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ASIAN TEXTILES

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OATG events programme

Thursday 10 May 2018

A journey through the Imperial wardrobe a talk by David Rosier

The lecture will provide an insight into the complex system of mandated Chinese Court Costume as well as dress accessories, that would have been worn by men and women on formal and semi-formal occasions (Regulated Court Costume) whilst at Court or positioned within Central or Provincial Government during the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911).

Consideration will be given to the history, nature, structure and iconography of formal Court Costume and the Insignia of Rank, worn by the Imperial Clan and the Civil and Military Officials. A display of Imperial Court Costume will be on show to support the talk.

Location: Pauling Centre, 58a Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6QS.

Time: 6 pm for a 6.15 pm start.

Tuesday 2 October 2108

Japanese Export Kimonos a talk by Allie Yamaguchi

The talk will be preceded by a viewing of related material from the Ashmolean collection selected by our chairman Aimée Payton and the curator for Japanese Art Dr Clare Pollard.

Location: Ashmolean Museum Jameel Centre Study Room 1 (for the viewing) and the Education Centre (for the presentation)

Time: 4.15 – 4.55 pm (viewing) and 5.15 pm (presentation)

OATG events are free for members and £3 for non-members.

For more information and/or registration please contact: eatg.events@gmail.com

Tuesday 12 June 2018

Lecture at the Ashmolean Museum (this is not an OATG event).

Steven Cohen will give a lecture based on research undertaken as Beattie Fellow looking at material related to **The Historical Carpet Collection of the Maharajas of Amer**.

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Front cover *Detail from a photograph by John Thomson of two Amoy women taken in China in 1871. Wellcome Library. See article on opposite page.*

John Thomson: photography in the Far East 1862–1872

The Scottish photographer John Thomson (1837–1921) spent ten years in Asia. He was the first Western photographer to travel extensively in the interior of China making a record of the people of the Late Qing dynasty, the first to photograph the ruins of Angkor Wat, and the first photojournalist to document the lives of everyday people on the streets of Victorian London.

Thomson set off for Asia in 1862 and numerous journeys took him to Siam (Thailand), Cambodia, Vietnam and many areas in China. Unlike most photographers working in the Far East at the time, who tended to be government officials or missionaries, he was a professional photographer. The photographs from these journeys form one of the most extensive records of any region taken in the nineteenth century, are wide-ranging in style and have a particular aesthetic quality.

London exhibition April 2018

Thomson's collection of nearly 700 glass negatives, which he made between 1868 and 1872, was acquired by Henry Wellcome in 1921. The first London exhibition of his work, *China and Siam through the lens of John Thomson*, is being held at SOAS's Brunei Gallery between 13 April and 23 June 2018 and includes images from the glass negatives held at the Wellcome Library in London.



John Thomson self-portrait with two Manchu soldiers. 1871. Amoy (Xiamen) Fukien province, China. Wellcome Library.



Wet collodion photographic process

The method of taking photographs in the early part of Thomson's career was the wet collodion process. Collodion syrup, which is pyroxylin in ether and alcohol, was applied evenly to a pre-

Dark room tent for wet collodion process photography. Wood-engraving from Gaston Tissandier's History and Handbook of Photography (1876) edited and translated by John Thomson himself.

JOHN THOMSON IN THE FAR EAST 1862–1872

cut piece of glass, and the coated plate was dipped in a mixture of chemicals to attract the light. The unexposed plate was placed in a holder for insertion into the camera. The entire operation had to be performed in complete darkness. Once the plate was exposed, it was removed, again in darkness, and developed. This method afforded the photographer the advantage of knowing immediately whether the image was what he wanted, but forced him to set up all his paraphernalia, including his darkroom tent, every time he wanted to expose a single negative. It also required him to travel with large quantities of equipment, as the loss of the simplest element in the process could result in long delays while a replacement was sent for.



Left *Siamese Lakhon dancing girls 1865. Wellcome Library.*



King Mongkut in state robes, Bangkok 1866.



Siamese priest and royal pupil 1865. Both Wellcome Library.

Early life

John Thomson was born in June 1837 in Edinburgh. He was apprenticed to a local optical and scientific instrument maker where he learned the principles of photography. He completed his apprenticeship around 1858. He also attended evening classes at the Watt Institution and School of Arts in Edinburgh where he learned design and composition. In 1861, he became a member of the Royal Scottish Society

JOHN THOMSON IN THE FAR EAST 1862–1872

of Arts, but by 1862 he had decided to travel to Singapore to join his older brother William, a watchmaker and photographer. There Thomson opened his first photographic studio and became a commercial photographer. He initially took portraits of European merchants, but gradually developed a keen interest in local peoples and places.

While based in Singapore he travelled extensively in Malaya and to Sumatra, and from October to November 1864 he travelled to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and India.

Siam and Cambodia and back to Britain

In 1865 Thomson sold his studio in Singapore and moved to Siam. In Bangkok he photographed the King of Siam and senior members of the royal court and government officials. In January 1866 Thomson set off for Laos and Cambodia. In Phnom Penh he photographed the King of Cambodia and the royal family.



Carving from Angkor Wat 1866.

Inspired by Henri Mouhot's account of the rediscovery of Angkor in the Cambodian jungle, Thomson set off in January 1866 with his translator HG Kennedy, a British Consular official in Bangkok. The pair spent two weeks at Angkor, where Thomson documented the vast site. He went on to Saigon before travelling back to Britain in May or June 1866.

By 1866 Thomson became a member of the Royal Ethnological Society of London and he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. In early 1867 Thomson published his first book, *The Antiquities of Cambodia*.

Return to the Far East

After a year in Britain, Thomson returned to the Far East.

He went back to Singapore in July 1867, before moving to Saigon for three months and finally settling in Hong Kong in 1868 where he set up another photographic studio. It was in Hong Kong where he married Isabel Petrie in 1869, with whom he had three children.

In 1870 Thomson sold his studio in preparation for travelling to mainland China. He spent the next four years there photographing the people of China and recording the diversity of Chinese culture.

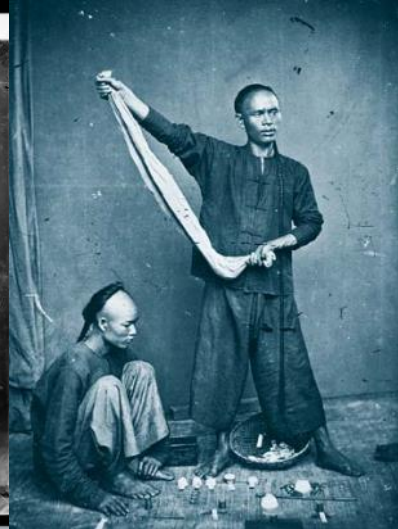


Canton boatman 1869. Wellcome Library.

