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ASIAN TEXTILES

NEWSLETTER OF THE OXFORD ASIAN TEXTILE GROUP

NUMBER 40 JUNE 2008

Hunting cloths from Afghanistan

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE: Afghan war rugs, Chinese textiles at the Horniman, Central Asian *suzanis* at the Burrell, reviews, visits and much more….

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Front cover picture: Hunting cloth (*chireh)* from Western Afghanistan. From the collection of Pierre and Micheline Centlivres (pp12-15).
Back cover: Detail of Indian chintz recently acquired by the Ashmolean Museum (see p5).

Asian Textiles is published three times a year, with deadlines on the first Monday in February, June and October.

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS

MONDAY 6th OCTOBER 2008

Contributions should be emailed or sent to Nick Fielding

— contact details on the back page

Editorial

If you wanted an illustration of the diversity of fabrics and cultures that can shelter under the banner of 'Asian textiles', the current issue of the newsletter provides a perfect example.

From Peter Reimann's beautiful and rare Filipino textiles, through the Burrell Collection's Central Asian *suzanis*, the Chinese symbolic fabrics at the Horniman Museum, Rahul Jain's exquisite recreations of classic Mughal Indian textiles, the Afghan war rugs from Canada and then Pierre and Micheline Centlivres' Afghan hunting cloths – all are present in this one small publication.

What is more, most of our contributors in this issue are experts in their field. Curators at three museums have been kind enough to give us their time and expertise, while the collections discussed have been put together by academics and collectors with the keenest of eyes. There can be little doubt that interest in the cultural treasure trove of textiles from Asia has never been so high.

It is hardly surprising that the Textile Museum in Washington is embarking on a major expansion of its exhibition space, even if it has been delayed by a year. And we know that here in Oxford, our own Ashmolean Museum will be opening its new textile gallery next year. The acquisition of a truly superb Indian chintz by the museum (see p5) is a vote of confidence in the future of the new gallery.

However, not all is rosy in the garden. The crisis facing the Textile Conservation Centre, acknowledged as a world centre of excellence, continues. How sad it is to read that it will not be taking on any more students, despite the fact that numbers are at record levels. We can only hope that in the period between now and October 2009 a solution can be found that will allow its work of training future generations of conservators to continue.

And then there is the question of private collections. In April, much of Sheila Paine's collection was broken up and auctioned off after no institutional buyer could be found. The same dilemma is facing Pierre and Micheline Centlivres, anthropologists who built up a wonderful collection of Afghan textiles during their stay in the country. Despite the rarity of many of their pieces and the fact they were collected and annotated by professionals, to date they have not been able to find a museum that will take their collection.

Of course, museum budgets are not huge, particularly those earmarked for new acquisitions. And textiles do not always figure high on the order of priority for many museum directors. To be truthful, there is not an enormous amount we can do about this.

Except that our very existence as a group of enthusiasts (I saw the term 'textilians' used recently to describe such as us) is making some kind of impact. Just read the reports from our meetings and visits, particularly the visit to Liverpool mentioned in this issue. Our members have marauded through museum stores all over Britain and next year - maybe - even France will feel their brunt. It's not a lot, but it is something.

I have only one small, but nonetheless, important, change in the newsletter to report for this issue. The sharp-eyed amongst you may have noticed on the front cover that we now have an ISSN number. Now, at last, on our fortieth issue, our existence is officially recognised!

The Editor

OATG EVENTS PROGRAMME

Wednesday 24 September at 5.45pm

Towards the new Textile Gallery at the Ashmolean Museum

Ruth Barnes and Sue Stanton

OATG Chairman Ruth Barnes and Ashmolean textile conservator Sue Stanton will tell us of their hopes and problems during the creation
of the new textile gallery.

Thursday 6 November 2008

AGM at 5.45pm

followed at 6.15 by

The Woven Archipelago: sustaining the traditional arts in contemporary Indonesia

William Ingram

William Ingram has worked for a decade with a network of 1200 traditional natural dye weavers and cooperatives across Indonesia , and is also an author and director of *Fabric of the Forest,* a film about weavers in Kalimantan.

Please note this meeting is on a Thursday rather than Wednesday as usual

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January 2009

Plans are in hand for a **visit to Paris** for a few days in mid January. We have been offered help in arranging visits to key textile museums and possibly the Gobelin factory. We plan to travel by Eurostar and stay in a modest but convenient hotel in Paris. Please contact Rosemary or Fiona if you think you might be interested so that we can keep you informed.

Talks are held at the Pauling Centre, 58 Banbury Road, Oxford.

Refreshments from 5.15pm.Visitors welcome (£2)

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Stunning Indian chintz at the Ashmolean

The magnificent textile illustrated has just been acquired for the Ashmolean Museum, with the generous help of the Museum's Friends and grants from the V&A Purchase Grant Fund and the Art Fund. It is a superb example of the fine painted chintz textiles ('*palampore*') made in South-east India for the European market. Cloths like it were used as hangings or bed curtains.

