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Inside: conserving bark-cloth; tracking sources of Chinese textiles; children's clothes in Gujarat; *The Fabric of India* and more

Contents

Front cover: Coat with buta pattern lining, 1801-1869 EAX.3976. © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

Back cover: Moon sari, designed and made by Aziz and Suleman Khatri, 2012. © Victoria & Albert Museum

Editorial

The first article in this issue of *Asian Textiles* is about a vital but rarely seen part of the work that goes on in museums: conservation. Monique Pullan describes just some of the difficulties that conservators must overcome in order to preserve fragile objects and display them looking their best. In this instance, the objects are bark-cloth garments from the Pacific region, currently on show at the British Museum.

Next, we have John E. Vollmer's account of some stunning Chinese textiles and the occasionally surprising routes by which they have arrived in North American museum collections. The photographs that accompany John's text are a treat in themselves.

Shweta Dhariwal's article describes her study of children's clothing made by women of the Rabari community in Gujarat. She has based her study on items in the collection of the South Asian Decorative Arts and Crafts Collection (SADACC), in Norwich, UK, where the current exhibition focuses on techniques and decoration from different regions of South Asia.

Continuing our focus on current exhibitions, we are fortunate to have Rosemary Crill's preview of the new show at the V&A: The Fabric of India. (Note that Rosemary will be speaking about this in Oxford soon—see the 'Events programme' opposite.) Details of all exhibitions mentioned can be found on page 30 of this issue.

Finally, a reminder to look at OATG's website and blog. On the website (oatg.org.uk), you can find information about the group, back issues of the magazine, and details of events. The blog (oxfordasiantextilegroup.wordpress.com) has regular updates, news, features and information about exhibitions, talks and textile fairs around the world.

The Editor

Asian Textiles is published three times a year: in February, June and October.
We welcome input from members — send a review of a book you've read, or an exhibition you've seen.

THE DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS FRIDAY 8 JANUARY 2016

Contributions should be emailed to: jane.anson@ntlworld.com

OATG events programme

Tuesday 20 October 2015: a talk by Rosemary Crill: *The Fabric of India*

Rosemary is the V&A Museum's Senior Curator for South & Southeast Asian textiles and dress, Middle Eastern carpets, textiles & dress and South Asian painting. She has co-curated the exhibition, *The Fabric of India*, which can be seen at the V&A from 3 October 2015 to 10 January 2016. Rosemary is also the author of the exhibition catalogue.

The Pauling Centre, 58a Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6QS - NB different venue - 6 pm for a 6.15 start. The talk will be followed by questions and drinks to 8.15 pm. OATG members free, non-members £3.

Saturday 21 November 2015 (TBC): 'A Life in Boxes: Discovering the May Beattie Carpet Archive'

Kathy Clough has been the Beattie Archive Assistant from April to October 2015. Her task was to rehouse and foliate some 30,000 documents, and along the way she came to know and love May Beattie. Kathy's posts about her discoveries on the OATG blog and published in the magazine show how diverse the material is, sometimes incomprehensibly technical and at other times revealing May's quirky sense of humour. On view will be a range of items which help tell May's story.

Eastern Art Study Room, Floor 1, Ashmolean Museum, Beaumont Street, Oxford, OX1 2PH, 12 am and 2 pm. OATG members free, non-members £3.

Letters

(views or opinions are those of the author only and not of OATG)

Shenanigans in Uzbekistan

We know that many OATG members have visited Qaraqalpaqstan and have met Marinika Babanazarova, the helpful and energetic Director of the Qaraqalpaq State Museum of Art named after Igor Savitsky. The granddaughter of the first president of the Qaraqalpaq Republic, Marinika was personally selected by Savitsky as his successor. Since her appointment in 1984 she has worked tirelessly to defend and develop the museum, which has since gained worldwide recognition – mainly for its enormous collection of over 40,000 Soviet avant-garde paintings and to a lesser extent for its important collection of Qaraqalpaq textiles and jewellery.

The recognition and success of this remote museum on the periphery of Uzbekistan has fired intense jealousies within the Tashkent museum establishment. For many years we have feared that there might be an attempt to relocate the art collection to the Uzbek capital, or worse, that parts of it go might missing. An art collection with a value of hundreds of millions of dollars must be a tempting target for certain members of the Uzbek kleptocratic regime.

No such move would be possible without the prior removal of Marinika. Late last month we were given a rare insight into the workings of the Uzbek State. A small team of inexperienced youthful government auditors was sent to the museum to check the authenticity of its collection. Thanks to an ultra-violet light they were quickly able to "establish" that some of the paintings were forgeries. Within days an anonymous blog accused Marinika of selling paintings (using an NGO as cover) and replacing them with fakes. The Qaraqalpaq Minister for Culture and Sport summoned Marinika to his office and pressurised her to sign a letter of resignation, which she has subsequently retracted. Now the authorities in Tashkent have confirmed the paintings are fakes and have launched a criminal investigation. Every single member of her staff signed a letter to the Uzbek Minister of Culture expressing their confidence in her and stating that no paintings were missing or forged – a very brave step.

In the repressive world of Uzbekistan, anything is possible. Somebody high up in the regime has decided Marinika must go. We just hope that she is not rewarded for her years of diligence by being fitted up for a crime that has never happened.

David and Sue Richardson qaraqalpaq.com

Behind the scenes with British Museum conservators at ‘Shifting Patterns: Pacific bark-cloth clothing’

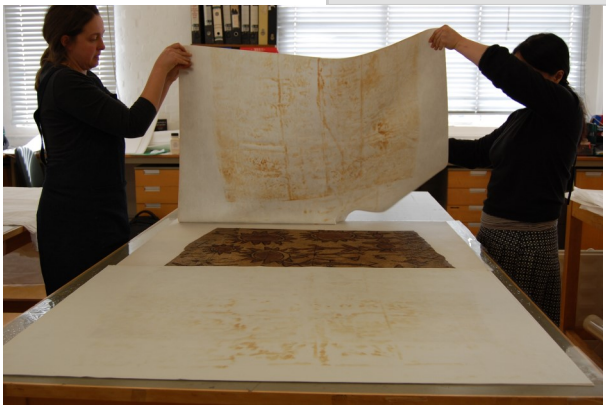
Monique Pullan, from the British Museum’s Conservation & Scientific Research Department, describes some of the work that was done in preparation for this exhibition.

In the islands of the Pacific the making of cloth from the bark of trees, including the paper mulberry, breadfruit and banyan, has a long tradition. The inner bark is stripped, soaked and beaten to form a thin flexible sheet material. The cloth can then be decorated in a myriad of ways – embossed, dyed, painted, printed, stencilled, cut or applied with beads or feathers. The manufacture of bark-cloth was likely brought to the region by early settlers from Asia. For a long time, together with woven basketry matting, bark-cloth formed the main source of ‘textile’ throughout the Pacific. The importation of woven fabrics from Europe led to the decline of bark-cloth making in some localities, but elsewhere the tradition has continued to the present or been revived.

Currently showing at The British Museum is the exhibition ‘Shifting Patterns: Pacific bark-cloth clothing’ (until 6 Dec 2015, Room 91, free entry). The exhibition focuses on clothing made from bark-cloth, ranging from loincloths, skirts, capes and ponchos to masks, headdresses and large flat cloths, which would be wrapped around the body. Arranged geographically, the display allows the viewer to trace differences and similarities in the styles of garment and forms of decoration produced by each island group across the Pacific, from Papua New Guinea in the west to Hawaii in the east. Adorning the body in bark-cloth was culturally significant for the societies on these islands, with the designs relating variously to clan identity, ancestry, historic events, spiritual narratives, and ceremonial ritual.

Drawn from The British Museum’s collection of over 900 items of Pacific bark-cloth, the exhibition includes some of the oldest surviving examples, brought back by early naval exploratory expeditions, such as those of James Cook and George Vancouver in the late 18th century, and collected by missionaries, who were often the first Europeans to make contact with some islands in the 19th century. Several contemporary pieces are also displayed. These include the work of bark-cloth artists from Oro Province, Papua New Guinea, where the recent revival in bark-cloth making has enabled the makers and wearers of the cloth to reconnect with their homeland and ancestors, and the work of the New Zealand-based Samoan fashion designer Paula Chan, who uses bark-cloth in a new diasporic context with her contemporary wedding dresses.

