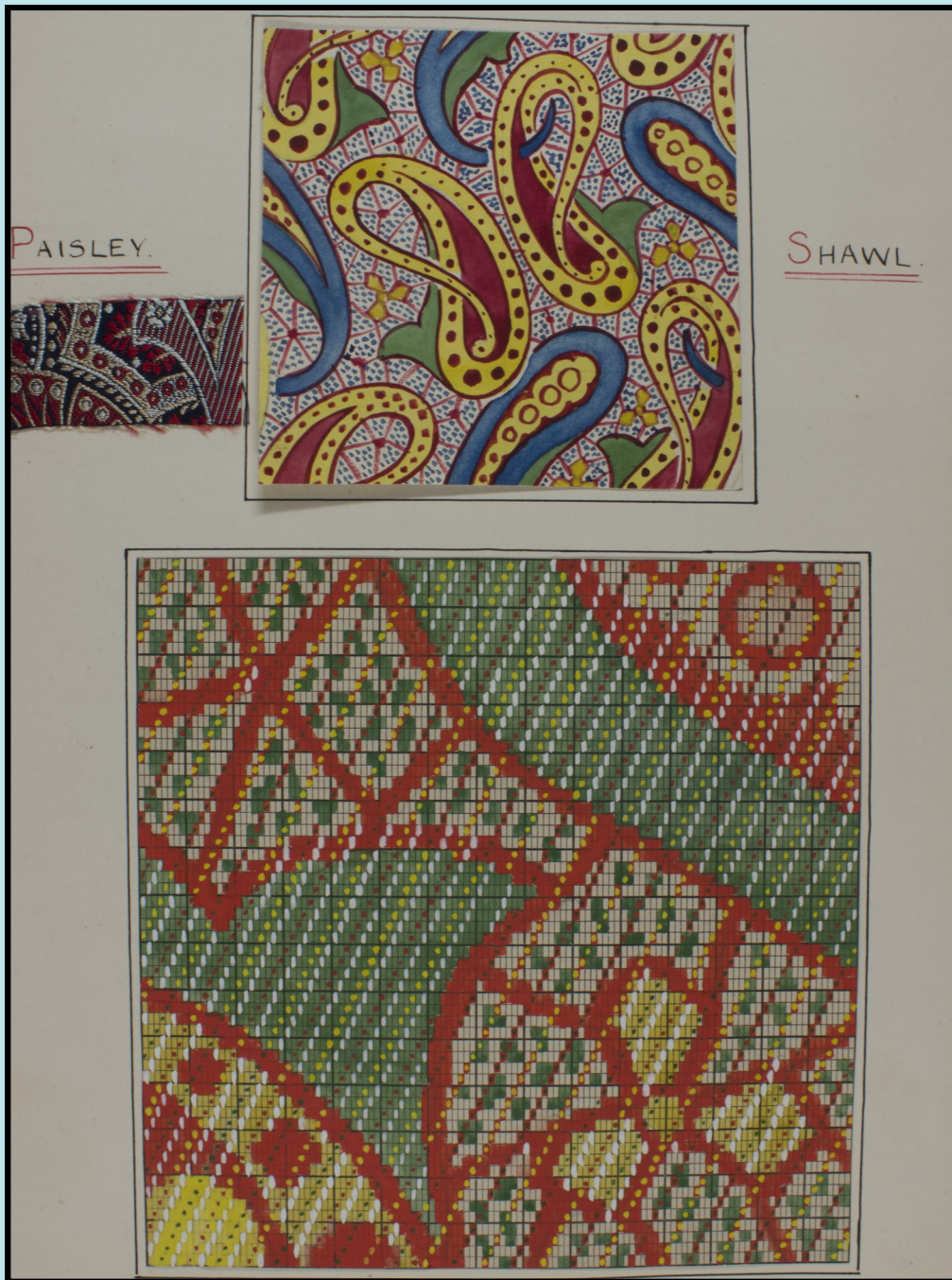


# ASIAN TEXTILES

MAGAZINE OF THE OXFORD ASIAN TEXTILE GROUP

NUMBER 53

OCTOBER 2012



**Inside:** Bradford's textile connections to India; children's kimonos in Paris and much more.

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**Front cover pic:** Page from John Forbes Watson's *Collection of Specimens and Illustrations of Textile Manufactures of India*.

**Rear cover pic:** Weaving ikat in Mallorca

## ***Asian Textiles* is 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 51**'. 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 members, as part of their membership, are entitled to access to the pdf files for *Asian Textiles* for the previous two years.

Passwords for all full colour issues to date are:

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

**DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS  
MONDAY 8th FEBRUARY 2013**

Contributions should be emailed or sent to  
the Editor

# Editorial

For some time now I have been concerned about the future of *Asian Textiles*. It has become increasingly expensive to post out to our members and will soon be uneconomical without a substantial increase in membership fees. At the same time, it seems to be more and more difficult to find contributors who can submit the kind of articles that I know are enjoyed by our readers.

