fan cases were all practical items used to carry everyday items, but they were also important symbols of identity, alerting others to the wearer's status and standing within society.

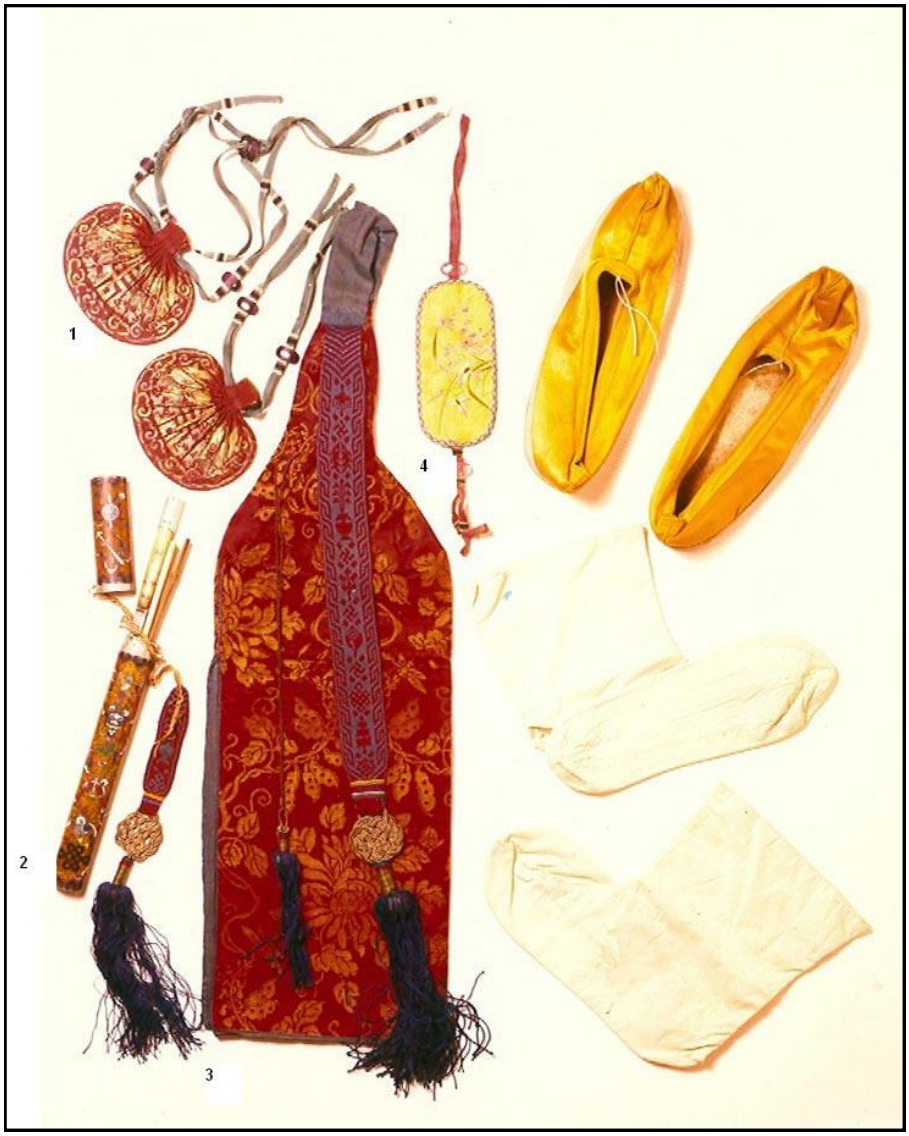
The use of purses hung from the sash harks back to the nomadic origins of Tibet's people when these elaborately decorated silk brocade purses would have been little more than a gathered leather circle used to hold flint for lighting fires.

The purses accompanying this outfit are made from red silk brocade and are decorated with couched silver and gold thread designs of dragons and good luck symbols.

The carrying of spectacle cases and chopsticks holders (see p16) suggests a more bureaucratic role for the owner of these accessories, with the cloisonné chopstick and knife holder being an integral part of any official's attire, as entertaining and being entertained was such an important part of high society in 1920's Lhasa.

Finally, the large external pocket used for holding items of business is made from red silk brocade, with draw strings of plaited orange and blue cotton ending in blue silk tassels. A blue silk loop sewn on for hanging from the sash is decorated with a tablet-woven strip in blue and red and is again finished with a deep blue silk tassel.

This official's outfit is just one example from an outstanding collection of Himalayan textiles, a choice few of which, including *cham* dance costumes, thangkas and silk banners can be seen on display at World Museum Liverpool.



Top: Tibetan officials in Calcutta in 1911. They are wearing the summer costume shown on page 15.

Bottom: Accessories were every bit as important as clothing to a court official. Here we see items including shoes, spectacle cases, chopstick and knife holders and a silk brocade purse.

A region of extraordinary diversity

Hywel Coleman writes on the Exhibition of Indonesian textiles from Bali and Nusa Tenggara that has opened at the University of Leeds International Textiles Archive.

Take an area a little smaller than Scotland, break it into more than 2,000 islands and then scatter these islands in an arc measuring 1,500 km from end to end (the same distance as London to Warsaw) : this is the region of Nusa Tenggara in Indonesia. The name *Nusa Tenggara* means 'the Islands of the Southeast'. Twelve million people live in this region. For comparison, Scotland, with a slightly large land area, has a population of just over five million.