JOHN THOMSON IN THE FAR EAST 1862–1872



Canton: bride and bridegroom 1869. Wellcome Library.



Street gamblers. National Library of Scotland.



A young Manchu in her wedding dress, Peking. Dressed in a richly embroidered costume and a large floral headdress with tassels, her face is powdered white. Thomson took many photographs of brides in lavish costumes, but he also expressed a gloomy view of the brides' future lives, which he compared with slavery.

"No Manchu maiden can be betrothed until she is fourteen years of age. Usually some elderly woman is employed as a go-between to arrange a marriage, and four primary rules exist to guide the matron. First the lady must be amiable. Secondly she must be a woman of few words. Thirdly she must be of industrious habits, and lastly she must neither want a limb nor an eye and indeed she must be moderately good-looking." Thomson also wrote that the wife "is even liable to be beaten by her mother-in-law, and husband too, if she neglects to discharge her duties as general domestic drudge."

JOHN THOMSON IN THE FAR EAST 1862–1872

From 1870 to 1871 he visited the Fukien region, travelling up the Min River by boat with the American Protestant missionary Revd Justus Doolittle, and then visited Amoy and Swatow.

In April 1871 he arrived in Formosa (Taiwan) with the missionary Dr James Laidlaw Maxwell, landing first in Takao. The pair visited the then capital, Taiwanfu (now Tainan), before travelling to the aboriginal villages on the west plains of the island, where he photographed members of the aboriginal Siraya Tribe (who are a branch of Pingpu).



A woman and child from Baksa, Formosa 1871.

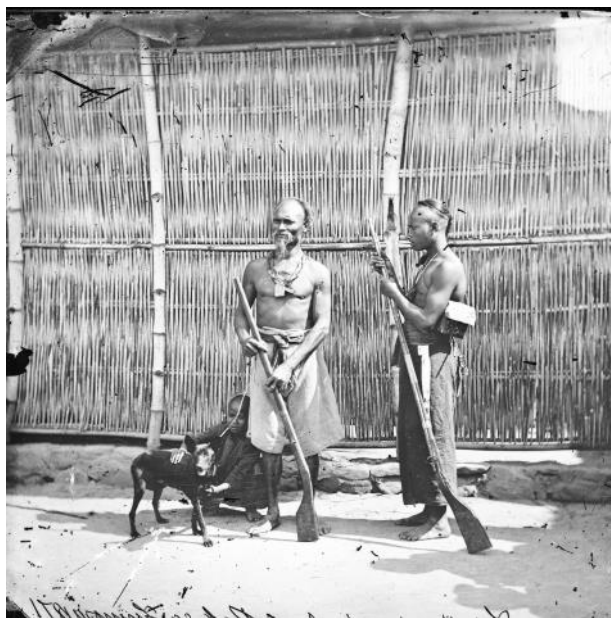


'Pepohoan' woman Baksa, Formosa 1871.



A mother and child in morning dress, Baksa, Formosa 1871.

All from Wellcome Library.



A hunting party, Baksa, Formosa 1871.



Hong-Ko's house, Lan-long/Lalung, Formosa 1871.

Both from Wellcome Library.

JOHN THOMSON IN THE FAR EAST 1862–1872

After leaving Formosa, Thomson spent the next three months travelling 3,000 miles from Shanghai up the Yangtze River, reaching Hupeh and Szechuan. He then went to the imperial capital Peking via Chefoo and Tientsin (Tianjin). His subjects all the while ranged from urban street beggars, to peasants in rural settings and Mandarins in imperial palaces.



A Manchu lady and her maid.

Both Wellcome Library.



Amoy man and woman 1870.



Manchu lady having her hair styled 1869.

Both Wellcome Library.



Detail from Painter Lam Qua at work. Hong Kong 1871.

Of Prince Kung, pictured right, John Thomson wrote: *“Prince Kung, now about forty years of age, is the sixth son of the Emperor Tao Kwang, who reigned from A.D. 1820 to 1850. He is a younger brother of the late Emperor Hien-Foong, and, consequently an uncle to the reigning Emperor Tung-Che.*

“Prior to 1860 he was little known beyond the precincts of the Court: but, when the Emperor fled from the summer palace, it was he who came forward to meet the Ministers of the Allied Powers, and negotiate the conditions of peace.

“He holds several high civil and military appointments, the most important that of member of the Supreme Council, a department of the Empire

resembling most nearly the Cabinet with us. Quick of apprehension, open to advice, and comparatively liberal in his views, he is the acknowledged leader of that small division among Chinese politicians who are known as the party of progress. Independently of his various offices, Prince Kung, as his title denotes, is a member of the highest order of Chinese nobility; an expression which, to prevent misconception, we must beg our readers' permission to explain.

“There have been from the most ancient times in China five degrees of honour, to which men whose services have been eminent may attain; the titles vesting, as we should say, in remainder to their heirs male.

“The latter, however, cannot succeed without revival of their patent, and even then, as a rule, the title they succeed to is one degree less honourable than that of their predecessor; so that were the usage in vogue with us a dukedom would dwindle to a baronetcy in five generations.

“The Manchu family, which rules the country, or to speak more correctly those of the stock who are within a certain degree of the Imperial line, have no less than eighteen orders of nobility, liable, however, like the old system spoken of above, to gradual extinction, except in a few particular instances where the patent ensures the title in perpetuity. Prince Kung received such a patent in 1865.”



Prince Kung.

JOHN THOMSON IN THE FAR EAST 1862–1872

Permanent return to Europe

In 1872 he returned to Britain. He published his photographs of the Far East: *Foochow and the River Min* in 1873, *Illustrations of China and its People* between 1873 and 1874, and *Through China with a Camera* in 1898.

When in London, Thomson renewed an acquaintance with Adolphe Smith, a radical journalist whom he had met at the Royal Geographical Society in 1866. Together they produced the monthly magazine *Street Life in London* from 1876 to 1877, establishing social documentary photography as an early type of photojournalism. Before returning to Britain to settle for good, Thomson made one final photographic journey, to Cyprus in 1878.



"A Cyprian Maid"
from John
Thomson's *Through*
Cyprus with a
Camera in the
Autumn of 1878.



Cyprian women and
children in a bare
room 1878.
Wellcome Library.

JOHN THOMSON IN THE FAR EAST 1862–1872

In 1879 he opened a portrait studio in Buckingham Palace Road, London, later moving to Mayfair, and in 1881 he was appointed royal photographer by Queen Victoria. In 1886 he began instructing Royal Geographical Society explorers in the use of photography to document their travels.

Thomson retired from his commercial studio in 1910 and spent most of his time in Edinburgh.

