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# ASIAN TEXTILES

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## OATG events programme

**Wednesday 19 April 2017**

**Colourful Banjara Textiles from the British Museum reserve collection at Blythe House** with the BM's Richard Blurton, Head, South and Southeast Asia Section, and textile gallery owner Joss Graham.

The Banjara are a semi-nomadic people who, prior to road and railways, provided long-distance caravans across India. They are known for their vibrant clothing and domestic textiles. See *Asian Textiles* #64 June 2016 for a review of *Textiles of the Banjara* with a description of the Banjara and some photos. Please note that numbers for this event are strictly limited and advanced registration is essential. Places will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

**Location:** Blythe House, Olympia (more details on access provided when booking). **Time:** Talk at 2 pm.

**Tuesday 9 May 2017**

**Patterns in silk: The marvellous innovations of Tai weavers.** Talk by Dr Chris Buckley.

The talk will discuss the ingenious patterning systems that Tai weavers use, and show how their influence has been felt from imperial Chinese silk workshops in the east to the development of computing in the west. It will be illustrated with outstanding Tai textiles from China, Vietnam, Laos and Thailand.

**Location:** The Pauling Centre, 58a Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6QS. **Time:** 6.15–8 pm.

**Tuesday 13 June 2017**

**Talk about Embroidered Bodies – Garments, Stitches and Stories from the Ashmolean Museum** with exhibition curator Aimée Payton.

The Embroidered Bodies exhibition at the Broadway Museum & Art Gallery runs from 5 May to 10 September 2017 and demonstrates the richness and diversity of the Ashmolean textile collection, and includes many objects never on display before.

**Location:** Ashmolean Museum, Education Centre (Level -1) **Time:** 2.45 pm for a 3 pm start.

**Saturday 15 July 2017**

**Tour of the exhibition Embroidered Bodies – Garments, Stitches and Stories from the Ashmolean Museum** with curator Aimée Payton.

Clothing tells a multitude of human stories, each embroidered stitch contributing to the tale. The exhibition introduces the Ashmolean's diverse textile collections through a selection of exquisitely crafted garments, expressing themes of personal identity, local tradition, and international trade. It includes a diverse selection of objects from the Eastern and Western textile collections of the Ashmolean from hats to shoes, and stomachers to collars, dating from the 1400s right up to the 20th century.

**Location:** Broadway Museum & Art Gallery, Tudor House, 65 High Street, Broadway, WR12 7DP **Time:** Meet at 2.30 pm for a 3 pm start. **Cost:** Discounted entrance fee £4. Advanced registration is essential.

**Keep an eye on the website <http://oatg.org.uk> and blog for all the latest information on events!  
For more information and registration please contact: [oatg.events@gmail.com](mailto:oatg.events@gmail.com)**

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**Front cover** A yurt and homemade donkey cart in the village of Qazaqdarya, which was once an important fish-processing and smoking centre. Today the Aral Sea has receded by 100km, leaving the village surrounded by barren salt-encrusted desert. See 'The Qaraqalpaq yurt and its decoration' p3.

## **The Qaraqalpaq yurt and its decoration**

by David and Sue Richardson

Many of the envoys and military officers who journeyed to the remote Khanate of Khiva in the nineteenth century – prior to, during, and after the 1873 Russian invasion – either started from the frontier town of Orenburg or crossed the Caspian Sea, disembarking at Kinderly Bay on the Peninsula of Mangishlaq.



*A finely decorated Qaraqalpaq yurt painted in Moynaq in 1946 by Boris Andrianov from the Khorezm Archaeological and Ethnographical Expedition.*

In both cases they faced a gruelling march across the barren Ustyurt plateau, following ancient caravan routes that took them to its precipitous eastern cliff face known as the *tchink*. To the north this overlooked the turquoise-blue Aral Sea and to the south the green oasis of the Aral Delta. As they descended from the Ustyurt, they entered a vast mosquito-infested wetland of winding channels, marshes, and thorny forests occupied by the semi-nomadic Qaraqalpaqs.

The travellers quickly realised that a Qaraqalpaq *kibitka* (the Russian term for a yurt) could easily be spotted, even from a distance, and stood out from the yurts of the neighbouring Qazaqs and Turkmen. The latter were traditionally dome-shaped and undecorated, but the Qaraqalpaq yurt was always cone-shaped, with the front of its roof distinctively criss-crossed by narrow white yurt bands. Inevitably a two-wheeled *arba* bullock cart stood nearby.

## QARAQALPAQ YURT DECORATION

Although far less common, the yurt of a Qaraqalpaq tribal leader or wealthy landowner was even more distinctive. It was stunningly decorated and must have been one of the most delightful nomadic dwellings encountered across the whole of Central Asia. The outer door flap was richly embellished with decoratively woven strips and was flanked on each side by vertical panels bearing bold horn-like motifs. Two matching yurt bands, decorated with more horn motifs and hanging fringes, were draped on each side like garlands, giving the rich man's yurt a festival air.

A Qaraqalpaq yurt was usually erected in a location associated with happiness, preferably close to a watercourse where it could be shaded by willow trees, the door and always positioned so that the door faced south. A single dwelling accommodated an entire extended family of three or more generations.

When Lieutenant-Colonel Alikhanov-Avarskiy entered a yurt belonging to members of the Esen clan at Aybugir in May 1873, he was amazed to find it occupied by a decrepit old woman cooking wheat over an open fire, a younger woman milling grain, a group of women washing clothes in a wooden trough surrounded by half-naked children and a young kid goat, and a further cluster of people sitting on a felt mat, among whom were seven men drinking tea!

### Qaraqalpaq glossary

<b>aq basqur</b>	The 'white head band', the largest non-structural <i>shalma</i> (qv) yurt band, decorated with inward-facing rectangular panels	<b>o'rmek</b>	Narrow, horizontal, single-heddle loom consisting of little more than a few crude interlocking sticks
<b>aq qur</b>	The 'white band', three pairs of which hold the rear roof felt in place and are interlaced to hold down the front roof felt	<b>plov</b>	Pilau rice and lamb
<b>arba</b>	A two-wheeled bullock cart	<b>qarshin</b>	Long and narrow box-shaped storage bag with a knotted pile face and plain-woven sides, back and base
<b>awıl</b>	A settlement of Qaraqalpaq yurts	<b>qıslaw</b>	Permanent wintering grounds
<b>baw shuw</b>	The full set of bands for a yurt and by implication sometimes used as a name for the dowry	<b>qıyıq</b>	A wooden boat
<b>besqur</b>	The 'five bands' of <i>qızıl qur</i> (qv) and Turkmen <i>nag'is qur</i> (qv), which are interlaced to decorate the <i>to'r</i> (qv) or place of honour. Poor families only have three	<b>qızıl basqur</b>	The wide and heavy 'red head band', the most important structural band which constrains the entire roof of a yurt
<b>dizbe</b>	A long and narrow woven tape used to space the roof struts evenly	<b>qızıl qur</b>	The 'red band'. Five pairs of <i>qızıl</i> and Turkmen <i>nag'is qur</i> (qv) hold the front roof felt in position and are interlaced to form the internal <i>besqur</i> (qv)
<b>esikqas</b>	Literally 'the eyebrow of the door', a pile weaving placed inside above the yurt door	<b>qora</b>	Cattle enclosure or corral
<b>g'ajarı</b>	Warp substitution technique for weaving a flat-woven goat-hair yurt band using a double warp of contrasting colours	<b>sandıq</b>	A carved wooden storage chest
<b>izbe</b>	A short piece of <i>dizbe</i> (qv), used to lace the lattice wall of the yurt together	<b>shalma</b>	Technique for weaving a flat-woven cotton yurt band with a decorative knotted pile of sheep's wool
<b>janbaw</b>	<i>Shalma</i> (qv) bands with a lower decorative fringe woven in pairs placed either side of the yurt door	<b>shiy o'n'ir</b>	Literally the 'breast of the <i>shiy</i> ', the two vertical strips that decorate the <i>shiy</i> -grass screen on each side of the yurt entrance
<b>jazlaw</b>	Traditional summer grazing pasture	<b>terme</b>	Warp-floating technique for weaving a flat-woven goat hair yurt band using alternate warps of contrasting colours
		<b>to'r</b>	The place of honour on the north side of the yurt interior
		<b>Turkmen nag'is qur</b>	A yurt band woven in the <i>g'ajarı</i> (qv) technique decorated with Turkmen patterns ( <i>nag'is</i> )
		<b>u'yshi</b>	Yurt-maker

(ı, the dotless i, is pronounced 'uh')



## QARAQALPAQ YURT DECORATION

The internal space was always strictly zoned around the central hearth. The western side was the male zone, occupied by the adults and the location of the main storage chest, the *sandıq*, as well as saddles, hunting equipment, and weapons. A box-shaped *qarshun* storage bag with a knotted pile face was always placed on top of the chest to hold the family's best clothes, and above this was stacked the *ju'k*, the pile of bedding mattresses and pillows.

