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ASIAN TEXTILES

MAGAZINE OF THE OXFORD ASIAN TEXTILE GROUP

NUMBER 45 FEBRUARY 2010

The Afghan carpet industry

Also in this issue: Textiles from Bhutan, the Khmer silk weavings of Cambodia and much more...

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Asian Textiles now available online in full colour!

This edition of *Asian Textiles* is available on-line in full colour in a Pdf file to download, view and/or print. Access to the Pdf file is either via http://www.oatg.org.uk/magazine.htm whilst it is the current issue or always via the back issues page http://www.oatg.org.uk/magazine-backissues.html by first clicking on the cover image thumbnail.

In both cases click on the link in the title line to the issue e.g.: '**Access colour Pdf of No 45**'. Enter the **username** and **password** given below, click '**login**' and then, on the resulting page, click on the relevant link to download. The username and password is the same for all three issues in each calendar year. OATG current members, as part of their membership, are being given access to the Pdf files for *Asian Textiles* for the previous two years. Passwords for all full colour issues to date are:

Year	**Username**	**Password**
2008	at08	6gicjk
2009	at09	pdr8nx
2010	at10	mqonj2

To protect the value of your membership please do not share these passwords with non-members.

Correction: Please note that a photograph on p28 of the last issue of *Asian Textiles* was wrongly captioned. Instead of 'Complex mosque roof', it should have been captioned 'Section of rooftop in Beijing's Forbidden City'.

Editorial

It gives me great pleasure to announce that Asian Textiles is now available to members online and in full colour. Until now it has been impossible to share copies of articles via email or simply download them for reference purposes so that the colours of particular textiles can be examined in more detail.

Now, thanks to the efforts of Pamela Cross, our website editor, we have this facility. Our congratulations go to her for the exceptional work she has put into making this happen. You can find more background on p5 and instructions on the page 2 opposite.

The sharper-eyed amongst you will have noticed that the magazine is slightly shorter than usual, at 28 pages. Unfortunately, several promised articles did not arrive and I have had no option but to cut pages. Can I use this opportunity to remind members that I am always looking for articles for the magazine and that the flow has been a little slow recently? I am particularly interested in articles about visits members have made—such as the fascinating article in this issue by Jenny Spancake—and also details of collections you may have come across on your travels.

The Editor

My old postcard for this edition illustrates some of the most unusual garments I have come across. As the caption says, this postcard from Hong Kong shows three 'street coolies', two of whom are wearing coats made from 'straw'. Similar rain shawls can be found across the Far East and Japan, but the oldest one I have ever seen was being worn by Otzi, the 5000-year-old iceman found high in the Alps in 1991 and now housed in a special museum in Bolzano, northern Italy.

OATG EVENTS PROGRAMME

Wednesday 10 March at 5.30 pm

(Please note time and refreshments from 5.00 pm)

The Newberry Collection of Near Eastern and Middle Eastern Embroideries at The Whitworth Art Gallery.

by Frances Pritchard, Curator (Textiles),

The Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester

Monday 19 April at 2.00 pm

Visit to the Haslemere Museum
where Freda Chapman, the Museum's textile expert,
will talk on textiles from their Russian, Palestinian and Uigher collections,
as well as an opportunity to view the Museum's other holdings.
Followed by afternoon tea.

Numbers are limited to 15. Cost £5.

The Haslemere Museum, 78 High Street, Haslemere, Surrey GU27 2LA
is easily reached by road or rail. Details will be sent nearer the date to those who sign up for the visit.
It is planned to meet for lunch in Haslemere beforehand.

Please book with the programme coordinators.

Talks are held at the Pauling Centre, 58 Banbury Road, Oxford.
Refreshments from 5.15pm.Visitors welcome (£2)

Programme Coordinators:

Rosemary Lee 01491 873276 rosemarylee143@btinternet.com
Fiona Sutcliffe 01491 872268 j.v.sutcliffe.t21@btinternet.com

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Asian Textiles magazine now available online in colour

The OATG website was originally launched in the summer of 2004. Since then there have been several modifications including the addition of a Google search facility for the contents of the Newsletter (issues 1-38)/*Asian Textiles* magazine (issues 39 onwards).

As of February this year the site's design has been freshened up - although the main structure remains unchanged. However, the exciting new change is the availability on the website of full colour Pdf files for issues 39-45 of *Asian Textiles* to download, view or even print off. Although members have been receiving printed copies of *Asian Textiles* with colour covers and black and white photos inside, each of these editions has been prepared in full colour and the editor has been very keen that we should all be able to view the colour pictures. Cost prevents us from printing the magazine in colour.

From issue 45 onwards each new edition of *Asian Textiles* will be published in printed form as previously but with the addition of a downloadable Pdf file on-line. To all those members who value their printed copy of the magazine please be reassured that this will continue. If you do not yet have a Pdf file reader on your computer you will find a link to download the latest (free) version of Adobe Reader on the download pages of our website.

The OATG committee has been keen to protect the value of OATG membership so you will need a password to access the downloadable files. The password will give you access to two years of back issues. All current members will be given access to all the available back issues (currently calendar years 2008 and 2009) and also to new editions of *Asian Textiles* as they are published. At the beginning of 2011, the earliest year of downloadable magazines will be available for anyone to download, whether or not they are an OATG member.

See the inside front cover contents page of this edition of *Asian Textiles* for the usernames and passwords for the 2008, 2009 and 2010 editions of the magazine. There is a separate username and password for each calendar year of publication, each giving access to three editions. In future each magazine will have the required username and password printed on the inside front cover on the Contents page. **In order to protect the value of your membership please do not share the passwords with non-members**.

There is an explanation of how to access the Pdf files set out on the Contents page together with the passwords. The easiest access is via the back issues webpage http://www.oatg.org.uk/magazine-backissues.html. Clicking on an image takes you to the contents list for that issue and, where there is a Pdf file to download, you will find a link in the title line for the issue.

Currently there are no Pdf files for issues 1-38. There is a valuable body of material contained in these back issues and we are very keen to make this freely available online. However, it is a major project to scan all the issues and convert them to Pdf format. If you would be interested in being part of this on-going project please contact the web editor via the link on the website (at the bottom of every OATG web page).

Pamela Cross, OATG web manager, February 2010

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 7th June 2010

Contributions should be emailed or sent to the Editor

The new Ashmolean comes to life

OATG chair Aimée Payton outlines some of the exciting changes that have already happened at the Ashmolean and other exciting developments still to come

You might think that with the opening of our fantastic new galleries, we at the Ashmolean might take a breather before we crack on with the next project. We might want to sit back and soak up the wonderful press that we have received and give ourselves a big pat on the back, while sipping cocktails and eating fine food in the rooftop restaurant. Well, no time wasted and I have exciting things to announce.

The Eastern Art Department has just launched Eastern Art Online: Yousef Jameel Centre for Islamic and Asian Art. http://jameelcentre.ashmolean.org/ . We have had a dedicated team of people, led by project manager Paul Groves, working on photographing in the region of 11,000 objects, checking catalogue data for all of these objects and defining the functions of the website.

The project has been running for nearly three years and was the result of a generous gift from Yousef Jameel, a regular supporter of the arts and education. The aim was to have a searchable database which takes you to specific objects and trails which guide you through the collections in a meaningful way. The Ashmolean's internal collections database feeds information to the website, so as we learn more about the objects, so will the visitors.

