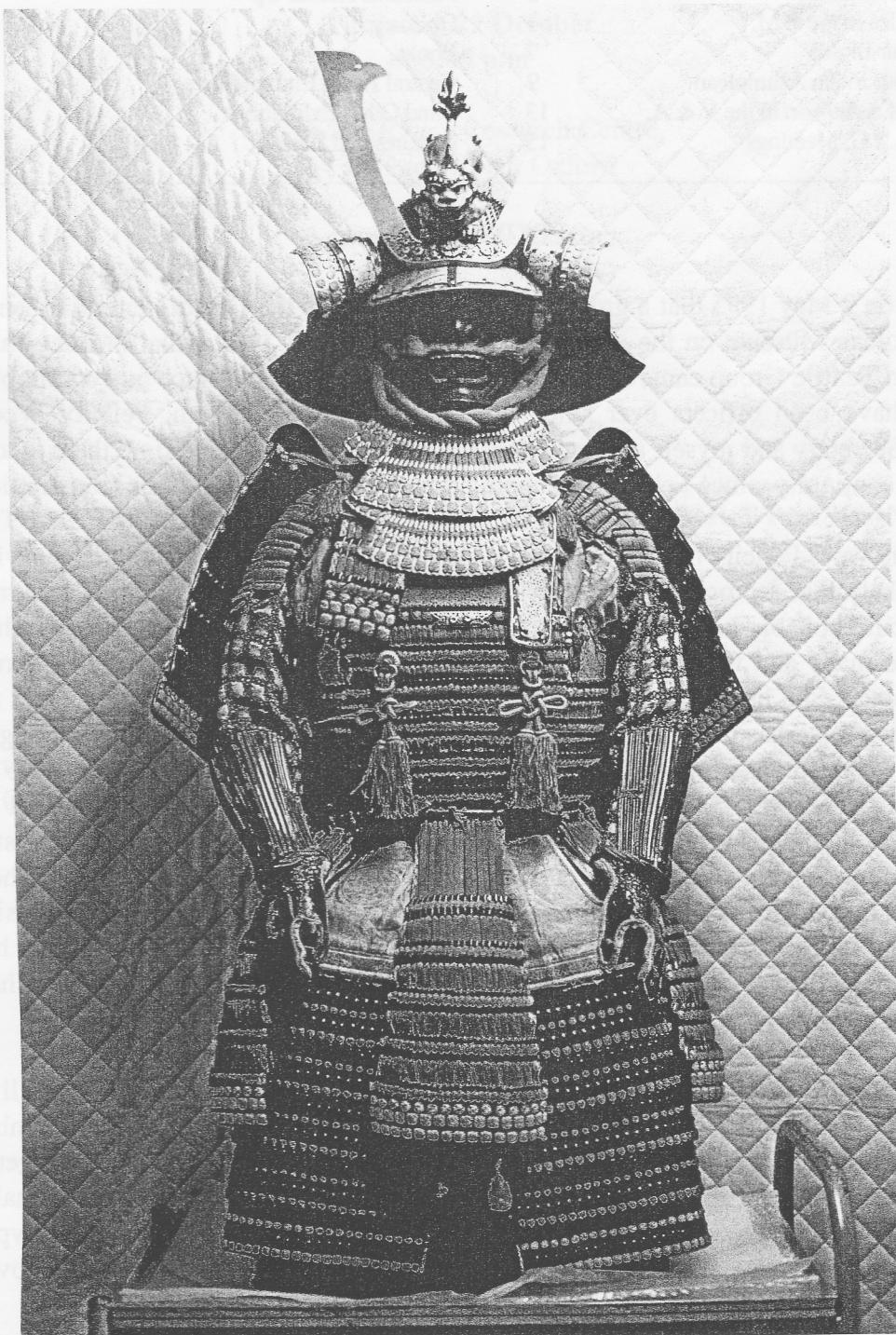


OXFORD ASIAN TEXTILE GROUP

Newsletter No. 14

October 1999



Composite suit of Japanese armour presented to Magdalen College, Oxford, by the late H.R.H. Prince Chichibu and lent by the College to the Ashmolean Museum. The 62 plate Miochin school helmet, signed Taira no Narikuni of Kodzuke, is dated 1560. Most of the rest of the armour dates from the Edo period (1600-1868).

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EDITORIAL

It was on 2 May 1995 that a group of five people met in the Department of Eastern Art at the Ashmolean Museum on the invitation of Ruth Barnes. It was at that meeting that the Oxford Asian Textile Group came into being. Two of the five have since moved on, but the other three have been officers ever since - Ruth Barnes as Chairman, Felicity Wood as Programme Secretary and myself as Newsletter Editor. Now for the first time there is to be a break in this continuity, since Felicity is stepping down under the terms of the Constitution.

In many ways Felicity has been the most important member of the group, since without her it is unlikely that a programme would have been kept going, and without a programme the group would probably have faded away. She really has been amazing in the way she has thought up so many and varied activities for us and the energy with which she has brought them into being. She has approached people who might be excellent lecturers - and all of them have been - and has persuaded owners of private collections to let us loose among their treasures, as well as organizing visits to exhibitions and institutions. But not content to leave it at that, she has ensured that open meetings have been well advertised, has provided maps so that nobody attending a meeting should lose their way, and has compiled a register of members willing to give overnight accommodation to those coming from afar. She has persuaded her husband to become our treasurer (though, alas! he has also decided to resign at the forthcoming A.G.M.), chivvied her sons into serving refreshments at meetings, and held a Christmas social in her home. What more could we ask? Her successor is going to have a hard act to follow.

By chance this has become a Central Asia/Japan newsletter, and the next one will have a slight bias in favour of India, despite my often declared intention to make each number as widely ranging as possible. There is, however, something to be said for collecting together a number of related subjects in one issue, and, if you agree, I propose to do so occasionally in future, while continuing to keep the overall range, both of geographical areas and of types of textile, as wide as possible. If there are any subjects you would particularly like covered, please let me know.

There are a number of enclosures with this newsletter, including an index for nos. 1-13. In future it is my intention to issue one triennially, which if the newsletter maintains its present size - and I hope it will, or even get bigger - should be about right. The present one covers four years, but the first four issues were very thin.

PROGRAMME

**Thursday 21 October
at 5.45 p.m**

at the Pitt Rivers Research Centre,
64 Banbury Road, Oxford

Annual General Meeting
(O.A.T.G. Members only)
Agenda enclosed

followed by refreshments and

at 7 p.m.

TAKE TWO SQUARES: ETHNIC CLOTHES WITHOUT PATTERNS

by Penelope Woolfit

Members free Visitors welcome, £2

For further information, or map of how to get there, please contact Felicity Wood, 2 Frenchay Road, Oxford OX2 6TG, tel/fax 01865 554281, e-mail: felicity.wood@dial.pipex.com.

**Tuesday 7 December
7 - 9 p.m.**

CHRISTMAS SOCIAL AND EXHIBITION

at the home of Alison and Antony Smith
in Woodstock

Numbers limited to 24
Further information and application form enclosed

For additional information please contact Alison Smith, St. Andrews, Manor Road, Old Woodstock, Oxon, OX20 1XJ, tel. 01993 813889.

TURKMEN COLLECTIONS AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM

The vast majority of the Museum's ethnographic holdings of Turkmen material have been acquired relatively recently and predominantly feature textile-based artefacts, which come from three main sources.

Readers may recall the *Turcoman of Iran* exhibition from the Abbot Hall Gallery in Kendal which was shown at a number of U.K. venues from September 1971 to December 1972, including the Ashmolean Museum. The Horniman Museum hosted the show in London, but in 1973 the Department of Ethnography of the British Museum acquired a large part of this magnificent collection.

The material was collected by Peter Andrews during fieldwork in north-eastern Iran, and came to the Museum with full supporting documentation, including details of production, use and indigenous terminology. The Iranian Turkmen are mostly Yomut and divide themselves into Jeperbay (or Jaferbay), Atabay and Gocuk sub-groups. There are also Tekke and Golden groups. The British Museum collection numbers over 200 items and includes a full yurt with interior felt textiles and fittings, costume, jewellery, domestic utensils, flat-woven (and to a limited extent, pile-woven) textiles, and animal regalia. Tools used in the preparation of textiles are also represented. Apart from the yurt itself, particularly striking are the patterned floor felts and the intricately worked flat-woven bags and saddle packs.