Above and right: removing soiling using sponges. © Trustees of the British Museum.



Left: blotter washing to remove staining.

Below: washing a bark-cloth to remove yellow discoloration. © Trustees of the British Museum.

Conserving the cloths for display

For over a year I led a team of conservators preparing objects for the exhibition. Many of the bark-cloths selected for the display showed some deterioration and required considerable conservation attention in order to stabilise them and make them look their best.

Being predominantly composed of cellulose, bark-cloth degrades naturally with age through the actions of oxygen, light, heat, relative humidity and acidic atmospheric pollutants. In addition, these often large items had been folded into small bundles for the convenience of storage (both prior to their arrival at the museum and subsequently) and had become soiled (again quite possibly both during their active life when the cloths were often stored in the rafters of smoky huts, but also the result of dirt from London's sooty air in the early 20th century). The once supple material has dried out and become stiffer and less flexible; folds and creases have 'set in'. Many cloths have become weak and brittle, and consequently suffered splits, tears and puncture damage particularly along edges, creases and folds. Delamination has occurred in some of the larger bark-cloths composed of several layers or joined sheets. Black dirt has become ingrained into the fibres. There was evidence of water damage, with staining noticed on several pieces, and some of the paler bark-cloths were yellowed due to coloured by-products formed during the ageing process and breakdown of the cellulose.

Conservation largely centred on cleaning, unfolding and flattening, and repairing areas of damage. Cleaning was carried out in various ways. Loose surface dirt was removed with special low-suction vacuum cleaners, followed by the use of different sponge erasers, which absorbed the more tenacious sooty dirt when dabbed over the bark-cloth's surface. It was important to avoid abrading the bark-cloth – and the work could be painstakingly slow given the sheer size of some of the objects.

Occasionally wet treatments were carried out to wash away soiling. Disfiguring stains on a bark-cloth from Erromango were removed by pressing the cloth between a sequence of wet and dry blotting papers, so that the soiling was drawn into the absorbent blotters. Care had to be taken to ensure that this did not affect the charcoal and earth

A man's ceremonial loincloth from Hawaii covered in polythene during humidification to remove creases. © Trustees of the British Museum.

CONSERVING BARK-CLOTH AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM

A kozo paper repair patch, yet to be trimmed, has been applied to the reverse of the bark-cloth to strengthen damage at the edge. © Trustees of the British Museum.

pigments used to decorate the cloth nor the distinct textural pattern impressed into its surface.

A man's dance skirt from Hawaii was flooded with water to flush out yellow discolouration and acidity. Preliminary testing had confirmed that the red and black pigments were wet fast.

The majority of pieces needed to be treated to remove creases and folds. Not only did the creasing spoil the appearance of the cloth, but it also created points of stress that might develop into more significant damage such as tearing in the future. Using a treatment called humidification, cold water vapour was gradually introduced into the bark-cloth by placing it in a localised environment of high humidity for several hours. Moisture passes from a damp cloth beneath the bark-cloth through a special Goretex membrane and into the bark-cloth. The Goretex membrane ensures that only water vapour passes through and the bark-cloth does not get wet – making it a suitable treatment even when dyes and pigments were water sensitive. The increased moisture content makes the bark-cloth fibres pliable and makes it possible to relax and flatten the distortions by pressing the cloth with weights. Having spent so much time removing folds and creases, it is planned that these bark-cloths will be stored either flat or rolled once the exhibition is over.

Splits and tears were repaired using patches of thin, lightweight *kozo* paper adhered to the back of the bark-cloth. This special paper is traditionally made in Japan from the inner bark of the mulberry tree – just like some of the bark-cloths themselves. This makes it a very compatible repair material, yet it remains clearly distinct from the original, differentiating conservation repairs from indigenous repairs, which were often carried out using patches of bark-cloth.

The repair paper could be coloured to match the surrounding material using acrylic paints. We deliberately avoided the natural dyes and pigments used originally. In some cases the colourants themselves contributed to the degradation of the bark-cloth; some blacks and dark browns in particular were derived from iron-containing muds and tannin-containing tree barks, which have chemically broken down the bark-cloth, making it weak and brittle. Analysis by the museum's scientists could indicate which pieces were likely to degrade at an accelerated rate because of the presence of high levels of iron and tannin.

Repair patches applied to damage in the brittle black painted areas of this cloth from the Cook Islands, seen before and after conservation. © Trustees of the British Museum.

Although many of the bark-cloths only required localised patching, a couple of pieces did undergo extensive repairs. The panel of bark-cloth on the back of a large headdress from the Cook Islands had been in a very fragmentary condition and was removed from its framework in order

The bark-cloth panel from this Cook Island headdress had to be fully lined on paper. © Trustees of the British Museum.

to apply an entire new paper backing to hold together all the disconnected pieces, before being reassembled.

Bark-cloth varies hugely in its thickness and texture, depending on the type of bark used and the amount of 'processing' during its manufacture. For thicker and more fibrous cloths the *kozo* paper did not successfully fill in areas of loss in the damage. In an indigo-dyed blue bark-cloth from the Solomon Islands, paper pulp was used to make fills of suitable thickness, texture and colour for two sizeable holes. The serpentine design on the cloth tells the story of a journey through mountainous terrain and it was felt to be important to infill the two holes as they interrupted and distracted from the narrative. The paper pulp was first dyed in a range of blue and brown shades, which were blended together to give a speckled appearance, matching the surrounding original material.

In the late 19th century several of the bark-cloths had been cut up to create samples for a reference collection. In some instances we were able to find the separated pieces and could reunite them, as in the case of a fringed skirt from Futuna, which had been cut into three.

When it came to mounting the exhibition, the fragile condition of most of the older pieces meant that they could not be wrapped, folded and tied as originally worn. The decision was taken to present the bark-cloths as flat lengths of cloth and to use photographs and drawings to illustrate how they would have functioned as garments, being a long way from familiar Western tailoring. Whilst the larger ones could hang suspended from a roller, the challenge came in finding a method of hanging the bark-cloths vertically without pinning or stitching them. In the end, small neodymium magnets were used to hold the bark-cloths in place on fabric-covered display panels.

Over 60 items passed through the conservation studio, giving us a great opportunity to become familiar with this material and appreciate the diverse range of vibrant colours, patterns and textures. Working in close association with exhibition curator Natasha McKinney broadened our understanding of the significance of these pieces and how they were used to communicate complex messages about identity and status. Through our discussions with the curator and, indirectly through her, with

Left and above: dyed paper pulp was used to make fills of suitable thickness, texture and colour. © Trustees of the British Museum.

CONSERVING BARK-CLOTH AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM

This bark-cloth skirt from the Futuna Islands could be pieced back together, with near-invisible joins. © Trustees of the British Museum.

representatives from the Pacific Island communities, it became apparent that it was important the bark-cloths were presented in as good a condition as possible. These artefacts hold great value for the Pacific Islanders, especially since few historic examples survive locally and in some places the BM collections are the only link to a lost way of living. In addition this exhibition is presenting this relatively little known aspect of Island material culture to an international audience in a very public arena – it is important that this is something for the communities to be proud of. For these reasons, the levels of conservation intervention, in particular in carrying out cleaning and the cosmetic filling of losses, were perhaps greater than otherwise would have been necessary for stabilisation alone.

This was one of the first conservation projects carried out in the new Clothworkers' Organics Conservation Studio, which forms part of the recently opened World Conservation and Exhibition Centre. This building, set within the perimeter of the main British Museum site, provides a new temporary exhibition space, facilities for object storage, and a centralised collections-management centre for processing loans, as well as science laboratories and conservation studios. It brings together objects and people who were previously scattered across numerous different locations. This was of particular benefit to this project, since for the first time, object conservators, textile conservators and paper conservators were co-located, enabling us to share skills and ideas as to the best way to work on the bark-cloths – being not quite a textile and not quite paper! Tours of these conservation facilities will soon be bookable, giving the public the opportunity to see some of the work that goes on behind the scenes. In the meantime I highly recommend a visit to the exhibition 'Shifting Patterns', a rare opportunity to enjoy this colourful and fascinating material, and to cast a thought to all the work that goes into the preparation of such a display.