The facts are thus: we produce a 32-page magazine every four months that is sent to roughly 150 people in Oxford and around the world. There is no editorial budget other than print and postage and those costs now amount to around £3 per issue. It takes somewhere between 5-6 days to edit the articles and design and lay out the magazine.

I had hoped at one point that we would be able to get some advertising to subsidise the costs of the magazine, but this has proved elusive. To get advertising, you have to invest time—and money—contacting and convincing potential advertisers, and this is simply impossible for a small magazine.

So where does that leave us? We have the following options:

- 1) We can carry on regardless and continue to devote a substantial part of our subscription income to producing the magazine.
- 2) We could reduce the size of the magazine and therefore reduce the postage costs.
- 3) We could make it less frequent.
- 4) We could abandon it altogether and decide to go online.

Of these options, the most appealing to me is the last one. We already have an excellent website and I think we could build on this to launch a more dynamic web presence. Specifically, we could launch an OATG blog. The number of such blogs is growing and we would be part of a vibrant sector on the internet, with great possibilities for expanding our reach and influence.

The advantages, besides cost savings, are first, we would be able to develop more of a dialogue with our members and also with the wider world of textiles. A blog would allow us to post items, such as meeting reports or details of events, almost immediately. All members would be able to post material as they chose. In all the time that I have been editing the magazine, I have had only a handful of letters or emails from our membership for publication. My guess is that would change if we had an open-access blog.

Second, it would enable us to ‘host’ articles by other people in the textile world and also to draw in people that may not have heard of us before. Although we can be found via our website, it is the dynamism of a blog that encourages people to make contact and to take part in online discussions, even if this only means leaving a short comment under an article or item on the blog. We can link to other textile sites and try to draw their readerships towards us. We can add a twitter account that will act as another conduit towards our activities and meetings.

I understand that there will be objections to adopting an online strategy. Some people simply do not get on with new media and prefer the physicality of a published magazine. A blog is ephemeral and you have to keep on coming back to it. It cannot be left on the side table to be glanced at later. All these points need to be borne in mind as we discuss this issue.

Of course, nothing has been decided yet. I hope that we can have a good discussion before we make any decision. I would stress that this is ultimately a decision for the membership and not for the editor or the committee members. In the first instance, please write to me and I will publish any correspondence in the next issue of the magazine. I look forward to your contributions.

*The Editor*

# OATG EVENTS PROGRAMME

**Wednesday 5 December 2012**

*Dressed to Impress*

**Lesley Pullen**

Researcher and Lecturer for Material Culture of Southeast Asia at SOAS

A study of the textiles carved in relief on the monumental sculptures East Java, exploring various sources for their design as reflected in trade cloths, architecture, paintings and ceramics.

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**Saturday 12 January 2013**

*Threads of Silk and Gold: Ornamental Textiles from Meiji Japan*

A gallery talk by **Clare Pollard** curator of the exhibition at the Ashmolean Museum

[www.ashmolean.org/exhibitions](http://www.ashmolean.org/exhibitions)

Meet at 2.20pm inside the Ashmolean Museum. Please register with Rosemary or Fiona as soon as possible and by 3 January 2013 at the latest. Exhibition entry on the day is £6/£4 concessions

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**Wednesday 13 March 2013**

*Shawls, Maps and Fashion*

**Sarah Cheang**

Lecturer in the History of Design at the Royal College of Art .

Her talk highlights recent work on Indian textiles in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the development of ideas about industrial manufacture and hand weaving and the geographies of fashion.

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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](mailto:rosemarylee143@btinternet.com)  
Fiona Sutcliffe 01491 872268 [j.v.sutcliffe.t21@btinternet.com](mailto:j.v.sutcliffe.t21@btinternet.com)



## Antique Rug and Textile Art Fair returns to London

The third London Antique Rug and Textile Art Fair (LARTA) will take place at The Show-room, close to Marble Arch and Edgware Road in London from 18th to 21st April 2013.

The Fair will present rare and beautiful antique rugs, carpets and textiles originating from Anatolia, the Caucasus, Persia, Central Asia, India and China, as well as from Europe and Africa, and from all periods up to the early 20th century.

Amongst the exhibitors will be Gallery Nomad, Marilyn Garrow Fine Textile Art, Joss Graham Gallery, Andy Loyd, Aaron Negad, Owen Parry and Markus Voigt Textiles.

A series of lectures will accompany the fair, including a talk by Brian MacDonald on Persian Tribal Rugs.

More information from <http://www.larta.net/index.php> or tel +44 (0) 7976 826218.