In October 1921 he died at the age of 84, which was the year in which Henry Wellcome acquired the nearly 700 glass negatives which form part of the exhibition at the Brunei Gallery.



Detail from 'Mission School Amoy' 1870.

Exhibition and associated events

China and Siam Through the Lens of John Thomson is on display at the Brunei Gallery SOAS www.soas.ac.uk/gallery between 13 April and 23 June 2018. The gallery is open Tuesday to Saturday 1030am–5pm. Late night Thursday until 20:00. Closed Sundays and Mondays. Admission is free.

The Chinese photographs of John Thomson (1837–1921) lecture by writer and broadcaster **Michael Wood**. Thursday 17 May, 6pm. Khalili Lecture Theatre at SOAS, Thornhaugh Street, London WC1H 0XG.

John Thomson: Master Photographer lecture by **Richard Ovenden** Thursday 14 June, 6pm DLT Lecture Theatre at SOAS, Thornhaugh Street, London WC1H 0XG. Richard Ovenden is Bodley's Librarian, University of Oxford. His *John Thomson (1837–1921) Photographer*, published two decades ago, remains one of the most authoritative works on John Thomson.

Study Day John Thomson: Reframing materials, images and archives Thursday 7 June Wellcome Trust Gibbs Building, 215 Euston Road, London NW1 2BE. Academics, curators and practitioners will present their research on themes such as production, reproduction, circulation, exhibition and the archival value of John Thomson's work.

Narcissist

Narcissist is one of the later flags in Sara Rahbar's *Flag Series* (2005–2016). It is an assemblage of textiles and amulets from Iran, South Asia and Central Asia: military buttons, patches and empty bullet cartridges from Iran and the USA; and a crucifix. The flag is meant to explore themes of national belonging and the futility of war and borders.



Narcissist by Sara Rahbar 2014. Silk, cotton, silver and metal. Length 183 cm / width 119 cm. British Museum 2015.6005.1.

Part of this short piece is adapted from two captions that appear in Fahmida Suleman's *Textiles of the Middle East and Central Asia: The Fabric of Life* which is reviewed on page 17 of this journal, and also from comments published by the Saatchi Gallery.

from Iran and the USA, thus reflecting her own multi-layered identity and heritage, as she grapples with the relationship between her adopted country and her native Iran.

Some of the textiles in *Narcissist* are associated with the Baluchis and Lakai Uzbeks, groups that were historically obliged to settle within imposed national borders that were meaningless to them.

Sara Rahbar was born in Tehran in 1976 and is a mixed-media artist based in New York City. Following the 1979 Iranian revolution, her family left Iran when she was a child in 1982. She returned for the first time when she was in her early-20s.

Her work ranges from photography to sculptures, and is largely autobiographical. She studied at the Fashion Institute of Technology in Manhattan, New York City, from 1996 until 2000, and was at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London 2004–5. Rahbar's work can be seen at the Centre Pompidou, the Saatchi Gallery, Taiwan National Museum of Fine Arts, Brisbane's Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art, the British Museum, and Davis Museum, Wellesley, Massachusetts among other places

Rahbar began her *Flag Series* in the aftermath of 9/11 when Americans felt compelled to display their flag for reasons of solidarity and identity. In the *Flag Series* traditional fabrics and objects are reworked to form collages of the American and Iranian flags. They explore ideas of nationality as well as the role of flags as symbols for ideological violence. Rahbar collects symbolic materials

Tibetan Dress in Amdo & Kham

Tibetan Dress in Amdo & Kham by Gina Corrigan

Book review by Pamela Cross

Published by Hali Publications Limited, London, 2017.

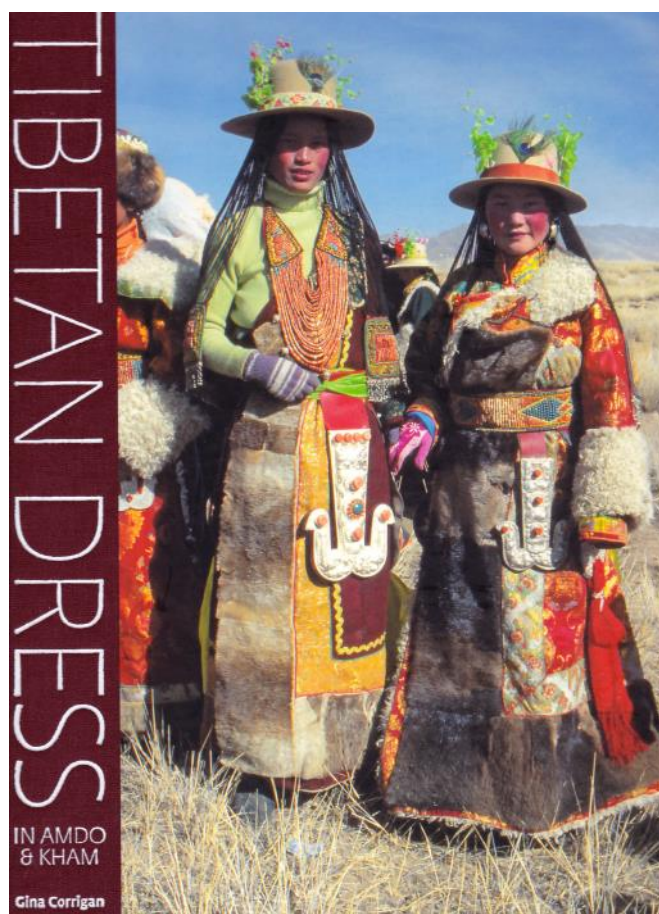
ISBN 978-1-85149-810-9 Cover price £40; available online from various sellers for around £26.

Tibetan Dress in Amdo & Kham describes the secular clothing and ornaments of contemporary Tibetan, Tu and Mongolian nomads and farmers, which are undergoing change. While it gives background on the Tibetan region as a whole, it focuses on Amdo and Kham, located in the Chinese provinces of Gansu, Sichuan and Qinghai.

Gina Corrigan researched and documented Tibetan dress in Amdo and Kham between 2009 and 2016, although the book benefits from earlier material from her travels dating back to 1984. It also benefits from information from nineteenth- and early twentieth- century European travellers.

Corrigan acquired her fellowship of the Royal Photographic Society in 1988, so her pictures are excellent. Given her eye for a well-composed image, many of the photographs taken before the main research period are particularly atmospheric. A casual glance might dismiss the work as a coffee-table book. However, the photographs are core to the text, and have substantial captions. The text is exhaustive, but the interaction with the photographs means that the book is visually strong. Appendices A and B, giving diagrams of the cut of the clothing, mainly of the ubiquitous *chuba*, reinforce an understanding of their construction.