Joining the pieces of the bark-cloth skirt from the Futuna Islands. © Trustees of the British Museum.

The exhibition 'Shifting Patterns: Pacific bark-cloth clothing' has been extended until 6 December 2015.

Tracking sources of Chinese dress and fabrics in museum collections

Curator and textile scholar John E. Vollmer reveals the journeys taken by some Chinese textiles from Beijing to North America.

Nearly all the early collections of Chinese dress and textiles in North American museums are ultimately traced to the Beijing art market, whether acquired first-hand or through the agency of collectors selecting from previously acquired materials. Three sources for American and Canadian museums offer insight into this movement of Ming (1368–1644) and Qing dynasty (1644–1911) artefacts from China to the West.

George Crofts

Nearly 600 artefacts of Chinese dress and textiles were acquired for the Royal Ontario Museum between 1918 and 1924, in addition to several thousand pieces of Tang dynasty ceramics, palace furniture, ancestor portraits, snuff bottles, glass, jade and other objects from George Crofts. Thus, one of the earliest major public holdings of Chinese art in North America was formed.

Figure 1: George Crofts about 1915. Courtesy the Far Eastern Library of the Royal Ontario Museum.

George Patrick Joseph Crofts was born in Bermondsey, Surrey, on 22 November 1871 to Robert Crofts and Ellen Georgina Barry Crofts, the seventh of eight children. Little is known about his childhood or education, but by 1899 he was already in China, presumably involved with a fur-trading business in the treaty port of Tientsin, that was his main business and remained in operation until 1924. In 1902 George Crofts married American Margaret Hardie Wilson (1863–1935) in Tientsin (Figure 1).

By 1912, and probably earlier, he was engaged in sourcing antiques for various London dealers including S.M. Franck & Co. from whom Charles Trick Currelly (1876–1957), the founding director of the Royal Ontario Museum bought select Chinese robes and art for the Toronto collection in 1914. S.M. Franck & Co., a wholesale dealer established since 1883, maintained a warehouse at 25 Camomile Street in the City of London and imported objects directly from China to supply both retail dealers and institutions such as the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Among Currelly's purchases from S.M. Franck & Co. was an over life-sized glazed ceramic figure of a seated Buddhist disciple, or lohan, from a cave in Yizhou in Hebei Province, which had been acquired by Crofts from an antique dealer in Beijing following their discovery in 1912. (Others of the set are in the British Museum, Metropolitan Museum, Nelson-Atkins Museum, University of Pennsylvania Museum and the Musée Guimet, Paris.) This acquisition proved particularly fortuitous.

In November 1918, while Currelly was showing a distinguished visitor around at the end of the day, he missed another caller, who left a card. Seeing the name of George Crofts on that card, Currelly tracked him to the King Edward Hotel on Toronto's Front Street. He reportedly told Crofts, whose reputation as a source of Chinese antiquities among London dealers was well known, that the museum hadn't a 'farthing' to spend.[1] Nonetheless, Crofts said he had been curious to see what else the Museum held besides the rare lohan sculpture he had sold in London and which he had seen on a postcard in the hotel. This encounter was retold in a speech in April

Figure 2: Robes offered to the Royal Ontario Museum, ca.1918. George Crofts Album, Royal Ontario Museum Far Eastern Collection.

1978 to Toronto's Empire Club by the then Director of the Museum, Dr James E. Cruise.

When Crofts showed Currelly photographs of some artefacts, Currelly said: 'Perhaps you would rather not talk prices, since we have no money, but if you would have no objection to telling me, I would very much like to know the price of these two objects,' and he held up the photographs.

Crofts replied, 'I have a strong feeling you would be worth helping here in Toronto, and I should very much like to help you. You could have those for…' And he mentioned fewer hundreds than Currelly had expected thousands.[2]

An agreement with the Museum to pay shipping plus costs remained in effect until 1924. Crofts provided a steady flow of Chinese artefacts that now form the George Crofts Collection at the Royal Ontario Museum. Among the first results of the agreement was a shipment of around 300 robes acquired on the art market in Beijing that came to the Museum in early 1919. A donation from the Robert Simpson Company, a major department store in Toronto, paid for the acquisition.

The imperial garments sent by Crofts were accompanied by notes identifying the wearer's rank, the type of garment and his assessment of quality and rarity. We do not know who supplied this information to Crofts. While many of the garments undoubtedly came originally from the imperial palaces, probably supplied by palace eunuchs after the abdication of Puyi, which formally ended imperial rule in China in 1911, we do not know how many times such items changed hands before Crofts acquired them.

This acquisition included a group of 35 women's informal robes originally identified as coming 'from the wardrobe of the Dowager Empress' (Figure 2). More recent research suggest that while the garments have a strong association with the court of

Figure 3: Woman's informal silk satin coat (*chenyi*) embroidered with butterflies and chrysanthemums, Qing dynasty, Guangxu period (1875-1908), Ht. 137 cm., Royal Ontario Museum, The George Crofts Collection, Gift of the Robert Simpson Co. Ltd (919.6.128).

Cixi, most of the Museum's robes are likely not attributable to her person. Nonetheless, two robes are so outstanding in terms of the sophistication of their design and imagery that the only person for whom they were made would have been Cixi. One with nine phoenixes – appropriate only for the empress – is related to several other surviving phoenix robes at museums in the West and at the Palace Museum, Beijing that are also attributed to the wardrobe of the Dowager Empress. Another with 'a hundred butterflies' is a masterpiece of the embroiderer's art (Figure 3).

In 1922 the University of Toronto conferred an honorary doctorate on Crofts for his contributions to the Museum and the province of Ontario. A labour dispute in 1924 ruined his business and he and Margaret Crofts returned to England, where he died on 5 April 1925 at King's College Hospital, London, aged 53.

Julia Krenz

At nearly the same time that Currelly and Crofts were cementing a deal to build a Chinese collection at the Royal Ontario Museum, another American was off to China. Julia Darling St Clair Krenz was born in St Louis, Missouri on 30 April 1882 to Arthur L. St Clair and his wife Louise Johnson. She was the middle of three children. In 1917 she moved to Washington D.C. where she was employed by the Department of Agriculture and also worked as secretary to a Missouri senator. In 1918, aged 36, she was offered an overseas post with the State Department. When the posting officer learned that Julia had just bought a fur coat with her savings, he advised her

Figure 4: Julia Darling St Clair on her wedding day, 1916. Courtesy Margaret Zee, *Peking Dust: The Story of an American Family Living in Pre-Communist China (1919–1942)*, 2003, p.43.

to take the post in Beijing, China. He is reported to have said; 'Julia, when the wind sweeps down from the Gobi Desert, you'll gather that coat around you and be thankful!' [3]

She served as a financial clerk to Colonel Walter Drysdale (1880–1946), the Military Attaché, American Legation, Beijing until her marriage to Henry Ferdinand Krenz (1897–1973) at the American Legation on 1 October 1919 (Figure 4). Henry, a former U.S. Marine, had served as Clerk at the American Legation since 1916. While Julia returned to the United States for the birth of her son in 1921; two daughters were born in Beijing in 1922 and 1924. In the 1920s Julia's younger sister Dorothy M. St Clair (1889–1977) took a position as secretary to the American Consul in Beijing.

Figure 5: Rank badge with phoenix (for a woman of the imperial household), silk and metallic thread tapestry (*kesi*), Ming dynasty, 16th century, 34.9 x 34.9 cm., Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fletcher Fund 1936 (36.65.31).