As is typical of many of them, it shows a stylised tree rising from a rocky mound, with large, ornate leaves and blossoms. Two cranes wade in pools with fish, squirrels run among the branches, and different birds are depicted in fine detail: a parrot has captured a snake and flies off with it, a humming bird dips into a flower, and birds of paradise, owls, and a peacock move between the flamboyant foliage.

The design was painted onto the cloth with resist and mordant prior to dyeing, a process repeated several times to obtain the different colours. This highly complex technique was developed to perfection in the textile workshops of South-east India. The asymmetric 'tree of life' emerging from a mound in part goes back to Chinese design, but it is combined with an Indian taste for minute detail, as one can see in Mughal painting of the time.

It suited the 18th century European vogue for chinoiserie. This particular example was kept in a French country house until quite recently; we may therefore assume that it was exported via one of the French settlements in Tamil Nadu, e.g. Pondicherry.

As the textile is a perfect example of cross-cultural connections, it will be a major highlight in *West Meets East*, the First Floor Orientation Gallery in the new Ashmolean which focuses on the encounter of Europe with Asia from the 16th century onwards. In addition to becoming a key display, it also supplements our existing Indian collections. Until this acquisition, the Museum lacked any example of Indian chintz and we have long been looking out to fill this gap.

Ruth Barnes

The Ashmolean's latest textile acquisition: an 18thC painted chintz from the Coromandel coast.

Recreating India's Mughal silks

From 10 June to 25 July the Francesca Galloway gallery in London is holding an exhibition of remarkable modern Indian silks entitled "Timeless Splendour: Woven silks from India (2004-2007) by Rahul Jain. In 1993, inspired by a technical study of Mughal and Safavid silks, textile historian Rahul Jain set up ASHA, a drawloom weaving workshop in India to re-create the weave, material and style of Imperial-quality Mughal silks from the 17th and 18th centuries. The designs were initially inspired by the Mughal *patka* or court sash.

Over the years Rahul refined the process to successfully revive the technical brilliance and opulent beauty of Mughal silks, of which little survived. The drawlooms at ASHA produced shawls and panels in the *taquete, samit, lampas* and double-cloth weaves. In 2007, ASHA wove the first draw-loomed velvet to be woven in the region in more than a century. The design reproduces a 16th century Ottoman velvet in the Topkapi Saray in Istanbul.

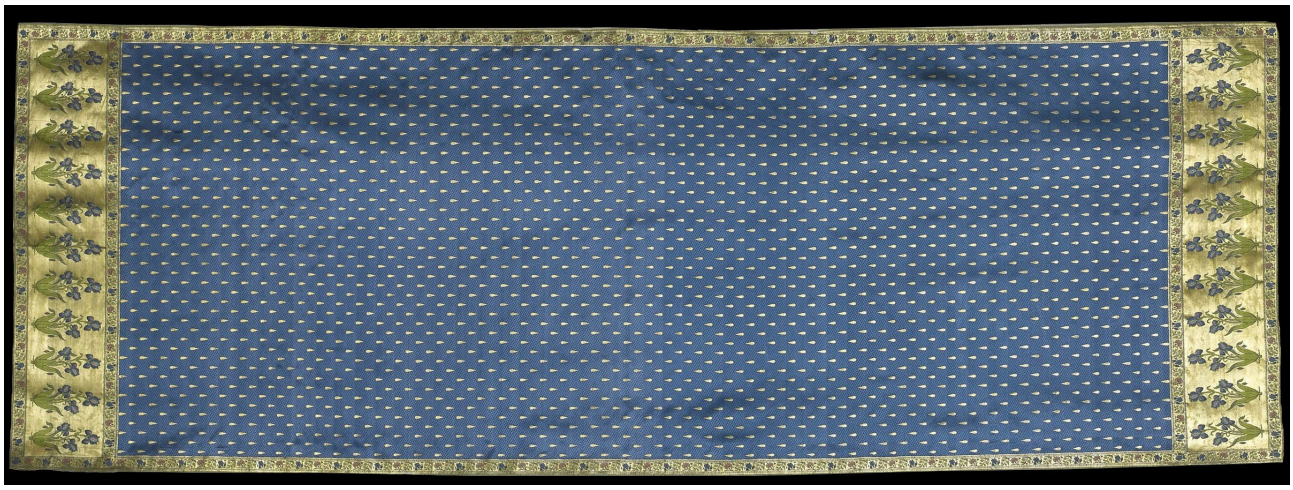
Developed in the first or second century somewhere in west Asia or the eastern Mediterranean, the drawloom soon surpassed the early Chinese innovations. It evolved into the most sophisticated of pre-industrial mechanisms for woven pattern and became the technological cornerstone for luxury silk weaving everywhere.