There are several things which will be of interest to OATG members. There is an online version of the Textile gallery, so those who have not been able to visit the Ashmolean will be able to access the wealth of information that Ruth Barnes has left with us in Oxford. Marianne Ellis's book *Embroideries and Samplers from Islamic Egypt* is available as a web publication.

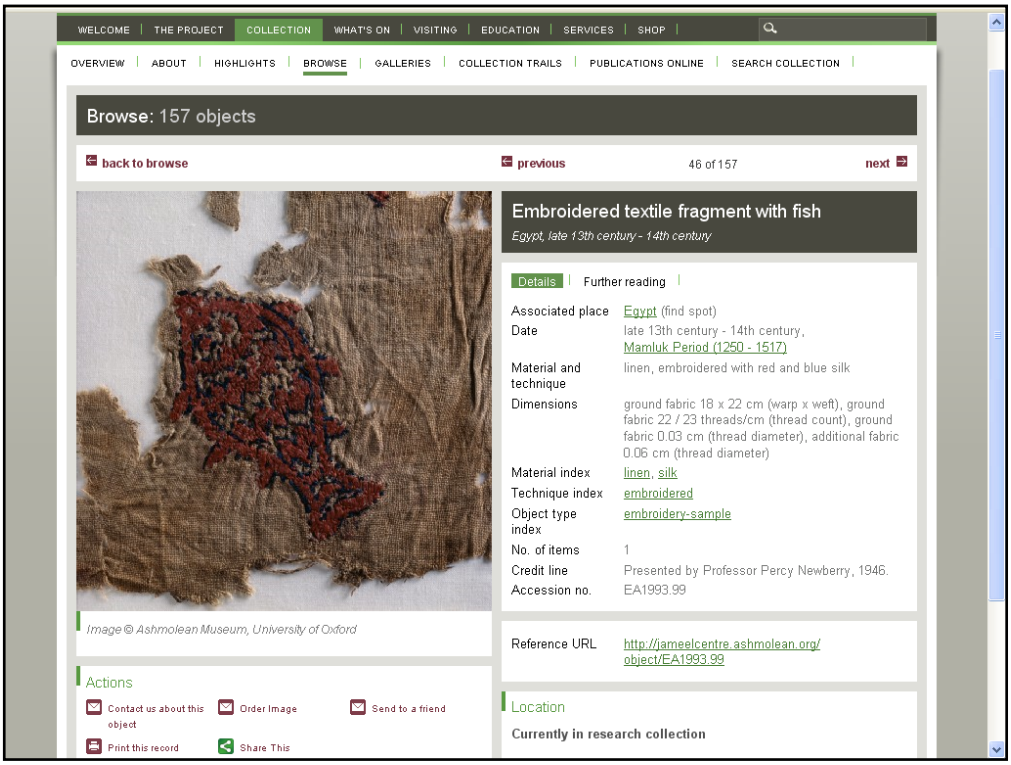
The beauty of both the online gallery and web publication is that by clicking on the object photographs, the visitor is taken to the catalogue entry so that they are able to find out more. But one of the most exciting things for textile enthusiasts, like ourselves, is the zoom function. The photography is so wonderful that every stitch is clearly identifiable, giving you a more detail view of the textile than seeing it in real life, especially when it is behind glass in the gallery.

This is the first phase of the website, so many more of the Eastern Art objects will be accessible in the near future as well as more trails and publications.

In 2003 there was a conference on the history of carpets, which was funded by the May Beattie Archive. The May Beattie Archive for the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, and The Bruschettini Foundation for Islamic and Asian Art have now jointly published the papers in *Carpets and Textiles in The Iranian World 1400-1700.* Hali magazine oversaw the layout of the book and project managed this beautiful, fully illustrated publication of the proceedings with wide range of papers such as *The court Dress of Safavid Iran in the Sixteenth Century, Traces of Timurid Carpets in Contemporary and Later Carpets from the Near East, The Use of Fine Goat Hair for the Production of Luxury Textiles* and *A Global Enterprise; Armenian Merchants in the Textile Trade in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. This has been a long time coming but it was well worth the wait.

One of my primary responsibilities at the moment is setting up the Jameel Study Centre, opening in the summer, which will allow access to the Eastern Art reserve collections. The main Study Room will be where individual researchers can look at objects. We will also have a smaller teaching room for group sessions and an area for study in one of the stores.

We have new stores attached to the study rooms that have been expertly designed by Flora Nuttgens, a former Ashmolean textile conservator. The provisions for textile storage are of course brilliant and we are looking forward to having the objects back onsite. I will update OATG on this project when there is more to say.



The new-look Ashmolean website

The Textile Society's Manchester Fair

Sunday 7th March 2010

Antique and Vintage Costumes and Textiles.

Armitage Centre, Moseley Road, Fallowfield, Manchester.

10 – 4.30 (trade 8.30)

£6 (Trade £10)

£4 full time students and snr citizens

www.textilesociety.org.uk or phone Deborah Roberts 077193 47512

We will be holding our first London Textile Fair on 26 September 2010 at Kensington Town Hall. Further details will be on our website or phone Kay Bryant 01491 572126

Understanding the carpets of Afghanistan

In her second article for *Asian Textiles*, Azra Nafees explains how 30 years of war have affected the traditional weavers of Afghan carpets and kilims.

Afghanistan has always been the traditional manufacturer of carpets and rugs. However the carpet industry and the export of carpets and rugs suffered badly when the Taliban came to power. Most of the carpet weavers fled to Pakistan and returned only after the Taliban was defeated.

Since there is an age old tradition of carpet weaving in Afghanistan and the carpets woven there bear certain richness and uniqueness in designs, a promising strategy should focus on the promotion of high quality carpets made in Afghanistan.

The increasing demand all over the world for Afghan carpets and rugs has stimulated a lively interest in this time-honoured craft. The Afghan carpet is among the few products left in the world today that are still made entirely by hand and, for the buyer, represents good value in terms of beauty and durability.

An Afghan rug (or Afghan carpet) is a type of hand-woven floor-covering textile tradition-

ally made in Afghanistan. Many of the Afghan rugs are also woven by Afghan refugees who reside in Pakistan and Iran. In any case, Afghan rugs are genuine, often charming and usually phenomenally inexpensive.

Most of the weavers in Afghanistan are the Ersari Turkmen (who live predominantly in the north-west of the country), but other smaller groups such as Chub Bash and Kizil Ayaks are also in the line of weaving rugs. Various vegetable and other natural dyes are used to produce the rich colours.