The eastern side was the female zone, used for cooking and for storing all of the provisions. The north side was the 'place of honour', the *to'r*, decked out with a flat-woven rug and used to entertain important guests such as tribal or religious leaders. Single settlements, known as *awls*, contained anything from just a handful to several hundreds of yurts, generally all occupied by families belonging to the same clan.



*Qaraqalpaqstan is a supposed autonomous republic within Uzbekistan.*

*It is remote. To the south-east the sands of the Qizil Qum stretch as far as Bokhara. To the south the empty Qara Qum desert reaches the foothills of the Kopet Dag, and Ashgabat in Turkmenistan. To the west the barren rocky plateau of the Ustyurt extends to the shores of the Caspian Sea. An enormous barren landscape of desert and salty lakes to the north eventually merges into the Russian steppes and the frontier towns of Orenburg and Samara.*

*The populated areas are confined to the banks and delta of the river Amu Darya.*

### The annual Qaraqalpaq migration

The Qaraqalpaqs followed a very different lifestyle from the nomadic Qazaqs, who headed north into the Siberian steppes for the summer, only returning before the onset of winter. At the same time they were not settled like the more southern Khivan Uzbeks. The Qaraqalpaqs did migrate, but only for a relatively short distance, ranging from a few kilometres up to a maximum of seventy-five. They spent the bitter winter at their wintering grounds, *qıslaw*, permanent settlements where the cattle were kept in *qora* enclosures – partially to protect them from attack by tigers, but also so that their owners could accumulate their droppings to fertilise the fields.

With the onset of summer the occupants of the *awl* packed up their yurts and loaded them onto *arba* carts or *qıyıq* boats to relocate them to the traditional summer grazing pastures, *jazlaw*, which were generally located close to a source of water over which the clan maintained hereditary rights. The bulls were used to plough the fields, which were then planted with cereals such as sorghum wheat, barley, millet, and lucerne. Following the harvest the yurts were dismantled and the entire *awl* and its livestock returned, transporting supplies of fodder for the winter.

## **QARAQALPAQ YURT DECORATION**

In many cases the migration was not strictly necessary – the northern Aral Delta contained vast reed beds where some varieties of reed grew up to eight metres high, providing sufficient pasturage to last the whole year round. Some visiting Russians described the small northern Qaraqalpaq villages as “cities of reeds” – even the yurts had reed walls and, in some cases, reed roofs. They were surrounded by reed windbreaks, and the livestock was kept in reed shelters built inside reed-walled *qora* enclosures. For many Qaraqalpaqs therefore, the migration was essentially a social relic of the ancient lifestyle of their ancestors – the nomadic tribes that occupied the banks of the Syr Darya during the early sixteenth century, from whom they had coalesced to form their new confederation.



*Early undated photograph of a Qaraqalpaq woman standing by the door of her yurt.  
Qaraqalpaq State Museum of Art named after Savitsky.*

### **The effects of Russian interference**

At the time of the Russian invasion the majority of Qaraqalpaqs were living in a state of destitution as a result of decades of punitive taxation imposed by the authoritarian Muhammad Rahim Bahadur Khan following his violent subjugation by the Khivan Uzbeks at the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century. With many of their ablest menfolk conscripted into the army or forced to provide unpaid labour for the Uzbek and Turkmen elite, the Qaraqalpaqs lacked the manpower to maintain their agricultural economy, which inevitably fell into a state of decay.

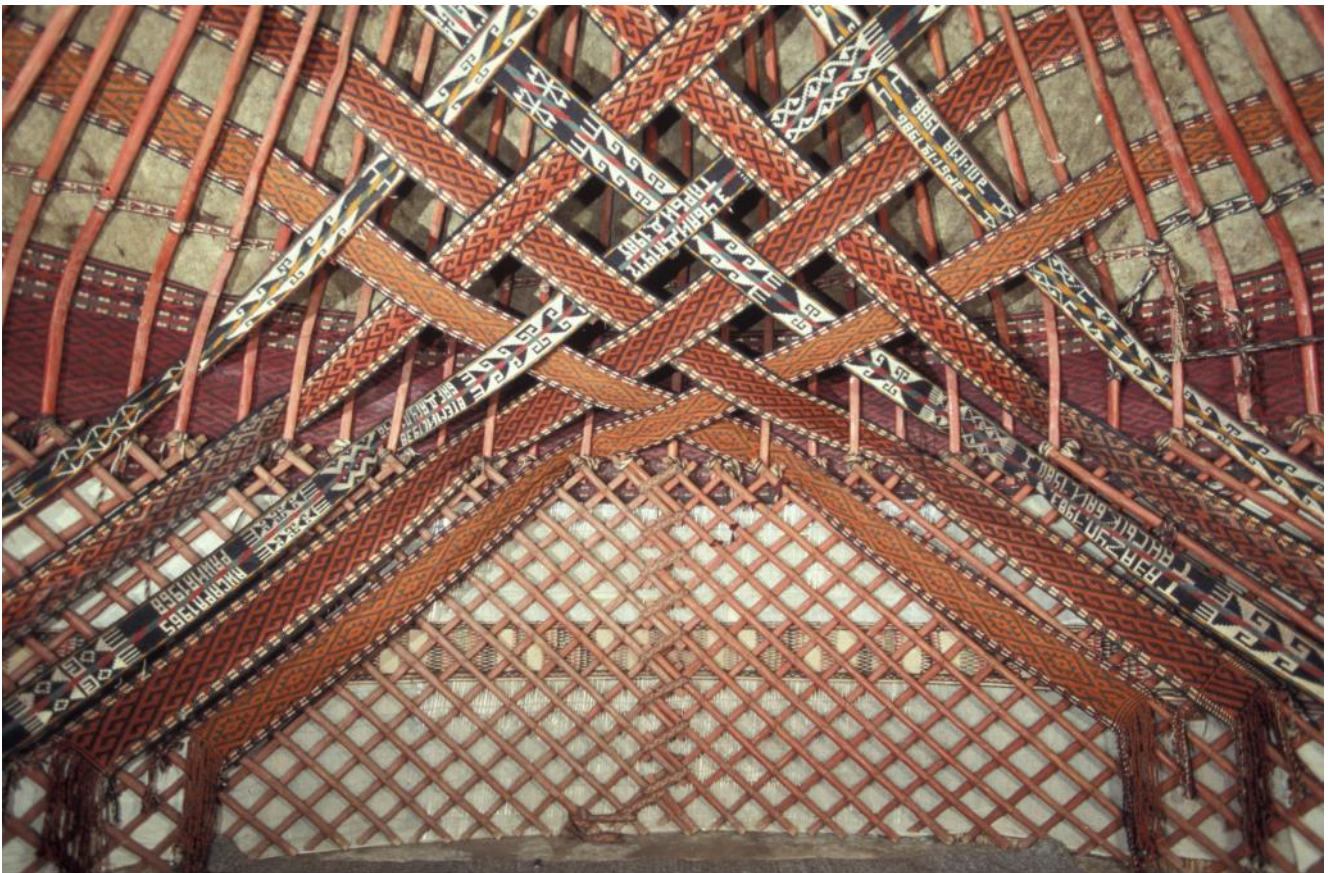
Although their new Russian colonial masters did not go out of their way to improve the Qaraqalpaqs standard of living, they did eliminate conscription and introduced a fairer and less arbitrary system of taxation. Over time the Qaraqalpaqs



## QARAQALPAQ YURT DECORATION

were able to repair their irrigation systems, rebuild their herds, and repair and re-equip their yurts. Consequently during the first third of the twentieth century there was a strong revival in weaving, embroidery, and other textile arts.