Corrigan's main focus has been to document the traditional local clothing, jewellery, hair ornamentation and horse regalia, which have prevailed for generations, before they disappear completely. The bulk of the information is based on interviews which Corrigan recorded on her numerous journeys, mainly with elderly weavers and



The front cover shows nomadic girls attending a wedding wearing brocade chubas decorated with wide pieces of otter skin which is no longer fashionable. They wear hats bought at the market and have added colourful plastic flowers. Traditional coral necklaces are worn, as well as a new style coral belt. Large silver alloy hooks hang from their sashes. Kokonor Lake, Hainan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (TAP), Qinghai Province, 2006.

TIBETAN DRESS – BOOK REVIEW



Young boys taking part in the Shaman's Festival. They learn the traditions from the older men. Their chubas are made of bright brocade and are worn over jeans and trainers. Brocade is cheaper than pulu. It is used while the children grow. The performance affirms their Tibetan identity and gives them an opportunity to wear Tibetan clothes. Jungjha, Repkong County, 2014.

tailors, so providing a valuable testimony for posterity. This focus on the skills involved in the clothing and regalia gives the book a particular relevance.

The leading article of clothing is the ubiquitous *chuba*, a full-length coat with an overlapping front secured by a sash or belt, worn by men and women in various styles. The nomads on the high plateau originally wore it for warmth. It was made from sheepskin and unadorned. It came to be decorated in many ways and made from various materials including felt. Three chapters are devoted almost entirely to the *chuba* and it appears in pictures throughout the book.

Chubas of woven cloth, *pulu* and *nambu*, might be worn by the nomads in summer, and by the valley farmers who did not need thick sheepskins. In spite of a chapter devoted to weaving, with exhaustive descriptions of both *pulu* and *nambu*, the difference between the two is not clearly defined.

Pulu was particularly woven for the monasteries, and also worn by the rich, mainly for festivals, while *nambu* was more home-spun. Both were originally weft-faced narrow woollen fabrics, tightly woven and usually fulled (lightly felted with hot or cold water and traditionally trampled). If coloured they were dyed after weaving and fulling.

Some *pulu* is now factory woven and includes synthetic fibres, making it lighter and more easily washable. Local weaving of both types has pretty much died out.

TIBETAN DRESS – BOOK REVIEW

Originally the narrow width determined the structure of the *chuba*. As well as diagrams in the appendices, there are detailed annotated photographic records of the stages of *chuba* construction.

Tibetan Dress in Amdo & Kham has a wider scope than garments alone. There are separate chapters on amulets and jewellery; hairstyles and hats; plait extensions and back ornaments; Tibetan boots; horse fairs and horse races; horse trappings and slings; and contemporary fabrics and ready-to-wear clothes.



A teenager from a farming village wears a modern tin alloy and plastic back ornament with false hair. It was bought in a local shop to wear over her hair for the New Year celebrations. In recent years children have been encouraged to wear cheap copies of old ornaments. Repkong, 2014.



Nomads on the summer pasture braid their hair. The back ornament is attached to the central plaits, decorated with strung coral and turquoise beads. Red twisted silk fringe ends are wrapped with metal strips. Golog TAP, 1997.

Over the 30 years of Corrigan's visits to the Tibetan region, usually twice a year, there has been a significant change in dress. This reflects not only major changes in the way of life, but also the January 2006 proclamation by the Dalai Lama calling on Tibetans to stop wearing skins of protected species. These had been extensively used to decorate clothing, particularly for festivals. The proclamation had an almost immediate effect, dramatically illustrated through the photographs, with a switch to fur fabric and brocade to trim and decorate. Corrigan's pictures, each carefully dated and described, document these changes.

TIBETAN DRESS – BOOK REVIEW

Core to Corrigan's presentation of the changes in dress is the exploration of the transformations in the social and economic landscape. The book covers the increased impact of the commercial world, the wearing of western dress, and the loss of family members involved in garment preparation and making.

The traditional interchange of pastoral and agricultural communities has been diluted, and new networks established. Nevertheless, clothing based on traditional styles remains important for festivals, weddings, pilgrimages and special occasions as a display of ethnic identity affirming heritage, wealth and status.

Tibetan Dress in Amdo & Kham is a substantial volume. The paper quality required for the good reproduction of the photographs means that that it is physically weighty.



Tibetan dancers wear traditional Kham chubas decorated with otter fur and brocade. The women wear the customary two ornate belts. The shirts have particularly long sleeves. Yushu Horse Fair, 2001.

Intellectually the content is well considered, researched and presented and will be of interest at many levels. Visually it details the dress and draws out the character of the wearers. The pictures of the horse fairs, especially the earlier ones, makes the heart sing in response to the colour, motion and scenery.

Perhaps most importantly, it will serve as a detailed record of a way of life and heritage that the Tibetan peoples are losing, and will want to recall if finally lost.

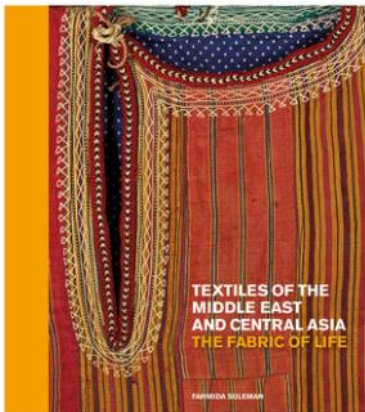
Pamela Cross created in 2000 a tribal textile information website with a forum which she administers. She set up OATG's first website in 2004 and remains its web manager. She joined the British Museum Friends Advisory Council in mid-2016.

Textiles of the Middle East and Central Asia

Textiles of the Middle East and Central Asia: The Fabric of Life by Fahmida Suleman

Book review by Fiona Kerlogue

Thames and Hudson/The British Museum. Hali Publications Limited, London, 2017.
ISBN 978-0-500-51991-2 Cover price £29.95



The British Museum's collection of Middle Eastern and Central Asian textiles comprises almost 3000 pieces. It includes a group of archaeological textile fragments dating from 10th- to 14th- century Egypt, as well as several 18th-century Ottoman items such as military banners and two curtains made for the Prophet's Mosque at Medina. The majority of the collection, however, dates from the 19th century to the present day. The textiles in the collections were acquired from a range of sources including missionary societies (especially Iranian and Palestinian material), anthropologists and a number of individual donors.

This lavishly illustrated volume presents some of the most interesting and most glorious examples, displayed in more than 250 photographs, most in full colour. A welcome feature is that in many cases a picture of the full object and a fine detail are shown on the same page.



Hooded cloak Iraq or Iran 1880s–1900. Wool and silk. Length 167 cm width 186 cm. As1967.02.24. Embroidered in cream silk along its borders with an ancient Arabic adage which translates 'If speech is silver, silence is gold'.