The region is divided into three provinces : Bali, NTB (West Nusa Tenggara) and NTT (East Nusa Tenggara). Despite its relatively limited land area, Nusa Tenggara is a region of extraordinary diversity, demographically, in climate, in natural history, economically, in terms of religious affiliation, culturally and linguistically. It is thus a microcosm of the extraordinary diversity of Indonesia as a whole.

Warp *ikat hinggi*, East Sumba

In terms of religion, for example, the people of Bali are largely Hindu, the population of NTB is largely Muslim, and the people of NTT are largely Christian. There are, however, numerous exceptions to these generalisations. Linguistically, the people of Nusa Tenggara speak 73 languages, in addition to the national language, Bahasa Indonesia.

As we would expect in a region of such variety, Nusa Tenggara is also extremely diverse in its traditional textiles. This can be seen in :

* techniques of textile production
* textile design
* the 'cultural islands' which are found even within individual geographic islands
* the functions which textiles have in their societies
* evidence of continuity, decline and innovation.

The exhibition ***Bali and the Islands of the Southeast*** aims to record some of

this extraordinary variety.

Techniques

Ikat is one of the most widely used techniques in Nusa Tenggara, particularly warp ikat. The exhibition includes three examples of the stunning warp ikat *hinggi* (blankets) from Sumba. Bali is one of the very few places in the world where double ikat cloths, called here *geringsing*, are produced. Double ikat is an immensely laborious procedure and is used to create only the most sacred cloths. Two examples are shown in the exhibition.

After ikat, supplementary weft and *songket* (a specialised form of supplementary weft using metallic threads) are the most notable textile production techniques in Nusa Tenggara. Several songket from Lombok, Sumbawa and Bima are included in the exhibition.

Design

Textile designs in Nusa Tenggara range from relatively straightforward parallel stripes and checks to complex symbolic and representational patterns. Some of these elements are indigenous whilst others show the influence of Indian *patola* textiles imported into Indonesia in the 17th century.

Probably one of the oldest design elements is the hook and rhomb, said to be associated with the Dong Son culture which dominated Southeast Asia at the beginning of the first millennium. This motif occurs in a myriad of manifestations, especially in the textiles of South Central Timor.

Cultural islands

A striking feature of textile production in Nusa Tenggara is that many of the communities which weave – often no larger than a single village – are ethnically and culturally distinct from the majority community which surrounds them. Some of these 'cultural islands' produce textiles purely for their own use whilst others produce them for sale to the wider community. Two examples from among several are the village of Tanglad on the island of Nusa Penida, near Bali, and Boti, a village-sized kingdom in South Central Timor, NTT.

Weavers in Tanglad produce weft ikat cloths called *cepuk*. These cloths are admired and are widely used throughout Bali for their sacred qualities. But Nusa Penida is distinct from

Double ikat geringsing, Bali

Weaver in the village kingdom of Boti, South Central Timor

mainland Bali in many ways, climatically and culturally. In the past the island was used by the Kingdom of Klungkung as a place of exile for troublemakers and the mainland Balinese still regard the place with nervous awe.

The people of Boti have preserved a unique culture and they practise their own belief system, whilst all around them the people have adopted Christianity. The textiles of Boti maintain the highest standards of traditional weaving, employing homespun cotton thread and natural dyes. Almost exclusively, the textiles produced here are used by the people themselves.

Functions

The textiles of Nusa Tenggara are produced for a variety of purposes, from humble daily wear to elaborate cloths required for ceremonial purposes. Examples include the *sarung nggoli* of Bima (good quality check sarongs which are worn for going to the mosque on Friday, for example, but which have no particular ritual function) and *mau ana'* (literally 'small blanket' or shoulder sash from South Central Timor, used as a ritual gift in *natoni* ceremonies when visitors are welcomed to a district, village, school or other institution).

Continuity, decline and innovation

The 'traditional' textiles of Nusa Tenggara do not exist in conditions of frozen stability. The contexts in which they are produced and used are dynamic, subject to constantly fluctuating economic and cultural forces. In response, the techniques of textile production, the cultural meanings of textiles and the functions which they play are also subject to change. Thus in this richly diverse region we can find evidence of continuity, decline and innovation occurring side by side.

Continuity There is evidence from Old Javanese literature that the weft ikat *cepuk* textiles, similar to those being woven today in Nusa Penida, and the double ikat *geringsing* cloths of Bali have been in production for at least six centuries.

Decline The weaving of *endek* (weft ikat) cloths in Gianyar, Bali, has declined sharply since the 1990s. The weaving of weft ikat *sarung* by the Selayar minority in the village of Meraran, West Sumbawa, has ended within living memory.

Innovation Batik has been introduced relatively recently in Bali, to cater for the tourist market and also in an attempt to create employment for unemployed weavers.

Conclusion

It is a source of wonder that, in such a small area, there continues to thrive such extraordinary cultural diversity. The textile producing communities of Nusa Tenggara have demonstrated their ability to adapt to changing social contexts and, from time to time, to borrow uninhibitedly from outside sources. At the same time, they have also succeeded in achieving continuity over many centuries, indeed for even longer.

But much remains to be discovered about the textiles of this region :

* Researchers have already paid considerable attention to the textiles of Bali (for example Hauser-Schäublin et al.), Bima (Hitchcock), East Sumba (Forshee) and some parts of Flores (Barnes). Other areas in this region, however, have been relatively neglected, particularly Lombok, Sumbawa, Timor and Rote.
* The concept of 'cultural islands' requires further exploration both within Nusa Tenggara and more widely in Indonesia.
* Much work is still needed on ethnolinguistic issues relating to textiles (the terminology of looms, the weaving and dyeing processes, and textile patterns).