## Websites and blogs that specialise in Asian textiles

I have been struck by the growing number of blogs and websites devoted to Asian textile art. Here are a few you may want to look up:

**Bhutan and Asia Textile Museum:** <http://bhutantextile241.blog126.fc2.com/blog-entry-189.htm>

**Antique Asian and Tibetan Rugs, Art and Indian Textiles:** <http://www.antiquetibet.com/>  
**Asian Textile Art:** <http://asiantextileart.com/index.html>

**Threads of Life blog:** <http://threadsoflifebali.wordpress.com/>

**Above the Fray: Traditional Hilltribe Art:** <http://www.hilltribeart.com/>

**Kain Mas (Cloth of Gold):** <http://www.kainmas.com/index.php/home-catalog/introduction/welcome-to-kain-mas-1.html>

**R. John Howe: Textiles and Text:** <http://rjohnhowe.wordpress.com/2011/12/30/steve-price-on-silk-in-central-asian-textiles/>



This is the last of my Liebig postcards for now. It shows women carpet weavers in the Merv Oasis in Central Asia, today part of Turkmenistan. The back of the cards states that the trade was mostly in the hands of Armenians and adds that the weavers received only a minimal salary. What this has to do with Oxo I have still not worked out.

# The mystery of *roba de llengues*— the *ikat* fabric produced on a Mediterranean island

**Nick Fielding finds that just one family on the island of Mallorca produces *ikat* cloth, a tradition that may date back to the time of the Arab occupation of Spain and the Balearics**

Tucked away in a valley in the southwest of the Tramuntana mountains in Mallorca close to the town of Bunyola you can find the wonderful 12th century Jardins d'Alfabia. As the name suggests, the gardens and buildings date back to the Arab occupation of the islands and once belonged to Benhabet, a wealthy Arab who lived there until the Catalan conquest.

Beautiful colonnaded walks, ponds and palm trees make this a very special place. Inside the house there are many beautiful objects, including a wonderful 14th century chair, possibly Flemish, carved with scenes from the story of Tristan and Isolde.

But what immediately caught my eye in the house were the walls in the main reception rooms. To my surprise I found they were covered in fabric, and more astonishing still, it was blue and white *ikat*. I knew *ikat* could be found in central Asia, India and the Far East islands, but had no idea that it was produced in the Mediterranean.

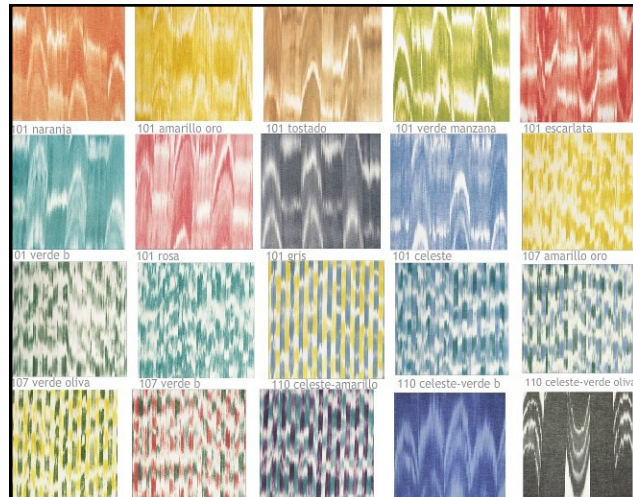
In fact, *ikat* is still produced in Majorca where it is known as *tela de llenguas* in Spanish or *roba de llengues* in Catalan - which translates as 'cloth of tongue's, based on the distinctive patterning.



**Ikat used as wall covering in the main house at Jardins d'Alfabia in Mallorca**



**A selection of some of the 300 patterns of ikat produced in Mallorca by the Vicenç family**



No-one really knows how the complicated technique arrived in Mallorca, but it was very popular in 18th century France and some people say it may even have arrived from there.

Today, the Vicenç family of Pollença are the only people still making it in the traditional way. For the Vicenç family, it is a tradition that goes back more than 200 years. The tradition was almost lost in the years before the Second World War but it was picked up again when Marti Vicenç's son found his father's notebooks and used them to reinvent the process.

In the Mallorcan system the first stage in the production process entails stretching the undyed cotton threads—or warp—onto a frame. The next step is to sketch out on the threads the intended design. The threads are then removed from the frame and those parts to be left white are covered with water-repellent bindings or they might merely be bound very tightly.

Bundles of white cotton threads are then dipped into vats and, according to the pattern desired, are selectively dyed—so that only those parts of the cotton that are unprotected will take on colour. The threads are then taken to weaving workshops, wound back onto spools and woven into cloth. It's a laborious process and the result is a cloth which is patterned on both sides, into which linen is woven to give the finished cloth greater body.

Fifteen people work in the factory, producing curtains, sofa fabrics, table cloths and bedspreads. The family make a total of 300 patterns and motifs. More information at <http://www.teixitsvicens.com/>.