A version of this proverb is traceable to ancient Egypt, but is in this form in a Hebrew rabbinical text from 5th-century Palestine. On each corner is inscribed the Qur'anic formula translated as: 'in the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate'.

TEXTILES OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND CENTRAL ASIA BOOK REVIEW



Contemporary photographs taken in the field, or archive photographs and paintings in the case of older material, help to suggest the context in which each object was used. The textiles are not presented as mere examples of design or technical skill in weaving or embroidery, but as items which have had a real function and significance in people's lives.

The approach taken by the author has been to evoke aspects of human life and of the cultures of the Middle East and Central Asia by means of the textiles. While the scope of the collection leads to examples being drawn from a very large area – from Egypt and Turkey in the east, Kazakhstan in the northeast to Yemen in the south – there are sufficient areas of life in common in all these places to allow for the material to be arranged by theme.

Thus the main chapters consider the textiles in relation to childhood; marriage and ceremony; status and identity; religion and belief; house and homestead, and politics and conflict.

Baluchi woman's attire of dress (dishdāsha or pashk), trousers (sirwāl or shalwār) and head-shawl (shādar or chādar) which represents a style of dress worn by nomadic and urban Baluchis across the world. Its recognisable feature is the large, richly embroidered A-shaped pocket (pado or pandohl) stitched down the front. Muscat 1990 silk. 2011.6003.44.a-c.

Generations of Baluchis have lived and prospered in Oman over centuries, but many maintain their distinctive style as a mark of ethnic identity.

TEXTILES OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND CENTRAL ASIA BOOK REVIEW

Each chapter is built around a relatively short textual exposition, in which there is room briefly to introduce the ways in which clothing and other items might have been used originally and how they might have been understood in terms of their expressive and symbolic functions.

Most of the space is given over to the very fine illustrations. But for those who seek further detail, the excellent footnotes provide a considerable amount. In addition, the often quite lengthy captions are designed to offer insights into the style, materials, originating culture and context of use for the particular items depicted.

The range of object type is determined by the themes of the chapters: amuletic elements of costume feature heavily in the childhood chapter; splendid garments worn by bride and groom in the chapter on marriage.

The role played by textiles in demonstrating the identity and status of the wearer means that the chapter on that topic is dominated by striking examples of outer wear, from the pieced clothing worn by Zoroastrians to the distinctive styles worn by Baluchi women. In this section are hoods, face-masks and festive or fashionable dress. Islam is the most widespread religion in the area, and Suleman has chosen prayer mats, dervish hats and garments inscribed with religious texts among other items for the chapter on religion.



*Prayer rug with qibla compass.
Mecca 2010. Printed polyester,
plastic and metal. 107 cm x 67 cm.
2011.6043.55.a.*

*Sold as part of a souvenir set to
pilgrims on ḥajj.*

TEXTILES OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND CENTRAL ASIA BOOK REVIEW



Woman's ceremonial jacket, Bethlehem or Beit Jala, Palestine, 1900–1920s. Woollen broadcloth, silk and cotton. Length 54 cm width 98 cm. As196601.6.

Bethlehem and Beit Jala were mainly Christian villages, and gold- and silver-embroidered and brocaded church vestments were major sources of inspiration, as were the highly decorative braided and couched uniforms of Ottoman and British military personnel. Worn over a wedding or ceremonial dress by pulling the long pointed dress sleeves through the jacket's short fitted ones, the taqşireh was a staple in a wedding trousseau.



Storage bags, tent hangings and cushion covers are among the domestic items included in the section on house and homestead. Although the book contains a sizeable number of recently-made items, it is the final chapter, on politics and conflict, which presents the most strikingly modern material, such as the coat of President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan, a scarf from the 1960s covered with portraits of politicians of the day, and an Afghan war rug depicting military helicopters.

Overall, the book is a feast of colour and detail, introducing a wonderful collection and providing an enticing overview. It will be of interest to textile enthusiasts, collectors, students and scholars.

[Dr Fiona Kerlogue is the Deputy Keeper of Anthropology at the Horniman Museum. Her publications include *Arts of Southeast Asia* in Thames and Hudson's World of Art series.](#)

Different regions of Oman have distinct styles of headgear for children. The one similarity is that they are all brightly coloured with a variety of hand-embroidered and beaded detailing. Red silk brocade hat from Muscat, height 20 cm diameter 12 cm. 2011.60003.21.

Peshawar by John Gillow

MY FAVOURITE PLACE is Peshawar, ancient winter capital of Afghanistan, long the defensive hub of the North West Frontier of Pakistan and before that British India. It is 12 miles from the fort at Jamrud and the scarcely governed Tribal Areas, 20 miles from Landi Kotal and the Khyber.

The city lies in a fertile valley which within living memory resounded to the sounding of horns and the baying of the hounds of the Peshawar Vale Hunt.

The old city is dominated by the fortress of Bala Hissar with its smooth, brick, British-built glacis still standing ready to repel a tribal invasion. Surrounding it are the many distinct *mohallas*: Khyber bazaar, Qisaquani (the story tellers) bazaar, and Ander Sher the jewellery bazaar, amongst many others.

In the long-ago days of peace, before all these bloody, senseless wars, we hopped on a bus in Kabul and on our arrival in the courtyard of the National Hotel in Khyber bazaar listened to the cricket and sipped our first milk tea since England. The National, like many of the structures that surround it, is an old Sikh building abandoned at partition in 1947.

Gone too are the Hindu jewellers and goldsmiths of Ander Sher, but after 1982 and the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, the Kabuli merchants of Chicken Street set up, en masse, in purpose-built bazaars off Ander Sher.



It was here you went to look for Uzbek and Tajik silk ikats, Lakhai embroideries, Turcoman and Uzbek chapans, Suzanis, Koochi dresses, and the delicate embroideries of Mokar which still smelled of Afghanistan: a mixture of powdered camel dung and the sweetest of male sweat.

The Afghans are largely gone now, victims of yet another change in the political wind, forced to leave Peshawar, with its relative security, schools and hospitals, and to migrate back to war-torn Kabul. Not that Peshawar hasn't been tense these last few years; armed guards on the bridges shaking with cold (or is it fear?) in the freezing midnight.

Things are slightly better now. The government of the province is in the efficient hands of the party of Imran Khan, the cricketer. There are guards and checkpoints at every street corner, and no traffic is allowed into the city at night.

There are still a few gems to be found in the Peshawar bazaars. The green and milk tea flows along with the gossip, the manners are exquisite, and the lunchtime mutton karhai and naan bread eaten cross-legged on the floor from the communal pot will mean you won't need any supper.

John Gillow is author of *Traditional Indonesian Textiles*, *African Textiles*, *Textiles of the Islamic World* and co-author of *Indian Textiles*, *Arts and Crafts of India*, and *World Textiles*, all published by Thames and Hudson. He deals in Asian and African textiles.