Most drawloomed silks were woven in complicated fabric structures requiring more than the customary two sets of yarns: warp and weft. Using additional sets of warp or weft, or both, on a loom that permitted great intricacy of pattern produced silks of dramatic pictorial character and textural richness. These were prized above almost any other type of textile at the courts and religious establishments of the great Asian and European empires.

"It is not known when the drawloom first arrived in India, where it came from, or what its early mechanical capabilities were", says Rahul in his introductory comments to the exhibition. "We do know that its pattern mechanism was, as it still is, constructed entirely of cord. It is identical to the type used on drawlooms in Iran and probably those in Central Asia as well. Local tradition in India traces the use of this cord harness with cord-made pattern modules to a 14th century master, Khwaja Bahauddin Naqshband of Bukhara, Central Asia."

The recent discovery of patterned Indian silks dating to the 14th or 15th century confirms the presence in the region by then of a developing drawloom industry. By the late 16th century Indian silkweavers had adapted and refined their skills to such a degree that their products nearly eclipsed the court silks imported into India from China, Iran and Turkey.

The Mughal period witnessed the production of magnificent silks, as superb in patterning



One of the silk weavings produced by the ASHA drawloom workshop set up by Rahul Jain to recreate Mughal silks of the 17th and 18th centuries.

as they were difficult in technical execution. Outstanding for their grand scale and sensitive draughtsmanship, Mughal silks were distinguished also by the high quality of their yarns and dyes, and by their complex construction and finesse of weaving.

Despite the survival of a wide range of India's textile skills into the modern era, the art of weaving complex patterned silks was lost during the 19th century. The expertise that created the splendid fabrics of Mughal India eroded rapidly as court patronage waned. The political and economic shifts of the colonial era altered irreparably the quality and character of the court fabric.

Yet the transmission of the more elementary patterning skills from one generation of silk-weavers to the next survived. Weak, simplified versions of earlier court products continued to be woven and have remained popular until the present day. Equally, the core elements of the Indian drawloom and its patterning mechanism have remain unchanged.

ASHA's textiles have been exhibited at the National Museum in New Delhi in 1997 and the British Museum in London in 2000. Over the years, they have been acquired by private and public collections, including the Textile Museum, Washington DC and the British Museum, London.

Francesca Galloway promotes the study and scholarship of historic Indian textiles and is delighted to present Rahul Jain's exquisite work. The exhibition will showcase a range of *ASHA*'s textiles including garments styled in the manner of the Indian *choga*, loom-woven shawls inspired by the Mughal *patka*, or sash, and textiles inspired by Safavid and Ottoman designs.

In 1996 *ASHA* was brought under the aegis of the trust *Textile Art of India* founded by Suresh Neotia, Lekha Poddar and Rahul Jain and chaired by Martand Singh.

Francesca Galloway, First Floor 31 Dover Street, London W1S 4ND. Tel 0207 499 6844. www.francescagalloway.com.

A message from OATG chairman, Dr Ruth Barnes

I have been the Chair of OATG now for 13 years, and I think it finally is time for someone else to take on this position.

My work at the Ashmolean will become ever more demanding over the next 18 months, and I really do not think that I can give OATG the attention it should receive from its chairman.

I plan to step down at the next AGM, and we are therefore actively looking for someone to take over. Please contact the committee if you want to nominate one of our members – including yourself.

Taking on the chair is not an onerous task. Our committee is made up of dedicated and very capable members who all carry out their responsibilities effectively, and the chairman actually has the easiest job of any of them.

It will be a pleasure to continue to be involved in the OATG, but I want to pass my active role on to another person.

Anyone wishing to take on the role of OATG chair, or to nominate someone for the position, should contact myself or any other OATG officer before the AGM in October

Museum expansion delayed until late 2009

The Textile Museum in Washington DC announced in the spring that the timeline for its expansion has been re-evaluated and that the space is now slated to open in fall 2009. The Museum's Board of Trustees and senior management decided to extend the planning and construction phase of the project in order to guarantee that the highest standards can be met in terms of preparing the facilities, exhibitions and public programmes.

"The new schedule provides more time for The Textile Museum to create a world-class cultural destination according to the highest standards," said Bruce P. Baganz, President of the Museum's Board of Trustees. "We are very pleased with the progress that McInturff Architects has made to date in designing the space and we anticipate a strong relationship moving forward."

"The complexities of the expansion project require extensive time and effort to be successful," explained Museum Director Daniel Walker. "It is crucial for the 7th Street location to adhere to the environmental and space conditions required for museums, and for us to design a space that is appealing to new audiences that are unfamiliar with the textile arts as well as our longtime friends and supporters. And apart from the design and build out of the space itself, it is essential that we have sufficient time to develop the programmatic and marketing plans that will engage the public and ensure the project's success."