However, collectivisation and increasingly oppressive Soviet attitudes towards nationalist ideas during the 1930s led to adverse changes, especially the demise of traditional costume and dress. Fortunately these pressures did not apply to the yurt or its decoration. This is not surprising as the majority of Qaraqalpaqs had nowhere else to live – the major programme of house construction did not really get under way in the Aral Delta until the 1950s and 1960s. This meant that the crafts of yurt-making and yurt band weaving were sustained long after the crafts of embroidery and cloth weaving had fallen into decline. Indeed these former crafts still continue today in some regions, although on a very intermittent basis.



*The decorative besqur, composed of five pairs of interlaced red and other narrow yurt bands.*

### **Qaraqalpaq weaving**

Given their reliance on the yurt, the Qaraqalpaqs, or more precisely their womenfolk, had to be highly skilled at yurt band weaving. Before her marriage a prospective bride was expected to have woven all the yurt bands for her future family home. They formed the major part of her dowry, which was sometimes even referred to as the *baw shuw*, the name for the full set of bands for the yurt.

The principal Qaraqalpaq weaving fibre was goat hair because only goats and cattle were tough enough to survive the Aral Delta conditions. Camels, sheep, and horses – creatures of the desert and steppe – could not tolerate the swarms of mosquitoes and gadflies that infested the delta during spring and summer. Unlike



## QARAQALPAQ YURT DECORATION



The *aq basqur* was always woven with a sequence of decorative rectangular panels.

sheep or camel wool, goat hair has smooth, glass-like fibres that do not easily interlock and felt. Nevertheless the Qaraqalpaqs were highly proficient at spinning, dyeing, and weaving it into colourful and durable yurt bands using nothing more than the primitive *o'rme*k loom, a single-heddle narrow-beam device that consisted of little more than a few crude interlocking sticks.

Qaraqalpaq goat-hair yurt bands were made using a variety of flat-weaving techniques, especially *terme* and *g'ajarı*, both of which were also used by the Qazaqs, Uzbeks, and Turkmen. Such bands ranged in size from narrow strips of *izbe* and *dizbe*, used to lace the wooden components of the yurt frame together, to the huge 60cm-wide *qızıl basqur*, 'red head band', which weighed over 15 kilogrammes and constrained the entire roof of the yurt.

These were all practical items, essential for maintaining the structural integrity of the yurt. Yet they were cleverly used. The three pairs of *aq qurs*, the 'white bands' that decorated the front of the yurt roof in a criss-cross pattern, actually held the rear roof felt in place while strapping down the front roof felt.

Although unseen from the outside, there were also either three or five pairs of *qızıl qurs* or 'red bands' that held the front roof felt in position. The loose ends were carefully interlaced inside the yurt to create a colourful lattice that decorated the *to'r*, the place of honour reserved for guests at the back of the yurt. As such the *to'r* was sometimes referred to as the *besqur* or 'five bands'.

The most artistic yurt bands were primarily decorative rather than structural, and were woven on the *o'rme*k loom in so-called combination technique, known as *shalma* by the Qaraqalpaqs, in which a flat-woven cotton yurt band was partially decorated with a knotted pile of sheep's wool.

The most important *shalma* band was the *aq basqur*, or 'white head band', decorated with a sequence of rectangular panels containing a wide variety of motifs, usually incorporating



## QARAQALPAQ YURT DECORATION

arrangements of livestock horns. It was always placed directly above the *qizil basqur*, its pattern facing inwards so that it could be seen by the yurt's occupants through the gaps between the roof struts. It was effectively the family's picture gallery.

Slightly smaller *shalma* bands known as *janbaw*, with a lower decorative fringe, were woven in pairs to be used as garlands on each side of the door. The widest *janbaw* were hung on the outside and the narrowest on the inside. Although the Aral Delta is a major cotton-growing area today, this was not always the case. It appears that the early Qaraqalpaqs did not cultivate cotton, only adopting it in the late nineteenth century from the sedentary Khivan Uzbeks who had grown it as a commercial crop for centuries. It is possible that in earlier times such Qaraqalpaq bands were woven using camel or sheep's wool acquired from the Qazaqs. Such material would only have been available to the wealthiest tribal echelons.



Kergi from Shimbay region decorated with the on altı mu'yiz (sixteen-horns) motif.  
Richardson Collection.

For the Qaraqalpaqs, sheep's wool and camel wool were luxury fibres that were acquired through barter, and therefore reserved for the finest applications such as the weaving of small knotted-pile carpet items. However, carpet weaving was not a major craft as it was with the neighbouring Turkmen. A Qaraqalpaq girl was expected to weave just two small carpet items in her entire life – the face for the box-shaped *qarshun* storage bag, used to hold the family's best clothing, and an *esikqas*, literally the eyebrow of the door, a carpet of similar size this was placed above the yurt door on the inside. For the shamanistic Qaraqalpaqs it acted as a talisman, protecting the occupants from the envious evil eye beyond. Although a Qaraqalpaq weaver could not match her Turkmen counterpart for the quality and fineness of her wools, her

## QARAQALPAQ YURT DECORATION

expertise in the use of natural dyes and in weaving yurt bands meant that many of the traditional Qaraqalpaq carpet items are powerful weavings.

A particularly desirable Qaraqalpaq speciality was the *kerge* storage bag, which was flat and rectangular and had goat-hair cords on each side so that it could be suspended from the lattice wall of the yurt. It was somewhat similar to the Turkmen *chupal* and the Kyrgyz *bashtyk*. *Kerges* were also woven on the *o'rmek* loom using the *shalma* combination technique, and were decorated with bold patterns based on either livestock horns or stepped diamonds.

They are far less common than *qarshun* storage bags and seem to have been restricted to the wealthy. They were always finished at the bottom with a crocheted fringe of twisted tassels, the Qaraqalpaqs believing that if the bottom edge finished gradually their lives would never end abruptly.

One other important *shalma* weaving was the pair of *shiy o'n'ir*, the two vertical strips that decorated the *shiy*-grass screen on each side of the yurt entrance. These were woven as a matching pair in a single strip that was then cut in two. Traditional *shiy o'n'ir* (the name means the 'breast of the *shiy*') were decorated with vertical columns of ram's horns or stepped diamonds. In the 1930s some of these were superseded by more colourful *shiy o'n'ir* made from appliqué and patchwork.

### The yurt in modern times

It is fascinating that the yurt continued to thrive long after the Qaraqalpaqs moved into the single-storey houses that were constructed on collective farms throughout the Aral Delta in the 1950s and 1960s.

The yurt was transformed from a dwelling that accommodated an extended family to a place for sleeping during the baking hot Aral summer nights, as well as for relaxing and entertaining guests. Architects went out of their way to design housing plots that incorporated a yard with a space to erect a yurt in the summer. Although the migration was by then long obsolete, Qaraqalpaq families took their yurts out of storage in the early summer and erected them next to the house, spreading felts and decorated mattresses on the floor around a low table. Some even moved their beds, radios, and TVs into them.

However over the years many family yurts became decrepit and unusable and were not always replaced, especially in the southern parts of Qaraqalpaqstan. This led to the closure of local yurt-making workshops. In recent decades this has spread to the northern delta, primarily driven by the desiccation of swathes of farmland, the result of the worsening Aral Sea environmental crisis. Families have been forced to abandon their farms and villages and to move south, especially into the conurbations of No'kis, Shimbay, and Xojeli, where it is harder to maintain a yurt.

Nevertheless a minority of rural families still erect their yurts for the summer, usually once the last spring rains have fallen in late May or early June. This is a social event which involves the whole family and normally ends with a celebratory evening dinner of festive *plov* (pilau rice and lamb) inside the newly erected dwelling.

It was traditionally the women's responsibility to erect the yurt, and this remains the case, although the men help with the more strenuous tasks. A family will usually request the help of an experienced yurt forewoman to oversee the erection, a local friend or a professional expert who is hired for the day.