The publication prepared for the exhibition (*The Turcomen of Iran*, Kendal: Abbot Hall Art Gallery, 1971) remains invaluable in terms of presenting background information and cataloguing those pieces from the larger collection which were included in the show.

I understand that material from the Andrews collection also went to the Horniman Museum and the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester. Some of the costume items and horse-trappings in Manchester will be displayed alongside a selection of Uzbek *susanis* collected in the late nineteenth century at the Gallery later this year (see p.22).

In 1975, further Turkmen material was acquired from Peter Andrews: forty-two items, again from north-eastern Iran, largely comprising male and female costume and weaving equipment.

Sotheby's auction house was the second source of Turkmen material, where the Museum made a major purchase in 1979. The acquisition of thirty-two items mostly comprises jewellery but includes three items of richly ornamented horse-trappings. The majority of the pieces are Tekke and many are outstanding. Sadly no research has been carried out to establish the history and exact provenance of the collection.

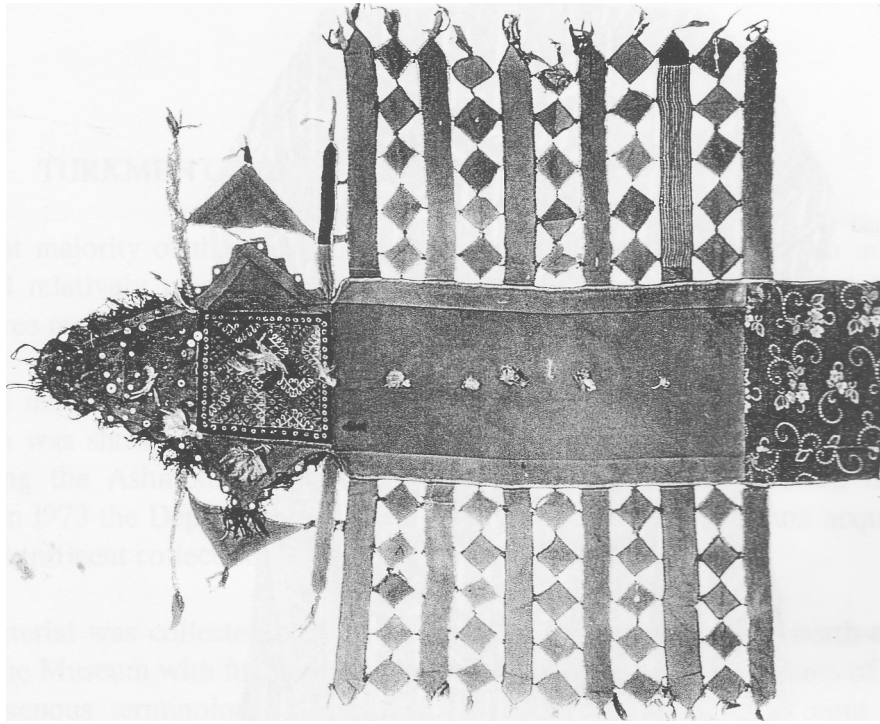
More recently the Museum has benefitted from field-based collecting in Central Asia, not by ethnographers, but by archaeologists working at the ancient site of Merv. The February 1999 issue of this newsletter (p.8) referred briefly to this initiative. Over the last four years, Dr St John Simpson (from the Museum's Department of Western Asiatic Antiquities) and Dr Georgina Herrmann (from the Institute of Archaeology at University



Woman's embroidered *chyrpy*, Turkmen, Turkmenistan? Early 20th Century? Donated by Dr Georgina Hewmann, who bought it in a Tetbury junk shop. (B.M. Ethno 1997 As28.1)

College London) have steadily acquired ethnographic material during their periods in Turkmenistan, in the modern city of Mary or through private purchase. With a knowledge of the Museum's existing holdings, they have tailored their acquisitions to fill "gaps" in the collections and provide modern counterparts for older examples of particular pieces. They have generously donated this material to the Museum in a series of gifts, numbering over 150 items in all. Costume provides the primary focus (including children's garments), but also included are felt textiles, domestic artefacts and animal-trappings.

Most striking are the blue and black married women's mantles or *chyrpy*, worn from the head and with vestigial sleeves hanging down the back. The different colours of the *chyrpy* denote the status of the wearer - young women's are blue or black, middle-aged women wear yellow, and older women white. The silk fabric is decorated with fine silk thread embroidery. Primarily in red, yellow and white, the "tree of life" and stylized floral designs, branching "ram's horns" and solar motifs often cover the whole garment. Dr Herrmann's most recently donated collection includes two particularly fine early 20th century examples. Ironically, one of these was acquired in 1998 in a Tetbury junk shop! (Illus. above)



Appliqued and embroidered horse cover, Yomut? Turkmen, Iran? mid-2)th century? Donated by the Oriental Rug and Textile Society of Great Britain (B.M. Ethno 1994 As 15.1)

Lastly, there are some forty or so miscellaneous Turkmen items , most with little or no documentation. This material includes spindles and a weaving comb collected in Herat, Afghanistan, and acquired from M.G.Konieczny, better known for his research and collecting among Baluch weavers. The earliest acquisitions date from 1883; a small number of Yomut Turkmen jewellery items collected by the Rev. Dr Henry Lansdell and donated by Augustus Wollaston Franks, a nineteenth century collector and Keeper of the British Museum. Finally and more recently, in 1993 there were purchases of further costume items and textiles (fourteen in all) and in 1994 came a donation of a Yomut (?) Turkmen horse-cover from the Oriental Rug and Textile Society.(Illus. above)

Sadly all of the Department of Ethnography's collections are currently inaccessible to visitors while they are packed for transfer. In 2001, its stored collections from the Museum of Mankind and the Orsman Road repository in east London will be moved to the British Museum Study Centre, which is currently being developed from a former Royal Mail sorting office on New Oxford Street. One of the highlights of the new Study Centre will be the Clothworkers' Centre for World Textiles, a major, dedicated storage and study facility for the Museum's 18,000 strong textile collections, drawn from across seven curatorial departments. As well as upgraded closed storage areas and a study room, the Clothworkers' Centre will feature an activity room to house demonstrations and workshops, a small display area, and a space dedicated to "visible storage" where visitors will be able to view textiles from across the collections, presented according to techniques of manufacture and decoration. The emphasis of the Study Centre as a whole will be on improved access to the collections: we look forward to welcoming O.A.T.G. members to the Clothworkers' Centre for World Textiles in the not-too-distant future.

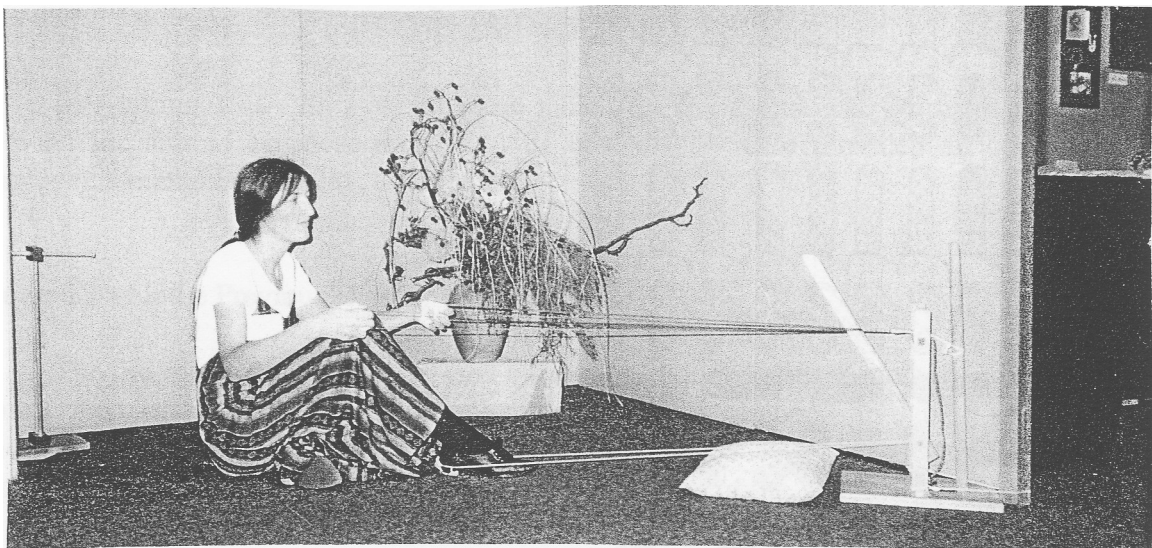
Sarah Posey
Curator - Europe, Central Asia and Middle East
British Museum Department of Ethnography

SAMURAI ARMOUR BRAIDS

The history of *kumihimo* (Japanese braidmaking) is often associated with the Samurai and their armour. However, *kumihimo* is usually the term given to braids made using "stand and bobbin" equipment such as the *marudai* and *takadai*. Although these styles of production have been around in Japan for some time, they only came into prominence after the abolishment of the Samurai class in 1868.