The Textile Museum will continue to offer exhibitions and educational programmes at its current location at 2320 S Street, NW through the remainder of 2008. Plans for 2009 are currently under review. As the Museum opens its new space at 7th Street, exhibitions will cease at the S Street location. The majority of the Museum's educational programmes will also move to the 7th Street facility. Moving the public face of The Textile Museum to the 7th Street location will enable the Museum to present larger and more varied temporary exhibitions and public programs as well as a significantly expanded shop, all of which will be more accessible to a broader audience.

Public access to the Museum's renowned Arthur D. Jenkins Library, as well as scholarly access to the collections, will continue to be offered at the S Street site after the 7th Street facility opens.

The Textile Museum's new 23,400-square-foot venue almost doubles the Museum's space overall and dramatically increases its exhibition space. McInturff Architects, based in Bethesda, Maryland, has been chosen to design the new 7th Street facility. The 421 7th Street, NW building – of which the Museum will occupy three floors: the lower, street and second levels – is owned by the International Order of Odd Fellows. This historic building was constructed in 1917.

An interior rendering of The Textile Museum's expanded space at 421 7th Street, NW, now scheduled to open in fall 2009.

Update: TCC battles for its survival

In April Nell Hoare, director of the Textile Conservation Centre, issued an update on the future of the institution, scheduled for closure on 31 October 2009. She reiterated that the University of Southampton's decision to close the centre still stands, but emphasised that until then the TCC will continue to run its courses and to undertake commercial work for its clients.

However, the TCC is not permitted to offer any further places to students, either on the MA Textile Conservation programme or the MA Museums and Galleries course. "In this academic year, we have the largest ever number of students from a larger number of countries than ever before," writes Ms Hoare, "We have a record number of MPhil/PhD students and are currently celebrating the success of two who have recently been awarded their PhDs."

Ms Hoare outlined the action being taken in response to the University's closure decision. She noted that the TCC has a supporting trust, the Textile Conservation Centre Foundation, which exists to support the work of the TCC. The Foundation is also party to the legal agreement governing the merger of the TCC with the University of Southampton. The Foundation and the University agreed in December last year that the Foundation should lead efforts to find an alternative home for the TCC. The Trustees, led by the Marquess of Douro, are now in discussions with a number of universities and other interested parties to see if a viable plan can be developed.

Should the search for a possible transfer not prove successful the TCC will be closed at the end of October 2009. The TCC Foundation must also plan for this eventuality. Ms Hoare also points out that the conservation programme run by the Royal College of Art in association with the V&A may also close in four years time. "Any reduction in conservation courses at postgraduate level will have a serious impact on the ability of museums to care for collections and make them accessible to the public", she adds.

To highlight the importance of postgraduate conservation training in the UK the TCC has commissioned two pieces of research: Demos, the cultural policy think tank noted for its work on cultural value, has begun research for *Saved for the Nation: The cultural value of conservation*. The resulting report will help to raise awareness of the importance of conservation and of conservation education.

The TCC has also commissioned Dr David Leigh, Secretary-General of the International Institute of Conservation (Icon) to write a document to provide tangible evidence of the importance of conservation education and research in universities. His current position and previous experience as head of the Conservation Unit and Chief Executive of Icon's predecessor body UKIC, mean that he is uniquely qualified for this research.

The interim results of these studies will be presented at a summit being planned jointly with the Icon for June 2008. The studies will be published in September 2008.

A 1930s Japanese postcard of a Kirghiz woman

Online exhibition of Filipino textiles

In January 2008, Kim Reimann, daughter of Dr Peter Reimann and his late wife, Myunghee, approached www.tribaltextiles.info – run by OATG member Pamela Cross - asking for help in publicising an upcoming exhibition of her father's Filipino textiles.

Curated by Paul Cormack, the exhibition of rare and beautiful traditional textiles was staged at the Philippine Consulate General in New York. Later the family took up an invitation to supply photos of the exhibition to the tribaltextiles website, to provide the core material for an enduring on-line exhibition. It is now online at http://www.tribaltextiles.info/Exhibitions/Filipino_txtls_Reimann/MPRF_txtls.html.

Dr Reimann, a retired physician from New Jersey, was born in Berlin. Together with his late wife Myunghee Kim, he has collected textiles from all over the world as well as many other types of art and artifacts.

The online collection comes mainly from Northern Luzon, Mindanao and a few smaller islands. All the textiles were collected locally on the islands between 1970 and 1990, some by friends, others by his daughter, Kim. Dr Reimann says he was able to identify most of the pieces using the book *Sinaunang Habi* (by Marion Pastor-Roces, Manila 1991). He also consulted Ms. Lisa Whittal of New York's Museum of Natural History.

The islanders from Luzon wove their cloths predominantly from cotton, sometimes decorated with imported beads and native shells. Many of the pieces from Mindanao are made from banana tree or Abaca fibre, very durable materials which have a natural sheen from being pounded with wooden mallets after the fabric has been woven.