The items in the exhibition are drawn from the collection of Hywel Coleman, Honorary Senior Research Fellow in the School of Education, University of Leeds. He is a consultant to the Ministry of National Education, Indonesia, and he has been collecting Indonesian textiles since 1973.
Web www.hywelcoleman.com. Email h.coleman@adm.leeds.ac.uk.

A monograph - ***Patterns of Culture : The Textiles of Bali and Nusa Tenggara*** - has been published to accompany the exhibition. This has been made possible with the generous support of the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in the UK. To obtain copies please contact ULITA (details below).

The exhibition is taking place at ULITA (University of Leeds International Textiles Archive) between 6th October 2008 and 27th February 2009. ULITA is open to the public from Tuesday to Friday every week from 9.30 to 16.30. No prior appointment is necessary (except for groups) and admission is free. ULITA is located in the converted St Wilfred's Chapel in the campus of Leeds University Business School, Maurice Keyworth Building, Moorland Road, Leeds LS2 9JT.

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Textile traditions of Sumatra—part 1

Earlier this year OATG members David and Sue Richardson travelled to the Indonesian island of Sumatra where they came across wonderful—but threatened—textile traditions. The second part of this article will appear in the next edition of *Asian Textiles*

We love the different cultures of the Indonesian islands, especially the small ones, and the kaleidoscope of textiles that they produce. Over the years we have made many trips to the region and have built up an interesting collection. However we had never been to Sumatra, the biggest Indonesian island (in fact the fourth largest in the world) and the one with probably the richest textile culture.

In April this year we found ourselves in the hot and bustling town of Medan, having spent six hours crossing the Strait of Malacca in the coldest and noisiest ferry on the planet. Our plan was to head for the pretty region of Lake Toba to explore the weavings of the Batak and then work our way across to mountainous Western Sumatra to spend time with the Minangkabau. After a couple of weeks we would then travel down to the hot and humid southern flatlands to visit the Malays of Palembang, ending up in the hilly port city of Bandar Lampung, only 120 miles from Jakarta.

Although Sumatra is an island of great cultural diversity there are also many common traits between its peoples. Textiles continue to play an important role as gifts of exchange at significant stages of life such as marriages, births and deaths, not only cementing the bonds between related families but also maintaining the demand for traditional cloths. In the past costume was strictly prescribed not only according to status but in relation to specific social interactions – thus when a Minangkabau married woman visited her mother-in-law she was expected to wear a certain design of cloth. This aspect still plays a part today and may account for the wide variety of different textiles used within each ethnic group. Above all, Sumatrans seem to love glitter and glitz and a local wedding makes the British equivalent look like a funeral.

At the same time weaving is not a universal activity but tends to be restricted to certain tra-

Sintamina Pasaribu with one of her cloths

ditional communities. Although tourists might assume otherwise, the majority of weaving is still undertaken to satisfy the needs of the local people.

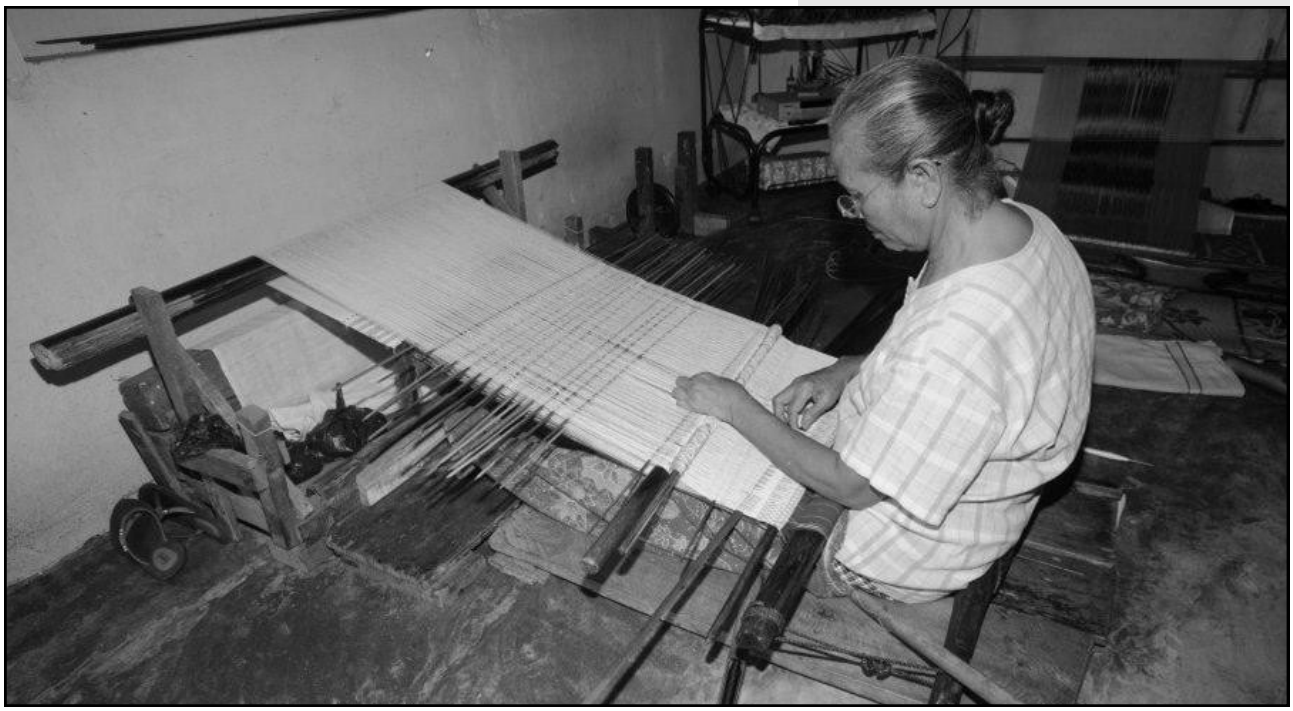
The Batak are divided into six ethnic groups and you pass through the highlands of the Karo and the Simalungun on the way to the flooded caldera of Lake Toba. We stopped at a well organised Karo weaving workshop at Kabanjahe, the capital of the district, where girls were working in good conditions operating six frame looms with flying shuttles. Using hand drawn patterns they were weaving good quality but rather characterless warp-striped cotton cloths, applying the discontinuous supplementary weft decoration by hand. Roughly a dozen identical cloths were turned out from each warp length, cloths that had been traditionally woven individually on a back-torsion loom. Half of the output was in traditional dark brown colours but the other half was in bright red or turquoise blue with synthetic gold thread decoration.