## QARAQALPAQ YURT DECORATION

Amazingly one surviving yurt-maker or *u'yshi* still plies his trade from a workshop hidden in a backstreet in Shimbay, a town that has been a major centre of Qaraqalpaq yurt-making for centuries. The numbers produced are small, and although the master is Qazaq rather than Qaraqalpaq, he and his Qaraqalpaq craftsmen manufacture both Qaraqalpaq and Qazaq yurts. The yurt-making process they follow has remained unchanged for centuries. One of the highlights of a trip to Qaraqalpaqstan is a visit to his medieval workshop followed by a drive into the countryside to hunt for yurts.

Qaraqalpaqs retain the legendary hospitality of Central Asia and will not hesitate to welcome an uninvited visitor into their yard to admire their yurt. They might even ask you to stay for tea.



*Quwanışbay Sanqıbaev, the last surviving u'yshi in the Aral Delta.*

Go soon – the number of summer yurts is dwindling fast! In a few year's time they will be nothing more than a long-forgotten memory.

### David and Sue Richardson

David and Sue's richly illustrated book *Qaraqalpaqs of the Aral Delta* was published by Prestel in June 2012.

The Richardsons have a comprehensive website on the Qaraqalpaqs: [www.qaraqalpaq.com/](http://www.qaraqalpaq.com/)

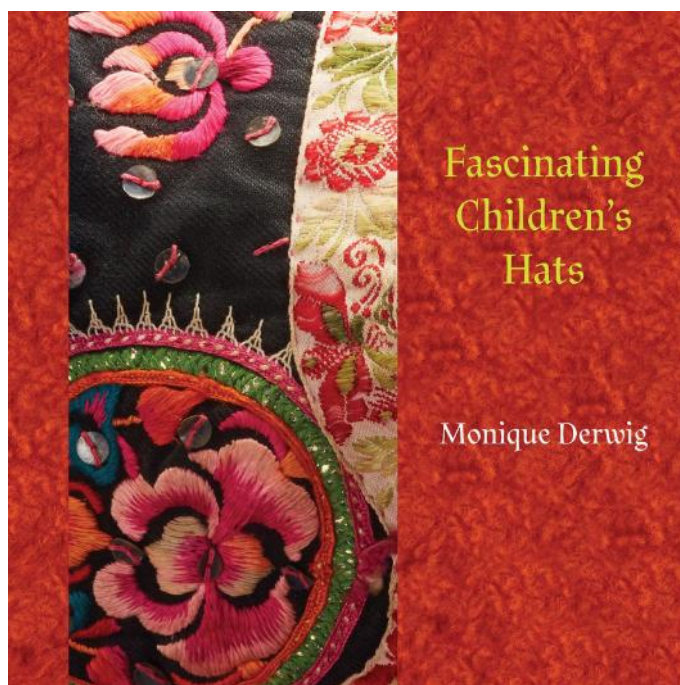
## BOOK REVIEW

# Book Review: *Fascinating Children's Hats* by Monique Derwig

### **Fascinating Children's Hats by Monique Derwig**

ISBN 9789082368321. Full colour, 96 pages, square-format paperback. €37.50. The book is available direct from the author: <http://www.fascinatingchildrensclothing.nl/>.

Monique Derwig's self-published *Fascinating Children's Hats* is subtitled "A tribute to the love of a mother for her child and the diversity of cultures". It is the essence, and at the heart, of this beautifully presented book, the proceeds of which are donated to [www.stichtingkumari.nl](http://www.stichtingkumari.nl) the Kumari Foundation, founded by her and which has the aim of improving the lives of disabled children in Nepal.



**Above** Front cover: Detail from a Yi (Chinese) baby's hat.

**Left** Hat with protective earflaps from the border region of Afghanistan and the north-west of Pakistan  
Height 30cm Depth 13cm.

The 96-page, full-colour book is well printed with beautiful colour reproduction. The featured hats positively leap off the page and have almost touchable texture.

Derwig cites OATG member Sheila Paine as the person who inspired her to write the book, and the book contains photographs of several hats she purchased from Sheila's collection. Most, however, were acquired from dealers and on the author's travels. Her total collection of children's clothes amounts to over 500 items. I first encountered Monique Derwig in 2004 when she joined the tribal textile forum I administer. She talked about being affected



by a 'textile virus' which she refers to on page 10 of her book. This immediately struck a chord, and her passion for textiles, especially those made for children, comes across loud and clear throughout her book.

The hats come from many countries including the Netherlands, Afghanistan, Egypt, Peru, Uzbekistan, Tanzania, Turkmenistan, India, Nepal, China, Thailand and Vietnam, although there is a strong focus on those of the Miao from China.

Considerable investment has been made in presenting the hats to show how they appeared when worn, and for this, as Derwig confirms, the photographer Jean Jacques Spuysers is to be congratulated. There are pictures from other photographers showing children wearing hats similar to those in the collection, but it is the free-standing, large hat images, fully-rounded as if wrapped around invisible heads, that are particularly appealing. This is a visual publication and the graphic designer, Janet Armstrong, has done an admirable job balancing the images and drawing the content and context together.

The book appears to be aimed at those less familiar with traditional textiles – i.e. textiles created by hand in ordinary homes in an earlier age and before cheap, mass-produced garments became available. It is not

a volume for the keen collector seeking detailed information on provenance or cultural background, although where the author has information on a particular item she shares it with the reader. In this context there is a section devoted to the symbolism of design and materials, where she touches on hats' underlying meaning, although this is mostly in general terms and jumps across continents. Throughout she comments on various aspects of decoration, but the book is not a detailed exposition of their construction or the textile techniques employed.

Nevertheless, Derwig is clear in her stated aims for the book. She writes, mirroring the subtitle, that she "didn't intend to write an encyclopaedia but simply love to share the beauty of a disappearing expression of cultural heritage. It is meant to be a tribute to the love of a mother for her child and the diversity of the world's cultures". In these aims she certainly succeeds and this beautifully produced book is a pleasure to read.

### Pamela Cross

Pamela is a textile collector, administrator of the [www.tribaltextile.info/community](http://www.tribaltextile.info/community) forum, and OATG web manager.



*Little girl wearing the costume of the Miao in Langde, China.*

# Mystery objects: your help sought

### Item 1 *below*

There are objects in the Ashmolean collections about which there is little information. The item below is one such example, even though it was donated to the collections as recently as 2005 – bearing in mind the museum is 350 years old.

The only information known is that it belonged to the Swiss landscape painter Louis-Auguste Veillon (1834–1890) who bought seven on his travels in North Africa or Palestine. It currently bears the description “Robe of white wool with white silk tassels and braiding at the crown of the hood and neck opening, semi-circular cut”. It is 178cm long. The accession number is EA2005.64.

How is it worn? Which way is up? Where is it from?

If you want to come and look at the object you are always welcome to book a viewing in the Eastern Art Study Centre at the Ashmolean; telephone number 44(0)1865 288107 or email [eastudycentre@ashmus.ox.ac.uk](mailto:eastudycentre@ashmus.ox.ac.uk).



### Item 2 *right*

New OATG member Mary Boyle brought the textile to this year's AGM hoping that members would be able to tell her more about it. The assembled group had a variety of suggestions, but no definitive answer. Mary bought it in a vintage shop in Bridport, Dorset. It seems to be a decorative collar for a dress and has metallic embroidery on the top section, but where is it from?

### Answers

If anyone has any ideas, please share them by writing to the editor ([gavin@firthpetroleum.com](mailto:gavin@firthpetroleum.com)) and we will publish them in the next edition of *Asian Textiles*. Feel free to include a photograph or a drawing if you have such a thing.





## Letters to the editor

Dear Editor,

### **Victoria Vorreiter's article on the Hmong in AT 65**

Congratulations on the last issue of *Asian Textiles*, which was dominated by Victoria Vorreiter's article on the Hmong of northern Thailand. The idea of devoting an issue to a longer topic seems to me to be a good one, and the photos and editorial layout were superb. Regarding the text, I have a correction and a general comment to make:

1. The Hmong did not come from Mongolia or Siberia, as stated in the article. The homeland of Hmong (Miao) speakers is in the region that is now Guizhou province in southern China. Many also live in Yunnan. Most of the Hmong in northern Thailand seem to have arrived there in the last few centuries, as a result of westward migration. It would be interesting to compare the costumes of the Hmong of Thailand with those of China: there are a lot of similarities, as you would expect.