Their patterning derives from the *ikat* technique in which the yarns are tie-dyed in skeins before they are threaded into the looms and woven. This collection also includes a woman's blouse made from cotton and pineapple fibre which is unique to the Philippines.

Dr Reimann says that it is no longer possible to find such textiles locally in the Philippines. There appears to be no more production of such crafts. The complex *ikat* techniques are practiced

Detail

Itneg cotton decorative cloth with Spanish diamond eagle design, Northern Luzon, early 20thC. Hand spun and hand woven cotton.

All photos©The Reimann family

Gadang woman's cotton wrap-around skirt, Paracelis Mountain Province, Northern Luzon, early 20th century

Bla'an man's *abaka* and *ikat* jacket and trousers, Mindanao, early 20th century.

less and less, if at all, and will possibly be lost.

Dr Reimann's wider collection includes Japanese *mingei* textiles, *ikats* from Bali, warped *ikats* from Bukhara and Turkmenistan, women's clothing (*kira*) from Bhutan, aprons from Nepal, Mexican and Guatemalan ponchos and shawls, prehistoric ponchos from Peru and Chilean Mapuche textiles.

According to Dr Reimann's daughter, Kim, he originally got interested in textiles in the early 1980s because his daughter Hannah studied weaving in high school as well as during college at the Kawashima Textile School in Kyoto, Japan. She learned how to dye textiles and made an *ikat* kimono and obi. And when Dr Reimann and his late wife visited Hannah in Kyoto (1983), they became fascinated by the kimono and other textiles they saw at the Toji Temple market (held every 2 weeks).

There they learned about where various Japanese textiles were made, and he bought Oshima and Okinawa textile pieces, and became fascinated by the *ikat* technique. This sparked his interest in textiles in general and learning about *ikats* from other parts of the world. Later, in the mid-1980s he found a double *ikat*, first an Indian one then an Indonesian one from Bali. The great textile production on the Indonesian islands fascinated him and he started to go to museums and learned more, eventually becoming a member of the Textile Museum in Washington DC.

Dr Peter Reimann

He also started to go to various art shows and galleries and become acquainted with dealers and people in the textile world. Ms. Nobuko Kajitani, formerly at the Metropolitan Museum, was his mentor and teacher on textiles.

In 1987-88, Kim Reimann went to the Philippines and brought back interesting textiles from Luzon and Mindanao. That was the start of the Filipino textile collection, which he started to build up through a dealer in New York who specialized in other imports from the Philippines but happened also to acquire some textiles.

His collection comes from dealers and also from his travels around the world with his late wife Dr. Myunghee Kim. Now he is keen to show his Filipino pieces. As he writes in the introduction to the online exhibition: "I believe it is not only desirable but necessary to show a larger public, including local Filipino natives and their Americanized offspring the wonders of Filipino culture and textile-crafts which are exclusively woven by women."

Chireh - Hunting cloths from Afghanistan

Pierre and Micheline Centlivres spent many years working as anthropologists in Afghanistan, during which time they assembled a magnificent collection of embroideries and textiles. The collection contains a dozen or so *chireh* - Afghan hunting cloths.
Nick Fielding explains their origin and use.

When travelling through Herat in Western Afghanistan in the mid-1970s as an impoverished student, one of the few things I bought was an Afghan hunting cloth. I bought it because it was both cheap and intensely vivid and had something about it that was very Afghan. About 1.2m x 1m and hand-painted with coloured figures of animals and birds, the cloth hung in my house for many years.

Precisely how these cloths – known in Afghanistan as *chireh* - were used in hunting was always a mystery to me. I have to confess that I had always thought that they were used by hunters to lay on or to wrap their equipment. This naïve view is far from the truth. It was not until I was recently in correspondence with Pierre and Micheline Centlivres that for the first time I understood their function.

Pierre and Micheline spent many years in Afghanistan, studying the local cultures. In particular they spent many years working in the north of the country. During their stay they collected hundreds of superb textiles, many of them now vary rare. One part of their collection consists of about a dozen *chireh*, all different, but many having similar elements.

Typical Herati *chireh*. Note the circle at top centre which would be cut out to allow the hunter to see his prey. © Pierre Centlivres

Despite their vivid designs, which usually feature partridge and a small assembly of other animals – including leopards, tigers, snakes, hares, donkeys and, more rarely, peacocks – the cloths were not originally produced for decoration, but for use in a unique hunting technique. Very few of these cloths survive because, being cheap, they were probably used a few times and then discarded or used to wrap up whatever had been shot.