We had presumed that Batak weavings would always be more simple and perhaps more "tribal" that the golden *songkets* of the Minangkabau and the Malays but we were wrong. During the 20th century they seem to have adopted a fashion for covering some of their striped cloths with patterns of gold supplementary weft, creating their own style of *songket*— a cloth intensively decorated with supplementary weft patterning using metallic thread. This love of supplementary gold is still very much alive today.

The most prolific Batak weavers are the Toba Batak who live around the shores of, and to the south of Lake Toba. They produce an amazing portfolio of cloths that they call *ulos*. We correctly anticipated that Lake Toba would be full of tourist tack and our hearts sank as we walked along the lanes of Tomok, the main tourist centre of Samosir Island, lined with stalls selling garish cloths over-decorated with gold and DayGlo pinks and yellows. Our faith was partially restored at Simonindo, further up the island, where there is a small museum with a display of traditional Toba *ulos*. Each design involved a different combination of warp stripe and warp ikat and many were made with just a single dye – blue indigo. Many had long fringes at each end and in some the fringes were laced into a pattern. After visiting several homes we came across the helpful 79-year-old Sintamina Pasaribu, who sat with us outside of her home opposite the church to show us her own collection of cloths and to explain why they had been given to her.

For example, her *ulos bintang maratur* with rows of stars had been given to her by her grandparents when she was a bride, to wish her a long life and many children. Her *ulos bolang*, with a light blue ikat centre panel and dark blue side borders, had been a wedding gift to her husband from his future mother-in-law. It was a funeral cloth, never intended to be worn. She had been given her red *ulos mangiring* with blue, yellow and red warp stripes, just after her marriage when she was three months pregnant. However her star weaving was her *ulos ragi hidup*, the highest status cloth of them all. It had been a gift from the parents of the groom to the parents of the

A ceremonial alcove or *palaminan* at Sungai Beringin.



Ibu Simatupang counting threads for a pattern stick on her loom

bride at the time of her wedding. In the past the *ragi hidup* could only be worn by a local *raja* but today it could be worn to a ceremony or a funeral by an elderly couple who had children and grandchildren. However were it to be donned by a younger person they would be ridiculed. Later in our journey we chanced upon a Batak wedding party and it was noticeable that only a couple of the most senior guests wore the *ragi hidup*.

The *ulos ragi hidup* is made from three strips of cloth sewn together side by side – a wide central panel and two narrower warp-striped side panels. The central panel is unusual, having a warp-striped centre and two cream-coloured end panels. The latter are finely woven in supplementary weft, one containing a row of male motifs and the other a row of female motifs. These three central sections are not sewn together but are woven as an integral piece, the separate warps being looped and joined using a special frame. Consequently the cloth symbolises the unification of male and female at the time of the wedding.

Sintamina's *ragi hidup* had been woven in 1923 in a small town to the south of Lake Toba called Tarung Tung. It seems to have been an important centre of *ragi hidup* production and was a key point on our itinerary. After some searching we were lucky to find a house in Desa Hutagalung with three women, all weaving *ulos* on back-tension looms. The mother, Ibu Simatupang was weaving a *ragi hidup* that had been ordered by a merchant, while her two daughters were weaving more contemporary cloths.

We had arrived at a good time to see the weaving of the cream end panel, a very fine piece, the weaving of which was indistinguishable in quality from the 1923 cloth we had seen a couple of days before on Samosir. Ibu Simatupang was using fine 100 gauge machine spun cotton and the design was pre-programmed with 25 pattern sticks. Yet while the design of the male and female end panels was traditional, the colour of the striped central panel was a very contemporary bright red and blue.

It emerged from our discussions that her two daughters – the eldest was 45-years-old – were incapable of weaving an *ulos ragi hidup* themselves. Not only had they never been taught, they seemed to lack any desire to learn, accepting that the skill required was beyond them. We suddenly realised that we were witnessing the end of an era – the *ragi hidup* would fade away with the disappearance of the present generation of experienced weavers.

Whereas the Batak Toba are generally Christian, the more southerly Batak Angkola and Mandaling are Muslim. Our final experience of Batak culture occurred at the palace of a local

Batak Angkola *raja* at the village of Muara-Tais. The Daulet Tuanku Sultan Haji Baharuddin Harahap had recently married a princess from Yogyakarta and as our guide was a family friend we had an open invitation to visit. The *raja* was currently building a massive new mosque-like glass and marble palace topped with three huge metallic domes. The audience hall of the old palace was garishly decorated with red, yellow and green banners and red, gold embroidered panels. The sultan's collection of textiles included a number of Angkola *ulos sadam*, jolly red and black weavings with beaded end borders and rows of colourful geometric supplementary weft patterning, including several bands of piled weaving.