The social and political changes of this era threatened the production of handmade braids, so in an effort to regenerate the market, support was given to the wearing of *obi-jime*, a braid used to secure the material *obi* belt over the kimono. As "stand and bobbin" equipment can produce a wide range of braid structures and patterns, these braids were ideally suited to cater for the new fashion. The subsequent dominance of these methods of braiding and the traditional secrecy surrounding the industry resulted in the loss of the original braiding technique used to produce armour braids. However, due to recent research work, notably by Masiko Kinoshita, this technique has been rediscovered. It is referred to as *kute-uchi* (braiding with hand strips) so as to distinguish it from other methods of braiding that can produce similar structured results.

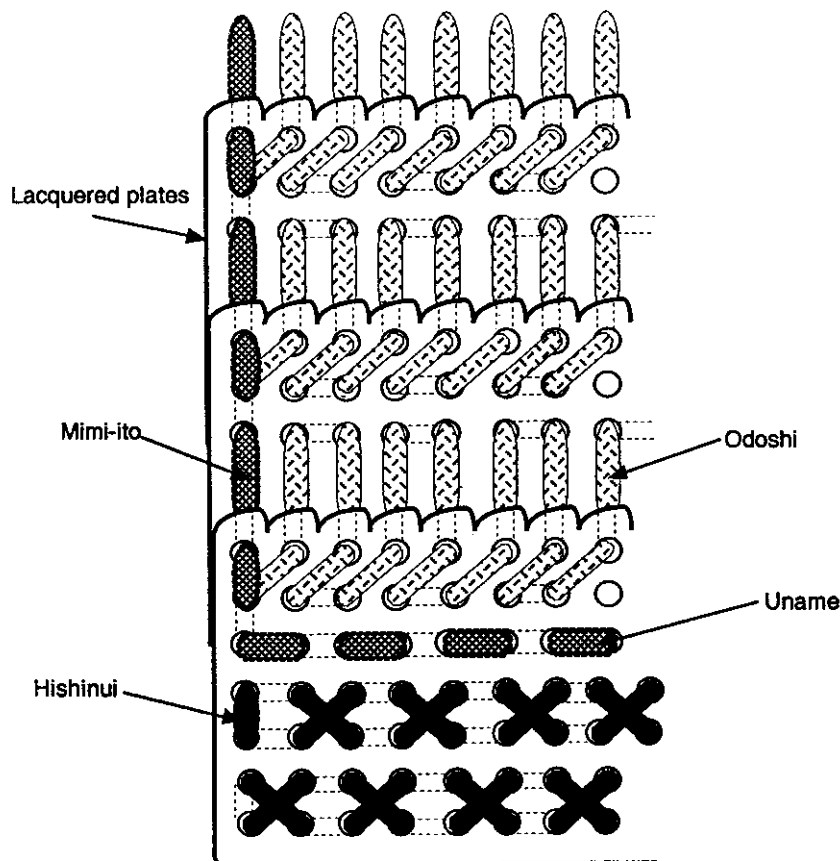
Kute-uchi is a loop manipulated technique. The nature of its construction is quite different from "stand and bobbin" techniques, and it is this difference that makes it so adept for the production of armour braids. Although "stand and bobbin" techniques are very versatile and can produce the braid structures used in armour, the *kute-uchi* method specializes in these structures, thus producing them more efficiently. It is not just the practicalities of the technique that imply *kute-uchi* was the method used for making armour braids. Technical differences between the braiding methods provide the clues to identify the majority of surviving armour braids as *kute-uchi* braids. Further evidence can also be found in the few surviving written and pictorial records.



Making *kute-uchi* armour braids at the *Samurai Undressed* exhibition. The footbeater was reconstructed by Ernie Henshall based on information from *Spshun Biko*, part of an unpublished manuscript *Shika Suyo* (The Thesaurus for Ceasing War) by Masunari Ozeki c.1810, translated by Masiko Kinoshita.

Kute-uchi braids were produced from hand held loops of thread. Hand straps, made by moving the loops in sequence, either through or over each other. A particular feature of the Japanese style of working was the use of a foot operated beater. This enabled a single braider to produce long lengths of braid. In other cultures, long lengths of loop manipulated braid are achieved by two workers, one to move the loops and the other to beat the stitches at the fell of the braid. Solitary workers normally tensioned the braid by stretching out their arms, thus limiting the length of braid that could easily be produced.

Throughout the centuries, Samurai armour has varied considerably in both style and construction. Yet there was a predominant braid structure used in its production. This was a flat, eight-ridge twill braid approximately 1cm wide and 2.5m long. These lacing braids, collectively known as *odoshi*, were used to connect together the small plates of lacquered metal or rawhide. The resulting lamellar armour was flexible, secure and decorative. The Japanese attribute of combining function and beauty can easily be identified in their armour. This regard for decorative detail could account for the Japanese preference for lacing their armour with silk braids rather than the conventional strips of leather used in other cultures. The silk braids were easier to pattern and took dye colours better than leather. It has also been suggested that silk was more acceptable than leather to Buddhist soldiers, but as leather was used in armour in many Buddhist areas elsewhere this seems unsubstantiated.



One of the most common styles of lacing together the lacquered plates was called *kebiki* (hair spread over). A detail of the bottom corner of a section of armour reveals the path taken by the lacing braids.

Colour played an important part in emphasizing rank and status in the Japanese court, although there were frequent changes made to accommodate new dyeing techniques. This had a certain influence on the Samurai, but ultimately the colour of the armour was a personal choice rather than an indication of rank or family. The *odoshi* braids were usually coloured monotone with a natural dye. Indigo was the prevailing choice, possibly due to the strengthening qualities of this dye, although red (madder, safflower and sappanwood) and purple (gromwell) were also popular. Some suits used combinations of colours or graduated shades of one colour to achieve decorative effects. Patterned braids produced from different coloured threads were occasionally used for *odoshi*, but more often they were reserved for the edge laces. These particular braids were known as *mimi-ito* (ear thread) and *uname* (a derivative of "thy path between rice fields") and interlaced the perimeter of each section of *odoshi*. The flat twill braids were also used as *hishinui*, crosses of red braid that trimmed the bottom of each section of armour (illus. opposite). These braids were originally used to conceal the lower bindings that held together the individual scales of a lacquered plate. However, their use continued in spite of the introduction of solid plates.

Kute-uchi was also used to create larger, more elaborate braids of different structures. These were mainly used to tie together the separate pieces of armour and to attach them to the wearer. Although in later years these braids were often of "stand and bobbin" construction.

As with so many ideas and techniques, lamellar armour and loop manipulated braids were both introduced into Japan by the Chinese. Yet from these early beginnings both techniques developed into something unique and distinctively Japanese in character, with their history quite literally intertwined together.

Jacqui Carey

THE RE-DISPLAY OF A SUIT OF JAPANESE ARMOUR IN THE ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM

In Autumn 1997 the new Japanese gallery at the Ashmolean Museum was opened. Moving the suit of Japanese armour to its new display case provided an opportunity to improve its method of display.