This is the first short article entitled "My favourite ..." place or textile or collection or book etc.
The editor looks forward to *your* own take on this theme.

Letters to the Editor

The Japan-British Exhibition of 1910

Dear Editor,

In response to Pamela Cross' comment in the last issue of *Asian Textiles* about the Japan-British Exhibition held in London in 1910, the Horniman Museum in London received material from the exhibition. Search on the online collections (<https://www.horniman.ac.uk/collections/search-for-objects/>) using the search term 'Japan British Exhibition'. Records of most items have photographs.

In 1981 the Horniman Museum acquired from the National Museum of Wales further items which had been on display in 1910, including educational materials and a girl's costume. Details of the latter were published, together with an original photograph showing it as worn, in the catalogue of the Horniman Museum's textile and costume exhibition entitled *Wrapping Japan*, which was held in 2007-8, and in which the costume was displayed once again.

Yours sincerely,
Fiona Kerlogue

Dr Fiona Kerlogue
Deputy Keeper of Anthropology, Horniman Museum
100 London Road, Forest Hill
London SE23 3PQ.

Dear Editor,

Following my article about Taiwanese aboriginal woven fabrics, titled *My experience of studying the collection of the British Museum*, which you published in *Asian Textiles* number 68, I thought that I should add that the British Museum has nearly 210 artefacts from Taiwan from the 1910 Japan-British Exhibition.

Professor Hu Chia-Yu, who received her Ph.D in anthropology from the University of London, and teaches at the National Taiwan University, wrote an article in Chinese that was published in the February 2014, vol 13, issue of the *Electronic Journal of Aboriginal Literature* issued by the Council of Indigenous Peoples in Taiwan (<http://ihc.apc.gov.tw/Journals.php?pid=620&id=775>).

Here Prof Hu wrote that she has been investigating Taiwanese ethnology in British museums since 2002, and that "I'm even more certain that the Taiwanese collections at the British Museum are related to the Japan-British Exhibitions in 1910."

The items are mostly indigenous weavings, clothing, daily necessities and tools, and include ramie-woven fabric blocks, beads, capes, belts, hats, necklaces and bamboo baskets. According to the museum's records, these Taiwanese artefacts were donated by an officer related to the Governor of Taiwan named T. Kawada, and Nosawa & Co.

Cambridge University's Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology received eight postcards of Taiwanese aboriginals whose origin is the Japan-British Exhibition, and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, has about 30 Taiwanese plant fibre products that were also on display at the exhibition. In the University of Oxford's Pitt-Rivers Museum there are 12 postcards of Taiwanese natives donated by Henry Balfour.

Yours sincerely,
Tsai Yu-Shan

Professor Tsai Yu-Shan
College of Textiles & Clothing
Fu Jen Catholic University,
Taiwan

Show & Tell January 2018

The Education Centre at the Ashmolean had a good crowd of members and guests for the 2018 Show & Tell which followed the Annual General Meeting. OATG members were allowed to bring up to three textiles, and some availed themselves of this opportunity. The able master of ceremonies was Pamela Cross. Some of the highlights included:

First up was **Chris Buckley** who brought a tubeskirt from Hainan, woven by a Li weaver of the Meifu subgroup. This type of skirt was worn by married women, mainly for weddings and festivals. It is decorated using warp ikat, and the motifs include Eld's deer, scorpions and people, some of whom are seated on horseback. It was woven in narrow bands on a body-tensioned loom and then stitched together.

In addition, he brought a man's jacket also with warp ikat. Instead of ikat designs tied on a frame, with this kind the ties are added with the warp looped around the weaver's big toe.

Rosemary Lee brought three ornaments. These short pieces were acquired in Sindh, but originally probably came from the Punjab.

A *choti*, which translates as 'plait', is a long ornament woven into a woman's hair to keep the braid out of the way. It runs down and covers the whole length of the plait. In traditional societies, subcontinental women do not cut their hair, so the tresses may be double plaited and then covered.

Rosemary's *choti* were shorter than usual and might therefore have been made for sale rather than indigenous use.

Rosemary Lee with one of her three choti ornaments.



Above Meifu tubeskirt from Hainan brought by Chris Buckley.



SHOW AND TELL



Loincloth, probably from the Ede or Rade tribal group in central Vietnam.



Loincloth from the Ta-oi central Vietnam.

Both brought by Pamela Cross

Pamela Cross talked about two loincloths from the central highlands of Vietnam and one from across the border in Laos. Traditional men's clothing disappears more quickly than women's, as men tend to respond earlier to modern-day influences. The first was probably from the Ede or Rade tribal group in central Vietnam, although several other groups in the area (eg Bahnar, Mnong) weave similar cloths. The Ede speak a Chamic language, a subgroup of the Malayo-Sumbawan branch of the Austronesian language family. It had some fine supplementary warp patterning and twined patterned end bands, as well as Job's tears grains threaded onto the warp above the fringe. It was almost four metres long and 24 cm wide.

A loincloth from the Ta-oi, a Mon-Khmer/Austroasiatic language ethnic group from the central provinces of Thua Thien-Hue and Quang-Tri in central Vietnam was the second piece shown by Pamela. The decorated ends had small, white glass beads threaded onto the weft and incorporated into the weaving, and narrow twined weft stripes with tied side tassels. The main body has simple warp stripes. Pamela read out how Ta-oi wear their long loincloths: "A Ta-oi man wears a *Cuhol* (loincloth) four metres long and 30 cm wide, which is tied from the front of the belly down across the legs to the back, then to the right hip around the belly, and again across the front. The remaining *Cuhol* is stuck upward to keep the part across the legs, and then falls at the back to create two parts to cover the front and back of the body."

Fiona Sutcliffe showed us a wood block print triptych of Japanese figures which had been in her possession for decades. While each print was able to stand on its own, they were intended to be appreciated together.

Jennifer Gurd brought a Kuba cut-pile piece from the Congo and a book with a

SHOW AND TELL



Left Fiona Sutcliffe's triptych. **Right** Kuba piece brought by Jennifer Gurd.



photograph showing a man making such a piece on a type of vertical loom where the article was above the weaver at an angle of about 45 degrees.