Disaster struck the family in 1927 when Henry pleaded guilty to embezzling $31,000 in bonds and was sentenced to five years' imprisonment at McNeil Island, Washington State. Dorothy moved her nephew and nieces back to the United States in the summer of 1927. In 1928 Julia, joined by her children, rented a house in Washington D.C. where the 1930 federal census lists Henry as bookkeeper and Julia as the proprietor of an imported goods shop at her residence. We know from her son, F. Henry Krenz (aka Kim, born 26 June 1920) that 'from this point onward Julia supported her family with the sale of Chinese artefacts that she had collected, and continued to collect. It was a time when China

Figure 6: Pillow end panel, silk damask embroidered with floss silk in needle loop technique, Ming dynasty, 1550-1650, 36.2 x 36.2 cm, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. Purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust, 41-15/8.

was in turmoil. The imperial dynasty had collapsed and many Chinese families that had been wealthy found it necessary to sell family treasures at bargain prices in order to stay alive. Julia was among the many who took advantage of this situation, and, since the American dollar was strong, was able to build a collection of valuable Chinese artefacts. She had an eye for quality, and soon developed a reputation among the Chinese merchants for buying only the finest specimens. They, in turn, made a point of bringing the finest items to her attention.'[4]

In 1931 Julia and the children (without Henry) joined Dorothy in Beijing, where Julia continued her business selling Chinese artefacts and the children attended the American School. We do not know much about Julia's business, save for interactions with museums. In 1936 Julia sold 34 pieces of Ming and early Qing dynasty rank badges, festival squares and fragments to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (Fletcher Fund 36.65.1-.34) (Figure 5). She also donated two presentation squares (?) to the Museum at this time.

Figure 7: Margaret Krenz St Clair Keenan modeling the *chaopao* sold to the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art with a formal court vest of slightly later date of the type that would have been worn with the *chaopao*, ca.1939. Courtesy Margaret Zee, *Peking Dust: The Story of an American Family Living in Pre-Communist China (1919–1942),* 2003, p.118.

A similar trip to Kansas City in 1941 resulted in the acquisition of 31 pieces of mostly Ming and early Qing dynasty rank and festival badges, sutra covers and fragments by the Nelson Atkins Museum (41.25.1-.31). These include one of the earliest recorded examples of needle looping in an American museum (Figure 6), an impressive Manchu woman's formal court coat (chaopao) and a non-matching court vest (Figure 7).

Figure 8: Rank badge with peacock insignia for third-rank civil official, silk satin embroidered with floss silk and metallic threads, Qing dynasty, 1775-1800, 28 x 28 cm., Royal Ontario Museum, The Krenz Collection, Gift of Mrs. Sigmund Samuel (950-100.67).

Julia, her younger daughter Margaret and sister Dorothy were interned at the U.S. legation by the Japanese from December 1941 until the summer of 1942. In the late 1940s Julia Krenz

Figure 9: Imperial court robe, silk and metallic thread tapestry (*kesi*), Qing dynasty, 17th century [with added early 18th-century cuffs and facings], 142.2 cm., Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of William Christian Paul, 1929 (30.75.5).

travelled to Asia several times and in 1950 she offered 597 pieces of mostly Qing dynasty rank badges to the Royal Ontario Museum (gift of Sigmund Samuel 950.100-1.-.597). This Chinese insignia collection demonstrates the full range of badge styles, which changed considerably from the 17th to the early 20th century and included a great variety of textile patterning techniques: embroidered, tapestry woven, brocaded satin (Figure 8). While the Ming dynasty badges at the Met and Nelson Atkins are among the finest known examples, alas, there only one fragmentary tapestry-woven (kesi) 16th-century badge in the Royal Ontario Museum. Julia Krenz's resources were much more limited than those at the disposal of George Crofts and while the number and scope of the artefacts she acquired for museums is similarly more modest, nonetheless they represent some of the most refined and significant additions to the three museums she supplied.

Julia Krenz retired to Lakefield, Ontario, Canada to be close to her son, and died there in 1971.

William Christian Paul

Unlike Crofts or Krenz, who were well known to museums for their knowledge and expertise, Paul only came to attention of the Metropolitan Museum of Art after his will was probated in 1930. His bequest of 1065 pieces of Chinese dress and fabric, according to Alan Priest, the curator of the Asian Department, made 'the Metropolitan Museum of Art collection of Chinese

Figure 10: Lamaist hanging (*thanka*), silk tabby embroidered with floss silk and metallic threads, mounted with silk brocade, lined with silk, Qing dynasty, dated by inscription to 1778, 142.2 x 85.1 cm., Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of William Christian Paul, 1929 (30.75.34a-b).

textiles the best in any museum in the world, with the exception of the Imperial Palace Museum of Peking [sic],…'[5] Hyperbole aside, it was, and is, a remarkable holding to have existed largely under the radar through out the early decades of the 20th century.

William Christian Paul was born in Albany, New York in 1871, one of five boys. The family moved to the small city of Oneonta, in central New York. He learned telegraphy and worked in the railroad offices there. In 1896–99 he travelled to Alaska to join the Klondike Gold Rush. He obviously did not strike it rich; but in 1908 made a 'health trip' around the world, at which time he became interested in collecting.[6] We might assume Beijing was on the itinerary and that he may have visited the various markets for art or used clothing that had begun to flourish in China as the Qing dynasty was collapsing. There is no explanation as to why he was attracted to Chinese dress and fabrics.

William Paul never married and for many years lived with a brother in Mount Vernon, New York, north of the city. He was employed in the applications bureau of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company in New York City for nearly 20 years. But in his spare time William became a connoisseur and expert in Chinese textile arts, expending most of his income acquiring beautiful textiles and studying them at night and when he was not at his office job. There is no record of the sources for Paul's collection. He may have acquired some pieces in Asia, but most probably pieces came through New York sources, such as Yamanaka & Company at 680 Fifth Avenue or American Art Association auction on Madison Avenue at 56th Street. The collection was stored in trunks and boxes in rooms he rented at 563 Walton Avenue in the Bronx near the newly constructed [old] Yankee Stadium. It included a full range of dragon robes including a rare silk and gold tapestry woven (kesi) robe of late 17th or early 18th century date (Figure 9), an imperial embroidered *thanka* dated 1778 (Figure 10), hundreds of rank badges and a variety of palace furnishing silks for tables, altars, chairs and niches. The bulk of the collection consists of

Figure 11: Pair of woman's sleeve turnbacks, silk satin embroidery with floss silk and metallic threads, Qing dynasty, 19th-century, 101.60 x 15.24 cm., Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of William Christian Paul, 1929 (30.75.455, .456).

accessories for the hand and for garments that exhibit exquisite needlework (Figure 11).

William Paul died in Manhattan, New York 12 January 1929, aged 58.

Some tentative observations from the present

Merchant, State Department employee, collector – each came to Chinese dress and fabric in a different, particular manner, yet all grasped the importance and value of these artefacts as antiques and made a decision to put them in public museums where they are preserved and continue to be available for study and public exhibition. The deluge of Chinese textiles in the Beijing art markets, whether on offer from established antique dealers or from pedlars, from the period of regime change in 1911 to the Japanese invasion in 1937 was staggering. The sampling of goods represented by these three museum suppliers offers a glimpse into that marketplace. Krenz, in particular, was able to acquire unused rank badges still in their red paper presentation mounts as they came from workshops. Many of the Crofts acquisitions of yardages and panels are have ink inventory marks along selvedges. The question remains: whose marks are they – a shop, a dealer, an imperial inventory?

As examples, these artefacts preserve a moment in the history of collection Chinese art at the beginning of the 20th century. Their identification as antique art objects, in contrast to curios, affected perceptions at the time. Robes were not costumes to be worn as fantasy dress, or fabrics that enhanced aesthetic interiors, but artefacts to be studied and valued as investments. The demand, as well as the expectation of what constituted an 'authentic', antique garment during this period is evident in the 'marriage' of components from diverse ensembles and the embellishment of plainer robes to make them appear more glamorous. Untailored yardages from palace stores were frequently made up for market, sometimes correctly, but often not. Ensembles of mismatched garments were also assembled in the marketplace. Fragments and scraps were tidied up with framing mats. Each of these 'fixes' has distorted reality in ways that make it difficult to assess the validity of claims as representative, typical or even extraordinary for Chinese dress and fabric artefacts in public collections. A more comprehensive examination of the people involved with Chinese dress and fabric collections during the first half of the 20th century may yet help us with more nuanced insights on which to build our knowledge.

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[6] 'Oneonta Native Makes Rich Gift to the Metropolitan', in The Otsego Farmer, Friday, July 15, 1930, column 6. This extended obituary provides most of the information we know about the life of William Christian Paul.

Patterns for children

Shweta Dhariwal, an independent textile design practitioner, writes about her ongoing study on traditional children's clothing of the Rabari community from India at The South Asian Decorative Arts and Crafts Collection (SADACC) Trust.