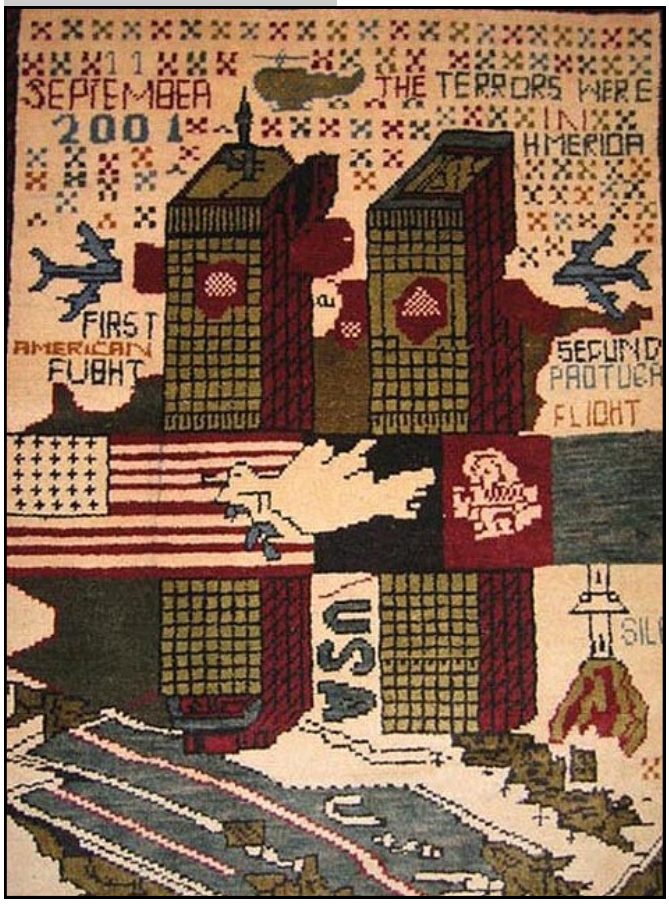
The rugs are mostly of medium sizes. Many patterns and colors are used, but the traditional and most typical is that of the octagonal elephant's foot (Bukhara) print, often with a red background. The weavers also produce other trappings of the nomadic lifestyle, including tent bags and ceremonial pieces.

Most Afghan weavers make rugs that are similar to those they have woven for decades. Weavers in Afghanistan have contributed greatly to the rug renaissance. The rug industry in Afghanistan, which had been shattered by the loss of Afghan weavers, is recovering fast now. Other Afghans are remaining in Afghanistan and doing the best they can to re-establish rug production. Some weave rugs in Afghanistan and truck them to Pakistan for finishing and for export.

Types of Afghan Carpets

There are many names for the type of weavings found in Afghanistan and Central Asia. For example, in Herat and the Northern Turkmen tribal areas an *ensi* (or *engsi*) is a rug designed to serve as an internal tent door. It is called *purdah* (or *purdhu*) in other parts of Afghanistan - all of them referring to a door curtain or closure.

The well known types of Afghan rugs are Berjasta, Nakhunak, Laghari, Adraskan, Maimana, Mashwani, Kilainu and kilim. Afghan War-Rugs are of particular interest which are getting more and more popular among the foreigners after the 9/11 attacks.



Afghan war carpet showing the Twin Towers

The quintessential Afghan rug of the past 50 years is a wool-on-wool product with a repeated octagonal figure (often inaccurately called elephant's foot) on a red field. In the trade it is called simply Afghan or Dulatabad. Afghan carpets are woven mostly in northern Afghanistan. A hundred years ago the *guls* (as the octagonal figures are properly called) were large — often 16 inches wide in bigger rugs. *Guls* have become smaller over the years until today they most often are no more than several inches across. As the *guls* have shrunk, so has the range of colors in the rugs.

Today most Afghans contain only two colours: a rather bright red and a blue so deep that it looks black. Still, Afghan rugs have survived because they are basically so appealing. They are still popular with Afghan people, including the many who have emigrated to the West.

One of the most exotic and distinctive of all Oriental rugs is the Shindand or Adraskan (named after neighboring villages), woven near Herat in western Afghanistan. Strangely elongated human and animal figures are their signature look.

Another staple of Afghanistan is Baluchi rugs, most notably Baluchi prayer rugs. These rugs are made by Baluchi people, especially in western Afghanistan near Herat. Baluchi prayer rugs can be muddy-looking rugs in outlook. Virtually all are made on wool foundations with synthetic dyes, and measure about 2ft 8ins by 4ft 7in. The best pieces have lustrous wool, good body, balanced colour, stable dyes, and interesting designs.

There is a small quantity of finely knotted rugs on silk foundations in the market, some with wool pile and others with silk. These are often called silk-warp Mauri rugs. Mostly these pieces are made in the capital city of Kabul, but one line of silk-warp Mauris is made in Dulatabad, designs with very small *guls*. Another line, usually with a silk pile as well as a silk foundation, is in designs that suggest the architecture of mosques.

A new genre of rug has appeared in the Afghan carpet industry in the past 15 years: the Afghan War Rug. These rugs may be of any dimension but are usually prayer-rug size and depict scenes from the everyday life of the Afghan people.

Sadly, of late that means scenes involving fighter planes, helicopters, machine guns, troop transports, and the like. Afghanistan's three decades of fighting and insecurity have spawned a thriving "war rug" business for an international clientele of military buffs and soldiers. The carpets - which have moved from Soviet-era imagery to U.S. and NATO insignia - are a reminder that even war is a commodity in today's Afghanistan, where so many are trying to profit from the billions pouring into the effort to stabilize the Taliban's birthplace.

Afghanistan's history has long been recorded by its largely uneducated people in stories and in carpets. When Soviet tanks rolled into Afghanistan in 1979, traditional woven scenes of hunters or village life gave way to Kalashnikov rifles, fighter planes and helicopters.

One such carpet shows the capital of Kabul under attack by planes and tanks. In another, a pattern of squat shapes reveals itself to be lines of Soviet tanks. A third carpet depicts a peaceful

city scene, except for helicopters flying overhead.

Some carpet sellers say the war rugs make a bigger statement about their country. Even the World Trade Center carpet is hopeful because it marks the moment when the world started paying attention to Afghanistan. Afghans don't buy the war rugs, but these carpets are important to their history, one seller says.

Viewing these rugs is a deeply defamiliarizing experience: woven in with traditional geometric patterns and imagery are helicopters, AK-47s, jets and fighter planes, land mines, grenades, personnel carriers, computer monitors, skyscrapers and other signs of Soviet and western culture's violent incursions into Afghanistan.

The weapons are usually rendered accurately enough that it's possible to identify their specific models; the curator's comments indicate that there are no fictional weapons in any of these rugs.

The miracle of these pieces is that weavers are able to incorporate bizarre elements into them, such as machine guns, and still they still manage to look like Oriental rugs! It is assumed that such production will be sporadic until conditions in Afghanistan improve.

Another very popular type of rug is the Afghan Kilim. Kilims are a flat-woven fabric made of wool. The variety of weaving techniques, of designs and colours is considerable, ranging from the simple yet charming striped kilims of the Pasthun-speaking Kouchis to the elaborate Baluch kilims of subtle design, often with decorative embroidery of great richness. The different types of kilims made in this region are becoming very popular in Western markets, as are those of woven by Uzbeks, Turkomans and Hazaras in other areas of Afghanistan.

Afghanistan has always produced an abundance of kilims (flat-woven rugs) and still does. One type is produced in enormous quantity: the ubiquitous Maimana kilim from the northern area of Maimana. Maimanas are woven in a slit-tapestry weave, a type of kilim weaving that leaves characteristic small (up to three-quarters of an inch) gaps or slits between areas where one colour leaves off and another begins. Their wool is rather coarse. They come in most sizes, though true 8 by 10s and 9 by 12s are rare.

Close-up of Afghan war carpet showing helicopter and missiles

Maimanas are phenomenally inexpensive but care should be taken in choosing them for runny dyes, scratchy, lustre-less wool and a loose weave but by and large they have good body, clear, harmonious colour, good wool, and a pleasant aspect.