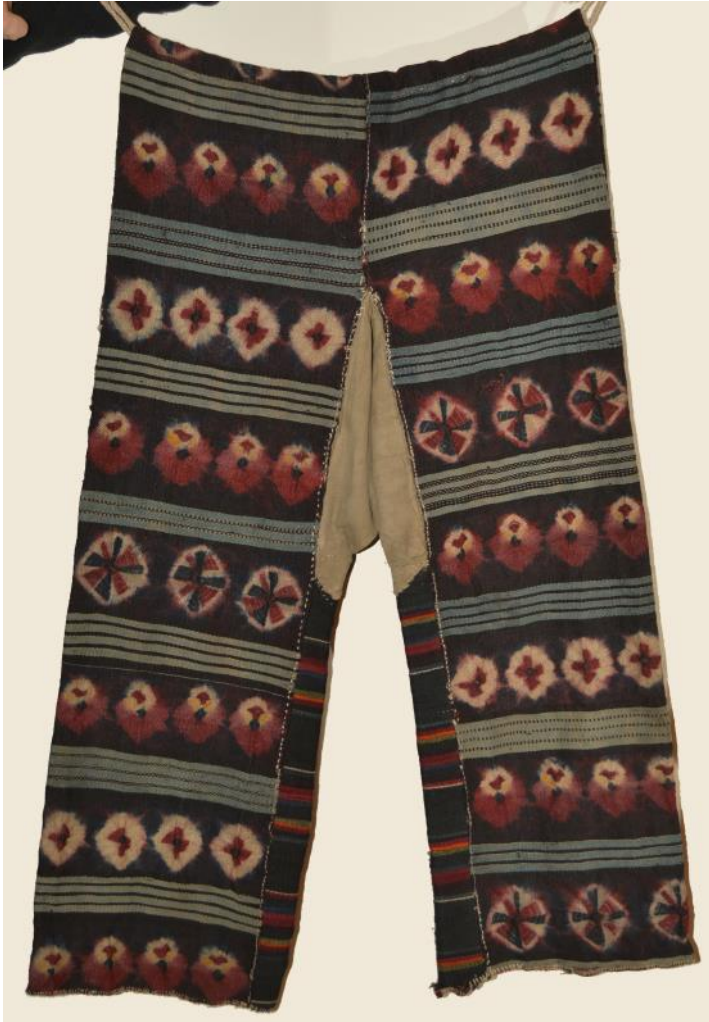
Christopher Legge brought a large flat-woven piece with supplementary wefts which had been sold to him as a Turkish *jajim*. While Christopher knew that it was not Turkish, he was wondering what it might be. By chance **Gavin Strachan** had brought



Above Christopher Legge's possible Swedish tåcke held up by Pamela Cross and Christopher. **Top left** A detail from Christopher's piece. **Left** a detail from Gavin Strachan's Krabbasår åkdyna. **Below** a tapestry weave åkdyna also shown by Gavin Strachan.



SHOW AND TELL



A pair of under-trousers from the Gurung people of west central Nepal from David Richardson.

two Swedish *åkdyna* or bench cushion covers, one of which, woven in the *krabbasår* style 'crab thicket' had similarities with Christopher's piece. Other suggestions for the origin of Christopher's piece were Morocco and central Asia. *Ågedyna* (to use the English rendition for the cushion cover *åkdyna*) come from southern Sweden, and bedspreads, or *täcke*, similar in size to Christopher's piece were woven as well. *Krabbasår* designs are symmetrical and geometric. Another common *åkdyna* technique is tapestry weave, where the subject matter may include animals, people and plants.

David Richardson introduced us to a pair of under-trousers from the Gurung people of west central Nepal. They live on the high ridges and upper valleys below the peaks of the Annapurnas and Himalchuli.

The under-trousers are worn with a cotton kilt held up by a woollen waistband. Woven from local Baruwal sheep wool, which produces a hardwearing rain- and wind-proof cloth, the woven fabric is carefully folded to create a desired cross-shaped effect, and coloured with imported Indian dyes before being wetted with boiled lime juice. Small amounts of powdered dye are placed inside the tie-dye knots to create the multi-coloured patterns. To produce the stripes, the textile is woven with two different wefts: wool and cotton – the wool taking the dye well, the cotton much less so.

Sue Richardson talked about a man's Nepali suite of clothing she had brought which consisted of an undergarment, a waist sash which strengthened the back and also acted as pockets, and a kilt worn over the top. The sash was tie-dyed with a powder where the penetration is then stopped with lime juice.

Carolyn Gurney brought the embroidered front panel of what is probably a woman's tunic. It was purchased in 1976 by her brother in Chicken Street in Kabul. The assembled company at the Show & Tell could not agree on a likely identity, so readers are requested to help. The editor would be grateful to hear of any suggestions – which if received will be published in the next edition of *Asian Textiles*.

SHOW AND TELL



Identification requested. **Left** A detail of Carolyn Gurney's tunic front bought in Afghanistan in 1976. **Right** the complete panel.

Please email the editor: gavin@firthpetroleum.com with your thoughts as to its more precise origins.



Julia Swift talked about a set of framed Turkish post cards and some lovely bound Japanese stencils.

Judith Gussin spoke eloquently about a Banjara sporran-like bag which was worn folded over a belt, and was thought to date from 1950.

She also showed us a Kutch toran decorated with her much-loved parrots reminiscent of the piece she had brought two years ago which was similarly festooned. Parrots are considered as bringers of good fortune and are linked with weddings. The toran is illustrated over the page.

Judith Gussin talking about her Banjara sporran-like bag.

SHOW AND TELL

Judith Gussin's Kutch toran with parrots.



Helen Wolfe described a recent journey she had made from the Tibetan plateau and into Uighur territory, and some of the textiles she had bought en route. From Tibet, Helen brought a twill backstrap woven sash, and from Khotan some co-operative woven ikat and an elegant folding man's hat.



Khotan folding hat brought by Helen Wolfe.



Judith Condor-Vidal is Director of *Trading for Development*, an organisation which produces fashion items within ethical business practices to bring development to deprived areas of the world. Amongst the items she brought was a fine *kantha*.

Finally **Marion Maule** wove an interesting and topical story based on the Japanese New Year and some Japanese folk art *temari* balls.

Judith Condor-Vidal.

MINUTES OF THE AGM OF THE OXFORD ASIAN TEXTILES GROUP

Held on Saturday 3 February 2018 at the Ashmolean Museum

PRESENT

Aimée Payton (Chairman), Sheila Allen (Treasurer), Felicitas von Droste zu Hülshoff (Programme Co-ordinator), Julia Nicholson (Member at Large), Gavin Strachan (Editor *Asian Textiles*), Pamela Cross (Website Manager), Judith Colegate (Secretary) and 23 members and guests.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Agnes Upshall (Blogger), Katherine Clough (Programme Co-ordinator), Felicity Wood.

THE CHAIRMAN

Aimée Payton opened the meeting by welcoming everyone. She thanked the committee individually for their work in the past year. Unfortunately, the committee still lacks a membership secretary. Once again Aimée asked for someone to volunteer from amongst the membership because Leena, our paid database manager, badly needs a replacement. She also asked if anyone would be prepared to help Agnes with the blog or take over the role.