Background[1]

From September, the SADACC Trust in Norwich is hosting a curated show of textiles from South Asia. The trust holds one of the finest collections of tailored[2] clothing from South Asia in Britain (Figure 1), with the largest section devoted to India. They have 103 records[3] of clothing, of which 30 are attributed to children (Figure 2).

It was the craftsmanship and vibrancy of the objects of this region that drew the collectors Philip and Jeannie Millward to the markets of Pakistan during their travels in Asia in 1978 and 1979. Initially purchasing items for the purpose of re-sale, as they say themselves, they passionately could not let go of the best pieces. These objects eventually grew to a sizeable number (probably in excess of 5000 objects) that required some serious management. With the help of the Pitt Rivers Museum and University of East Anglia, a trust was established with the aim of:

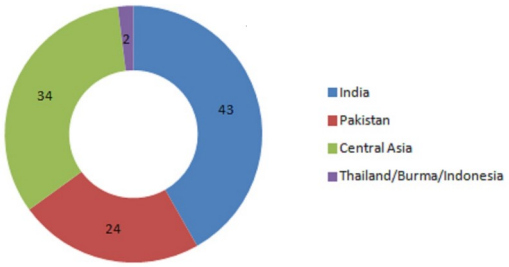

Figure 1: Clothing records by country in the collection at SADACC Trust.

- Actively acquiring good examples of everyday South Asian arts and crafts and displaying these through a series of permanent and temporary exhibitions
- Holding lectures on South Asian arts, crafts, and cultures
- Awarding travel and educational scholarships to postgraduate students
- Establishing a reference library on South Asia.

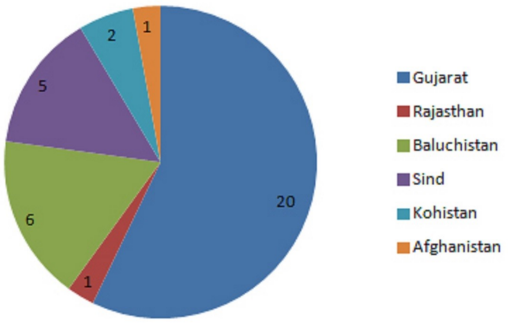

Figure 2: Children's clothing records according to region at SADACC Trust.

The objective of the collection is to preserve a record of and promote an interest in the arts, crafts and cultures of South Asia and neighbouring countries, particularly as globalisation is resulting in the rapid decline in many of the traditional crafts of this vibrant region. The collection is becoming progressively better known and is attracting people from East Anglia as well as nationally. A growing number of second-generation Asian families are visiting them, probably interested in retaining links with the cultural heritage of their parents and grandparents.

Introduction

Traditional children's clothing of India is an area relatively understudied by textile scholars. Research into the craft traditions of India, particularly Gujarat and Kutch or Sindh, often mentions children's clothing only fleetingly. Within the study of dress history and material culture also, children's clothing occupies a somewhat marginal status. An exception is the work by Emma Tarlo (1996) which, though set in another part of Gujarat, mentions the relationship between clothing and the female life-cycle.

She says, “Childhood is the time when gender roles are least clearly delineated – also interestingly, the only time when girls wear ready-made European-style clothes. Young girls are found wearing anything from skirts and dresses to shorts and vests like their brothers”. This view bears similarities with S.N. Dar’s (1982) statement in an earlier book where he says, “The term childhood in India, has indeed, always been so small that it does not take long for babies to pass from short vests into loin cloths or full skirts and for older children to be fitted into the patterns of grown-up men and women.” However, the objects studied as part of this study indicate that for festive and special occasions the children wore elaborate dresses, specially tailored for them.

Methodology

“Handmade garments retain hidden messages about their users and their makers.” M. Brooks

This study is concerned with traditional patterns of children’s garments and the narratives woven in them. It looks at the journey of five selected pieces from a remote village of Gujarat to their present home. The central objective of this research is to bring these garments to life, and place them into the larger historical, economical and anthropological context to which they belong. The belief is that these exquisitely embroidered small garments, far removed from their social village life, will trigger the emotive and curious nature of the audience/reader to know more about the people (maker and user) and place (culture) to which they belong. In addition to the aesthetic and symbolic elements of a dress, an underlying focus of the research is on craft and garment construction, particularly in understanding the proportions, body structure and decorative details that distinguish children's garments.

Textile tradition of Gujarat

Gujarat, a state in western India, is known for its vibrant artistic traditions and rich material culture. Before India became a democratic country in 1947, the region was split into smaller princely states. At that time, the state of Gujarat was a part of Bombay Presidency and an important seat of textile manufacture. It was a hotbed for cross-cultural traffic and influence due to maritime trade in the 16th and 17th centuries by the Dutch, the Portuguese and finally the British. Textiles were used as barter for spices in South-east Asia. Only in 1960 did Gujarat become a separate state. Understanding these geographical boundaries is important for this research as it is linked to the presence of the dynamic maker community on either side of the present-day political border[4].

The makers

The Rabaris are a trans-migratory community principally inhabiting the semi-arid western region of India. While the landscape is largely barren, it is adorned with *baval*/acacia trees. Traditionally camel herders, the Rabaris began settling in urban areas of India, often taking up

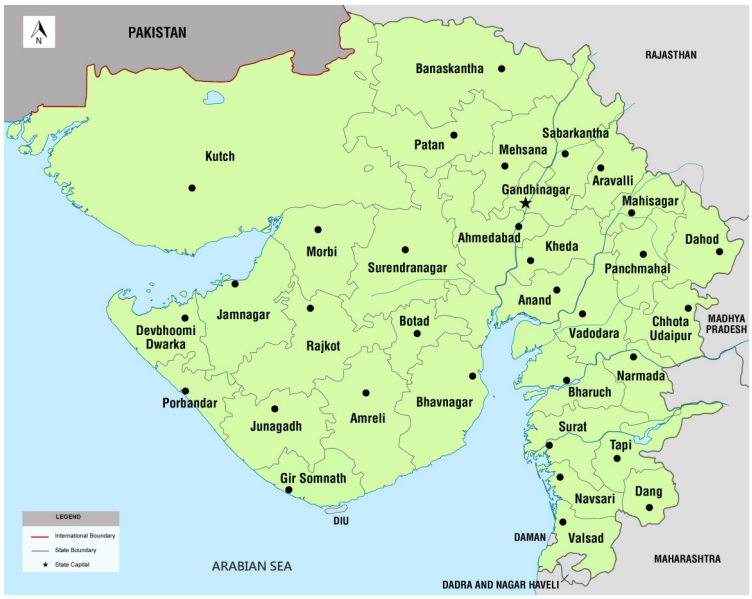

Figure 3: Map of Gujarat.

jobs as milkmen (Shah and Banga, 1992). There are various theories on the migration[5] of the Rabari people. Some historians trace their history to the Rajput community of Rajasthan, while others believe they migrated from Afghanistan through Baluchistan. It is believed that in the 14th century they migrated to the Kutch region of North-west Gujarat.

According to Senger (2014), “for thousand years, the people of Kutch migrated in and out of Kutch to countries like Sindh, Afghanistan, Britain and Africa. Many foreigners who came here have depictions of Kutch in their journals. One of the army personnel of Alexander the Great called it 'Abhir', which means the shape of a tortoise.” Kutch has also been an important tourist attraction, drawing people to its salt deserts and rich artistic and craft traditions.

In the region of Kutch, the Rabaris comprise three distinct communities –

Figure 4: *Jhuladi* with heavily embroidered cotton bodice and sleeves, broad synthetic metallic lace on the bottom hem and a polyester *bandhani*/tie & dye motif in the skirt called *chutti daani.* Noteworthy is the use of plastic buttons on the inseam of the sleeves.

Figure 5: A combination of fabrics and textures used in the *jhuladi.* While the fabric of the sleeves is polyester, silk *bandhani* is used for the gathered portion.

Figure 6: *Jhuladi* with an embroidered cotton bodice, polyester sleeves and gathered lower portion with thin metallic border on the bottom hem and a unique embroidered pocket in the front.

Kachchhi, Dhebaria and Vagadia. The Kachchhi live in the western part of the peninsula and in areas surrounding the city of Bhuj, the Dhebaria reside around the towns of Anjar in central Kutch, and the Vagadia are present in the *talukas*/sub-divisions of Vagad and Rapar in the eastern part. Of the garments studied at SADACC Trust, four belong to the Dhebaria Rabari and one garment to the Vagadia Rabari community.