Andraskan Afghan rug, about 3 by 6 ft, features peculiar, elongated human and animal figures. Often their dyes bleed, so many of these rugs get spoiled with due course of time.
The Serapi rug is also popular as it is woven and finished in Afghanistan using natural dyes and handspun wool.

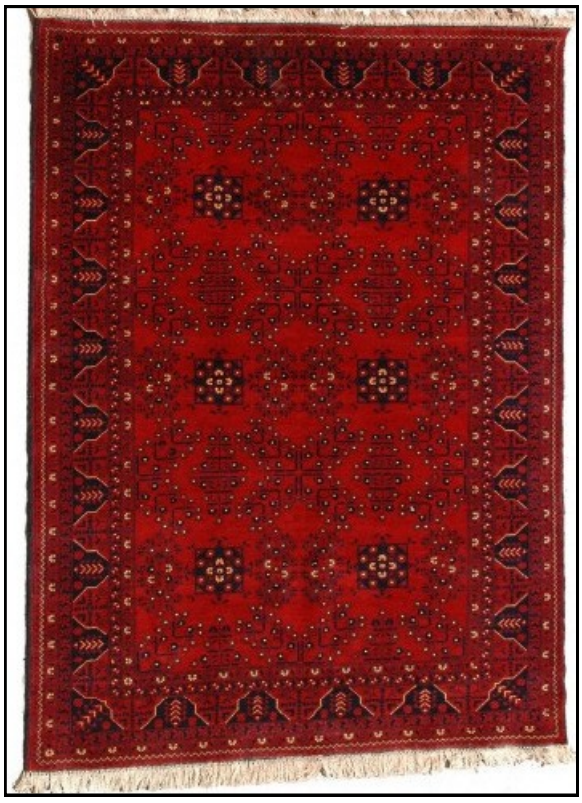
Materials Used in Making Afghan Rugs and Carpets
The materials used for making tribal rugs are basically what these nomads have at their immediate disposal: wool from their sheep which is used in the warp and weft as well as the pile. Some tribes use goat hair for overbidding the sides (selvedges) or rugs. Camel hair is especially prized for the field areas of prayer carpets.

When possible the sheep are driven into streams to wash them prior to shearing. The wool is then sorted by colour and quality and then combed and spun. The wool is then dyed. One person generally spins one kilo per day.

Dyes: Natural dyes are still used, but since the 1950s pre-dyed wool yarn (using synthetic dyes) readily found in the towns and villages are often substituted for or combined with the natural dyes. The wild colours (some almost iridescent) often found in many Afghan rugs are surely synthetics. In natural dying, the yarn is presoaked in a fixing bath of alum, copper sulphate, ferrous sulphate, tin or urine.

The yarn is then transferred to a dye bath and soaked until the desired colour is obtained. The yarn is then washed and hung out to dry. Dying was usually done by the men. Natural dyes fade beautifully and often show as uneven colouring (*abrash*). *Abrash* (meaning speckled or marbled) is commonly the result of a weaver running out of wool and having to dye another lot or buying a similar color from elsewhere.

Abrash in no way detracts from the value of a tribal carpet, but is a desirable characteristic of a tribal weaving. Naturally dyed wool will fade right through whereas synthetic dyes will fade only on the tips where the light hits it. A newer tribal carpet can be "mellowed" by placing it in the direct sun for several days. Natural dyes originate from the following materials:



Typical Afghan red and blue carpet.

Reds: Madder - Root of Madder Plant - (ranges from reds to orange and purple)
Cochineal: Produced from the female shield louse (Blue /red tone)
Lac Deep purple: From the excretions of a scale insect native to India which breeds on the Kermes oak
Blues: Indigo plant (Dyers Wood)
Black: Can be achieved by using a very dark blue or by use of a bath of tannic acid, acorn cups, pomegranate skin, oak galls, and then adding to a bath iron sulphate to make the colour fast. This can produce a weakness in the black wool which in carpets 50 to 100 years old can be seen as worn black areas where the remaining pile is still fresh.
Yellow: Many sources including; Dyers weed; Saffron; wild chamomile; tanners sumac; buck-

thorn; pomegranate tree; isperek (a flowering larkspur)
Green: Obtained from walnuts and olive leaves.
Brown: Can be natural undyed wool or by dying with fresh or dried pods of the walnut, oak galls or acorn cups.
Looms: Tribal carpets are almost always done on the horizontal or ground loom. This is due to the fact that the nomads rarely remain in one location for more than two months. The horizontal loom can be easily dismantled and packed on an animal to the new location and then staked out on the ground again.

The Writer hails from Dir in Pakistan and is a teacher trainer by profession. She holds a Masters Degree in Economics, English and Education from the University of Peshawar. She also edits a monthly online magazine *SAHAR The Voice of Pashtuns*.

Visiting the land of 'golden silk'

OATG member Jenny Spancake travelled to Cambodia in December with the Thai Textile Society, where she found that traditional silk weaving and ikat production are thriving

In December 2009 the Thai Textile Society travelled to Siem Reap, Cambodia, site of the Angkor Archaeological Park, to visit both the monuments of the ancient Khmer empire and the villages currently weaving traditional Cambodian textiles. The mission of the TTS is the study and appreciation of textiles with a particular emphasis on those of Thailand and Southeast Asian textiles. A study trip, co-led by Jenny Spancake and Pauline Tabtiang that looked at the past and the present in one country of the region was planned to further that aim.

The bas reliefs and other carving on the walls of the famous monuments of the Angkor area illustrate the type of textiles in use at the time of the Khmer Empire; they are on doorways and ceilings, textiles are shown in use on the bas reliefs. Most of the group had visited Angkor before but we focused on these images so easily overlooked on a first visit (photo 1). We discussed how important the role of textiles must have been at the courts of Angkor.

Although we do not know what was specifically produced in Cambodia itself at the time of Angkor, we do know that at least by the nineteenth century the Cambodians produced intricate weft *ikat* (*hol* in Khmer) textiles. Then in 1975 the country experienced the rule of the Khmer Rouge and the loss of much traditional knowledge. A number of groups have been working to reestablish traditional textiles in Cambodia and we wanted to see what was being produced today around Siem Reap.

Khmer carvings showing textile patterns (photo 1)

About a two hours drive takes you to the village of Phnom Srok in Beantay Meanchay Province. An association of silk villages in the area had been formed with funds from France to enable the villages to set up a central training site where villagers could come and learn how to use natural dye.

The centre teaches the villagers how to use the natural dyes and controls the quality of the dyes. About 100 different colours can be produced. When asked what was used as a mordant, a lively conversation ensued wherein we discovered the many problems of translation. We tried to describe what a mordant does in a variety of ways but never made any progress in discovering what was used.

This conversation truly brought home the

Silkworms and cocoons hanging beneath the rafters of a house (photo 2)

problem of doing research in a language not one's own and the specificity of textile terms, terms that are not necessarily known or understood by the average person who can translate all of the everyday aspects of life.

Another surprise for us was seeing the local silk in its natural state before bleaching. I had seen photos of the "golden silk" for which the area is known, but seeing the rich golden colour of the silk in reality brought home the differences in varieties of silk. A small village we visited showed us the silk cocoons nestled in branches (photo 2).