Until recently, schools in Thailand taught that Thai people came from Mongolia. This seems to have been a hangover from colonial days, when many Asian people were labelled "Mongolic" because of a (spurious and rather bizarre) idea that they resembled Mongolian peoples. It may be that the Hmong picked this idea up from Thai schooling, since it is not part of Hmong mythology.

Reviews of current knowledge on the origins and homelands of the various linguistic groups in southeast Asia can be found in the books *The Peopling of East Asia* (Routledge 2005) and *Past Human Migrations in East Asia* (Routledge 2008), edited by Sagart, Blench and Sanchez-Mazas. The general consensus is that the Hmong and Tai language groups originated in the region that is now southern China (south of the Yangtze river) at around the same time that rice farming developed in this region, based on shared vocabulary related to wet rice farming.

2. Speaking personally, I prefer to see ethnic subgroups referred to by language dialect names or place names. These are more 'neutral' than names like Black, Green, Striped etc, which generally are names given by outsiders. I acknowledge that in some cases (such as Black Tai/ White Tai) such names have become near-universal. When speaking amongst themselves Hmong refer to themselves according to where they are from, and which clan they belong to. Christian Culas has reviewed the tricky question of naming Hmong groups, both from the perspective of outsiders and that of the Hmong themselves, in his essay *The Ethnonyms of Hmong in Vietnam*, which appears in the book *Inter-ethnic dynamics in Asia* (Routledge 2010). These books are not easy to locate, but substantial chunks can be read online!

Yours sincerely,

Dr Chris Buckley, Oxfordshire

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Dear Editor,

### ***Asian Textiles* number 65**

As the balance of content of the last edition of *Asian Textiles* AT65, was so out of the ordinary I felt moved to write with some feedback. I was interested to read Victoria Vorreiter's mega article which focused so much on a core area of my own collection. As it happens I have not managed to travel to Laos so her superb photos of the Hmong in Laos were of particular interest. I can see many similarities with those I have seen in Vietnam. Whilst not wanting to critique the article I feel I must disagree with a (somewhat rash) statement that Victoria made: "It is notable that the Hmong are the *only* [my italics] ethnic group in Southeast Asia skilled in this age-old resist technique, where designs are created by applying wax so as to prevent dye penetrating the cloth" (pages 7 and 8).

I have in my collection an indigo-dyed, wax-resist patterned, skirt from a Mien (Yao in China) group in Vietnam, the Kam Mien, Dao Tien, Tsio Ban Yao. Jess G Pourret's book *The Yao: The Mien and Mun Yao in China, Vietnam, Laos and Thailand* has several references and

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

photos, including the two-page spread of pages 90-91, showing these skirts laid out as part of the full costume, as well as being worn in modern and 1920s photos.

It is always interesting to hear from OATG founder Ruth Barnes and her subsequent professional life at the Yale University Art Gallery since leaving the Ashmolean. I have become aware of the very competitive atmosphere between national and international museums and galleries since joining the British Museum Friends Advisory Council in 2016. However, as a Friend and supporter of the V&A Museum I found that Ruth's satisfaction at securing the Walter Angst Collection of Indonesian Wayang in the midst of the inheritor's discussions with the V&A jarred somewhat. I know that I was not the only OATG member to feel this.

AT65 was indeed an interesting edition of *Asian Textiles*. Whilst appreciating that giving the major part of the edition to Victoria's article gave space to develop a theme in some depth, and enabled a large number of beautiful photos of what are probably fast disappearing communities to be shared with us, I think that, on balance, I prefer *Asian Textiles* with a greater number of articles and variety of content.

Yours sincerely,  
Pamela Cross, Kent

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Dear Editor,

I appreciate Chris Buckley's kind comments about the quality of my photos, essay, and the layout, which I designed. Coming from an expert on Asian textiles, this means a great deal. I thought I might now add some thoughts of some of the points raised.

1. Indeed, the Hmong and Mien languages are classified together as they share roots in the Austro-Thai linguistic stock. Yet, while their cultures evolved in very different ways and in different locales, interestingly there still remain commonalities in certain ritual instruments and practices and in a number of embroidery motifs.

In regards to the source and migrations of the Hmong, called Miao by the Chinese, because there are no written texts, their exact place of origin and trajectory remain open to question. We must look to oral tradition and traces of genetic connections. It is known that the Hmong moved gradually over millennia in a southerly course, following the Yellow River into Central China sometime before 2000 BC. Eventually they settled in the highlands of what is now known as Hunan, Hubei, and Henan Provinces.

After the Eastern Han Dynasty, from 25-220 AD, the Chinese expanded into these territories, seeking to govern all inhabitants, ambitions that provoked centuries of conflicts with the autonomous Hmong. By the 1700s, the Hmong were ultimately forced to migrate to the lower reaches of the Yangtze River, in the southern Chinese provinces of Guizhou, Yunnan, and Sichuan, where the majority currently lives. Some Hmong groups, however, continued to travel southwards, spreading into northern Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand in successive waves.

All to say, while it remains uncertain if the Hmong first came from the Mongolian region, migrating from a motherland of "icy terrain and harsh winters" as recounted in Hmong stories and myths, there are certain shamanic traditions that are undeniably similar.

2. I fully appreciate Chris Buckley's preference in identifying the various Hmong groups and subgroups by their language dialect names and places. For my project, I employed the names the people use themselves – Blue, Black, White, and Striped. Perhaps, as he suggests, the Hmong adopted these terms after being so named by others. This is something to consider and I thank him for it.

I take the point made by Pamela Cross. As my area of research and collecting comes from Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar, not China or Vietnam, I should amend my phrase about the Hmong's resist technique as being by the "only ethnic group in Southeast Asia" to "the only highland ethnic group in the Golden Triangle".

Yours sincerely,  
Victoria Vorreiter,  
Chiang Mai, Thailand



## Report on some OATG talks and visits

### **Visit to *Life and Sole – Footwear from the Islamic World* at the British Museum**

On 27 April 2016 members of OATG had a stimulating and enjoyable guided tour of the exhibition *Life and Sole – Footwear from the Islamic World* at the British Museum. Shoes reflect the status and lifestyle of the wearer, and those in the exhibition ranged from patten-style footwear for high-society ladies, some almost impossible to walk in, to humble sandals made from plants. Among the boots and clogs, slippers were popular as they well suit hot climates and are easy to remove when entering a house or mosque.

The exhibition, held in the temporary exhibition space of the John Addis Gallery of the Islamic World (Room 34), had a fascinating display from North Africa, the Middle East, Turkey, and Central and South Asia dating from the 1800s to the present day, mostly drawn from the BM collections. Shoes have always played a significant role in the social and cultural life of these regions, and exhibiting them together for the first time conveyed their importance and diversity in a marked way.



*Embroidered slippers with silk velvet and gilded threads and spangles, India, 1800–60, As5488.a-b. © Trustees of the British Museum.*

Showing us round were Fahmida Suleman, Phyllis Bishop Curator for the Modern Middle East, and conservators Barbara Wills, Conservator of Organic Artefacts, and Bronwen Roberts. It was something of an Oxford gathering as Fahmida obtained her degrees from the University, and Bronwen had worked for a time at the Ashmolean. An extra dimension to the tour was that we had the benefit of the different perspectives of the curator and the conservators, who had worked closely together, but as Barbara Wills pointed out when talking about the considerable conservation work that had been done on some of the exhibits, the whole point is that you do not see where so much of it has been put in.

On display were some associated artefacts. These included an Ottoman shoeshine box from Syria, cobblers' tools from Afghanistan, and a telling photograph of a barefoot lady carrying goods to market with her shoes atop her produce, perhaps

## OATG TALKS AND VISITS

to wear when she arrived in the city. A caption on one wall carried the Tuareg proverb “Luxury begins the day a man starts wearing shoes”.

Miniature paintings in the exhibition included one of Mughal emperor Shah Jahan wearing a pair of gold-embroidered velvet slippers (*mojari* or *moza*) with floral patterns to match his ornate gown. The safe-keeping of his footwear was a serious concern. When Shah Jahan went on tour, which was frequently, his collection of shoes was guarded by the royal *kafsh-bardar* – the keeper of the shoes.