One of the few descriptions of the use of these cloths comes from Louis Dupree who, writing in the 1950s, noted that many Afghan hunters are "superb stalkers". He added:

> *"In Badakhshan some stalking hunters wear masks with rabbit ears. West of Badaskshan, hunters use a large square (seven feet) cloth (chireh), painted with mythological and real animals, to lure birds. Holes cut into the cloth permit vision and firing.*

At times, hunters dig shallow fox-holes before covering themselves with the camouflaged cloth."

However, a much fuller description came from a paper Pierre sent me that he had written in 1966. He added another, on the same subject, written by Swiss ethnographer, Alain Jeanneret. Together, the two papers explain in detail the use of the cloths and the much rarer hunting hoods that can be found in northern Afghanistan.

According to Jeanneret, the cloths are used in the hunting of partridge, for which the Afghans have a special affection. The birds are regularly hunted for the pot, but the cock birds are used for fighting and are treasured by their owners, who can often be seen caressing the birds and showing them off.

According to Jeanneret's informants, the cloths were made in the town of Obeh, about 100 kms due east of Herat along the valley of the Hari Rud river. He was told that a master designer was responsible for the main designs – of which there were three principal forms in 1963, with minor variations – and that he passed them on through his family. The cloths appear to be painted by hand.

The technique for using the cloths is unique, although it is unknown if anyone still hunts with them today. The hunters go out in the early evening to places that they know partridge come to drink water. The cloth is tied to bushes so that it is in full view. The hunter then takes a position behind the cloth and waits for his quarry, keeping an eye on what is happening through two small holes near the top of the cloth that are designed for this purpose.

***Kalachireh* from the collection of Pierre & Micheline Centrlives.**

When asked by Jeanneret why the cloths are covered with images of leopards, hares, etc, the sellers in Herat were unable to explain, except by saying that these were all animals that were attracted to each other. He was able to establish that all the animals portrayed actually lived in Afghanistan (or had done so in the comparatively recent past), so they were not fantasy animals.

Significantly, a hunting cloth in the collection of the Musee Historique de Berne, which had been collected in 1947, was significantly more detailed than more recent ones. It included, for example, the words *Allahu Akbar!* (God is Great) above the head of the leopard which forms the main illustration on the cloth. There are eight partridge, two hares and a leopard on the cloth. The background has a simple design and there is also an oval marked onto the cloth, which must be where a hole would originally have been made to allow the hunter to watch his prey. The later cloths contain fewer animals and no writing or background design. They are also less colourful.

Jeanneret speculated that the designs which show a leopard or tiger in mortal combat with a snake echo similar designs that appear in India and that therefore the cloths have their origin in that country - possibly in Gujerat or Rajasthan - and were originally brought to Afghanistan along well-established and ancient trade routes. He suggests that the vagueness of the vendors in Herat as to the significance of the animals on the cloth is simply because their original meaning has been forgotten.

More information on the their significance comes from Pierre Centlivres. His paper describes his fieldwork in Tashqurghan in 1965. This town is about 50kms from Afghanistan's northern border, close to the ancient city of Balkh. Here the partridge is abundant on the rocky mountain slopes outside the town.

According to Centlivres, the *chireh* here usually have a yellow background. However, in this region local hunters go one step further. They make a kind of hooded garment from the printed cloths, known as a *kalachireh*, which is worn over the head, sometimes together with a robe which covers the arms and upper body. In the mid-1960s these hunting hoods were also used in the Panjshir Valley, south of Tashqurghan. When wearing it, the hunter takes on the appearance of a leopard or tiger, complete with protruding ears.

The robe covering the body is covered in circles and wheels, the fabric itself being an imported cotton velour. The hood is tailored to give a realistic protruding snout. Centlivres found no shops selling these articles, nor were there any professional hunters in the region. It is clear that the *kalachireh* is not a commercial article, but made on demand by local tailors.

Photograph taken in 1965 showing a hunter in Tashqurghan wearing a *kalachireh.* Photo © Pierre Centrlivres.

He speculates that the cloths have some kind of magico-religious significance, pointing to similar cloths that can be found in parts of the Congo.

Centlivres describes a hunting expedition in the Koh-i-Damesh mountains, about 12kms to the south of the town, noting how the hunter pronounced the words *Allahu Akbar!* as he loaded his gun and also when killing a downed bird. He adds that leopards are not uncommon in the region, although they mostly kill sheep at pasturage.

The hunters told him that once it sees the leopard mask, the partridge is paralysed with terror and therefore it is easier to approach and shoot. It is less likely to flee than if it saw human figures approaching.

Today, the tradition of producing the *chireh* cloths survives in the family of Haji

Abdullah Wakil Zadhah and his sons and grandsons. Based in Herat, Haji Abdullah draws the outline of the design using a ballpoint pen. The lines are painted over with a brush and hand-ground Indian ink by Haji Abdullah's two sons. They also paint in the black shadows that give the animals definition and volume. Haji Abdullah's grandsons colour in the centres with traditional yellow, red, green and black inks, which are not colour-fast.