**Typical Mallorcan roba de llengues in the distinct blue and white patterning**

# UNCOVERING BRADFORD'S TEXTILE LINKS TO INDIA

**Dr. Nima Poovaya-Smith looks for connections between the famous West Yorkshire town and the silk textiles of the Indian subcontinent, in the process turning up some remarkable survivals.**

Reading Brenda M King's book, *Silk and Empire*(1), on a hot summer's night while in the middle of curating *Connect: People, Place, Imagination*(2) for Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, Bradford, nearly five years ago, one paragraph leapt out at me – and my heart leapt with it:

*"The role of Indian textile design in Bradford at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century was a highly influential one. All of the essential aesthetic and technical principles referred to by educators of designers and weavers were displayed in India's textile designs. Furthermore, in Indian textiles, they were combined with the requirements of utility and expressed an exceptional command of colouring. It was this unique combination that made them the most suitable exemplars for hand or machine production. It therefore becomes obvious why India's designs are so strongly represented in the archival material of Bradford: key textbooks, students' work, trade journals, products of the textile industries and the fashion journal."*(3)



**Thomas Wardle Pattern, 1831–1909; Leek Embroidery Society, late 19th century; Handwoven tussur silks with handblock printing and stitching with gold thread and metal spangles; All photos © courtesy of Bradford Museums and Galleries**





Listers Mill, Bradford, early 20th century

Fragment of silk velvet with embroidery in coloured threads.

*Silk velvet with silk thread*

*Collection: Bradford Museums and Galleries*

I had always wondered if Bradford had had textile links with the Indian Subcontinent before the arrival of the South Asian community, largely from the 1950s onwards. Unsurprisingly, when I began to delve, there were of course scattered links, which were already in the public domain. But they were slender threads that cropped up in different narratives, not sufficient in themselves to weave a whole cloth.

King's revelatory text, distilled from primary research she had conducted of student work books, industry journals and other archival material from Bradford College, coupled with the fact that Cartwright Hall's principal benefactor - textile grandee, Samuel Cunliffe Lister(4) - also owned silk farms in India, provided a central focus for the *Connect* narratives.

Lister had not only revolutionised the wool industry with his inventions, mainly in collaboration with Isaac Holden (1807-97), but also succeeded in perfecting silk-comb appliances which allowed for the large-scale use of waste silk. Refining this process nearly bankrupted him, but he did eventually recoup his wealth ten-fold. 'Titus Salt transformed alpaca from Peru, which he described as 'superattenuated horsehair', into one of the most fashionable materials of its time. Lister took what had until then been a worthless product -waste silk - and made it into a material desired wherever fine dress goods were bought.'(5)

Frank Warner in his book *The Silk Industry of the United Kingdom*(6), is wonderfully waspish about the accounts of how Lister and Salt transformed unpromising waste material into



something exquisite: “The ‘superannuated horsehair’ of the one narrative has its counterpart in the ‘dirty flocks’ and ‘crushed worms’ of the other. Both give the discovery an air of chance by laying the scene in port warehouses, but Lord Masham’s own pen at least avoids the indefensible suggestion that silk waste had not been utilised before his time.” It is nonetheless a fascinating story.

Lister built Manningham Mills in 1873, one of the largest silk mills in Europe. At its height it reputedly employed 11,000 people. Presciently, Lister had said that he pictured Cartwright Hall as “the place where the Asiatic of the future might come in search of the inventor of the power loom. I have the very strong impression that the East will overcome the West in the coming years, and that instead of our clothing the East, they will want to clothe us.”(7)

Bradford Technical College (now Bradford College) was founded in 1878 with donations by local industrialists including Lister and his one-time partner Isaac Holden. It was set up because of the sophisticated awareness that, in order to stay ahead of the game, Bradford’s textile industry needed to innovate and diversify both textile production and design since “commercial supremacy came from technical education.”(8)

Significantly, the City owned almost complete sets of John Forbes Watson’s (1827-92) magnificent first and second series *Collection of Specimens and Illustrations of the Textile Manufactures of India*. Containing a comprehensive selection of Indian fabric samples, it is one of the most important cultural source books on Indian textiles. Forbes Watson’s motives had a steely commercial underpinning. These ‘mobile industrial museums’ were distributed around Britain as templates for manufacturers wishing to compete with the Indian market. King stresses how important these were in establishing a pedagogical base for the textile students:

“All of the classes of woven fabrics that were discussed, including plain and twilled weave, satins, double cloths, brocades, gauze cloths and velvets, had an Indian equivalent in the Forbes Watson collection to which students could refer.”(9)

The emergence of a substantial South Asian community in Bradford, starting in the 1950s, largely as industrious and productive textile mill workers, takes on a different kind of continuity in the light of this little discussed history.