The hill town of Bukittinggi sits at the heart of the Minangkabau highlands and is a pleasant place to stay for a few days. While the museum does have a display of textiles it is quite disappointing so we familiarised ourselves with the local weavings at the handful of dealers located along the main street. The finest weavings are exquisitely beautiful, with conservative colourings, densely woven supplementary gold decoration and a refined and muted colouration to the gold thread. Many were woven over 100 years ago. The problem is that the Minangkabau use their *songket* for headdresses and waist belts, requiring it to be tightly folded. Over time this creates lines of damaged gold threads across the cloth.

The quality of the imported metallic thread remains the key factor in determining the quality of local modern *songket*. In the past the finest gold thread was imported from Macao, although it was probably made in India, Iran or even Europe. It is impossible to find the equivalent quality today. It must be very frustrating for modern weavers, since it still requires the same amount of skill and effort to weave a mediocre cloth compared to a top-notch one.

Our first local trip was to Sungai Beringin where the wealthy Nasrul family had constructed a fabulous traditional *rumah gadang* house and ceremonial hall. The family kindly showed us some of their formal costumes and textiles, all featuring large amounts of gold supplementary weft and gold embroidery. The ceremonial hall contained raised stages lavishly decorated with gold encrusted wall panels, canopies, banners, hangings, umbrellas and other paraphernalia.

There are several local Minangkabau villages that specialise in producing high quality textiles for weddings and traditional ceremonies. The closest to Bukitttingi is neighbouring Kota Gadang, where they make big brightly embroidered floral silk shawls stretching them out on large wooden frames. Some women also produce hand made lacework fringes known as *rendo ujuang* for decorating the ends of *songket* cloths.

Pandai Sisket, 9km further south, sits at the foot of Singgalang volcano and specialises in *songket* weaving. We read that it had 1,000 looms but this can no longer be correct. Pusako Weaving House, the most stylish local dealer, is supported by just 20 to 30 weavers and other dealers seem to rely on similar small numbers. Ibu Tafsinor, the proprietor, was keen to show off a cerise silk cloth completely covered in a 20-motif gold design, noting that some weavers could even incorporate up to 40-motifs. The quality of the weaving, accomplished on non-traditional frame looms, was excellent but we found the designs over complicated and the ground weaves too garish. Yet this is today's fashion. Tourism is minimal and most customers are local Indonesians or Malays who have come specifically to buy cloth. Only a minority still want the traditional designs on a purple ground.

The second *songket* weaving village is Silingkang, over 100km south of Bukittinggi. You would never know apart from a couple of dealers shops at the side of the road just on the edge of town. Silingkang *songket* is woven in similar bright colours and is distinguished by its floral and peacock motifs, which for us did not appeal. We were told there were about 100 local weavers, 25 of whom worked for one dealer while 25 more worked for another. The children were just leaving school and some of them escorted us to visit the homes of a few of the weavers. Interestingly some women were using frame looms whilst others still had back-tension looms. Silingkang looked like quite a poor village and the working conditions for many of the weavers looked primitive, stuck in a cellar with a single light bulb and surrounded by household junk. Those that we talked to all sold their *songket* to traders and complained that they received little for their efforts. (**contd on p26**)

Preserving Indonesia's textile tradition

Mariah Waworuntu of The Indonesian Traditional Textile Society explains how the organisation was formed.

Textiles have always played a significant role in the lives of Indonesian people, as they seem to have a certain power that allows them to enter into all aspects of life and be examined on various levels of interpretation.

Primarily textiles are used as clothing but may also function as objects in rituals and ceremonies. In Java batik has many uses; it is important from birth, marriage, until death. In Bali textiles are used not only for daily wear but also for ceremonies and as part of rituals. In Sumba woven cloths present stories and are virtual windows of culture and history.

During the 1970s, the production, use and understanding of Indonesian traditional textiles was at a very low level. Some types of textiles became very rare and some were not made anymore. Because of these circumstances, a group of textile enthusiasts got together to safeguard this precious heritage, and founded *Himpunan Wastraprema* also known as the Indonesian Traditional Textile Society. Wastraprema comes from the Sanskrit words: *wastra*= cloth; *prema*=love.

This group of men and women share a devotion and keen interest in working towards the survival and sustainability of Indonesian textiles. With the support of Mr. Ali Sadikin—at the time the Governor of Jakarta - the Jakarta Textile Museum soon opened, located in an early 19th century mansion in West Jakarta. As constitutional partner of the Museum, the Wastraprema's official address is at the Jakarta Textile Museum, where the Society has its office in a pavilion next to the Museum.

The initial collection of the Museum consisted of fine traditional textiles donated by Wastraprema members. In its efforts to work towards a better understanding and appreciation of the importance of valuing and preserving textile heritage, the Wastraprema continues to initiate and promote study, exhibitions, and other forms of dissemination of traditional Indonesian textiles to ensure its survival and sustainability.

To this end, the Wastraprema has supported a student of the Gajah Mada University Yogyakarta in obtaining his doctoral degree with his research on the life and work of Panembahan Hard-

Ritual Cloth. Ngada Flores, Nusa Tenggara Timur. 248 x 110cm. Handspun cotton, organic dye, fibre string, shells, warp ikat, plain weave, embroidery (Caecilia Papadimitriou Collection).

jonagoro Go Tik Swan, who was motivated by President Soekarno to create "Batik Indonesia", a term for a combination of Javanese court and north-coastal batik motifs and techniques.