The highlight of the trip was our visit to Morimoto Kikuo's Forest Village Project. To visit Mr. Morimoto's village is to be able to see all of the traditional aspects of the production of a silk textile. He has received the Rolex prize which rewards pioneering projects that demonstrate innovative thought and contribute to the betterment of mankind for his role in reestablishing the traditional Khmer *hol*.

He founded the Institute for Khmer Traditional Textiles (IKTT) to create and promote tradi-

Fibre ties rather than the plastic ties make the dye process work better (photo 4)

tional silk *hol* textiles with intricate patterns that range from floral to complex pictorial representations of the Buddha's life. Mr. Morimoto found some older women who still retained that knowledge; he encouraged them to teach others and from this beginning he now runs a village of about 200 people who produce traditional textiles.

The women bring their young children to work; for me the sight of a very young girl watching her mother weave exemplifies Mr. Morimoto's goal – the preservation of traditional textiles and the handing down of knowledge from one generation to the next.

It was fascinating to see the entire production process in one village. Mr. Morimoto believes that using the traditional methods produces a textile of superior quality closer to the historic textiles we so admire. At the Forest Village the silk is bleached with banana ash. The ikat ties are produced by making strips of banana fibre (photo 3). I had never seen such ties used so this was new to me. Mr. Morimoto believes the fibre ties rather than the plastic ties make the dye process work better (photo 4).

Natural dyes are used. One of the most important is *lac* which produces a beautiful red colour, a hallmark of the older Cambodian ikats. *Lac* is produced from the resinous secretion of a species of insect (photo 5) as they nest in a host tree. Previously found in Cambodia before the Khmer Rouge, the particular trees which support the insect were destroyed during this upheaval.

One of Mr. Morimoto's projects is raising trees to replace these and to bring the insect back to Cambodia. *Lac* is currently the only thing needed for his silk production that is not produced at the village.

A wide variety of other natural dyes are used; mordants are alum and iron. The iron is produced by putting old pieces of iron in a bucket of water and letting nature take its course. We watched a documentary produced on the village which showed an old gun being boiled in one pot; perhaps a very symbolic recycling in a Cambodian context. Mr. Morimoto quoted the old saying about dyeing when explaining why his more laborious process is better: "quick way of dyeing, quick way of going".

Many mulberry trees were also destroyed during the time of the Khmer Rouge. Mr. Morimoto found villages where the original still grew and reintroduced the trees at the Forest Village and brought silkworm eggs from Khmer villages in Thailand. The village also grows cotton. Everything is grown organically at the Forest Village. Mr. Morimoto believes that the soil and its

Using banana fibre strips to make ikat fabrics (Photo 3)

quality is particularly important in every aspect of textile production, particularly dyeing especially for indigo. No chemicals of any kind are used in his village.

Another aspect of Mr.Morimoto's project is preservation of both the older textiles and their designs (photo 6). He researches these by visiting villages and documenting the designs. He has begun computerizing them so that they can be preserved indefinitely. We had a very educational time with him as he showed us the older textiles and discussed them.

One thing that saddens him greatly is that the average Cambodian cannot afford to purchase the products produced by the village. Unfortunately the traditional methods are time consuming and this must be reflected in the price.

But he has succeeded in his mission of revitalizing Cambodian ikat. His goal has also been to create an atmosphere where those engaged in every aspect of the production of a textile can do their work without fear of lack of sustenance for their family. When I visited the Forest Village and saw the women engaged in various aspects of *ikat* production working together and with their children, laughing and producing beautiful *ikat* pieces I could only believe he has succeeded. Despite the dislocation of the Khmer Rouge Cambodian traditional textiles are being produced again. The question now will be for how long as weavers are lured away to higher paying jobs in the growing tourist industry.

Lac, an insect excretion, is used to make red dye

Mr Morimoto looks at some of the older textile designs (photo 6)

Jenny L Spancake

The magic of Bhutanese weavings

Aurélie Samuel, assistant curator for Asian Textiles at the Guimet Museum in Paris, describes Bhutanese textiles from the Krishna Riboud Collection

Because of its location, Bhutan, wedged between Tibet and India, has long been ignored by the rest of the world. It was only in the second half of the twentieth century that foreign countries began building real relationships with "the Kingdom of the Thunder Dragon", as the Bhutanese call their own country, allowing us the discover an amazing wealth of textile techniques.

Hitherto, the only Bhutanese textiles known in the West were the few pieces preserved in the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the Museum of the University of Cambridge, brought from Bhutan in the nineteenth and early twentieth century by British diplomats and soldiers. The oldest known Bhutanese textiles are Buddhist statue ornaments from the sixteenth century found in temples. The oral tradition traces the introduction of weaving in Bhutan around the eighth century, when a Chinese princess, who came to marry the King of Tashigang (Eastern Bhutan), taught the women of the region how to weave wool and cotton.

Weaving

One of the most amazing characteristics of Bhutanese textiles is that they seem to be embroidered, while they are actually woven. To obtain such a result, weavers create the background of the textile by introducing supplementary weft and warp yarns into the ground-weave. These yarns are combined with each other to create a brocaded pattern (*kushu*), that is, a discontinuous supplementary weft, limited to the drawing, in high relief, which gives the illusion of embroidery. This weaving technique is called *thrima* (sometimes spelled *Timah*), and can only be found under this form in Bhutan.

Among other techniques practiced in Bhutan, we find *Sapmi*, from Lhuntshi, red and blue (seldom black) diamond-shaped patterns created by the introduction of a pattern weft (continuous) into the ground-weave, the *yathra*, a wool clothe with diamond patterns from the region of Bumthang in central Bhutan, and ultimately *aikapur*, a pattern formed by the supplementary warp threads. These different techniques of weaving were gradually adopted throughout the country.

In Bhutan, weaving is exclusively a female activity. Weavers use two kinds of looms: the vertical loom with its fixed frame and the backstrap loom (*tahshing*), also called horizontal loom, introduced in the early twentieth century. In the first case, the warp yarns are hung on a fixed frame, the tension given by the weaver wearing a strap attached to her waist.

The most common type has two beams (rolls to spin the warp yarn) that require a wooden frame. These looms are generally easily transportable to be used by itinerant weavers. The second type, the horizontal loom with several shafts, has pedals. The warp yarns are attached to the beam on one side of the loom and strung into the shaft before passing through the teeth of a comb.

The weavers use a large variety of materials. Silk has been in use for many centuries, but it is usually imported from China, India or Nepal, since Bhutanese Buddhists will often refuse to kill silkworms. Two types of silk are used in Bhutan: one, *bura*, from the worm *Philosoma cynthia,* is mostly imported from Assam. The other, *Seshu*, is obtained from *Bombyx mori* and comes from India or China. Cotton has been grown in Bhutan for a long time, but the local production is now largely replaced by the cheaper Indian cottons. Yak wool is commonly used in the highest regions of the country.

Natural dyes are obtained from the madder root for reds, mixed with turmeric for orange, and the juice of a tree of the indigo kind for blue. Yellow dyes come from the leaves of the *Sym-*

plocos, a flowering plant. Lacquer, secretion of the insect *Laccifer Lacca*, is also very popular in order to obtain a deep red.

The lacquer worms produce a resinous substance that the Bhutanese collect inside the cocoon after the insect takes flight. Living in colonies, these insects cluster on a tree branch, which, in Bhutan, is most often a jujube. Nowadays, however, imported chemical dyes, mostly from Indian, have largely supplanted natural dyes, expanding the colour palette of Bhutanese textiles.