### Iran and Central weavings at Legge Carpets, Oxford

A Show and Tell evening of tribal and village weavings from Iran and Central Asia was held by husband and wife team Angela and Christopher Legge in Legge Carpets & Textiles in Oakthorpe Road, Summertown on 18 July 2016.

The evening was fascinating. It was restricted to 15 members, so including Angela and Christopher the shop was pleasingly full. The Legges have an extensive private collection in addition to a large stock, and it was mostly parts of the private collection that we were shown.

There were two elements to the visit. First Angela led us to a wall where three Tekke *engsi*s were displayed. The Tekke or Teke are one of the Turkmen tribes of Turkmenistan, and an *engsi* is the small rug originally used as the door of a yurt, although many were made as tradeable items. An *engsi*'s field is divided into four panels with a slanted arch at the top, similar to a prayer rug, and red dominates the palette. The question posed was “which is the oldest?” The answer, after the collective group got it wrong using size and weaving quality as potential indicators, was that it was the one that had the most relaxed lines, and the most pleasing visual impact, and was not in fact as tightly woven as the most modern of the three.



Angela Legge's Tekke engsi quiz; the oldest is the one on the right.



Christopher Legge enthusing the audience.

The second, and major, half of the evening was Christopher talking about his visits to Iran, and passing around and discussing a variety of tribal weavings. These ranged from a pair of Turkmen *duye dizlyk* (camel knee-covers) to some *wagireh* samplers (templates for the design and production of larger rugs). The quality of all the pieces shown was outstanding. Nor did Christopher and Angela kick us into the night at the conclusion of the formal business, and when your correspondent finally left the premises there still remained plenty of admiring visitors.



## OATG TALKS AND VISITS

### Study visit and lecture of Japanese decorative textiles at the Ashmolean

A very successful event, with great objects on view, of late-19th and early-20th century Japanese decorative textiles from the Ashmolean was held on 28 September 2016 at the Jameel Centre Study Room 1. It was led by Dr Clare Pollard, curator of Japanese Art at the Ashmolean, and was followed with an insightful presentation by Dr Pollard on recent discoveries at the National Museum of Ireland.



*Left some of the group in the Jameel Centre Study Room.*



*Above detail from Leaping Carp, Kyoto, late 19th–early 20th century. Yūzen-birōdo (dyed silk velvet) pile partly cut. (EA1997.224).*

*Left Minagawa Gekka (1892–1987). Yuzen textile two-fold screen with design of cranes in water, pigment on silk c. 1920. (EA2008.68)*

## OATG TALKS AND VISITS

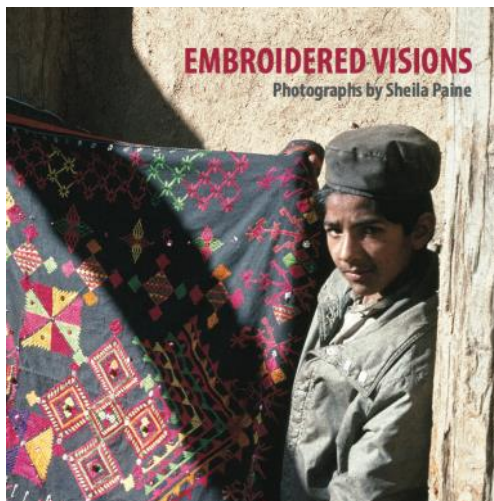
The separate talk concentrated on Meiji ornamental textiles held in store at the National Museum of Ireland's Collins Barracks from the Asian art collection donated during the 1930s by the Irish-American Albert Bender. Pollard said "This afternoon I would like to show you some of the lovely things we discovered. We've not yet had time yet to investigate them in depth – this is more of an interim report." *Asian Textiles* hopes to bring you the more detailed report in due course.

### A Carpet Ride to Khiva

A talk by author Chris Aslan Alexander was given on 13 October 2016 about his seven years in the walled city of Khiva in Uzbekistan. He was originally employed to write a guidebook from scratch, but he fell in love with the place and set up a carpet-weaving workshop to provide work for the poor and disabled using local silk and natural dyestuffs. Accompanied by lovely slides, he described the vicissitudes of setting up such an enterprise, the beauty of the city, the charm of the people, sericulture, and how they also established a suzani embroidery. The carpet designs are based on 15th-century Timurid carpets and patterns, on Persian and Mughal miniatures, on the tiles that adorn Khiva buildings, and on Khiva's carved wooden doors and pillars.

### Sheila Paine's textiles and photographs at the Pitt Rivers Museum

On 2 November 2016 John Gillow gave, as usual, an enthralling talk, this time at the Pitt Rivers Museum to celebrate the exhibition of embroidery expert Sheila Paine's textiles and photographs on show there. Sheila sat in the front row and there were constant friendly engagements between the two as the story unfolded.



**Left** Front cover of recent Pitt Rivers publication showing a detail from 'A man and boy hold up a colourful embroidered textile decorated with geometric motifs. Sherakot, Pakistan. 1993.' (PRM 2012.4.2989)

**Right** Woman's cotton shift (unfinished). Collected by Sheila Paine in Bar Paro, Palas Valley, Kohistan, Pakistan, 1993 (PRM 2008.116.9)



Many of the photographs adorned the Long Gallery adjacent to the packed lecture theatre and there was an opportunity to view these both before and after the talk, aided, for those not driving, by the usual hospitality found at OATG meetings.

Illustrated above is the front cover of the new Pitt Rivers Museum publication *Embroidered Visions: Photographs by Sheila Paine*. The photograph was on display in the Long Gallery at the museum in the exhibition *Embroidered Visions: Photographs of Central Asia and the Middle East by Sheila Paine* which runs until 30 April 2017. Also illustrated is an embroidered textile from the Pitt Rivers collections which was on display in the accompanying small exhibition *Stitch of a Symbol – Insights into the textile journeys of Sheila Paine*.



The book *Embroidered Visions: Photographs by Sheila Paine* presents a wide selection of photographs taken by Sheila Paine during travels over more than two decades researching textiles and their motifs. It includes all the photographs in the exhibition and others from these regions, as well as from Europe, Central America and Africa. The publication was supported by the Friends of the Pitt Rivers Museum and is available in the Pitt Rivers Museum shop.

### Talismanic Textiles from the Islamic World

On 9 December 2016 Dr Francesca Leoni gave a talk which focussed on the talismanic textiles included in the exhibition *Power and Protection, Islamic Art and the Supernatural*. Dr Francesca Leoni is the Yousef Jameel Curator of Islamic Art and a Research Associate at the Khalili Research Centre, University of Oxford, and the curator of the exhibition which was on display at the Ashmolean Museum's special exhibitions galleries.



Power and Protection was the first major exhibition to explore the supernatural in the art of the Islamic world. Within Islamic societies, people of all backgrounds have engaged in practices such as the casting of horoscopes and the interpretation of omens [compare and contrast the talismanic clothing in West Africa in AT57 of February 2014]. The exhibition included objects and works of art from the 12th to the 20th century from Morocco to China, which have been used as sources of guidance and protection. Included in the exhibition were objects of quality and scale, many of which have never been seen in public, including some excellent textiles.

Three stunning Ottoman talismanic shirts, intricately decorated with passages from the Qur'an, kept the wearer safe from harm. The earliest, dated 1583 (991 AH), was most likely worn underneath armour during battle.

High on the walls of the middle gallery were two enormous textile banners, one from Iran, the other from India, while the third gallery includes the central section of an Ottoman silk banner with the *dhu'l-fiqar* sword motif, a symbol of invincibility. Also on display were objects that, although not actual textiles, were worn on the body as amulets. These include an Ottoman coin-shaped gold amulet that has a pierced projection, indicating that it was probably sewn onto clothing.

## Show & Tell January 2017

Immediately following the AGM at the Ashmolean on 28 January there was a Show and Tell. Pamela Cross compered the afternoon.

**Nick Fielding** kicked off proceedings by telling us about an embroidered gun cover, which was originally in the collection of Sheila Paine. This beaded Pashtun example came from the Gazni area of Afghanistan and was intended to cover a Lee Enfield rifle.



**Above** Nick Fielding's Kazakh bag, and saffron-dyed dress with Baluchi embroidery. **Left** Fiona Sutcliffe modelling her Turkman coat.