In April this year, Wastraprema organized an exhibition called Adiwastra Nusantara or "Masterpieces of the Islands", showcasing rare cloths from private collections.

This event was held in conjunction with the sale and promotion of traditional textiles from all over Indonesia. By popular demand, this exhibition will be repeated next year with a different theme.

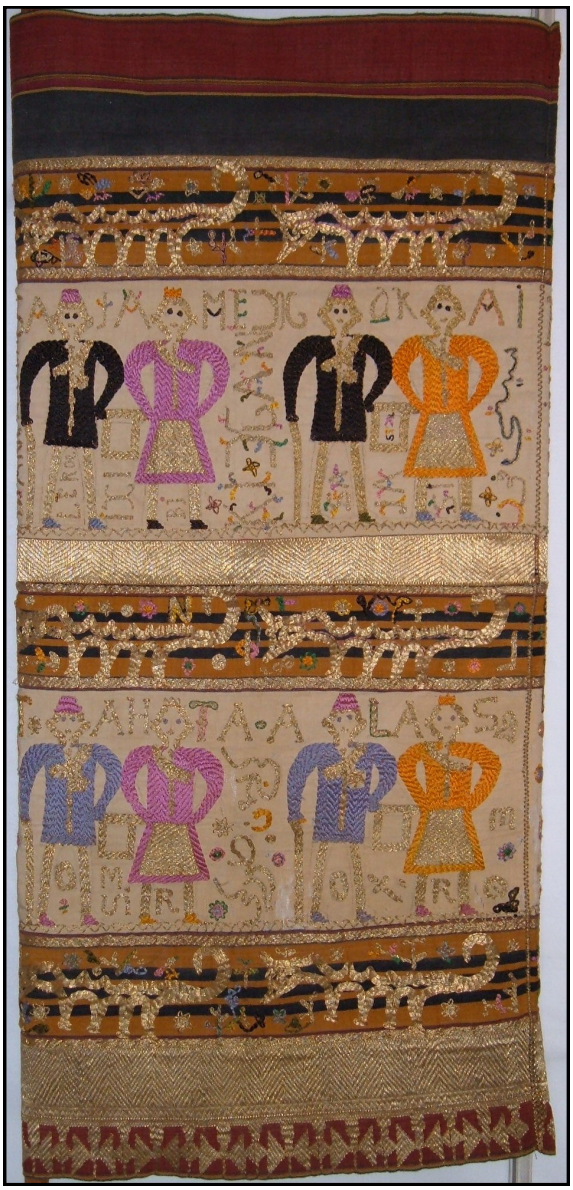
To increase appreciation of traditional textiles, Wastraprema is also working towards introducing an informative textile art education programme for elementary, secondary, and tourism schools. Creating this programme will challenge textile enthusiasts to share their knowledge and expertise with the younger generation.

From 2 - 5 February 2009, the second ASEAN Traditional Textile Symposium will be held in Manila, organized by the Museum Foundation of the Philippines and the Philippine National Museum in cooperation with Himpunan Wastraprema, and supported by the ASEAN Foundation Jakarta.

Our aim is to form a region-wide ASEAN Traditional Textiles Art Community, where knowledge, expertise and experiences in terms of traditional textiles can be shared.

Sources:

The Jakarta Textile Museum. *Pemerintah Daerah Khusus Ibukota* Jakarta 1998.
Jurnal Wastra. Jakarta: Himpunan Wastraprema. 2007, 2008



Woman's sarong. Tapis Lampung. 1933. 55 x 121 cm. Handspun cotton, silk, organic and chemical dyes, gold thread, mica, plain weave, embroidery(Caecilia Papadimitriou Collection).

Sumatra (contd from p24) It costs 200,000 IDR to buy enough thread to weave half a dozen cloths for which they were only paid 250,000 IDR (£14) for each finished item.

We discovered a local family who specialised in preparing the warps for all of the local weavers. They bought in reels of pre-dyed machine spun cotton and synthetic thread and used their own warping mill to create the specific warp sets required for each individual weaving. This was then sold on to the weaver along with the required quantity of cotton and gold thread. The latter was "Lorry" brand, imported from India via Singapore.

One of the highlights of our trip was as the result of gate crashing a local wedding reception. The event was held in a large marquee and the bride and groom stood on the stage in their gold encrusted wedding alcove, wearing their traditional glittering costumes. Nancy and Dedi were probably in their early twenties, but Nancy was so heavily made-up that she looked like the groom's mother. We were welcomed with open arms and after introducing ourselves, offered our congratulations to the happy couple. We could have stayed for the rest of the night but when we were eventually asked to take the stage and to sing for all of the guests we decided it might be a good moment to leave. We made our excuses and darted for the door!

Insight into the Ashmolean's new galleries

Starting the new programme in October, our Chairman Ruth Barnes together with Ashmolean textile conservator, Susan Stanton, gave us a wonderful insight into the plans and creation of a new textile gallery for the Ashmolean Museum.

Ruth had been campaigning for many years for just a textile case but with the development of thirty-nine new galleries at the Ashmolean, the creation of a new gallery for textiles has been taken up with great enthusiasm. It's a wonderful opportunity to finally display some of the large and impressive collection that has been tucked away in Oxford. Several collections will be on view for the first time. It's a wonderful present for Ruth to have 150 sq. metres of gallery as opposed to just a case!