All of the above strands, coupled with the fact that one of the reasons lustre fabric produced in Salt’s mill went into decline towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was because of competition from the Indian market, informed the major silk textile commission from Jaipur-based master block printer Abdul Rashid. This enabled *Connect* to tell a story about the role of textiles, both as reality and metaphor, in the various power struggles generated by Empire.

Abdul Rashid’s stunning textile reinterpreted images from a Salts Pattern Book - also on display in *Connect* - surmounted by a Mughal Tree of Life. The work symbolically draws together some of the threads of Bradford and India’s textile history. The commission also helped solve another problem. There was a lack of visual vibrancy in the central area of *Connect* where the marmoreal statue of Edmund Cartwright (1743-1823) and busts of Lister and Holden were located.

If truth be told, these were tolerated rather than loved. The Cartwright statue in particular was far too massive to move. However, with Rashid’s textiles as a backdrop, they came alive as key figures within a cross-cultural textile narrative. It felt like the start of a story that deserved to be unfolded further and thus the idea for a temporary exhibition, *Silk: Bradford and the Subcontinent*, was born.

An important factor in staging *Silk* was the interesting textile collection from the Subcontinent that Bradford had been developing since the early 1990s. There were a number of silk brocades, chiffons, and organzas from India and Pakistan, either woven or surface-decorated. They were largely acquired for the exhibition *101 Saris from India* (1992) and *The Draped and the Shaped: Textiles and Costumes from Pakistan* (1997).

Loans of students’ work books from Bradford College, chosen by King, as well as a



Silk saris from the Bradford Collection



selection of volumes from the Forbes Watson set, enabled the reinforcing of the connections between Bradford and the Subcontinent. However, in spite of having been a major producer of silk, actual examples of Bradford silk were rather thin on the ground. The reasons for this are perhaps best expressed by local historian James Parker who, writing about the inaugural exhibition that marked the launch of Cartwright Hall in 1904, which included a magnificent display of Bradford silks, remarked that “Dainty ladies of Mayfair and Belgravia buy these lovely diaphanous cloud-tinted silks as from Paris, little knowing that Bradford made them, and sent them abroad to be brought back with the burden of a foreign tax. That is because Bradford has been too conservative. It has been content to sell to the wholesale buyer.

“But in this Exhibition it shows the public what it can do, and now that we see that the brightest and most beautiful garments of the world are of our own make, it is to be hoped the prejudice in favour of foreign goods will vanish like the foolish superstition that it is.”(10)

Sadly, firmly evidenced examples of Bradford silks did not really materialise, although there are tantalising references to illustrious names buying lengths of Bradford silk to be made up into dresses. However, the indefatigable Janet Simmonds, Museums Manager, Bradford Central, and Nilesh Mistry, Museums Officer, International Fine and Decorative Arts (the latter and I worked together on the curation of *Silk*) were able to track down, in addition to the already well known embroidered Manningham silk velvets, other lengths of silk velvets in jewel hues from Bradford’s social history and industrial museum collections.(11)

Simmonds and Mistry also tracked down a selection of silk fabric samples, produced in Manningham Mills, depicting animal and architectural motifs using the Jacquard weave process.



Hakeem, born 1950; Brocade silk, Karachi, Pakistan 2012

They include a duck in flight, a fox, a kingfisher and, intriguingly, an image of St Michael's Church in Macclesfield.

Two major textile commissions for the exhibition – Shehnaz Ismail's *Reflections* and Anne Crowther's *Fairy Fabrics* – explored the exhibition themes from a cultural, historical and social perspective, thereby further reinforcing the exhibition narrative. Ismail's *tussur* silk scroll embodies complex, layered story telling. The subtle outlines of the maps of the Subcontinent and the UK are done in the running stitch used for the *kantha* embroidery of Bengal.

Cloth chillies ward off the evil eye and the fragrant, talismanic envelopes made from different surface-patterned textiles symbolise transfers, journeys and protection. The scroll is studded with different-sized mirror discs acting as reflections of these concepts. Hand printed text on the scroll makes multiple references, including listing the names of all of the craftspeople involved in its production as well as quotations from King's *Silk and Empire*.

Anne Crowther's linear textile panels hang in layers, exploiting the transparency of the silks



**Shehnaz Ismail, born 1946; Reflection 2012; tussar silk with embroidery and handblock printing, mirrors and amulets; © Shehnaz Ismail**

“with caught and imprisoned motifs and glimpses of patterns between the layers.” Crowther had worked as a textile archivist in Bradford College and the Forbes Watson volumes had had a deep impact on her. The scaled-up designs have been drawn directly from motifs from these volumes, transforming the minute to the epic. The commission has also been inspired by saris from the collection as well as the local historian Parker's poetic description of the silks on display in 1904 during Cartwright Hall's legendary first exhibition:

“What Bradford learned about wool it has applied to silk. To-day [1904] it stands at the head of the world's silk weaving industry. The laugh of sunlit waters, the sparkle of morning dew, the soft pearly hues of the shells upon the shore, the tender bloom on the ripe fruits of summer have been caught and imprisoned in those fairy fabrics that flutter from Bradford's wonderful looms.”(12)



The exhibition also touches on links established between the wider North and the Subcontinent through pioneers like Thomas Wardle (1831-1909). A silk dyer, Wardle learnt how to dissolve the natural gum that coated the fibres of *tussur*, a wild silk, found in Indian forests. Hitherto, it could not be used commercially because of its resistance to bleaching and dyeing. Wardle's *The Dyes and Tans of India* (1882) enabled Indian dyers to colour *tussur* with local plants and minerals and increase the value of the yarn. Wardle barely recovered his expenses.