Nick's second piece was a Kazakh bag, which would have been found inside the yurt. The velvet ground was probably a trade cloth and various motifs were embroidered on this in silk thread which included a solar motif and horseshoe patterns associated with Tuva or the Altai. Nick pointed out that although these pieces are generally referred to as Kirghiz, they are in fact Kazakh as, up to the 1920s, all Kazakhs were called Kirghiz by the Russians. We needed sunglasses for Nick's final piece, a vivid yellow saffron-dyed dress with fine Baluch embroidery, apparently discovered in an Oxfam shop for the princely sum of £8!

**Fiona Sutcliffe** was resplendent in her green velvet Turkman coat which was lined with printed Russian cloth. She read an extract from her 1998 diary describing its purchase. She was in the Friday Bazaar in Ashgabat with Sheila Paine when she spotted this and was wondering whether or not to buy it. She asked Sheila's opinion and, when told they were asking \$15 for it, was told very firmly "Buy it!"





*Jenny Ramirez looks on as Nick Fielding and Pamela Cross hold up her Chinese textile while Iain Stephens describes the piece.*

Next we had a superb Chinese textile brought along by a visitor, **Jenny Ramirez**. It had belonged to her great-grandmother in France who was born in 1875 and died before the start of World War Two, so it had obviously been in the family for some time. Luckily a new member, Iain Stephens, was a mine of information and was able to explain that something this size would have usually been a wedding blanket. As it did not contain any symbols linked with a wedding, he assumed it was an export piece. The centre was a version of a symbol for longevity with several Daoist symbols embroidered on it.

**Marion Maule** brought along several examples of Japanese *fukusa* – gift covers, and *furoshiki* – multi-purpose cloths. One had a symbol of fertility, another the seven foods of Spring. A black piece from Okinawa was quite different from all of the others and depicted pine, plum and bamboo – collectively known as the three friends of winter. The most striking piece by far was by the Japanese textile designer, and Living National Treasure, Serizawa Keisuke, who died in 1984.



*Marion Maule describes some of her Japanese pieces.*

## 2017 SHOW AND TELL

The three items brought by **Priscilla Church** spanned a wide geographical area. The first was a Hmong resist-dyed pleated skirt, which she had bought in the 1970s while living in Thailand. She recalled how she had dressed her young daughter in it. Her second piece was a small bag bought in a yurt in Kirghizstan seven years ago. Priscilla's final offering was a very vibrant apron which she had acquired in Delhi in 1962 while working as a VSO volunteer. She bought it from a Tibetan lady who had just escaped over the mountains and took it off to sell it to her. An interesting discussion on aniline dyes ensued.



**Left to right** Priscilla Church and her Hmong pleated skirt. Helen Wolfe with two of her three pieces.

The Tibetan theme was continued by **Helen Wolfe** with a piece of another apron as well as an exquisite small needle case which would have been hung from a belt. Her final piece was worn around the waist at the back, so that the end of the wearer's plait could be tucked into it. The photographs Helen had brought along really helped us to understand this.



New member, **Mary Boyle**, brought along a textile, now shown on page 14 as a 'mystery object' as no satisfactory answer was forthcoming at the meeting.

**Left** Carolyn Gurney displays her Hazara textile.

**Right** Balkan pieces from Gavin Strachan: a coif, socks and a coat.



**Carolyn Gurney's** first item was a small bag she bought in Afghanistan in the 1970/80s, but it was her next textile which caused some debate. This was a matching pair of embroideries which had never been separated. The consensus was that they may have been from Gazni and were decorative ends for sleeves or trousers. Nick Fielding was able to shed some light on Carolyn's final piece – some beautiful unfinished drawn-thread work. According to Nick, Hazara women probably used it as a prayer mat.

**Gavin Strachan** brought some pieces which had come to light in an English provincial auction. It is known that they were collected in the 1860/70s by a Lt Col Charles D'Oyly Harmer, who was born in 1844, but which part of the Balkans were they from? Helen Wolfe of the British Museum offered to ask some of her colleagues.



**Sue Richardson** showed a beaded tube skirt from the highlands of Flores called a *lawo butu*, which was believed to be around 100 years old. She explained how they were used for two particular ceremonies – the first to do with drought and famine, and the second with the roofing of a clan house. Sue's other piece was a scarf from the island of Sumba. This had been made by a member of the local royalty and had fabulous colours. Some of the ikat motifs were of roosters, which was particularly apt as our meeting took place on Chinese New Year, celebrating the year of the rooster.

**David Richardson** also brought a piece from Sumba, but of a totally different type and scale. It was a *hinggi* (man's blanket) that had been dyed using mud. David explained that there is only one woman still doing this on Sumba and that he and Sue would be interviewing her and documenting her process later this year. The *hinggi* featured bold snake motifs. David's next piece was from the little-visited island of Kisar. The main natural dye used was morinda. David talked about the linguistic links between Kisar and Timor and the similarity of some of their motifs.

**Above**  
Sue Richardson and  
the Flores tube skirt.



**Right**  
David Richardson  
with Pamela Cross  
discussing the mud-  
dyed hinggi.

## 2017 SHOW AND TELL



**Left** David Richardson's textile from Kisa, mainly dyed with morinda. **Right** Chris Buckley and his Iban weaver's sword.

**Chris Buckley** was the only person whose offering wasn't a textile. Instead he had brought a heavy Iban weaver's sword. The Iban wanted to imitate cloths they had seen from Gujarat and this necessitated a wider textile – hence the size of this sword. He explained how weavers often replaced parts of their looms as they became worn, but they treasured their swords. Some are painted or feature beadwork, but his example was finely carved instead.

**Aimée Payton** showed us a textile that she actually wears for another of her passions – belly dancing! It was an Assuit dress (named after the place where they were originally made) in which the mesh is wrapped with silver. Aimee found it in a junk shop in Brighton and promised to wear it and perform for us sometime!



**Left** Aimée Payton holding an Assuit dress. **Centre** Pamela Cross with an Iban war jacket. **Right** Pamela showing her Banjara pulia.



The first piece that **Pamela Cross** showed us was an extremely colourful Iban war jacket from the 1950s-1970s. She explained that the motifs of people on horses were probably based on images of the Trooping of the Colour, as posters of this were sometimes seen stuck on longhouse walls. It was woven using a slit tapestry technique and, unusually, the name of the owner was woven into the jacket. Pamela believed that it might have belonged to someone who was fighting the Communists in Malaysia. Amazingly this was found in a hotel gift shop in Sabah, among some children's clothing.

We were then shown a Banjara *pulia* with very dense embroidery and shells on three sides, bought in the 1980s. Women often carried baskets or pots on their heads, resting on a circular pad. The *pulia* was attached to this pad by means of the loops on the edge without shells and it hung down the wearer's back, showcasing the embroidery skill.



*Iain Stephens talking about his stunning coat.*

Our final new member, **Iain Stephens**, explained

how he had started his collection when he acquired 300 pieces in Taiwan. He first showed us two intricately-woven black horsehair hats, which had been collected by a missionary in the 1930s. His next offering was a stunning coat with chicken feathers on the bottom of the lappets. The outer layer was from a silk paper technique. This is formed when the worms are kept in the dark. This had been lined with a heavy-duty bast fibre. It also had small sections of indigo wax resist by the side seams and on the edges of the lappets. His last piece was a baby carrier, which he had collected in Bhutan. The striped edges were still in remarkably good condition and we enjoyed Iain's demonstration, ably assisted by Pamela, of the various ways in which these were worn.

[Sue Richardson.](#) [Photographs David and Sue Richardson.](#)

## Asian Textiles in Asia

We know that *Asian Textiles* has an international readership. While we have many members in England and in and around Oxford, we also have subscribers in USA and Canada; in France, Germany, Poland and Portugal; in Scotland and Guernsey; in Australia; and also in Singapore, Indonesia and Taiwan.

From Taiwan's Taipei, OATG member Tsai Yushan, Associate Professor in the Department of Textiles at Fu Jen Catholic University, has recently been in touch with our website manager and founder of the *tribaltextiles.info* website, Pamela Cross, concerning a film made about Taiwan



aboriginal weaving which is now on YouTube. The 48-minute film in Chinese was broadcast earlier this year to Chinese-speaking regions of the world and features research by Yushan about the painstaking reproduction of old Taiwan aboriginal textiles. It includes footage of her discussing her article (see screenshot above) which appeared in *Asian Textiles* number 57 in February 2014. Further news and photographs may be seen on the *tribaltextiles.info* website at <http://www.tribaltextiles.info/community/viewtopic.php?f=3&t=2547&p=8037#p8037>.