In Bhutan, weaving is traditionally regarded as a major form of art. Traditionally, Bhutan's economy was based on barter. Clothes used to be the main currency, even with foreigners. In addition, they are crucial to the social and religious life of the Bhutanese. For each stage of life (ageing, getting a social promotion, getting married) there is a specific garment, fabric, or ornament. The royal edict of 1989, in order to maintain traditions against foreign influence, requires that "native" Bhutanese people wear the traditional attire, and this has strengthened the importance of clothing in their daily lives.

Costumes

Bhutanese women wear the *kira*, a kind of coat draped according to a complex folding technique. It is held on the shoulder by a silver buckle called *koma* and closed by a belt, the *kera*. On special occasions, the *kira* is decorated with a *rachu*, sort of shawl worn over the shoulder. The observer can guess the function of a particular *kira* from its colour. For example, when its background is white (it is then called *kushutara*), it is destined for an aristocrat.

The *charkab* is another kind of thick wool *kira* designed to protect from rain or snow. Less common, the *kushung*, ancestor of the *kushutara*, is tied around the head instead of being wrapped around the body. They are recognizable by their edges usually decorated with swastikas and geometrical designs, and are still sometimes worn during Buddhist ceremonies and processions.

Men wear the *go*, a coat of Tibetan origin, introduced in Bhutan during the seventeenth century. It is closed by a belt like the women's *kira*. On special occasions, men wear on the shoulder

***Chaksi pankhep* , Cotton and silk, Bhutan, about 1920**

of their *go* a *Kabne*, its colour marking the social status of the wearer. The higher it is, the longer his *go* is and wider are its sleeves. For women also, it is all about length: a woman of the common people wears her *kira* above the ankle, a woman of high rank above the foot, the queen being the only one allowed to let it reach the ground.

Among other clothes from Bhutan, the *chaksi pankhep* is a ceremonial cloth for nobles and monks only. It is made of three different parts of cotton or silk cloth stitched together and generally has diamond-shaped patterns on a light background (white or beige), sometimes burgundy for the monks. The *bhundi* is a piece of cloth made of cotton or nettle fibre the Bhutanese use for carrying packages or children on their backs. It consists of a single piece of cloth cut into three, before being sewn back together to make a square cloth. Small leather straps are added to close it. It is usually decorated in its centre with a large swastika (*yudrug Bhutani*) and geometric patterns.

Decorative patterns

The animals featured on several types of textiles, mainly on *kira* or sometimes on *chaksi pankhep*, probably refer to the ancient Bhutanese religious symbolic, their signification being usually auspicious.

The *yudrug* (swastika) is an auspicious sign, symbol of eternity and long life. The *dramee* (sort of diamond grid), is the endless (eternal) node, a very common symbol in Tibetan Buddhism, and one of eight auspicious symbols, with the role of protection and to bring prosperity.

The *Dorji*, or thunderbolt (*vajra* diamond), embodies the indestructible nature of enlightenment. The *phenphenma* (butterfly) pattern takes the form of its insect namesake and is drawn as an eight-pointed star. The *therpochay* (literally "Chinese wall") is inspired by a Chinese motif. It looks like a frieze and refers to a token to bring rain. Finally, the *Phubai*, a triangular pattern, symbolizes the rainbow.

Bhutanese textiles in the Krishna Riboud collection

Textiles from Bhutan, which came by purchase or donation, are few among the collection, nevertheless they are part of what makes it a reference collection, featuring the largest possible number of different weaving techniques. Some of these techniques are almost exclusively practiced in Bhutan, which is why Krishna Riboud wanted some of them in her collection. She has bought seven of them, all kept at the Guimet Museum since 2003, when the 4000 AEDTA textiles came to join the reserves of the institution.

Chaksi pankhep

Cotton and silk
Bhutan, circa 1920
246cm x 75cm
In the Krishnâ Riboud collection since December 1981
Musée Guimet, 2003 verbal bequest – MA 9125 (AEDTA 1040)

Technical analysis:

Weft-patterned brocaded tabby with a décor of *poil traînant*
Warp: 2 warps
1 main warp and 1 flushing warp making up floats: *poil traînant*
-Proportions: 1 *fil pièce*, 1 pile thread
- Materials:
foundation warp: beige cotton, S plied yarn with 2 Z ends
flushing warp: Z-twisted, red silk, S plied yarn with 2 Z ends, black
-Reduction: 40 threads/cm
Weft: 3 wefts
-Proportion: 1 pick of each lat
1 pick 1st lat, ground, beige
1 pick, 2nd lat, red weft-patterned, black
1 pick, 3rd lat, red discontinuous supplementary weft, black
-Materials:

1st lat: ground: Z-twisted beige cotton
2nd lat: weft-patterned: black and red Z-twisted silk
3rd lat: broché fabric: black and red Z-twisted silk
-Reduction: 18 passes/cm (36 sticks)

Pankhep or part of a chaksi pankhep

Traditionally, the *chaksi pankhep* was used by the King to wipe his hands after a meal or during a ritual ceremony. Its name means etymologically "towel" (*chaksi*) and "coverage for the legs" (*pankhep*). However, over time, its uses became more diverse. This kind of cloth comes from the Tashigong region. The background is generally made of a large central diamond, which serves as an axis of symmetry for the whole textile, as is the case here.

Several bands of geometric red and black (sometimes they can be dark blue) patterns surround the central part. The two lateral borders form stripes (along the warp). C*haksi pankhep* fringes can reach 20cm in length, but here they are shorter. The décor of this *chaksi pankhep* was created by the addition of an extra silk weft and a brocading weft plus a pattern of supplementary float warp (*poil traînant*) inside the borders on a background of cotton tabby.

The central diamond is framed by geometric patterns alternately red and black.
This piece can be compared to other similar works, notably the one kept at the Victoria and Albert Museum , brought by Sir Charles Bell sometime between 1905 and 1910, crafted circa 1900.

Pankhep* or part of a *chaksi pankhep
Cotton and silk
Bhutan, early XXth century?
266cm x 31cm
Inventoried at AEDTA between 1981 and 1984
Musée Guimet, 2003 verbal bequest - MA 9836 (AEDTA 1855)

Technical analysis:
Weft-patterned and brocaded tabby
Tabby weft
Warp: 1 warp
-Materials: Z-twisted *filé* cotton
-Reduction: 24 threads/cm
Weft: 3 wefts
- Proportions : 1 stick for each lat
1 stick 1st lat, ground, beige
1 pick, 2nd lat, red weft-patterned, blue
1 pick, 3rd lat, red red discontinuous supplementary weft, blue
Materials:
1st lat: ground: Z-twisted beige cotton
2nd lat: weft-patterned: red Z-twisted blue silk,
3rd lat: discontinuous supplementary weft fabric: blue Z-twisted silk with S-plied yarn of 2 Z ends, red

Reduction: 11 passes/cm
This piece, in its current condition, could be a *pankhep*. The p*ankhep* is crafted in a very similar way to the *chaksi* but its patterns are more sober and made up of a single band decorated in the same patterns. Apart from its decorative function, it can also be tied at the back to carry packages or small children. It was traditionally used to pay taxes or make donations to temples.