King kindly loaned the exhibition two 19th century examples of an Indian pattern, extensively used by the Leek Embroidery Society, based in Staffordshire. The pattern first produced for Liberty and Co of London in the late 19th century by Sir Thomas Wardle was named 'Allahabad Marigold'. It is an historic Indian design which is still popular today. It was hand block-printed in Leek onto hand woven Indian *tussur* silk. The printed pattern was then stitched over, using Indian *tussur* silk yarn, dyed in Leek with Indian dyes. It is a wonderful example of two



Anne Crowther, born 1967; 'Fairy Fabrics' 2012; silk with stitched and cut surface decoration; © Anne Crowther



traditions coalescing.

One of the most pleasing commissions in the exhibition again touched on connections between two countries—in this case India and Pakistan. During the Partition of 1947, a large number of skilled Muslim weavers from Varanasi (Benares) emigrated to Pakistan. They established colonies of cottage industry workshops for silk brocade in Karachi, Lahore, Khairpur and Hyderabad. The largest community is now based in Orangi town, Karachi where two pure silk brocade lengths were commissioned from master weaver, Hakeem. These *dupattas* in red and purple, with attached borders, are fine examples of the weavers' craft. Due to the demands of the market, these weavers seldom produce saris and recently have begun including a polyster mix into the silk.

*Silk: Bradford and the Subcontinent*, is one of those projects where the culmination – the exhibition actually opening to the public - feels more like a beginning. This could be the start of even further discoveries of early textile connections between Bradford and the Subcontinent and perhaps most thrilling of all, more examples of Bradford silks coming to the surface.

### Dr. Nima Poovaya-Smith

Director, Alchemy

**Silk: Bradford and the Subcontinent** along with **Conversations About Empire** (Ilkley Literature Festival) and **Patronage, Power and Politics** (Harewood House) is part of the **Allegories of Power: Art, Empires and Ideas** programme conceived and brokered by Alchemy. **Allegories of Power** has been funded by Arts Council, Yorkshire.

*Silk: Bradford and the Subcontinent* is a collaboration between Bradford Museums and Galleries and Alchemy.

The exhibition runs until 18<sup>th</sup> November 2012. Please click on [www.bradfordmuseums.org](http://www.bradfordmuseums.org) for more details about Cartwright Hall Art Gallery.

### References

1. Brenda M. King, *Silk and Empire* (Manchester University Press, 2005)
2. *Connect: People, Place, Imagination*, launched in 2008, is the permanent collection display of Bradford Museums and Galleries, exploring complex, interwoven links between works of art from different cultures, allowing a variety of cultural, political and social subtexts to surface as a result.
3. Brenda M. King, *Silk and Empire* (Manchester University Press, 2005) p. 41
4. Samuel Cunliffe Lister (1815-1906), later Lord Masham, was an industrialist, entrepreneur, inventor and millionaire who played a central role in the development of Bradford's textile industry.
5. Mark Keighley, *A Fabric Huge: The Story of Listers* (James and James, London, 1989) p.20
6. Frank Warner, *The Silk Industry of the United Kingdom: Its Origin and Development* (Nabu Public Domain Reprints, 2011; originally published by Drake's, 1921) p.229
7. Mark Keighley, *Wool City* (Wool Publishing, 2007) p.6
8. Brenda M. King, *Silk and Empire* (Manchester University Press, 2005) p. 33
9. Ibid p.37
10. James Parker: *Illustrated Rambles from Hipperholme to Tong Including the Opening of the Bradford Exhibition*, Percy Lund, 1904)
11. Manningham Mills produced a wide range of textiles, including velvet pile fabrics utilising silk until the Second World War. Later products concentrated on cotton and various man-made fibres for velvet.
12. James Parker, *Illustrated Rambles from Hipperholme to Tong Including the Opening of the Bradford Exhibition* (Percy Lund, 1904)

## CHILDREN'S KIMONOS IN PARIS

**It was all our fault that Marion Maule found herself visiting a travelling exhibition of children's kimonos in Paris during the summer. Fortunately, it all ended happily.**

*Asian Textiles No52* was responsible for my Eurostar daytrip to Paris in June. Serendipitously, my fellow textile enthusiasts were late. While waiting to view the spectacular exhibition of Kabuki Theatre Costumes curated by Aurelie Samuel (see report in *Asian Textiles* No. 53), the receptionist alerted me to another visual feast, an exhibition of children's kimonos at the Bibliotheque Forney.