As traditional hunting has declined in Afghanistan due to almost 30 years of war and its consequences, Haji Abdullah has begun to incorporate domestic animals such as horses and camels, into his designs, often connected to local stories and scenes from daily life.

It remains to be seen whether either of these types of hunting techniques survive in Afghanistan in the twenty-first century. While the *chireh* cloths can still be found, the *kalachireh* is extremely rare and we should be grateful to the Pierre and Micheline Centlivres for obtaining examples of these remarkable items and preserving them for posterity.

A *kalachireh* from the collection of the Historischen Museum, Bern.
© Ethnographic Collection at the Bern Historical Museum.

Now retired, they are looking for a permanent home for their collection, so far without luck. Once again, as with Sheila Paine's remarkable collection, it appears that museum curators lack either the money or the inclination to invest in important textile collections.

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Prized *suzanis* from the Burrell Collection

A collection of Bokharan *suzanis*, many dating from the middle of the 19thC, is now on show in Glasgow. Noorah al-Gailani, Curator of Islamic Civilisations at the museum, explains their significance.

The Burrell Collection in Glasgow is showing its rarely seen prized collection of Uzbek *suzani* embroideries in a temporary exhibition that runs until the end of 2008. This small but exquisite collection of 19th century Central Asian needlework was acquired by Sir William Burrell in 1925, and used at his home, Hutton Castle, near Berwick-on-Tweed. They were gifted to the city of Glasgow with the rest of his collection in 1944. This is the first time that these *suzanis* have been shown all together.

The exhibition focuses on the cultural context in which the *suzanis* were made. And through its five themes, it explores the lives of the Uzbek and Tajik communities that made them, the multicultural society they belonged to, and the impact of the Silk Road routes that passed through the Khanate of Bukhara and its key towns and cities where these *suzanis* were made. The exhibition also looks at the European exploration of Central Asia in the 19th century, and how the suzanis and other products found their way into European collections.

Suzani wall hanging, Uzbekistan, 19th century Embroidered silk thread on unbleached cotton cloth.

Suzani, from *suzan* – needle in Farsi – refers to a particular type of embroidery that was made domestically for use as a wall hanging or a drape to conceal shelved alcoves and niches. Essentially an urban tradition, *suzanis* were made to be included in a set of dowry embroideries that an Uzbek or Tajik bride took to her marital home. They were made of domestically woven cotton cloth strips, and locally spun and dyed silk embroidery threads.

The women of the family, who shared the creation of the dowry, were also known to have reared their own silk worms to subsidise the costs of the dowry pieces. A whole *suzani* usually consisted of four or five strips of cloth, and could take up to two years to finish. But the design and layout of these pieces was the privilege of one woman in the community, the *kalamkahs*, a trained draughtswoman who got paid for her work.

She usually inherited her pro-

Detail of *Ruijo* or *joipush* – sheet for a wedding-bed. Uzbekistan, 19th century

fession from her mother, and was invested with preserving the community's embroidery designs and patterns. Once the layout was drawn, the women in the family divided the various strips that made up the embroideries amongst themselves; and once the embroidery work was complete and re-stitched together, the pieces were backed with a printed cotton cloth with *ikat* silk boarders. Two of the Burrell *suzanis* still have their original backings.

Among the eleven Burrell *suzanis* is one wedding-bed sheet. Though the sheet is technically not a *suzani*, it belongs to the same family of Bukharan dowry embroideries. Typically the sheet is only embroidered on three of its sides, the two long edges and one short one; the centre and bottom parts are left blank and incomplete. The centre part needed to be clear, as the marriage was consummated on it; and the bottom part was left deliberately incomplete to invoke further weddings in the family. On the morning after the wedding night, the blood-stained sheet – a sign of the bride's virginity - was presented to the groom's mother for inspection, and then sent off to the bride's family. Once the sheet was back with the bride, she used it as a day cover for her folded and stacked bedding.

The exhibition also sheds light on the involvement of the Bukharan Jewish community who specialised in the spinning and dying of the silk threads used on *suzanis*. In addition to providing the embroidery threads, they are also known to have acquired *suzanis* from their Muslim neighbours to use in their own festivals and ceremonies.

In addition to the *suzanis*, the exhibition also includes seven other Burrell objects that demonstrate the exchange of ideas and influences along the Silk Road and how these exchanges are recorded on the *suzanis*. Included are four 17th century embroideries – two from Central Asia and two from Turkey; and three piled carpets – two Iranian and one from Khotan in Eastern Turkestan (now in the Xinjiang province in western China).

An extensive six-month-long programme of public events includes lectures, themed gallery talks, and tours that link the *suzanis* in the exhibition with other displays in the Burrell collection. Between the 17th and 24th of July, two Uzbek master-embroiderers are visiting the Burrell Collection, and will be demonstrating their skills and the developments that have occurred within this tradition. The embroiderers' visit has been made possible by the support of the Forum of Culture and Arts of Uzbekistan Foundation. See the Burrell Collection and the Colours of the Silk Road exhibition pages on the Glasgow Museums website (www.glasgowmuseums.com).