However, this piece might be the central part of an unfinished *chaksi pankhep,* since it has a diamond central motif typical of this type of cloth. The latter is surrounded by several bands of geometric blue and red shapes, probably woven using the technique of *sapma*. Among them, we may recognize a row of red and blue *phenphenma* (butterfly) and *Dorje* (lightning) on a beige background, and a row of *dramee* (endless node). At each end of the textile, cotton fringes complete the set.

Kera

Cotton and silk
Bhutan, early XXth century?
204cm x 40cm
In the Krishnâ Riboud collection since 1987
Musée Guimet, 2003 verbal bequest
- MA 10624 (AEDTA 2724)

Technical analysis:
Tabby weft
Warp: 1 warp
Materials: cotton, Z-twisted filé
Reduction: 24 yarns/cm
Weft: 2 wefts
-Proportions: 1 stick for each lat
1 stick 1rst lat, ground, beige
1 stick, 2nd lat, red weft-patterned, black, yellow, green
Materials:
1rst lat: ground: beige Z-twisted cotton
2nd lat: weft-patterned: silk, 3-end S twist red untwisted filaments, 3-end Z twist black bundles, 2-end S twisted bundles with 2 Z yellow ends, 3-end bundles, untwisted, green
Reduction: 11 passes/cm (22 picks)
This piece seems to be a *kera*, a belt used to fasten the coat worn by women, the *kira*. It is folded several times before being wrapped around the waist. Its form is native to eastern Bhutan and still features rows of patterns crafted by using a supplementary weft. The patterns on the white background (some pieces have a yellow background) are alternatively red and black. Large two-coloured diamonds are woven in bands. The diamonds are the dominant motif - this is the case on this piece - but chevrons, flowers, stars, or swastikas can also be found. The *kera* are woven into one long piece on a loom with a rigid frame.

The ground-weave of this belt of plain cotton tabby is decorated with supplementary weft of wild silk. In the twentieth century, more colours have been introduced in the composition of these pieces. Among the red *Phubai* (rainbow) patterns, red *phenphenma* (stylized butterflies), chevrons and black geometric designs, mostly diamonds are scattered. They are made with *flottés* of continuous weft: weft-patterned on a background of cotton tabby. A piece from the early twentieth century, preserved at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, is very similar to this one.

Part of a *bhundi* ?
Cotton and silk
Bhutan, circa 1900
143cm x 31cm
In the Riboud collection since 1991,
donation of Joss Graham

Musée Guimet, 2003 verbal bequest
- MA 11025 (AEDTA 3148)

Technical analysis:

Brocaded tabby
Warp: 1 warp
Materials : warp: S-twisted cotton with 2 Z ends
Reduction: 28 yarns/cm
Weft: 2 wefts
Proportions: 1 stick of each lat
1 stick 1st lat, ground, beige
1 stick, 2nd lat, red brocaded, yellow, purple, green, blue
Materials:
1st lat: ground: beige S-twisted cotton
2nd lat: brocaded: silk, Z red twist, S plied yarn of 2 Z yellow ends, purple Z twist, green Z twist, blue Z twist
Reduction: 10 passes/cm (22 twists/cm)

This piece of tissue appears at first glance to be a *kera*, decorated with a swastika flanked by several central diamonds. However, its decor is similar to that of a *bhundi*, a cloth used to carry objects. The *bhundi* is made up from three strips of fabric sewn together to form a square. However, this piece is rectangular. We can therefore assume that this is actually an incomplete *bhundi*, of which only the central portion was completed. This theory is supported by comparison with mid-nineteenth century *bhundi* from the Bartholomew collection.

The décor features a great variety of symbols. The large central swastika (*yudrug*), shaped by threads dyed blue, red, yellow and green, is surrounded by red and black *dramee* (diamond grid, endless knot), woven using the technique of s*apma* and *thrima*, and a small *therpochay* frieze of red and blue. The presence of unusual colours, like purple and pink, suggests the use of chemical dyes.

Special thanks:
Among all the people who helped me with this work, I owe special thanks to Marie-Hélène Guelton, who was kind enough to review my analysis and offered precious advice.

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Absorbing talk on Chinese cloud collars

Rachel Silberstein from the Department of Oriental Studies at Oxford University gave an absorbing talk to members and visitors on the 21 October. She described the lecture as "the fascinating history of the Cloud Collar". The story began around the time of the Tang dynasty when collars were worn as an accessory on top of the garment to cover and adorn the shoulders.

As so often in matters Chinese there is more to a name than meets the eye. A cloud shape was considered to be auspicious and it also came to be associated with the shape meaning "as you wish".

The cloud collars first appeared at the Imperial court during the Jin dynasty (1115 – 1234) and by the following Yuan dynasty, it had become integrated into the robe, worn by men and women. During the Ming dynasty (1368 – 1644) cloud collars continued to be worn as part of the imperial dress, but with simpler shaping, often containing dragon decorations.

Moreover, during this time the cloud collar travelled into other cultures through trade and diplomacy. The cloud collar was often worn by noble men of distinction and importance in Iran between C14 and C16. The cloud collar also entered Tibetan culture, there Tibetan nobility remodelled Chinese gifts and made the collars into hangings for Buddhist practice.

In China meanwhile the cloud collar returned to be worn by women, and this fashion probably spread from the palace to female entertainers until by the C18 more privileged women were wearing them.

The cloud collars were also worn as part of Han women's wedding dress, and it began to incorporate elements from a more official object of dress, a woman's outer vest called the *xiapei*, a separate item, rather like a stole in Christian liturgical dress. Chinese brides were traditionally known as "Empress of the day", and perhaps the cloud collar was a less expensive route to formal dress than the *xiapei*.

Cloud collars were also used to cover clothes and protect them from dirt and hair oil. This practical aspect meant that cloud collars became part of daily wear for Han women. Cloud collars and cloud collar jackets depicted scenes from traditional tales and demonstrate an interesting relationship between women's dress and popular culture.

By the C19 the cloud collar was ubiquitous but in the following century it gradually began to fade from women's dress, though it is still worn today as part of theatrical costume and Tibetan lamas' ceremonial dress. In essence, the history of the cloud collar is the story of elite fashion democratised , as Han women came to wear what had once been the province of the imperial court.

Judith Colegate

Exploring an eclectic Oxford collection

A Visit to Oriental Carpets, 25 Oakthorpe Road, Oxford
Saturday 17 October 2009

We were met early on Saturday evening by a striking figure in a voluminous brown outfit complete with baggy trousers, cummerbund and head dress. Christopher Legge, in full Kurdistan dress, and his wife Angela welcomed OATG members to his north Oxford shop which had become a treasure trove, with carpets on walls and floor and a stack of rugs and smaller pieces towards the back. Among the group there were familiar faces and some new ones whom we greeted and welcomed as we sat on the benches round the central space.

All the beautiful and colourful pieces Christopher showed and discussed had been collected over many years; he admitted he knew little about a few of them but treasured them as mysteries. But all had been made by village women with love, with great care and often with immense skill.

This was no standard display of carpets from different regions but an exploration of an eclectic collection of special pieces each with its own purpose and unique design. We examined rugs with traditional designs handed down through the generations, beautiful pieces based on a design pattern, and delightful samplers in a variety of beautiful colours and with intricate motifs.