The clothing worn by them is an outcome and expression of the harsh geographic and climatic condition of the land. Rabari women traditionally embroidered exquisite pieces for their own dowries and their families. Judy Frater (2004) considers embroidery as an affordable expression of community, sub-community and status within that community. Anyone who has conversed with a Rabari woman will understand that these embroidered garments were a personal expression driven not by economic gains but by societal appreciation. These dowry textiles put immense strain on the families and because of the time it took to make them, the average wedding age of the girls kept getting postponed. It was in the 20th century that elders of the Dhebaria Rabari community banned the elaborate embroidery style for personal consumption. I believe it is post this all-encompassing ban that the Dhebaria Rabari women continued the work they love, without violating the law, by making products for commercial purpose. It also led to the maintenance of this art form through generations of Rabari women, while bringing to the limelight a new wage-earner class of women artisans. They no longer have the free time to do elaborate and exquisite hand embroideries like their predecessors, and hence used readymade trims as a replacement for hand embroidery. Another factor could be the 'value for money' mindset of the buyers, causing a shift from societal appreciation to economic justification. Earlier, the cost of making the garments was never given prominence over the desire to make them, but to make it commercially viable cost-cutting measures had to be adopted. These trims and fabrics used on the garments also reflect a certain period in fashion as the Rabari women usually respond to what is available in the market and incorporate it into their designs. Like most craft traditions in India, traditional clothing is also evolving in nature and changes with time. At the same time the individuality of the makers, along with the socio-economic status of the

family is also evident, as seen in the three garments shown in Figures 4, 5 and 6, all belonging to the 20th century.

According to Ghai (2013), *kediyun* (Figure 8) was traditionally made only by women from the same community as those who wore it. According to Rabari custom, the *kediyun* worn by the groom should be made by the first cousin (sister) and this was how she was introduced to the community. However, the custom has now changed. Tailors (primarily men) started making the *kediyun* only some forty years ago. This fact could well be true for the other garments as well, since all the Rabari started settling down in the 20th century.

The users

Children in India, like their worldwide counterparts were, for the largest part of the 19th century and before, considered to be miniature adults and not individuals. They were, however, important as bearers of family name and legacies. In this patriarchal society, a male child was given more preference than a girl child, a fact that is regretfully still largely true in many families in the region. It is not surprising then

Figure 7: *Kediyun* worn by a bridegroom, fashioned out of a combination of cotton and polyester fabric.

that all the garments studied are gender specific and were worn by young Rabari boys. While the *jhuladi* was worn by newborn children and boys till seven years of age, the *kediyun* (Figure 8) worn by a bridegroom was similar to an adult's garment, indicating the gradual initiation into adult life. According to Senger (2014), girls were married between nine and 16 years of age and boys were married between the ages of 12 and 20.

The *Chattiyaman*[6] (Figure 9) which belongs to the Vagadia Rabari community is distinctly different from the other four garments in terms of the tailoring and fabric selection as well as ornamentation. According to Zakiya Khatri, a traditional artisan from Kutch, it is the first garment gifted by maternal grandparents to their grandchild on the sixth day after their birth. '*Chatti*' means 'six'.

It is interesting to note that the children's clothing has elements of both men's and women's adult clothing. While the cut of the *jhuladi* is similar to that of a man's *kediyun,* the embroidery style and fabrics resemble the bodices of the women's. On a philosophical level, this is almost a reflection of the role played by both male and female in the creation of the child and the continuing of family tradition.

Emblems of Pride

Production period

The clothing studied belongs to the 20th century. This can be linked to the fundamental reason that most of the clothing in India was worn for destruction. Most of the common people had only one or two pairs of clothing, which they wore till it could not be worn any longer, or it did not survive the geo-climatic conditions. They

Figure 8: *Jhuladi* or *Chattiyaman* worn by a Vagadia Rabari boy. The stripe patterned gathered skirt is in silk/rayon while the sleeves are in polyester cotton and embroidered bodice in cotton.

also have a tradition of passing of clothing from older to younger siblings. Also, a lot of clothing was repurposed to fashion products like the *ralli* quilt, famous in this region. Hence, surviving garments from the region that we find in museum records are possibly either clothes that belonged to royalty or distress sales made by locals to textile collectors and other foreigners who visited the region. A study of children's clothing of this community in the collection of V&A Museum (Edwards, 2011) also reveals that most of the clothing belongs to the 20th century. Mill-made cloth also started being available in the local markets almost 40 years ago (Ghai, 2013). Traditional handloom-woven fabric of Kutch used to be of narrower widths than the ones used in the construction of the garments studied. *Kinkhab*/metallic brocades are used on the garments due to their availability in the proximate markets of Ahmedabad and Surat, which have been major producers of *kinkhab* since the 15th century.

Embedded belief

Amongst the various functions of clothing, the two most important ones are identity and protection. In the desert region of India, in addition to gender, class and ethnicity, clothing has a deep symbolic significance that pertains to people' faith. Women construct clothing for their children in a style similar to adult clothing; however the embroidery takes on a talismanic role. The clothing both identifies and protects the wearer, becoming both a traditional artefact and a bearer of traditional meanings. This is aligned with the definition of tradition as, "[a] social custom passed down from one generation to another through the process of socialisation. Traditions represent the beliefs, values, and way of thinking of a social group." (Theodorson and Theodorson, 1969).

Frater (1995) suggests that the *kediyun* may find its roots in the clothing of the Rajputs. Mughals influenced the traditional male attire of the Rajputs. According to

Goswamy (1993), Akbar (one of the greatest Mughal rulers) planned to make *jama*[7], a type of garment accepted both by Hindus and Muslims. "But he was conscious of the fact that Hindu and Muslims be told at sight (since in many other respects it was now difficult to tell them apart), so that no awkwardness of any kind arise, no social *faux pas* are made. The Hindus fastening the garment outside with tie-cords at the left armpit, Muslims with the same kinds of tie-cords at the right armpit. The inner invisible fastening would, quite naturally, be exactly in the opposite directions, considering the cut of the garment." This is evident in all the garments studied, identifying the wearers as Hindus.

The stitches

Rabari embroidery is particularly notable for its considerable variety of stitches, its bold and abstract design motifs and their symbolic meanings. The almost childlike drawn motifs are inspired by desert habitation and mythology – *mor*/peacocks, *sudo/* parrots, *hathi*/elephants, *vinchi/*scorpion and *derdi/*temple. As mentioned by Mukhopadhyay (1983), "the display of bold forms, designs and colours appear to be quite in keeping with the bold spirit of a wandering tribe." There is a dominant use of white in their embroidery, which looks resplendent against the dark background preferred by the women. The Dhebarias rarely use blue or pastel shades. The open chain stitch is the basic stitch, while buttonhole and interlaced stitches and their variations are also used in plenty. The stitch used for gathering the fine pleats in the skirt of the studied garments is called *chin*. Motifs are generally repeated, usually encased within a circle or an octagonal arrangement of mirror settings. However, regional differences in workmanship and execution of these embroideries have produced great aesthetic diversity.

Conclusion

"...The world as we shape it, and our experience as the world shapes it,
are like the mountain and the river. They shape each other, but they have their own shape.
They are reflections of each other, but they have their own existence, in their own realms.
They fit around each other, but they remain distinct from each other.
They cannot be transformed into each other, yet they transform each other.
The river only carves and the mountain only guides, yet in their interaction,
the carving becomes the guiding and the guiding becomes the carving..."
Wenger, 1998

This research is relevant in the present digital age where hand skills are rare in many parts of the world. With improved modes of communication and technology, Gujarat is fast urbanising. While the earthquake that struck Kutch in 2001 brought devastation, it also brought public glare and a lot of money to the region, changing centuries of living cultural beliefs. This is an attempt to preserve these traditional resources of surface decoration and garment construction and a hope that this study will enable designers to take it forward and combine the ways in which garments are created for children in a national and global context in the 21st century.