In the Indonesian island of Sumba, we see pictured on the left, taken by David and Sue Richardson, Tamu Rambu Hamu Eti, the Queen of Rindi, with a copy of *Asian Textiles* number 63 of February 2016. This issue featured a photographic essay by the Richardsons about the funeral of Bapak Umbu Hunga Meha, the King of Karera, which was held in May 2015. The Richardsons run regular tours to Indonesia, which includes two days on Sumba, see link: <http://www.asiantextilestudies.com/>



# OATG 2017 Annual General Meeting

**Our secretary, Judith Colegate, reports:**

## **OATG Annual General Meeting**

Meeting held Saturday 28 January 2017 in the Education Room of the Ashmolean Museum.

### **Present**

Aimée Payton (Chairman), Sheila Allen (Treasurer), Katherine Clough and Felicitas von Droste zu Hülshoff (Programme Co-ordinators), Julia Nicholson (Member at Large), Gavin Strachan (Editor *Asian Textiles*), Pamela Cross (Website Manager), Judith Colegate (Secretary) and many members of OATG.

Apologies for absence: Agnes Upshall (Blogger)

### **The Chairman**

The Chairman opened proceedings by thanking everyone for coming. She continued with thanks to the committee for their hard work in the past year. She particularly mentioned the wonderful job being done by the new committee members. She also previewed her forthcoming exhibition *Embroidered Bodies* which is initially being staged at the Ashmolean Annexe in Broadway, and later, in a more extended version, in the Museum itself.

She reiterated her plea for someone from within the membership to volunteer to become the group's membership secretary.

### **The Treasurer**

Sheila Allen reported that the balance at 30 September 2016 was £1,671.25, which, given the costs of the group, including publication of *Asian Textiles*, clearly showed the effect of a lack of a Membership Secretary is having on the financial health of the society. Our professional database manager is good, but expensive, and is now too busy with other commitments.

The payment of subscriptions at the correct rate and time is showing some improvement, but members were asked to ensure that their direct debits/standing orders were set at the appropriate level. Members were reminded that subscriptions are due on the 1 October each year.

### **Programme Co-ordinators**

Felicitas von Droste zu Hülshoff and Kathy Clough combined their verbal report with a visual one. This depicted the six events that had ranged across Asia, from the Islamic world to Japan, and had included textiles at the Pitt Rivers Museum and the Ashmolean, as well as an excursion to the British Museum and a visit to Legge Carpets in Summertown.

They also outlined some of their thoughts for the coming year. A membership survey had shown that there would be interest in a textile-based workshop day and they were investigating a day devoted to shibori.

Members were asked to indicate at what time of day they would prefer meetings to be held. The consensus seemed to be a mix between lunchtime and early evenings. The former would allow members living outside Oxford to attend more easily.

Since joining the committee a year ago they have set up a new email account with Google, and all documents are available on the shared Google mail drive. In September they began using Eventbrite for advertising and booking events by email and stressed the necessity of keeping the email list up to date.

### **Editor**

Gavin Strachan has now edited three editions of *Asian Textiles*. He admitted it had been a learning curve. He asked for feedback on the length of articles, and whether it was a good idea occasionally

## **OATG AGM**

to devote most of an issue to one article. The general feeling was that several articles on different topics were preferred and that long articles could be published in two sections in consecutive issues.

Gavin suggested that, based on written feedback he had received, that there was definite scope for members to write an article about an interesting single item or a handful of items in their collection. That way a variety of topics would be addressed, members' interest kindled, and debate might possibly ensue. Members should not worry about their English as this can easily be corrected, and is what editors are for.

### **Website Manager**

Pamela Cross reported that the OATG website continued to provide internet access to all editions of *Asian Textiles* in searchable PDF format all the way back to the initial 1995 edition. The current year's editions, and those of the previous two full years, are only available via password access to fully paid-up members. Access to the PDF files published in 2014 have recently become freely available on the OATG website.

Pamela reminded everyone that information about upcoming events is always available on the website. This is especially relevant to those members who are not on Facebook or signed up for the blog. The OATG events programme, as supplied to the web manager, may be found on-line, and if available, information may be updated between editions of *Asian Textiles*.

The web manager also supports the Treasurer and the Programme Co-ordinators by operating OATG's PayPal account for international members who do not have a sterling bank account. Around eight members used the facility during the past year. The website provides contact form links for digitally contacting the Membership Secretary, Programme Co-ordinators, *Asian Textiles* editor, and Web Manager. These have security features attached to minimise spam and other computer risks.

The OATG website links, via drop-down menus, to the excellent OATG blog run separately by Agnes Upshall. Occasionally the OATG website as well as the blog, carries urgent last-minute events information on the Events Stop Press page.

### **Blog**

As Agnes Upshall was unable to attend, her report was read out by the secretary, Judith Colegate.

She reported that 2016 was another successful year for OATG's blog, with more posts, more visitors, more views and more regular followers than in previous years.

In 2013 there were 795 visitors and 1,474 total views. Each year the number of visitors and viewers has increased. In 2016 there were 4,170 visitors and 6,744 viewers. At the same time the number of new blog posts rose from 39 in 2013, to 48 in 2014, and 60 in 2015. Last year, 2016, the number almost doubled to 115.

The blog now has over 100 regular followers, many of whom, she interestingly thought, were not members of OATG. This means that the group is becoming known more widely as a source of online information on Asian (and other) textiles.

By signing up to follow the blog, you will receive an email notification every time a new post is published. Just click the 'follow' button halfway down the blog home page on the right hand side.

The web address of the blog is [oxfordasiantextilesgroup.Wordpress.com](http://oxfordasiantextilesgroup.Wordpress.com).

OATG also has a Facebook page at [Facebook.com/Oxford Asian Textiles Group](https://www.facebook.com/OxfordAsianTextilesGroup). If you use Facebook, visit the group's page and 'like' it, to stay up to date with OATG's activities. It is also a good way to introduce friends to OATG if you know anyone who might be interested in joining.

Agnes thanked anyone who had sent suggestions for blog posts over the previous year. Please keep visiting the blog and Facebook page, keep sharing posts on social media, and keep sending your suggestions.

### **AOB**

There being no other business the meeting concluded with the agreement to hold next year's AGM in the same venue and with a similar format.

Aimée then invited all present to take some refreshment.

### **Show & Tell**

There then followed another successful Show & Tell session which is reported on pages 22–27.



## OATG COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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**OATG website** <http://www.oatg.org.uk/>

**OATG blog** <https://oxfordasiantextilegroup.wordpress.com/>

**OATG Facebook** <https://www.facebook.com/OxfordAsianTextileGroup/>

## MEMBERSHIP OF OXFORD ASIAN TEXTILE GROUP

(includes three issues of *Asian Textiles* magazine)

For membership enquiries contact Sheila Allen at 19 Southmoor Road, Oxford, OX2 6RF; email: [nick\\_allen98@hotmail.com](mailto:nick_allen98@hotmail.com).

The rate is £25 for single membership and £35 for joint membership. We prefer that payments are made by standing order. Cheques should be made out to OATG.

We depend on your subscriptions to keep our programme of lectures running, as well as for the printing and postage of *Asian Textiles*.

### Password details for 2017 editions of *Asian Textiles* on the OATG website

Issue Nos	Date	username	password
66, 67, 68	2017	at17	bh4n3v

***Asian Textiles*** is published three times a year: in February, June and October.

We welcome input from members and any other readers – send a review of a book you've read or an exhibition you've seen, or even something more elaborate.

**THE DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS WEDNESDAY 7 JUNE 2017**

Contributions should be emailed to: [gavin@firthpetroleum.com](mailto:gavin@firthpetroleum.com)





*Three Qaraqalpaq women standing in front of the shiy-screen wall of a yurt in the village of Sari Altın. The name means 'yellow gold', a reference to the wheat grown on the surrounding collective farms. See article page 3: 'The Qaraqalpaq yurt and its decoration' by David and Sue Richardson*