I'd been aware of Kazuko Nakano's very personal collection since 2011. Unable to attend the first European sharing of her passion at the Puppenhaus in Basle, a Swiss friend had sent me the catalogue. Though the illustrations are fine and numerous, it was much more exciting and rewarding to be within easy reach of the more than one hundred kimonos and accessories hardly any of which were behind glass. There seemed to be a playful element in the arrangement of the exhibits, and the very good lighting and excellent labelling also enhanced our experience.

On show were legacies from the Meiji to the end of the Showa period (1868-1989). They encapsulated, in textile form, ordinary and special days in the lives of month-old babies to thirteen-year-old girls. Although many of the kimonos, sashes, collars and hats were in pristine condition, and predominantly made of silk or silk crepe; others, mostly of cotton, had clearly been worn and lovingly patched.



**Little girl's lined cotton kimono overloaded with wishes for the New Year and longevity: fans, origami cranes, temari balls, plum blossoms, orchids, peonies, chrysanthemums, incense symbols and a Heian cart.**

**Boy's figured silk kimono featuring a heavily-embroidered eagle, yuzen-dyeing, handpainted rocks, waves and Mount Fuji and the Tachibana (mandarin orange) family crest (*mon*).**



Some boasted adult family crests (*mon*), others had a variety of protective stitches (*himo kazari*, *semamori*) on the front and back. A dazzling diversity of symbols reflected parental affection and a desire for the success and survival of their children. On the girls' kimonos allusions to the courtly world of the Heian period (794-1185), through flowers, fans, shell-matching and incense-guessing games, butterflies and snowflakes predominated.

More masculine motifs like dragons, horses, falcons, tales of famous warriors, Mount Fuji, angry waves and game boards appeared on the boys' kimonos. Among the decorative techniques used were paste-resist dyeing (*Yuzen*), tie-dyeing (*shibori*), stencils (*katagami*), ikat (*kasuri*) and embroidery.

The longstanding use of donated patches of precious fabrics to symbolize longevity and good wishes made up my favourite girl's kimono (*Hyaku-hagi Dogi*). It may also be Mrs Nakano's favourite because her *Children's Kimonos* collection arose from her interest in quilting and patchwork and love of collecting scraps.

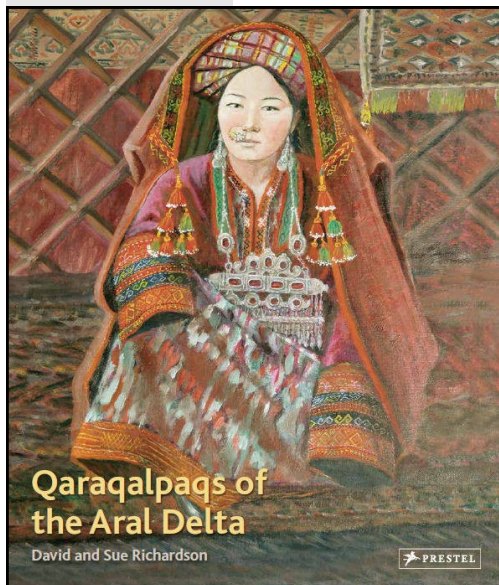
I also liked a striking red silk with white cranes, the red and white pilgrim vests of a mother and daughter, and an elegant purple silk Choyo (chrysanthemum) festival kimono with flowers and family crests.

Among the most appealing boys' kimonos, one featured Nasu no Yoichi, a 12th century archer who changed Japanese history in 1185, another energetic wild horses and the third cloves (expressing a desire for health and wealth), all on dark silk backgrounds.

I could easily have spent another two hours among Mrs Nakano's treasures. Fortunately for my friends, I knew I could prolong the pleasure through the comprehensive catalogue\*. The text, in French, German and English, has a detailed description and illustration of every kimono and accessory and is full of historical information. Special stitches and Japanese terminology are clearly explained.

\**Kinder Kimonos* (ISBN 978-2-9599712-8-0) available from [info@junku.fr](mailto:info@junku.fr). Price 20 Euros.





## A major contribution to the ethnography of the Qaraqalpaqs

David and Sue Richardson,  
*Qaraqalpaqs of the Aral Delta*,  
 Prestel Verlag, 2012,  
 SBN: 978-3-7913-4738-7,  
 £99, hbk.

A substantial article in the last issue of *Asian Textiles* and a recent talk by David and Sue to members of the OATG mean that the arrival of this wonderful book will not be a surprise to many of you. However, the book itself, one of the most sumptuous and well researched books on textiles to be published in many years, will certainly surprise even the most knowledgeable textile enthusiast.