Problems with the Previous Display Method

The old display system was based on the traditional Japanese method, a basic wooden frame over which the various armour components were draped. In Japan, armour would traditionally only be displayed on such forms for short periods. Long-term display on this type of form had caused significant damage to some parts of the armour.

The construction of Japanese armour makes its display problematic. "Japanese armour contains a variety of materials, including metals, textiles, leathers and oriental lacquer. . . These materials are laced, stuck or stitched together to form individual protective elements,

such as a shoulder-defence, a body-defence or a shin-guard. These elements are attached to the body either individually or in conjunction with other elements, to form flexible, protective, colourful and symbolic armour." (Guppy, 1998). The thigh-armour, for example, is made from a combination of materials. Heavy lacquered metal plates are sewn onto an apron-type structure made from padded silk brocade with a heavier fabric lining. The "apron" straps are tied around the wearer's waist and have to support the whole weight of the lacquered metal. The "apron" straps on the thigh-armour at the Ashmolean were severely degraded, with much of the silk lost, leaving only the cotton lining fabric to bear the strain.

A similar problem occurred with the sleeves, where the fabric ground structure has heavy lacquered metal plates applied to it and also some areas of chain-mail. The sleeves are tied onto the body with silk cords which are under considerable strain. Figure 1 shows the sleeves and thigh-guards on the original display mount (see below left).

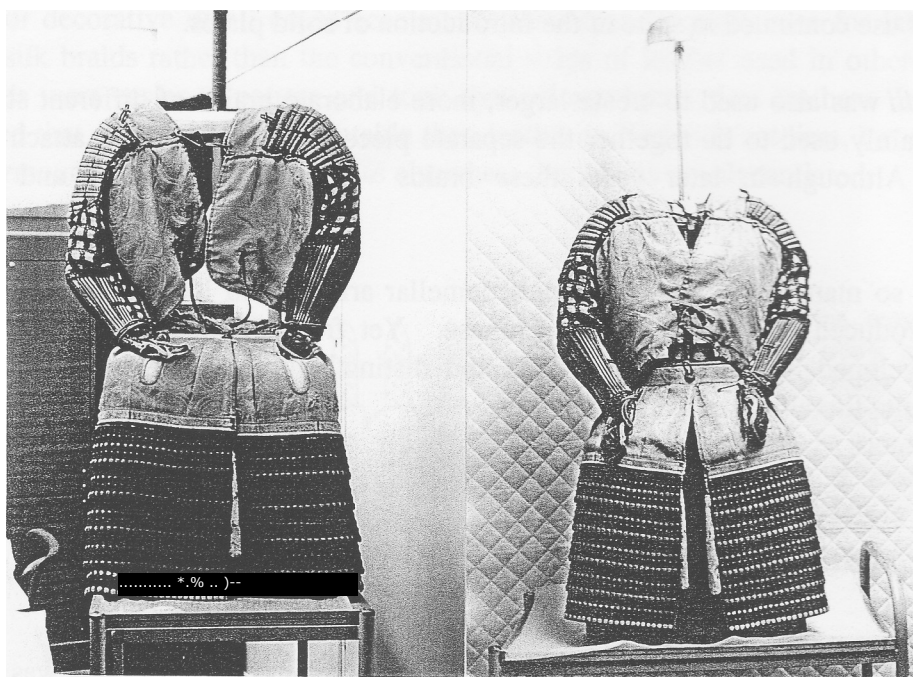


Fig 1 (left) Sleeves and thigh-guards on original display mount.

Fig 2 (right) Sleeves and thigh-guards on adapted display mount.

The other main component of the armour which was causing a problem on display was the rigid body-armour or cuirass. This had been resting directly on the silk of the upper part of the "apron" part of the thigh-guards. The shoulder straps of the cuirass were also resting heavily on the silk of the sleeves.

The remaining components of the armour - five guards which hang from the base of the cuirass; three neck and throat protectors; two shin and foot pieces; two shoulder-guards and the helmet - were in reasonable condition and could be returned to the armour after the basic elements had been re-supported. The main problem was documenting the way the various components had been attached and the type of knots used.

Preparation of the New Mount

The old mount was adapted in several ways in order to improve the method of display. See diagram 1 (below).

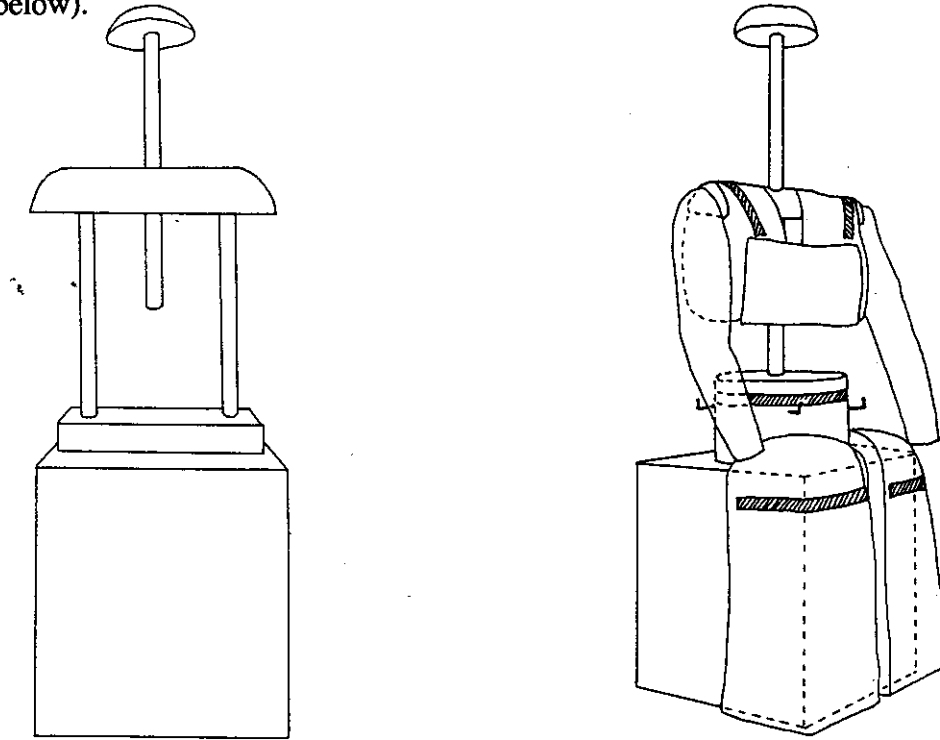


Diagram 1a (left) Original display mount Diagram 1b (right) Adapted display mount, showing position of velcro strips, hooks and inert foam blocks and pads.

(1)The original rectangular block at waist height was removed and replaced with a rounded block made from zero-formaldehyde MDF. The block was slightly smaller than the inside base of the cuirass. The shoulder bar of the original mount was shortened and the two uprights replaced with a single central pole. All these wooden elements were covered with "Moistop", an alluminiumized polyethylene and nylon barrier film which reduces off-gassing from the wood.

(2)Carved inert foam blocks covered with smooth fabric were placed over the front comers of the base block to provide a smooth profile over which the fabric of the thigh-armour could be draped. Similar pads were also attached to the shoulder bar with detachable sleeve forms.

(3)Velcro was fixed to the mount in strategic places to take the weight of the heavy elements of the sleeves and thigh-guards and to relieve the strain on the ties and cords. The soft half of the velcro was sewn onto cotton tape which was then sewn onto the lining of the thigh-armour along the top edge of the lacquered metal plates. It was also sewn along the inside of the waistband of the "apron" and onto the lining of the sleeves along the top of the lacquered metal shoulder plates.

(4) Four right-angled hooks were fixed into the MDF block just below the velcro. The two front hooks were positioned so that they protruded through the two slits below the waistband of the thigh-armor. The rigid cuirass can rest on these hooks (padded) and none of its weight falls onto the silk of the thigh-armor. In addition, the pressure of the shoulder straps is removed from the silk sleeve fabric.

Figure 2 (p.10 above) shows the sleeves and thigh-guards on the adapted mount.