Ruth explained that it will be on the lower ground floor within a series of other thematic galleries. Rather than using a geographical approach, Ruth wants to identify topics relating to textiles such as function, status, culture and gender. As a result the various walls of the Gallery will identify such themes as weaving methods, social status, gender identity, religious imagery and the trade influences created by cross cultural links.

On entering the gallery you will first see a freestanding case which will always house an important item such as a robe, mantel or coat. The first one will be a gold and silver thread Arab robe given to T.E. Lawrence by Emir Faisal. This magnificent piece will create a striking display in the round. Other items to be rotated will be coats from the Robert Shaw Collection such as the beautiful 19th Century silk double-ikat from Gujarat, India. One can imagine how beautiful this will look in the new setting with the optimum lighting on these vibrant red and yellow silks with their metallic embroidery.

On the East wall of the gallery which relates to status, life cycle rituals and religious themes, one of the key objects will be a Doge's hat from Northern Italy. This is another spectacularly shaped item made with golden thread depicting intricate woven designs. Other pieces of clothing will indicate the age of the wearer. The Ashmolean has a wonderful collection of children's clothing so we will have a chance to see items such as a Roman child's sock or a delightful Indian boy's coat. There will also be religious textiles with biblical themes as well as samplers to show how patterns were developed.

Cross-cultural links are displayed on the west wall. The Ashmolean has a large collection of Indian block printed textiles which will be set next to each other as comparisons. These items were made in India and traded to Egypt in the 14th Century. From samplers we will be able to see the connections between Islamic and medieval embroideries.

Ruth not only wants to create a visually pleasing display but also wants to enable visitors to study objects from pull out drawers. Seating, magnifying and back lighting are planned so that the fine weaving and details can be revealed. This system will enable the displays to be changed so we can enjoy more of what is held at the Museum. Ruth mentioned that there are six to eight hundred coptic textiles, a collection that was once owned by William Morris. There are also the fascinating scraps of a robe from Tutankhamun's tomb, not to mention so many wonderful curious little objects waiting to be displayed.

Whilst Ruth gave us a wonderful tour of this new gallery space, Sue explained how each piece has to be assessed to make sure they can be safely displayed. She demonstrated the immense care that is taken with the example of the double-ikat silk coat, which could not hang without being repaired along crease lines. She showed how she restores with delicate adhesive materials so that the article is safe for display and looks little changed.

Ruth and Sue gave us a wonderful insight into the various aspects of the future structure of the gallery and we wish them all the best in their work towards this special opening. So put the completion date in your diary, November 2010, when we will be able to relish the beauty of the Ashmolean's textiles set at last in their own gallery space. **Jane O'Brien**

Tibetan rugs and dyes in the remote Wangden valley

.Rupert Smith first travelled to Turkey in the 1980s and was taught to weave by a master craftsman. Now he collects and trades in oriental carpets and is based in Thailand. Arriving in Oxford on a warm summer's evening in June he proceeded to spread out an interesting and varied collection of Tibetan rugs of varying ages, sizes, shapes and design. Tibetan rugs are notoriously difficult to date and to assign a place of origin; design and structure have been influenced through trading with China, Mongolia and Central Asia.

Rupert Smith discussed the main features of rugs such as the fine geometric design of an early square from Gampa Dzong, the plain blankets made with cut loop pile strips called *tsuktruk*, also runners, square pieces and aprons woven in bright stripes, different colour combinations for different parts of the country. There are some recurrent motifs such as the cross design, also used in Uzbek textiles, and also the crossed *vajra* which represents thunderbolts. These represent power and are thus appropriate for a monk's meditation rug.

Some of the weaving methods used in Tibet are unusual, particularly the Wangden technique where the backing is warp faced. A clear video helped members to understand the way in which weavers loop the yarn around a stick and then cut the pile.

Rugs have always been very important in the monasteries of Tibet as part of the meditation discipline. In the home, rugs are used as coverings for sofas or beds, as cushion covers, door covers and aprons. Saddle rugs and other woven items are also made for adorning horses or yaks.

In the remote Wangden valley, a project has been set up to encourage a group of eight families to create rugs using traditional designs. Each family is expected to contribute to the design process, to dye the materials using natural dyes such as indigo, madder and dried rhubarb, and to weave the rugs to a general specification. With help from project leaders including Smith, experiments with mordants to counter fading and with overdyeing combinations are in hand. The best of the finished rugs sell well in the Far East.

It was a pleasure to have such a knowledgeable and entertaining speaker to enlighten us on the way of life in remote regions of Tibet and the part textiles play in the religious and domestic life of the people. **Fiona Sutcliffe**

An Indonesian journal packed full of information

***Jurnal Wastra,* the magazine of Himpunan Wastraprema - Indonesian Traditional Textiles Society**

I was fortunate to be sent issue No.12, June 2008 of *Jurnal Wastra,* the bi-lingual (Bahasa Indonesia and English) journal of the *Himpunan Wastraprema* (HM), the Indonesian Traditional Textiles Society, which is published twice a year with Mariah Waworuntu as its chief editor.

It gives a very positive first impression being in full colour on heavy, quite glossy paper with a card cover and provides 48 pages of text and photos. Each page has both English and Bahasa and all image captions are in both languages. An additional challenge for the editor is getting the two languages to run side-by-side gracefully, which is successfully achieved.