Notes

[1] Based on personal communication with Philip Millward, Founder member of the SADACC Trust in February 2015 and with Amy Chang, Curator at SADACC Trust between February and June 2015.
[2] Includes jackets, hats, trousers etc. and excludes saris, shawls and other draped items.
[3] One object record might encompass numerous items.
[4] According to Senger (2014), "Geographically they are distributed over a wide area

extensively from Kathiawar (Gujarat) through Sindh and Rajputana to the Thal district of Sindh (now in Pakistan) the Sind-Sagar doab in the Punjab (now in Pakistan), where they are known as Arbaris, and where most of them, although given to their traditional profession of camel-rearing have embraced Islam".

[5] For more details please refer to Frater, Judy. 1995. *Threads of Identity*. India: Mapin Publishing.

[6] In conversation with Zakiya Aiyub Khatri, a traditional bandhani artisan in Kutch.

[7] "In Persian the word *jama* could mean 'a garment, robe, vest, coat, or wrapper'. In many cases there is little visible difference between a *jama* and a *choga* or *atamsukh*, all of which are long crossover robes. The garment was probably introduced to India by Scythians or Kushans in the second century and was popular among the Rajputs… [A]t some point in its evolution, a waist seam was introduced and the skirt attached to it became fuller and more gathered. The tight-fitting double-breasted bodice was fastened with tie-strings or *kas* - one pair of which held the inner panel in place under one arm, and a second pair secured the cross-over panel under the other arm". (Kumar, 1999)

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The Fabric of India

Rosemary Crill, co-curator of the exhibition opening this month at the V&A, gives us a preview of the show, which promises to be a delight.

The Fabric of India is the first major exhibition to present an overview of India's textile history, as well as of the astonishing range of materials and techniques that ensured India's mastery in the field, not only at home but the world over. The exhibition explores how textiles have been crucial to India's economic, cultural and political development over the course of millennia. Drawn largely from the V&A's own collection but also incorporating key international loans, *The Fabric of India* includes about 200 objects, ranging in date from the 3rd century AD up to the present day.

Bangalore sari (detail), ca. 1867. 6107 (IS) © Victoria & Albert Museum.

The exhibition starts by exploring the raw materials and many ways of making and decorating Indian textiles. These range from subtly beautiful plain fabrics of different materials and the dyes used to colour them, to regional varieties of weaving, block-printing and embroidery. Textiles have traditionally been made all over the sub-continent and the exhibition draws out the contrasts between for example, Naga back-strap weaves of the far Northeast, double-weave *khes* from western India, elaborate silk-and-gold brocades woven on complex draw-looms in Varanasi and simple but beautiful South Indian silk saris.

The next sections deal with how Indian textiles were used and by whom, turning first to pieces made for religious use. Here, a huge appliqué flag from a Muslim shrine is shown alongside a chintz hanging made for an Armenian church; other pieces on show include imposing Hindu temple hangings from South India, an Islamic talismanic shirt inscribed with protective verses from the Qur'an, a rare early embroidery for a Jain devotee, and a silk hanging woven with lotuses for use in a Buddhist temple or monastery. Textiles have been central to many religious practices in India, and the pieces on display show how traditional techniques have been used by patrons of many faiths.

Talismanic shirt, inscribed and painted cotton, 15th-16th century. T 59-1935 © Victoria & Albert Museum.

Courtly patronage has

THE FABRIC OF INDIA

Tipu's tent, National Trust, Powis Castle. © National Trust Images.

produced some of the most magnificent of Indian textiles. Starting with rare pre-Mughal silks from the 15th century, and proceeding to grand furnishings and dress for the Mughal and Deccani courts in the 17th, lavish materials and virtuoso techniques illustrate the impressive and beautiful objects that were available to only the very wealthiest of patrons. Amongst those shown here are Mughal and Deccani hangings, floor-spreads, shawls and garments and a superb South Indian hanging depicting a Hindu ruler and his court. Towering above these is the royal tent of Tipu Sultan of Mysore, into which visitors will be able to walk to be enveloped by chintz flowers.

India's textiles have been prized by foreign buyers for millennia: there is archaeological evidence that cotton was being sent to the Middle East from India as early as 5-4,000 BC. No textiles from such early dates survive, but some of the earliest fragments to have come to light will be on show in *The Fabric of India*: part of a woollen rug or blanket excavated by Aurel Stein at Niya in Chinese Central Asia, dating from the 1st-3rd century AD, and two pieces from the Ashmolean's Newberry Collection of Indian block-printed cottons found in Egypt, dating to the 8th and 14th centuries. As well as showing the huge chronological and geographical spread of India's textile trade, even at these early periods, pieces like these remind us that the majority of India's textile trade was in everyday, utilitarian cloth, rather than the gorgeously patterned chintzes or embroideries or superfine muslins that we now tend to associate with the term. A group of handkerchiefs from Bengal

Embroidered panel (detail), Gujarat ca. 1700, cotton embroidered with silk. © Victoria & Albert Museum.

Moon sari (detail), designed and made by Aziz and Suleman Khatri, 2012. © Victoria & Albert Museum.

and South India illustrates this aspect of the trade, and also brings into the picture the Africa trade and its concomitant, the Atlantic slave trade. Checked handkerchiefs from South India were a major export from London to West Africa, and the trade extended to the West Indies with the introduction of sugar cultivation to British-owned islands such as Barbados and Jamaica, and the use of West African slaves to work on them. Prestigious trade textiles are represented as well, by three impressive heirloom textiles sent to Indonesia, together with later, exquisitely drawn and dyed pieces made for the Thai market and examples of the perhaps more familiar chintz garments and hangings for Europe.

Indian cloth exported to Britain in the 18th and 19th centuries stimulated the desire for cheaper British imitations, and this became possible with the advances made in spinning, weaving and printing during the Industrial Revolution and afterwards. By the end of the 18th century, British cloth woven from Indian yarn was being sent back to India for sale, a reversal of the direction of trade that had a dire effect on India's textile production. This economic crisis fed into a growing desire for independence from British rule, a goal that was achieved under the leadership of M K ('Mahatma') Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru in 1947. The exhibition shows rare archival footage of Gandhi and Nehru, alongside examples of hand-woven cloth (*khadi*) from the 19th and 21st centuries and some pieces of the British cloth exported to India in the 19th century. After Independence, modernisation of textile production, including hand-weaving, was a priority, and this section shows how India's textile makers responded to a new world order in the 20th century and up to the present day. It includes textiles and garments by modern makers who have used or adapted traditional techniques, and includes lavish outfits made for society weddings and film-stars, high-end shawls and contemporary pieces for a young market.

The exhibition ends with a look at the place of handmade textiles in contemporary Indian design and fashion. From art installations to bold new saris, hand-skills are very much in evidence in India today. Western-style fashion has emerged as a significant element in Indian design in recent years, and it is often combined with traditional local skills of printing, embroidery and weaving to create remarkable hybrid garments. Indian fashion designers such as Manish Arora, Rajesh Pratap Singh and Rahul Mishra (all shown in the exhibition) are gaining international reputations, and they are especially celebrated for their use of Indian craftsmanship. The exhibition ends with an inspiring look at the contemporary sari - the iconic Indian garment, still a symbol of national identity, which has been given a new lease of life by today's young designers. Over centuries and still apparent in the 21st century, constant adaptation and innovation has ensured the continued survival of handmade textiles from India.

The Fabric of India is curated by Rosemary Crill and Divia Patel. It is on show at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London from 3 October 2015 to 10 January 2016. Sponsored by Good Earth India, with support from Experion and Nirav Modi, it is accompanied by a lavishly illustrated book edited by Rosemary Crill. For more information see www.vam.ac.uk/indiafestival

OATG's 20th birthday party

In case you missed it, OATG member Sue Richardson reports on the Asian textiles event of the year. Sadly, we couldn't deliver cake with the magazine...

On 8 August over 60 people gathered in the Education Room of the Ashmolean Museum to celebrate 20 years of the Oxford Asian Textile Group. The occasion was all the more special as our founder Ruth Barnes was there to give a talk on 'Dressing for the Great Game: the Robert Shaw Collection of Central Asian Garments in the Ashmolean Museum'.

The room was full of members old and new, so packed indeed that some stood at the back or sat on the stairs. The proceedings were opened by our Chair, Aimée, expressing her thanks to Ruth, followed by Ruth giving some background on how the group was founded and how well known it now is.