Very little interventive conservation was carried out on the armours. A layer of dyed silk crepeline was stitched over the most damaged areas of silk brocade. The severely damaged ties of the thigh-armor were simply wrapped in soft acid-free tissue, coiled, and rested on the MDF base.

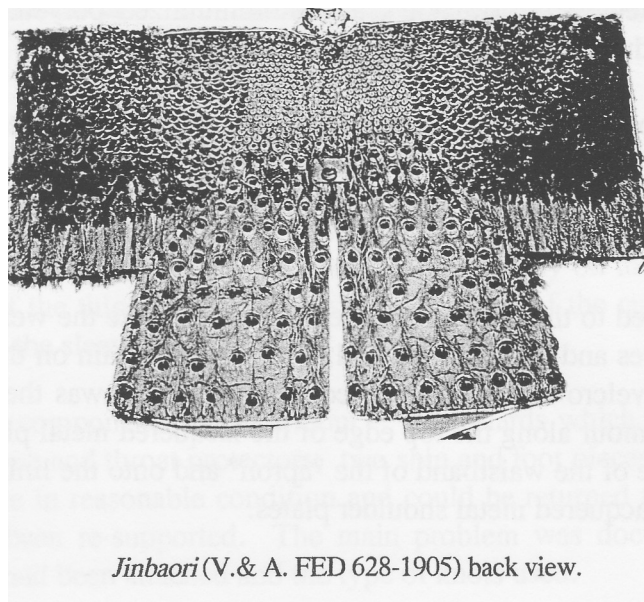
The new display system has improved the appearance of the armour and the most vulnerable components are now relieved of some of the damaging forces. However, some parts of the armour which are currently in good condition, such as the guards hanging from the cuirass, are still at risk. It may be necessary to adapt the display further in order to reduce the strain on these elements.

References

Guppy, A., *What's Wrong with Japanese Armour?*SSCR Journal Vol.9, no.2, 1998, pp5-10.

Kozan, S., *The Manufacture of Armour and Helmets in 16th Century Japan*, trans. Wakameda, T., Holland Press, London, 1963.

Susan M. Stanton
Textile Conservator, Department of Eastern Art
Ashmolean Museum



Jinbaori (V. & A. FED 628-1905) back view.

THE CONSERVATION AND MOUNTING OF A *JINBAORI*, c.1700-1900, IN THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

The *Jinbaori* evolved in the late sixteenth century as a surcoat worn over a full suit of Samurai armour. Originally a purely functional garment intended to keep the wearer and his armour dry, it developed into a symbol of personal taste and power, with expensive exotic materials being used in the construction and design.

This *jinbaori* (V.& A. FED 628-1905) is dated 1700-1800, a time when the Samurai governed the provinces in the name of the Shogun (the supreme warlord) who himself governed nominally in the name of the Emperor. This *jinbaori* would have been used for ceremonial purposes and most likely for *Sankin-kotai* when the Samurai processed between his estates at court and his own province.

It is an exotic, showy, flamboyant piece, incorporating both Japanese and Chinese textiles and decorated with peacock feathers. The epaulettes (*tachi-uke*) are of velvet, as is the collar lining. The lapels (*en*) are of Chinese silk, and the lining is a woven silk and peacock feather fabric. At the centre back is an ornate metal *kanamono* (an ornate metal plate on which the *agemaki* or decorative bow is hung) (see illus. p.12). Although covered in feathers, the *jinbaori* is heavy.

Condition and Conservation

In general the *jinbaori* was clean and sound. There were some areas of weakness to the ground silk of the body, and many feathers were shedding and disrupted, but there was no insect damage.

The velvet had degraded and split and where it was used as a binding to the collar edge it had in some places fallen away. Repair and support were essential here, so silk habotai and also some nylon net was dyed to colour match. It was necessary partially to unpick the collar to allow access to the back of the velvet so the silk could be inserted as a support fabric behind the velvet. The velvet was then couched to the silk using a fine polyester thread. The fragile fragments of velvet remaining from binding the collar edge were covered with the colour matched net to hold them in place and prevent further losses.

Although some remedial conservation was necessary, the main concern was to provide good and adequate support for the *jinbaori* whilst on display.

Much work had previously been carried out to develop a method for displaying heavy Chinese robes and Japanese kimono using a substantial purpose-made Vilene support tailored to the exact shape of the object. The Vilene support was given a final cover of silk to give a good finish and to allow the garment to slide easily onto the support mount.

The whole assemblage (mount and garment) can be hung on a standard T-bar kimono

It was decided by the curator that it was important to show the shot silk and feather lining and not obscure this with the mount, so the purpose-made and tailored mount for the *jinbaori* was made in two parts.

Finally the feathers were steamed to relax them and allow some of the disruptions to be removed. Feathers are composed of the protein Keratin. The amino acid composition of Keratin is complex but within the morphology adjacent protein chains associate with each other through hydrogen bonding. Most hydrogen bonds are disrupted at temperatures between 40-60°C, which is why steam is most successful at relaxing feathers.

Some small repairs were also carried out to the feathers where possible, and broken feather shafts were either splinted or butt joined using Mowilith 50 (P.V.A. resin) in acetone as the adhesive.

A longer and more detailed article on this *jinbaori* can be found in the V&A *Conservation Journal* no. 27, April 1998, ISSN 0967-2273.

Marion Kite and Audrey Hill

Conservation Department, Victoria and Albert

Museum



REPORTS OF O.A.T.G. MEETINGS

A Visit to the Shaw Collection of Costumes from Central Asia

I feel sure that the small group gathered in the fine new Eastern Art Print Room of the Ashmolean Museum on the afternoon of 7 July had no conception of the visual feast that awaited them. Beneath the gaze of a set of Burmese *nats*, Ruth Barnes unfolded a treasure trove of ikat coats; some quilted for warmth, and some more serviceable than others. All once belonged to Robert Shaw, British Commissioner in Ladakh, merchant trader, intelligence gatherer within the machinations of the Great Game and, even, sometime rogue. He had collected them on journeys to Kashgar, Yarkand and Yangi Hissar, some as gifts from Yakub Beg, ruler of Kashgaria, who claimed direct descent from Tamurlane. The *raison d'être* for these physically and intellectually exhausting forays was to negotiate tea and trading concessions.

Perhaps we should remind ourselves that in the 1860s etiquette was paramount, whether this took the form of taking tea or exchanging gifts - Robert Shaw makes this abundantly plain in his book *Visits to High Tartary, Yarkand and Kashgar*- so much so that as he approached Yarkand, emissaries from the Court of Yakub Beg, dressed in gorgeous clothing, accompanied by about thirty horsemen, rode out to meet him to inquire and ensure that he was bearing appropriate gifts. Much is made of the quantity and quality of the latest models of British firearms carried by Shaw as gifts, but compared to the robes he was to receive they seem rather mundane. Robes were customary gifts, and Shaw records that on one occasion he was dismissed by Yakub Beg after "being nearly stifled, from having to wear three heavy robes, one above the other." Much, much later, when he was leaving Yarkand, Robert Shaw was engaged in lengthy discussions with Yakub Beg's interpreter so as to ensure that fitting gifts were sent to Queen Victoria. On reading of his suggestion, "things peculiar to this country and not very bulky", one realizes how little perceptions change! Apparently gifts of jade and silk were despatched to England.

The collection, found by Ruth Barnes and Lorraine Rostant in 1993 in an English lacquer chest, while undertaking "housekeeping" in the Ashmolean basement, comprises thirteen garments, nine caps, stockings and shoes. The garments are datable from Shaw's own account of his travels and audiences with Yakub Beg in Kashgar in 1869. He describes a lavish Court setting, an assemblage of thousands, "a living kaleidoscope", and rank upon rank of attendants, all clad in brilliantly coloured silk robes.