The attractive presentation of issue No.12 is supported by an impressive group of contributors. The first article is by Dr Anas Biranual, a textile designer and fibre artist and currently Dean of the Faculty of Art and Design at the Bandung Institute of Technology. He reviews the 'Traditional Textiles Exhibition: Masterpieces of the Islands: a return of past cultural glory' held in April in the Jakarta Convention Centre.

Dr Woro Sumaryoto, lecturer of Anthropology at various institutions of higher education in Indonesia and overseas and specialising in Javanese Studies and Literature, gives in her article on Wayang and Batik an interesting and well illustrated description of the batik patterns worn by *wayang kulit* figures (leather puppet shadow theatre).

Genevieve Duggan needs little introduction to *Asian Textiles* readers who will be aware of her long term research on the culture of the island of Sawu*, especially the female moities and the ceremonial ikats of the island. I was particularly interested in her article in 'The Sabunese* Man's Blanket, Hi'i: An introduction to the textiles of the island of Sawu* (NTT)'. This article takes full advantage of colour printing to show several images of hi'i, pattern details and men wearing different hi'i patterning depending on moiety and origin and is supported by detailed text.

This edition of the journal sees the introduction of a new section on textiles of neighbouring countries with an article by Belen Ponferrada-Thirkell, an independent researcher and museum education consultant, on *pina* cloth from the Philippines: 'The Pina:Traversing Continents and Cultures'. The pineapple was introduced to the Philippines from South America by the Spaniards in the 16th century and provides both fruit and a fine fabric which can be extracted from the leaves.

Dr Ananda Moersid, senior lecturer of cultural Anthropology, Design Sociology and Interior Design at Jakarta Institute of Arts discusses in 'Re-invention of Tradition' the nuances and implications of how textiles, as displayed in the Masterpieces of the Archipelago exhibit mentioned above, are cultural symbols through which Indonesia express its identity.

The final article 'Batik Indramayu: a cultural note' by Edy Handoko, a researcher and batik entrepreneur, describes the batik of the Regency of Indramayu which lies on the border of the West Javanese city of Cirebon and is a meeting place of the Javanese and Sundanese cultures.

As well as articles *Jurnal Wastra* includes book reviews, information on books and events and a page of 'news in pictures'. Maria Waworuntu and her editorial team are to be commended on the quality of the publication and also the considerable fund raising efforts necessary to support it.

I was sufficiently enthused by the publication to consider joining HM in order to receive its journal. However, and it is here that the downside of the costs of full colour production and the heavy paper and card which support it becomes evident, annual membership of HM is $70 per year to include the two issues of the journal and mailing costs. This may be out of reach on an individual basis but could still be of interest to a library or group.

*While the island is officially named Sawu in Indonesian atlases, the inhabitants call it Sabu. While in this article Sawu continues to be used for the name of the island, the people are referred to as Sabunese.

Pamela A Cross.

A new wave of Saudi contemporary art comes to London, SOAS Brunei Gallery, University of London. 16th October 2008 - 13 December 2008
This pioneering exhibition is set to shed new light on the largely unknown contemporary art culture of Saudi Arabia. A new generation of artists will be in London this October to take part in the first ever comprehensive exhibition of contemporary Saudi art staged in the UK.

Edge Of Arabia, will feature the work of 17 Saudi contemporary artists, male and female, whose work explores the complex and diverse identities of 21st century life in the Middle East.

The issues addressed are as much personal or domestic as they are global. The artists have chosen not to focus on negative perceptions of the Middle East or artistic and intellectual clichés associated with the region and instead present a contemporary world view that is as unpredictable as it is beautiful.
More information http://www.soas.ac.uk/gallery/edge/edge-of-arabia.html

Field Trip: Conservation with Angela Cheung, Saturday 25 October.
Hong Kong Museum of History, 100 Chatham Road south, Kowloon, Tsim Sha Tsui.
Meet in the lobby of the Museum at 9.55am sharp.
Conservation is a primary function of museums, preserving invaluable and irreplaceable cultural artefacts. The specialist textile conservators are responsible for the preservation and restoration of textiles and garments.
In this visit to the Hong Kong Museum of History Conservation Suite, we will hear the personal experiences of textile conservator Angela Cheung, as well as enjoying a tour of the facilities and opportunity to view some current conservation projects. We will end the program with advice for members on the care of their own textile collections.
For a preview see the Museum's website
www.lcsd.gov.hk/CE/Museum/Conservation/
Please feel free to suggest, by email to Natascha Radclyffe-Thomas, items of particular interest to you within the Museum's textile collections.
Free for members, $50 for non-members, but please register with Natascha Radclyffe-Thomas at natascha8@btinternet.com

Chinese Treasures at Lotherton Hall. 7 June-31 December. Lotherton Hall, Leeds Leeds's outstanding Chinese collection will explore themes including food and drink, festivals, faiths and fashion. Admission free. More details www.leeds.gov.uk/lothertonhall

'**Great Rugs of the Hajji Babas'**, Thursday 4 December, 6.30pm.,The Textile Museum, Washington. Join Textile Museum director Daniel Walker for an exploration of some of the excellent rugs in the Hajji Baba Club members' collections and the qualities that have made collectors covet them.

'The Cutting Edge', 12 Nov 2008—7 July 2009, The Textile Museum of Canada, Ontario. Methods used to wrap two-dimensional textiles onto the body change and adapt in response to society's needs and cultural preferences. This exhibition will examine the simplest methods for dressing the human form and trace the development of ever more complex garments. See www.textilemuseum.ca

Have you checked out our website recently?

www.oatg.org.uk

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