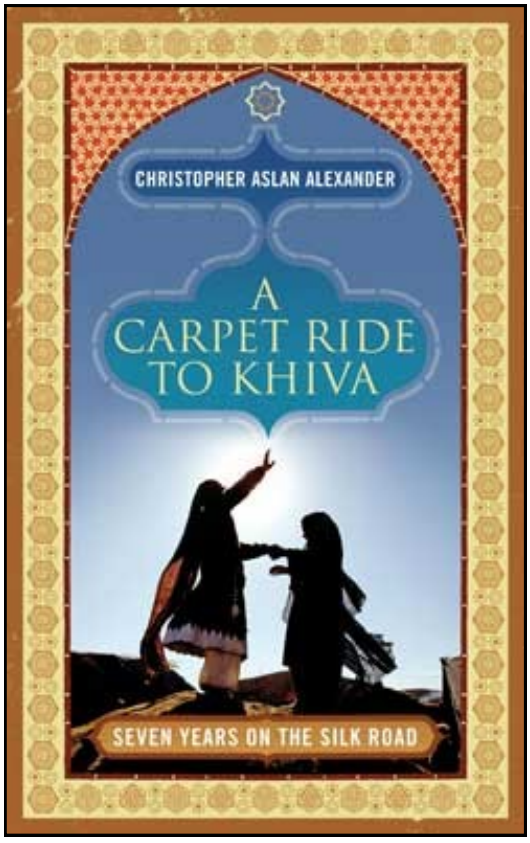
Of particular interest were the nomadic tribal items made specifically for a wedding. These included pairs of five sided *asmalyk* , a brightly coloured camel trapping, and a bag, complete with tassels for transporting tent poles. This hangs from the side of the camel, the blue and reddish tassels being both decorative and a warning of danger. He also displayed an exuberant rug probably woven by a young girl in preparation for her wedding. After a somewhat erratic start her skills had improved and the top of the rug was fairly regular. The rug was full of character, as I am sure was the weaver.

We looked at a variety of saddle bags, every one beautiful but with differing designs and using a range of weaving techniques. Christopher told us about the bag for sheep shears, a necessity for a nomadic shepherd in Azerbaijan. He was eventually given an authentic pair of interlocking razor sharp knives for which such a bag was designed.

He showed us a rare remnant from a carpet probably once donated by the relative of a deceased rich man to a mosque, but discarded when it became too worn. He invited us to identify and date a curious rug featuring stylised peacocks and dragons - or were they cats? It turned out to be English with the date 1951 woven in to it. A careful look suggested it had a Festival of Britain flavour, but our initial guesses were very wide ranging in time and place.

We were privileged to be able to examine and handle the rugs, the gorgeous little bags, the heavy ceremonial horse rug, the camel knee pads and all the other interesting and unusual pieces. Fortunately the weaving tradition still thrives in Iran, although the modern Iranian prefers the new to the old. All the more reason to treasure the older weavings. Thanking Angela and Christopher Legge for their welcome and for sharing their treasures with us we left, exhilarated, into a dark Oxford evening.

Fiona Sutcliffe



Confronting corruption with shuttles, dyes and knots

Christopher Aslan Alexander, *A Carpet Ride to Khiva*, Icon Books UK, London 2010. ISBN 978-184831125-1, 318 pages, 17 full-colour illustrations.

This is the story of an idealistic young volunteer with a Christian charity, setting up and running a carpet workshop in the oasis of Khiva in Uzbekistan. Only it isn't. The corruption that pervades every aspect of Uzbek life creeps into this gentle tale of making carpets and explodes it into a much deeper and more important insight into the horrors of that country.

Christopher Alexander first went to Khiva to write a guide book for a Swedish NGO and knew nothing at all about carpets. His friendship with a local carpet dealer arouses his interest and he finds himself – after many trials, loneliness and false starts, described in detail – producing carpets with UNESCO financial backing. He moves in eventually with an Uzbek family and with the needy fervour of youth, he adopts them as his 'mother', 'sister', acquires a parrot and a cat and integrates completely into life in Khiva. Even so, he manages to remain a vegetarian and to eschew vodka.

Khiva is the most northerly of the oasis towns of Uzbekistan and slightly remote from the others – Bukhara, Samarkand – and is often derided as a 'museum' town. Indeed, visitors must pay an entrance fee and almost nobody lives within its massive curving walls. It is largely a 19th century reconstruction, but is nonetheless dramatically atmospheric.

The author meticulously and exhaustively describes every aspect of life there. He inserts into his narrative the history of Khiva with quotes and anecdotes, he details the conventions of miniature painting, delves into the production of silk, recounts the history and legends of the Silk Road, the origins of the German Mennonites in Central Asia, mentions local preferences in TV programmes, describes the lives of the women he employs as weavers and the work of the puppet maker and the local carvers of wooden chopping boards. The only thing he doesn't mention is the family of tightrope walkers in the town.

The author's beginnings in Khiva as a guidebook writer are clear, but at this point one wonders who his readers are. Textile people will enjoy the book but will already be familiar with such matters as the origins of natural dyes or the production of silk, while for the general reader there is an overload of information.

But then, gradually and subtly, the reader is hooked as the story builds up and becomes a David and Goliath tale of exposing a cruel, corrupt society and confronting it with shuttles, dyes and knots. And personal courage. The dogged perseverance of the author in working on his carpets – checking Persian miniatures in the British Library, reduced to smuggling his dyes out of Afghanistan as they were presumed to be drugs – is matched by his tenacity in keeping to his moral values.

On return from a trip abroad to the project he has given so much to, he is allowed no further than Tashkent airport. He cannot win.

This book has particular relevance to the OATG. Our members, Sue and David Richardson,

also find themselves refused an entry visa to continue their invaluable work on Karakalpakstan. Those who came on my tours to Central Asia will, I hope, have happier memories of beginning their visit to Khiva with a silent moonlit walk around the old town. Alexander's description of the buildings are so meticulous, they will imagine themselves there again.

The evolution of this book from a story of weaving carpets to an expose of pervasive corruption and danger makes it essential reading for anyone interested in Central Asia. Undeterred, Christopher Alexander has now moved to the Pamirs where he runs a project combing the finest yak-down, to be spun and knitted into fair trade knitwear. We must hope the ride is easier.

Sheila Paine

Cultural complexity in the Balkans

Diane Waller, *Textiles from the Balkans*, The British Museum Press, 2010, 88pp. ISBN 978-0-7141-2583-01

The British Museum has an outstanding collection of Balkan textiles, much of it donated in 1971 by the Bulgarian Committee for Cultural Relations. The mostly hemp, linen and woollen clothing comes from what the author refers to as a "complex mosaic of ethnic, religious and cultural groups, each with their distinct traditions that cross national frontiers."

In fact, anyone simply looking at the illustrations would be hard-pressed to place many of these textiles. So many share design elements with textiles from further east, particularly the Caucasus and Central Asia. This is hardly surprising, considering the important influence of Ottoman Turkey on the region.

Author Diane Waller carefully navigates her way through these complexities, showing how Balkan textiles played a vital role for those who wore them. The illustrations are wonderful, particularly those showing the remarkable aprons and festival clothing worn by women in the countryside—although very few wear these costumes today, except on special occasions.

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A Kirghiz woman from the Altai region of Siberia wearing the tall *shirkule* head -dress. This Russian postcard dates from 1911.,

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