A hint of this panoply was displayed before us with hardly a tear, and scant evidence of fading. Many coats were reversible, some made in locally produced ikat and others fashioned in ikat from Bukhara and Samarkand. Some were lined in a cotton "paisley" print fabric which probably came from Russia, whilst others were all of silk. Most had fine braided borders that had been meticulously woven on to the garment. The cut was Chinese, as were the styles of the fastenings and the long voluminous sleeves. Cleverly concealed pockets emphasised the skills of these master tailors. Mostly these splendid swaggerring coats were worn by men round their shoulders, but from the tiny waists of others, almost certainly some were made for the Court ladies too.

Amongst the collection is a magnificent pink satin robe, and it is tempting to speculate that this was the robe that Shaw was helped into on first being received by Yakub Beg - no wonder Shaw immediately felt that he had a special rapport with the wily ruler.

Shaw returned to England in 1870 carrying this collection. It has to be said that they are not practical garments, nor are they suited to English life. We are left with the charming story, recorded by Shaw's sister, that on occasion they indulged in a fantasy world by putting them on and playing at oriental despots!



Indigo dyed ikat coat from the Shaw collection

Japanese Country Textiles A Visit to the V.& A., 8 September 1999

Having read with pleasure *Mingei*, Japan Folk Crafts Museum, and *Japanese Country Textiles* by Anna Jackson, I looked forward to joining a group of O.A.T.G. members for a study on such country textiles with Anna Jackson, whose welcome, enthusiasm and knowledge of the subject resulted in a splendid time in which to examine relevant items from the Victoria and Albert Museum's collection.

Mingei is an abbreviation of the phrase *minshuteki kogie*, or "people's art", invented by the art critic and philosopher Soetsu Yanagi (1889-1961). Yanagi was influenced by the ideas of William Morris. To the philosopher, a characteristic of objects of daily life, including textiles, was functionality.

An indigo cotton futon cover demonstrated the technique of *kasuri*, resist dyeing, depicting Kinko, one of the immortals, riding the carp. Cotton replaced bast fibres in revolutionizing people's lives. Stencils made from mulberry papers and persimmon juice using rice resist dyed fabric produced a beautiful pine and crane design. A bold family crest produced by *tsutsugaki*, free paste technique, decorated a carrying cloth, and an example of the dyer's art, a male occupation, depicted swirling waves and petals.

By the 1870s, chemical dyes were introduced into Japan, and the design of a lively octopus caused the group to smile. *Sashiko* quilting with cotton thread created geometric patterns on garments. We were impressed by the beauty of a garment from northern Japan showing areas stitched in counted white thread. On display was a *kosode* a garment with small sleeves having a gap for ventilation underneath the arm. The kuzu plant was used in the making of an outfit for a Samurai fireman. This ceremonial summer outfit was stiff and transparent.

Turning to the Ryuku Islands, we were shown examples of banana fibre *bingata* textiles of Okinawa. A spectacular use of stencils and mineral pigments produces multicoloured fabrics associated with the Ryukuan royalty. Mainland Japan became interested in these textiles. It was not a humble cloth worn by peasants; Yanagi just re-discovered it and there followed a revival.

The Ainu, an aboriginal people, used the inner bark of the elm tree for their robes. Designs on Ainu textiles are created by applique and embroidery. These skills are highly prized, men valuing the expertise of their wives.

We were delighted to study these examples of Japanese country textiles, a number having been collected by Jack Langewiss in the 1950s and 60s. We are most appreciative of Felicity Wood's effort in organizing this event, and Anna Jackson's informative talk.

Freda Chapman

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Many thanks for the O.A.T.G. Newsletter No.12 with your article on the Tradescant Asian shoes. Do let me know if anyone responds with any suggestion for the origin of the child's with the high upturned toe. I've seen similar high toes of course on early Chinese, T'ang, etc, figures, and nineteenth century Korea, but less evidence for the seventeenth century.

Of course I've learnt a lot since the work for the Rarities was to be published in 1983*, and would now say firmly that the pair of men's red velvet mules mentioned in your last paragraph is European, even English, though I wouldn't argue that it couldn't have come from China. I suspect that gentlemen travelling there would have taken their slippers - which is what this is - and no less uncomfortable than those other men wore here at that date.

Yours sincerely

JUNE SWANN

[*June Swann is the doyenne of shoe historians and did the research for *Tradescant's Rarities*, Ashmolean Museum 1983 on which I relied heavily when writing my article. Ed.]

Dear Editor,

I did wonder what on earth I had said when you referred in your editorial (Newsletter no. 13) to debating what I had queried in my report on Sandra Dudley's lecture (p.14), and was relieved when I looked it up!

Personally I don't think that "dress" demeans the status of embroidery: surely the original purpose of embroidery was to decorate magnificent clothing? When bone and thorn needles were "discovered" pieces of clothing would have been joined with threads of animal or vegetable origin, and this developed further into decorative stitching. One can imagine cave women adorning their skin clothing with beads, seeds and/or shells in the way that native Americans and other tribes still do world-wide, and this progressed logically towards other kinds of embellishment. Items such as pieces made just to be decorative, plus samplers which had a different purpose originally, came in centuries later. To consider embroidery as just an isolated treasured category in itself to my mind is too purist.

Yours sincerely,

PATSY YARDLEY

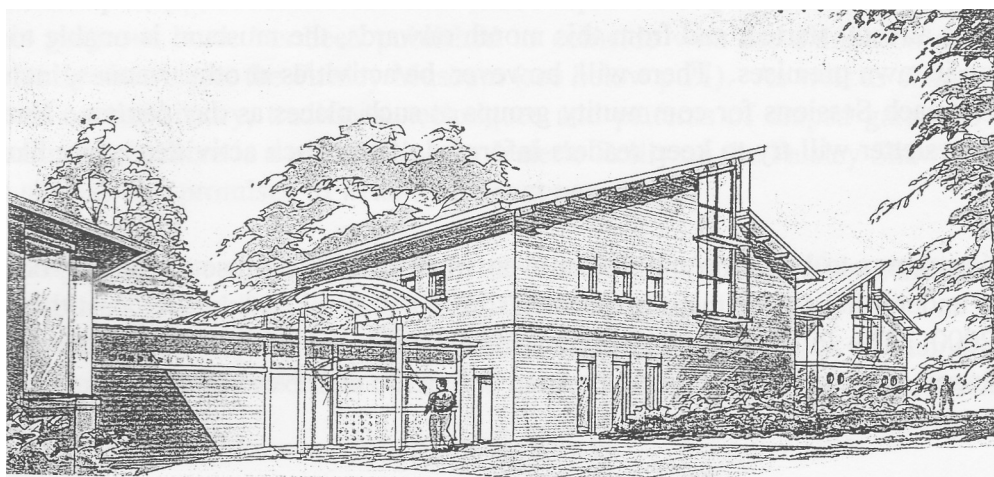
MUSEUMS ROUND-UP

I first became aware of the Silver Studio some years ago when attending a Japanese study day at the V.& A., and so when the Friends of the Geffrye Museum recently offered a visit, I jumped at the opportunity, and a very rewarding visit it turned out to be. Arthur Silver set up his studio in 1880 and ran it until his death in 1896, by which time it had become Britain's leading design studio for textiles and wallpapers, with such famous names as Archibald Knox and C.F.A. Voysey working for it. But their designs were not marketed under either their own names or the name of the Silver Studio, but those of the prestigious firms who used those designs, notably Liberty's. On his death at the early age of 43, Arthur's 21-year old son Rex took over and continued to run the studio until his retirement, aged 84, in 1963, when it closed. A great many of the designs, especially during the Art Nouveau and Art Deco periods were strongly influenced by Japanese patterns, and I hope to include an article on this theme in a later newsletter.

Rex Silver's stepdaughter and heir, Mary Peerless, gave the contents of the studio to Hornsey College of Art (now part of Middlesex University) in 1967. It seems that nothing had ever been thrown away, and the collection comprised some 40,000 designs, 2000 wallpaper and 5000 textile samples, an invaluable archive of day-books, sales ledgers, trade cards and catalogues, as well as a library of books on design.

As is so often the way with collections, once an institution has been given one, owners of similar collections decide to deposit or bequeath theirs there too, and in this way the University has been given four other archives, as well as increasing the collections by purchase. Now they are in the process of building at Cat Hill in North London a museum to house all this in environmentally controlled conditions, with permanent and temporary

exhibition galleries, teaching, study and lecture rooms, and conservation laboratories, as well as a comprehensive database. To be known as the Museum of Domestic Architecture and Design, it is due to open in September 2000.