Ruth began her work at the Ashmolean in 1990, initially being employed to catalogue Indian Trade Textiles – the most important collection of its kind in the world. One day she came across a lacquered chest which a colleague told her contained 'nothing of interest, just some old Japanese stuff'. Luckily she did not take these words at face value and opened the chest. What she discovered inside was a stunning collection of colourful 19th-century Central Asian ikat coats. After the collapse of the Soviet Union there had been an explosion of ikat cloth onto the art market, but most of this had problems with its date and provenance.

Ruth noted that all of the coats had accession numbers prefixed with the letter X, apparently indicating that they came from the old Indian Institute. They were transferred to the museum as the Shaw Collection of coats from Central Asia, but there was no information about the year of accession. Further searching led to the discovery of 20 skullcaps and other items.

Ruth realised the importance of ascertaining the provenance of this collection, especially as the museum wanted her to curate a small exhibition of these items. She first contacted Mary Treager, the previous Head of Department, who in turn suggested she contact the Pitt Rivers. Ruth had previously worked at the Pitt Rivers so had good contacts there. Julia Nicholson was able to confirm that they also had pieces which had been transferred from the Indian Institute in the 1930s and were recorded as being donated by Shaw. Excitingly he was referred to as the author of *Visits to High Tartary, Yarkand and Kashgar*. Were this man and 'her' Shaw one and the same person?

Off she went to the library to track down this book which was published in 1871, just two years after Shaw's travels. She was delighted to find within it several references to him receiving coats as gifts. All she needed to do now was find out if these were the same coats she had found in the lacquered chest.

A colleague was studying Francis Younghusband (leader of the British Expedition into Tibet in 1904) and showed her a photo of Shaw in a Central Asian coat in Younghusband's biography. This coat was clearly very similar to those in the Ashmolean collection. The photo had been included because Shaw was Younghusband's uncle, and influenced him greatly.

Ruth found out that the Younghusband collection was held in the India Office Library but there was one problem – it was huge. Ruth therefore decided to concentrate her efforts on the material relating to Younghusband's mother, Clara – Shaw's sister.

She discovered an old family album in which many of the coats were described in detail. It also showed that the family had loaned the collection to the South Kensington Museum (later the V&A). Research of the documentation at the V&A indicated they had been withdrawn from there by the family for an unknown reason and transferred to Oxford in 1881. There was now no doubt at all that the coats from the chest were collected by Shaw during his expedition in 1868/69 – but was it possible to identify any of the individual coats?

Shaw was a tea planter who probably wanted to travel for commercial interests but was inevitably drawn into the Great Game, as it later became known. In 1868 he travelled from Ladakh in northern India to Kashgaria (Xinjiang) to meet the Muslim leader Yakub Beg. When he stopped in Yarkand he was given gifts including a skullcap, boots, and robes by the Governor. Gifts of robes, then as now, were a sign of honouring the recipient. On his arrival in Kashgar he had an audience with Yakub Beg where he was given more gifts, one of which was a pink satin robe. This was entered into the Ashmolean collection erroneously – the pink satin was turned inside as a lining, the red cotton boteh-patterned lining now showing on the outside!

Unfortunately he was kept under virtual house arrest for the next three months, but finally in April 1869 he had another meeting with Yakub Beg, during which he was informed that he was free to return to India. He described being given 'a robe of crimson satin, gorgeous with gold and embroidery'. Again Ruth was able to link this to a specific coat in the collection, this time because one of the photographs in Clara's family album clearly shows Shaw wearing it.

After Ruth had ended her talk we were lucky enough to be able to see several of the textiles from the collection for ourselves, including the inside-out coat. It was amazing to think that the textiles a few feet away from us had been worn nearly 150 years ago by this incredible man.

The afternoon ended, as all good celebrations should, with tea and cake. Hopefully the next 20 years will see the Oxford Asian Textile Group go from strength to strength.

High-quality photographs of several of the pieces from the Shaw Collection can be viewed at: http://jameelcentre.ashmolean.org/collection/4/1257/1267

Non-OATG events and exhibitions

5 February—6 December 2015, British Museum, London

Shifting patterns: Pacific bark-cloth clothing

In the islands of the Pacific, cloth made from the inner bark of trees is a distinctive art tradition. Probably brought to the region at least 5,000 years ago, its designs reflect the histories of each island group and the creativity of the makers. Spanning the region from New Guinea in the west to Rapa Nui (Easter Island) in the east, the exhibition will show garments, headdresses, masks and body adornments dating from the 1700s to 2014, the pieces on display include everyday items and ceremonial costumes linked to key life-cycle events such as initiation and marriage.

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13 June 2015—31 January 2016, Victoria & Albert Museum, London

Shoes: Pleasure and Pain

This exhibition looks at the extremes of footwear, presenting around 200 pairs of shoes ranging from ancient Egyptian gold sandals to contemporary elaborate designs. It considers the cultural significance and transformative capacity of shoes, and will examine the latest developments in footwear technology. Examples from famous shoe wearers will be shown alongside a dazzling range of historic shoes, many of which have not been displayed before.

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3 October 2015—10 January 2016, Victoria & Albert Museum, London

The Fabric of India

The highlight of the V&A's India Festival, this will be the first major exhibition to explore the dynamic and multifaceted world of handmade textiles from India. It will include a spectacular 18th-century tent belonging to Tipu Sultan, a stunning range of historic costume, highly prized textiles made for international trade, and cutting-edge fashion by celebrated Indian designers.

The exhibition will feature over 200 objects ranging from the 3rd to the 21st century. Objects on display for the first time will be shown alongside renowned masterworks and the very latest in Indian contemporary design. The astonishing skills and variety evident in this incomparably rich tradition will surprise and inform even those with prior knowledge of the subject, and is sure to delight visitors.

From 10 September 2015

South Asian Decorative Arts and Crafts Collection Trust, Norwich

Cloth: A Journey through South Asian Textiles

Techniques of weaving and decoration will be explored through selected regions, as the exhibition considers the processes and significance behind fabrics used in daily life in South Asia.

Also in the Old Skating Rink, contemporary gallery Art 18/21 will feature work by London artist Hormarzd Narielwalla. Incorporating tailored patterns into his collage pieces, for *Cloth* the artist will make a series of works referencing the textiles in the SADACC collections. All works will be for sale.

For further information, please contact info@sadacc.co.uk or call 01603 663890

The Old Skating Rink Gallery, 34-36 Bethel Street, Norwich NR2 1NR www.sadacc.co.uk

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2016 Textile Tour of the Lesser Sunda Islands

David and Sue Richardson are leading another textile tour in May 2016, visiting ikat-weaving villages in eastern Indonesia. They sail in calm waters from island to island aboard the graceful Indonesia-built schooner *Ombak Putih*, fitted with all modern conveniences including en-suite air-conditioned cabins. Guests are given an illustrated briefing about the people and textiles they will see the following day. Maximum group size is 22 and because of two cancellations four cabins are still available. For textile enthusiasts, this is the trip of a lifetime. One of last year's guests enjoyed the trip so much that he is coming again, bringing some friends. For more information contact David and Sue at hine.house@ntlworld.com or see: https://www.facebook.com/David.andSue.Richardson/287466518059

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MEMBERSHIP OF OXFORD ASIAN TEXTILE GROUP

(includes three issues of *Asian Textiles* magazine)

Subscriptions for the year 2015– 2016 are now due

The rate is £25 for single membership and £35 for joint membership. Most members pay by standing order; I would be grateful if you could check that your standing order is up to date. Cheques made out to OATG can be sent to me at 19 Southmoor Road, Oxford, OX2 6RF.

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

If you have any queries, please contact Sheila Allen, OATG Treasurer, 19 Southmoor Road, Oxford, OX2 6RF. Email: nick_allen98@hotmail.com

A note from the Treasurer

Unfortunately some members do not seem to have been made aware of the increased subscription rates, so that many payments by standing order last year were made at the old rate of £15. I would be grateful if you could check your bank statements and send me a cheque for £10 if you find that you have only paid £15 so far (cheques to Sheila Allen, OATG Treasurer, 19 Southmoor Road, Oxford, OX2 6RF please). Could you also ask your bank to change your standing order to the new amount, please?
I apologise for the inconvenience but look forward to receiving your cheques so that we can continue to produce a high quality magazine and put on interesting events.

Sheila Allen

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