David and Sue have spent much of the last decade working on this book which is not just about textiles, but, more accurately, is a major contribution to the ethnography of the Qaraqalpaqs. Not even the Russians or Soviets ever produced anything that so comprehensively describes the now largely-disappeared lifestyle and cultural artefacts of this little known group from Central Asia. It has required them to learn Russian and a good deal of Turkic in order to access the few documents and books that can cast light on the early history of this enigmatic group. Not an ethnic group in the usual sense, they are a Turkic-speaking minority, made up of different tribal peoples – the remnants of nomadic groups that had previously come together to form the Uzbeks.

Today, the Qaraqalpaqs make up just over two per cent of the population of Uzbekistan and live in a so-called 'Autonomous Republic', which in reality is completely controlled from Tashkent. Any money earned from cotton and wheat is siphoned off before it reaches the general population. Instead the 600,000 or so Qaraqalpaqs are left to contemplate their arid lands and polluted environment. The Aral Sea has all but disappeared and the intensive use of pesticides and other chemicals has caused enormous health issues in the local population.

For all this, the textiles of the Qaraqalpaqs are a revelation. Initially it was goat hair that provided the impetus to spinning and weaving, but later in the eighteenth century, as they migrated into the Aral Delta they adopted the cotton and silk weaving traditions of Khiva. Ironically, it was the Russian occupation of Central Asia that provided the greatest stimulation to their artistic skills. Russia guaranteed stability and allowed them to rebuild their shattered agricultural economy. On the back of this they were able to purchase the new brightly coloured trade cloths and incorporate them into their own designs and styles, especially through the use of chain stitch.

This for a few decades at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, a wonderful textile tradition flourished. It came to an end with the forced collectivisation on the 1930s and the importation of cheap cloth that meant most women no longer had to make (or decorate) their clothing.

However, the full extent of that brief flowering is on display in this book, explained in every detail, from the dyeing, weaving and stitching, to the jewellery, yurt construction, marriage customs and household furnishings.

This book will be the standard work on the Qaraqalpaqs and is unlikely ever to be superseded. It is also a model for the way in which this kind of book should be written. Even if you have no interest in the textiles themselves, go out and treat yourself. You are unlikely ever to find a better book on textiles.

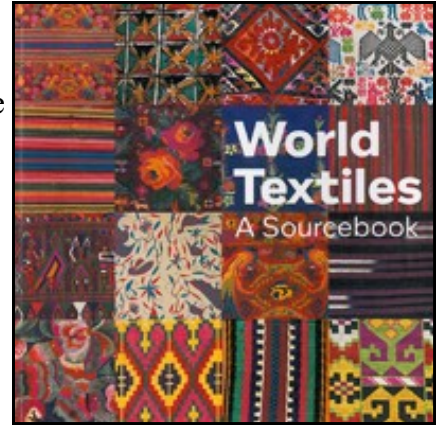
## New BM guide to textiles of the world

*World Textiles: A Sourcebook*, The British Museum,  
ISBN: 978-0-7141-5093-2, £24.99. softcover

For some years the British Museum Press has been publishing a series of books, the Fabric Folio series, covering the textiles of Palestine, Afghanistan, India and Pakistan, Guatemala, Mexico and other regions. These well illustrated books, highlighting some of the wonderful pieces in the BM collections, have been indispensable to collectors and those looking for more than the brief note such textiles are usually allotted in general guides.

Now the museum has combined text from the ten books in the series and introduced a new introduction written by Chloe Sayer, abridged and edited from the original introductions. The result is a substantial – 368pages – book that covers the textile traditions and techniques in those countries that are best known for their textile heritage.

Profusely illustrated with hundreds of colour illustrations, the book makes a great guide to identification. It also provides accession numbers for the pieces illustrated in the book, so that they can be tracked down and studied more closely. A basic reading list and glossary completes what is a very handy book for non-specialist readers.



### MEMBERSHIP OF OXFORD ASIAN TEXTILE GROUP

(includes three issues of *Asian Textiles*)

**Membership subscriptions were due for renewal on 1<sup>st</sup> October.**

OATG membership runs from 1<sup>st</sup> October to 30<sup>th</sup> September every year, and subscriptions for the year 2012-13 are now due. Membership costs £15 for individuals, or £20 for a joint subscription. If you pay by cheque, please make the cheque out to OATG, and write your name clearly on the back. If you haven't already renewed your membership for this year, then I look forward to receiving your subscription soon, at the address below.

Alternatively, if you would like to set up a banker's order, that would be a tremendous help to us as it cuts down on admin. You can download a form from the website, and send it to your bank.

We depend on your subscriptions in order to keep our programme of lectures and trips running, as well as for the publication and postage of *Asian Textiles* magazine. I do hope you would like to continue your membership of OATG.

Any queries, please contact me.

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