The new Museum of Domestic Architecture and Design

As mentioned by Sarah Posey above (p.6), and as members may remember from an article in an earlier O.A.T.G. newsletter (no.6, February 1997), the textile collections of the British Museum will be housed in the new Clothworkers' Centre for World Textiles (CCWT) from 2001. The Centre will occupy 2,000 square metres on the first floor of the British Museum Study Centre now being developed in a former Royal Mail sorting office in New Oxford Street, not more than 200 metres from the main museum.

The C.C.W.T. has already launched a Newsletter, of which I have belatedly received a copy of the first issue, although it was published as long ago as October 1998. It claims that further issues "will appear on an occasional basis", though I understand that the second one will not be published until this month - too late for review in this newsletter. However, if members would like to join the mailing list, please contact Helen Wolfe, Textile Centre Project Co-ordinator, British Museum Department of Ethnography, 6 Burlington Gardens, London W1X 2EX (hwolfe@british-museum.ac.uk).

Lyn Stevens-Wall, who wrote about the South Asian textiles in the National Museums of Scotland in the last newsletter, was the recipient of a scholarship from the Friends of the N.M.S., to enable her to visit India earlier this year. For five weeks she toured the north west, visiting Delhi, Jodhpur, Jaipur, Udaipur, Ahmedabad, Bhuj and Mumbai. In the villages in Kutch north of Bhuj she witnessed the production of embroidery, textile painting and other crafts for local trade and for the few tourists who pass through. She was also fascinated by the bazaar in Bhuj, where she met the master craftsman Khatri M.Iqbal Alimohamed Isha and his family who have been practising tie-dye to a high standard for several generations, selling their work both in India and abroad.

I am sorry to say that the application, mentioned in the last newsletter, by the Museum of East Asian Art in Bath to the Heritage Lottery Fund for aid in developing an education

centre has been unsuccessful. Nevertheless the Museum hopes to find funds from other sources to go ahead with the scheme on a more modest scale.

On the other hand the major development at the Horniman Museum, reported in the same issue, has already started, and from this month onwards, the museum is unable to offer workshops on its own premises. There will, however, be activities at other venues, including a series of Outreach Sessions for community groups at such places as day centres. Needless to say, this newsletter will try to keep readers informed of any such activities as *are* likely to interest them.

Building seems to be going on almost everywhere, and the Museum of Ethnology in Rotterdam is undergoing such a major expansion that it will be closed until at least the end of November 2000. The Pitt Rivers, however, is nearing the end of its trials in this respect. Keep your fingers crossed - it might even be open before the next Newsletter.

Editor

O B I T U A R Y

Jeanne Bromfield

Jeanne had spent nearly all of her adult life in Hong Kong where she followed a demanding career in English education. Only on retirement to Wiltshire did she have the leisure time seriously to pursue her enthusiasm for quilting and patchwork. With characteristic professionalism, Jeanne studied for the City and Guilds Diploma in Patchwork and Quilting, and she became a member of the Quilters' Guild. She joined local groups in Devizes and Glamorgan, where her work embraced all aspects of design and dyeing - often reflecting her time spent travelling and living in the Far East. Her friends from these groups hope to mount an exhibition of Jeanne's work at Joseph's Coat (quilting shop) in Cowbridge, Glamorgan. Jeanne was a new member of O.A.T.G., but willingly stepped forward last year to fill the gap of temporary assistant membership secretary. Jeanne bore her short illness with grace and died early in May.

Rosemary Lee

O.A.T.G. SUBSCRIPTIONS NOW OVERDUE

As noticed in the last newsletter, annual subscriptions are due on or before 1 October. Rates remain at £10 for individuals and £15 for two or more people living at the same address and sharing a newsletter. For those of you who have not yet paid, this is the last newsletter you will receive. Please send your cheque or the enclosed banker's order form as soon as possible to the membership secretary, Dymphna Hermans, the Warden's Lodgings, All Souls College, Oxford, OXI 4AL, tel. 01865 279370, fax. 01865 279337. Please note that her e-mail address has changed to: dgh@operamail.com

BOOKS

Askari, Nasreen, & Arthur, Liz, *Uncut Cloth: Saris, Shawls and Sashes*, Merrell Holberton, 1999, 128pp, about 130 col. illus., ISBN 185894 083 4, pb.

This gorgeous book has been published to coincide with the exhibition of the same name currently showing at the Paisley Museum (see below p.21). As well as chapters by the two authors on the history, traditions, techniques and patterns of draped garments and the trade in uncut cloth, there is a contribution by Valerie Reilly on the Paisley Shawl - a subject on which she has also promised to write in the next newsletter.

Fereday, Gwen, et al., *A Dyeing Art: Geometric Double Ikats from Andhra Pradesh*, Surrey Institute of Art and Design, 1999, 48pp, 60 col & 15 b/w illus. pb

Produced to accompany a recent exhibition, this slender book contains valuable essays by an international collection of experts on the techniques, history and patterns of the *telia rumal*.

Valery M. Garrett, *Chinese Dragon Robes*, O.U.P., 1998, 72pp, 24 col. & 23 b/w illus., ISBN 0-19-590499-0, £8.99 hb.

Quite half this little book is given over to the history of dragon robes and the regulations governing their use during the Qing period (1644-1911). There follow sections, which do not go into any great depth, on weaves, embroidery, dyes, cut, and the Imperial silk works, with a final section on symbolism. Though brief, like other works in this series, it provides a useful reference work on the subject.

Gillow, John, and Sentance, Bryan, *World Textiles: A Visual Guide to Traditional Techniques*, Thames & Hudson, 1999, 240pp, 551 co. & 227 b/w illus., 28x24cm, ISBN 0 500 019509, £28.

This is the first book to illustrate in nearly 800 colour drawings and photographs the whole range of traditional handmade textiles from all over the globe, classified by materials and technique rather than by period and country. Eight sections cover all aspects of production, each giving a summary of characteristics, making, and geographical distribution. Every kind of textile is covered: non-loom and loom woven, painted and printed, dyed, sewn, embroidered and embellished. The book is completed by a glossary, a bibliography and information on examples in public collections.

Rivers, Victoria Z., *The Shining Cloth: Dress and Adornment that Glitters*; Thames & Hudson, 1999, 192pp, 287 illus., 30.8x24cm, ISBN 0 500 019517, £32.

The author has spent over a decade searching for light-reflecting textiles. Drawing on specialist anthropological research from every continent, she examines silk and other shimmering fabrics and explores the use of gold, silver and other metals, sequins, beads and mirrors, as well as natural objects - shells, seeds, feathers and beetle wings used with fabrics.

Two recent publications from the V. & A. will be of interest to members; *Shamiana, the Mughal Tent* contains a photographic record of the 1997 exhibition showing textile panels created by groups of Asian women living in this country and abroad. £9.95 pb. The other is a

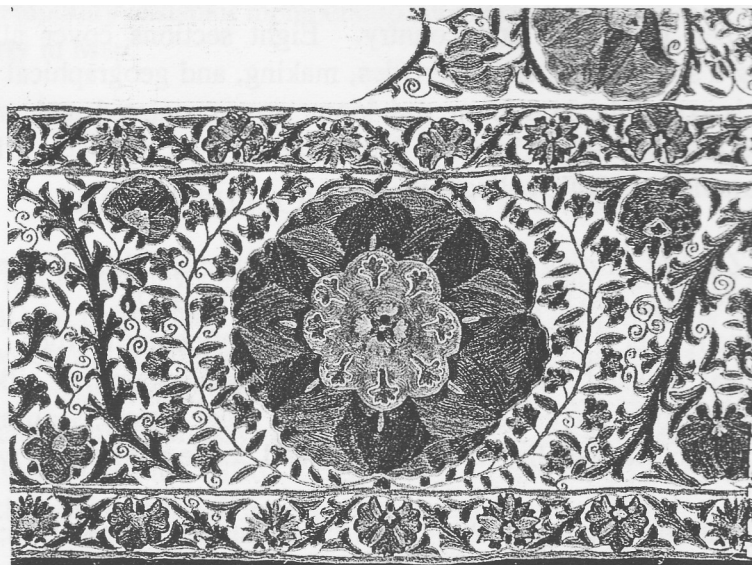
EXHIBITIONS

Central Asian Embroideries at the Whitworth Art Gallery

It is over 25 years since the Whitworth Art Gallery exhibited such a lavish range of its embroideries from Central Asia. Two groups have been selected for this small exhibition: suzanis from towns and villages of the former emirates of Bokhara and Kokand, where they were made in sets as part of a girl's dowry, and a variety of Turkmen embroideries, including women's *chyrpys*, trouser cuffs, a girl's cap, and horse and camel trappings, principally from the Yomut and Tekke of north-east Iran and Turkmenistan.