THE TREASURER

Sheila Allen reported that at the year ending 30 September 2017 income was £2,870.03 from subscriptions and £60 from visitors' fees, sale of the journal and donations, totalling £2930.03. Expenses were £2520.96 comprising £412.50 for the database manager, £1,734.71 journal printing and postage (£790 printing and £944.71 postage). Meeting expenses were £373.75 for room hire, speakers' vouchers and expenses, and refreshments. The balance at the year-end was £2,520.96. Sheila reported that the OATG has 130 active members, of whom 54 have not made payment due on 1 October and seven are still paying at the old rate.

PROGRAMME CO-ORDINATORS

Felicitas von Droste zu Hülshoff reported it is two years since she and Kathy Clough took over as programme co-ordinators. They are most appreciative of the support they have had from other committee members, especially as Kathy is not in Oxford at present and Felicitas is sometimes tied up with her work. Over the past year there has been a wide-ranging programme of ten events from Japan to Persia with a strong focus on southeast Asia. Of these, three events took place outside Oxford, and there were also viewings of textiles at the Ashmolean and the British Museum's reserve collection.

They are working on a programme for the coming year that could range from a natural dye workshop to a journey through the Chinese imperial wardrobe to a talk on Gold Thread Embroidery from Sumatra with other intriguing stops en route. There is also the possibility of a visit to the Durham Oriental Museum in the summer.

The email account on Gmail is still being used and a list of potential speakers and events is kept on the Google drive accessible to all committee members. Eventbrite and the OATG Facebook page are used for advertising events as well as *Asian Textiles* and flyers at OATG events. At present there is a problem with the disability access at the Pauling Centre.

THE EDITOR

Gavin Strachan apologised for the late despatch of the most recent edition of *Asian Textiles*. This was the result of having had to pay too much attention in recent months to his professional work. However, he anticipated that the next edition would be out during March. He suggested that members might like to send in a short article on *My Favourite...*, where the title could be completed with say "textile", "country", "collection", "museum" or "painting with a textile in it". Any article should, if possible, be accompanied by a picture.

THE WEBSITE

Pamela Cross reported that the OATG website continued to provide internet access to all editions of *Asian Textiles* in searchable PDF format all the way back to the initial edition in 1995 when it was

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

OATG's Newsletter. The current year's editions, and those of the previous two full years, are only available via password access to fully paid-up members. Access to the PDF files of issues published in 2015 have recently become freely available at the OATG website.

The OATG events programme, as supplied to the Web Manager, may be found online and, if available, information may be updated between editions of *Asian Textiles*. The Web Manager also supports the Treasurer and the Membership Secretary by operating OATG's PayPal account for international members without a Sterling bank account. Around 11 members used this facility in the past year. The website provides contact form links for digitally contacting the Membership Secretary, Programme Organisers, *Asian Textiles* editor and the Web Manager. These have security features to minimise spam and other computer risks. The OATG website links via drop-down menus to the excellent OATG blog, run separately by Agnes Upshall. Occasionally the OATG website, as well as the blog, carries urgent last-minute events information on the Events Stop Press page.

BLOG

Agnes Upshall sent a report in her absence. In this she apologised for the paucity of her blogs in recent months since the birth of baby Esther in November, but it had been a good year for blogs. She hoped at some point she would have more free time but at present her activities are limited. When the re-election of committee members would be reached, she would happily pass the job on to someone else. She has detailed instructions of how she manages the blog, would be pleased to co-ordinate a handover, and could offer help and advice by phone and Skype. If nobody else volunteered she was prepared to continue, perhaps working in collaboration with someone else.

NEXT AGM

The date for the next AGM had not yet been decided, but would be during the same period in 2019. Members would be informed in good time.

AOB

There are new regulations about data protection. Those members present were asked to sign a form acknowledging that OATG would not share with a third party any personal details held for the sole purpose of OATG business and that the society will endeavour to follow current personal information protection regulations.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

A vote on the membership of the committee membership took place. Sue Richardson agreed to assist Agnes with the blog. Dr David Richardson agreed to become the new Membership Secretary. The other committee members were returned unopposed, although several made clear their willingness to be replaced if required.

The OATG blog and Facebook page

Did you know that you can sign up to the OATG blog to receive via email articles posted there? So far only 57 receive blog information this way, which means that there are a lot of OATG members who are not signed up to do so. It's easy. Just go to the "Follow the OATG blog via Email" panel which is on the right-hand side towards the bottom of the blog page (oxfordasiantextilegroup.wordpress.com/) and then follow the simple instructions.

Our new blogger Sue Richardson is now also sharing her posts on the Facebook page ([www.facebook.com OxfordAsianTextileGroup/](http://www.facebook.com/OxfordAsianTextileGroup/)) too, where you can share information etc.

From a recently-posted blog on an article about Hmong hemp weavers keeping ancient threads alive in Laos, comes this picture of an ethnic Hmong Leng woman decorating hemp fabric using batik. Photo: Tessa Bunney



OATG COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chair: Aimée Payton. Email: aimee_payton@yahoo.co.uk

Hon. Treasurer: Sheila Allen. Email: nick_allen98@hotmail.com

Membership Secretary: David Richardson. Email: davidandsue@asiantextilestudies.com

Secretary: Judith Colegate. Email: courtlandshill@googlemail.com

Programme Coordinators: Katherine Clough and Felicitas von Droste zu Hülshoff.
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Bloggers: Sue Richardson. Email: davidandsue@asiantextilestudies.com
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Website Manager: Pamela Cross. Email: pac@tribaltextiles.info

Member at Large: Julia Nicholson. Email: julia.nicholson@prm.ox.ac.uk

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

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

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

MEMBERSHIP OF OXFORD ASIAN TEXTILE GROUP (includes three issues of *Asian Textiles* magazine)

For membership enquiries contact Sheila Allen at 19 Southmoor Road, Oxford, OX2 6RF; email: nick_allen98@hotmail.com.

Membership fees are £25 for single membership and £35 for a joint membership. 2017/18 subscriptions are due on 1 October 2017. We prefer that payments are made by standing order. Cheques should be made out to "OATG" and sent to Sheila Allen.

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

Password details for 2018 editions of *Asian Textiles* on the OATG website

Issue Nos	Date	username	password
69, 70, 71	2018	at18	vofd4w

Asian Textiles is published three times a year.

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

THE DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS FRIDAY 1 JUNE 2018

Contributions should be emailed to: gavin@firthpetroleum.com



From Tibetan Dress in Amdo & Kham: Nomads on the summer pasture braid their hair. The back ornament is attached to the central plaits, decorated with strung coral and turquoise beads. Red twisted silk fringe ends are wrapped with metal strips. Golog Hainan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, 1997. See book review page 13.