Ten suzanis will be on show. One of these, a *ruija*, which was a special bridal sheet, was acquired by Thomas Wardle, the renowned silk dyer and textile manufacturer, on his trip to India in 1885 and exhibited at the Colonial and India Exhibition, London, 1886, and the Manchester Royal Jubilee Exhibition, 1887. Another was bought by the Victorian connoisseur, John Charles Robinson, and seven of the remainder came from the collection of Professor Percy and Mrs Essie Newberry, which was presented to the Gallery in December 1949. Two are nim-suzanis (small coverlets) and one is a wrapper embroidered on muslin. They display a range of patterns and stitches and include characteristic examples from Tashkent and Ura-Tube, as well as from the neighbourhoods of Bokhara and Shakhrisyabz.

Many of the Turkmen embroideries were acquired through fieldwork undertaken in north-east Iran by Mr and Mrs Peter-Alford Andrews and were first shown in *The Turcoman of Iran*, organized by Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Kendal, in 1971, which toured to nine venues including the Ashmolean Museum. Other pieces, including a white ground *chyrpy*, were bought mainly from dealers during the 1970s to enhance and fill gaps in the collection. The most recent acquisition is a felt horse blanket purchased at auction this April.



Detail of *ruija*, mid 19th century, embroidered in chain (tambour) stitch in coloured silks and red wool on a cotton ground, presented by Thomas Wardle in 1890. (The Whitworth Art Gallery, Accession No. T.8065)

The exhibition is on show at the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, from 9 October to 1 May 2000/ While it is aimed especially at embroiderers, with information being provided on the stitches of each piece, the dazzling designs have a wide appeal for enthusiasts of textiles and Central Asia. An embroidery workshop on *Suzani Techniques* on 13 November is already fully booked, but a further workshop is planned for January. In addition, there will be afternoon tours of the exhibition for the public on Tuesday 2 and Saturday 27 November. Dates of tours in 2000 remain to be finalized. Groups may book tours by arrangement with the Gallery. For bookings or further information, tel. 0161-275 7452. Access to the exhibition is also possible by visiting the Gallery's website, <http://www.whitworth.man.ac.uk>

Frances
Pritchard

Other Exhibitions

Life and Ceremony in Urban Algeria-

- includes finely embroidered furnishings and textiles for domestic and dress use, incorporating luxury fabrics such as silk, velvet and brocade. You may not think Algeria is very Asian, but the exhibition illustrates the impact of numerous foreign invasions and occupations which have introduced a wealth of Andalusian, Ottoman, Jewish and European styles, techniques and materials to Algerian towns and cities. At the British Museum now until 30 January 2000. Tel. 020-7636 8920.

Indigo-Dyed Textiles from Around the World-

- from Jenny Balfour-Paul's collection are on display until 30 October at the galleries of the Cornwall Craft Association at Trelowarran, near Helston, Cornwall. Jenny is giving a day-time talk in the gallery on 27 October. For details of time and further information, phone the gallery, 01326 221567.

Fashioning Mao -

- shows how the sexually egalitarian Mao suit has been transformed by later Chinese fashion designers; a small display in the VA A. from 13 October to 23 April 2000. For further information tel. 020-7942 2197

Cotswold Antique Dealers Fortnight

An autumn season of selling exhibitions, 16-30 October, including *Tribal Eye: an Exploration of Symbolism in Nomadic Tribal Weaving* at the Samarkand Galleries, Stow-on-the-Wold (tel. 01451 832322). For full programme and information about other events, tel. 01608 662627

Trappings - The Nomad's Art

+ Antique Gabbeh at the Gordon Reece Galleries, Knaresborough, Yorkshire, until 7 November. Tel. 01423 866219

Overseas

Ikat: Splendid Silks from Central Asia -

- at the Art Institute of Chicago until 9 January 2000

Woven Symbols: Chinese Garments and Textiles -

- at Seattle Asian Art Museum until 2 April 2000

Last Chance to See -

The Unit Cloth ends its run at Paisley Museum on 23 October. There are a number of demonstrations, children's and adult workshops being held in connexion with the exhibition. For details and booking tel. 0141 899 3151.

LECTURES AND EVENTS

The 20th Anniversary Fair will be held at Chelsea Old Town Hall, Kings Road, Chelsea. Tuesday to Sunday 12-17 and Tuesday to Sunday 19-24 October, 10 am. to 8 p.m. Tuesday to Friday and 10 am. to 5.30 p.m. at weekends. (Tel. +44 171 255 2272)

Chinese Textile Tour

Embroideries of Oasis and Steppe - Textiles of Central Asia

An illustrated lecture and display by Sheila Paine at the Oxfordshire Museum, Fletcher's House, Park Street, Woodstock, on Saturday 23 October at 2.30 p.m. (to be repeated at 6.30 p.m. if there is sufficient demand). Tickets, to include light refreshments, £5 available from the Museum from mid-September (with S.A.E. please). Museum tel. 01993 811456

Indigo Round the World: Dye, Plants and Techniques

A week-end course will be given by Jenny Balfour-Paul at the School of Biological Sciences, Bristol University, Friday 29 October 7.30 p.m. to Sunday 31 October 3 p.m. Fee £60 (£45 concessions), max. 20 students. Details from David Hill, School of Biological Sciences, Woodland Road, Bristol, BS8 1UG, tel. 0117 928 9000, fax. 0117 925 7374

Batik and Paste Resist Techniques

A practical course by Karen Mears organized by the Horniman Museum but held at the Kirkdale Learning Centre, 84 Kirkdale, Sydenham, SE26 4BH; six sessions, Thursdays from 4 November, 7.30-9.30 p.m.; £45. Tel 020-8699 1872, extra 129.

Oriental Rug & Textile Society of Great Britain

Lectures at 6.30 p.m. at the Brunei Gallery: *The Ceremonial Cloths of Sumba, Indonesia* by Janet Willoughby, 12 October; *Moroccan Carpets* by Jean Engels, 7 December, *Living with the Shahsavan* by Richard Tapper, 11 January 2000; non-members £2.50.

Further information from the Hon. Secretary, Elizabeth Bridges, Tel.0181.986 1328

The Flowering of Asian Ornament

A Study Day run by Asia House and the Oriental Rug & Textile Society, Sunday 14 November, 11 am. to 3 p.m. at the Brunei Gallery: *Facts, Clouds and Flower Scrolls* by Jessica Rawson & *Newcomers to Paradise* by Jon Thompson; non-members £15. Tickets must be pre-booked through Asia House, 105 Piccadilly, London W1V 9FN, Tel. 0171-499 1287

Weavers Conference

The 6th Biennial Conference of the Association of Guilds of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers will be held at Westminster College, Oxford, 14-16 April 2000. Among the speakers is Ruth Barnes, who will talk on *Textiles from Mediaeval Asia in the Ashmolean Museum* Bookings have to be made before 31 January 2000; further information and booking forms can be obtained from Elizabeth Cook, tel. 01865 874416. It will be possible to book for individual lectures;.

The O.A.T.G. Newsletter is published three times a year
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DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE - MONDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2000

Contributions should be sent to the Editor
Phyllis Nye, Hewel Barn, Common Road, Beckley, Oxon, OX3 9UR, U.K.
Tel/fax. 01865 351607