Symbolic Chinese textiles at the Horniman

A colourful exhibition focussing on the symbols found in Chinese silk embroidered costume opened at the Horniman Museum in May.

Everything in the exhibition is from the Horniman's own collections, some items acquired by the Museum's founder Frederick Horniman himself in the late 19th century, others donated by the families of British missionaries, diplomats, military men or officials who served in the Chinese Imperial Customs service in the final years of the Qing empire. Most items have not been displayed for a generation.

The theme is the symbolism of the motifs, which are chiefly executed in embroidery, and how these symbols were used to express ideas deriving from centuries of tradition. Together the symbols have played an important part in the formation of Chinese cultural identity, dependent as they are on a shared familiarity with the sources from which they are drawn and the coded system in which they operate.

In particular, many symbols derive their meaning from homophones, so that the word for bat, for example, has the same sound as the word for good fortune. In the Chinese cultural sphere, embroidered motifs also often occur in clusters, with the sounds of the names for the objects depicted combining together to form an auspicious phrase. Symbols may refer to longevity, fidelity, happiness, wealth and so on.

Many of them, such as the yin-yang sign, the eight trigrams or *bagua*, and the Eight Buddhist Symbols, for example, continue to be understood and employed by Chinese people today. As well as providing an opportunity to enjoy the colour, detail and exquisite needlework of late Qing embroidery, the exhibition thus aims to provide an insight into how Chinese people see and have seen the world.

The exhibition is divided into five parts, of which the two major sections are religion and secular costume. The section on religious iconography includes material relating to the three major philosophies of China – Daoism, Buddhism and Confucianism – which together express common

Silk shoes created in the shape of a fish, dating from the 20th Century. An extra flap of turquoise silk, imitating a tail, is worn on the ankle.

religious notions in both ancient and modern Chinese society.

One delicate rectangular multi-coloured silk hanging shows a figure of Xi Wang Mu, the Queen Mother of the West, believed to rule the western paradise in the Kunlun Mountains, and representing notions of immortality in Chinese mythology. Another hanging depicts the Eight Immortals, whose attributes often stand alone as key elements in the iconography of Daoism. Thus the gourd, fan, sword or basket of flowers appearing alone, for example, may represent the figure who normally carries it, and the virtue expressed in the story of his or her life.

A set of carved wooden altar pieces representing the Eight Buddhist Symbols acts as a reference point for interpretation of many of the symbols found in the embroidered items elsewhere in the exhibition. Above the altar pieces is a fine 17th century figure of Buddha Sakyamuni with a swastika symbol on the chest. The swastika is represented in the Chinese language by the symbol for the character '*wan*', which means 'all' or 'eternity'.

The section dealing with secular costume is subdivided by gender, with one side of the showcase for men's costume and other for women's. Men's costume on display includes audience robes, headgear, footwear and rank badges. Rank was key to the iconography associated with men's lives, especially for officials in the imperial court during the Qing Dynasty. The different kinds of birds and animals on the embroidered badges stitched to the front and back of an official's coat were indicators of rank among civil servants and military officers. The women's costume section includes delicately embroidered robes and skirts, as well as hats and fans. Two magnificent operatic headdresses are also included in this section. Photographs of Chinese people dating from around 1900 from the Museum's photographic archive complement the objects in this section.

Four smaller sections include material relating to children, small dress accessories such as bags and fan cases, and items illustrating techniques. A range of children's hats, headdresses and shoes in the shapes of tiger, goldfish and other animals provide a charming insight into the care lavished on children, but also symbolise two specific functions: protecting children, especially boys, against harm and ensuring their success in the future. The importance of examinations for success in imperial China is made clear in two silk paintings, both of which depict elaborate and lengthy processions for someone who has achieved such success. A small display of samples embroidered with enlarged stitching by Marianne Ellis elucidates the technical aspect of the exhibition.

While most of the items on display would have once belonged to people from the middle and upper echelons of society, a slide show of paintings from the Horniman's archive, showing scenes from the lives of ordinary people, vividly complements the exhibition.

Dr Fiona Kerlogue

A man's surcoat of dark blue silk, decorated with motifs that symbolise wealth, rank, honour and longevity. *c.*1855

The Exhibition at the Horniman Museum - *China: Symbols in Silk* — runs until Sunday 7 September 2009. For details on how to get to the Museum, see www.horniman.ac.uk

Correction: In the last issue, the Chinese braid photo on p29 should have been credited to Gina Corrigan.

Afghan rugs that speak for themselves

Max Allen, Founding Curator at the Textile Museum of Canada, explains the background to the museum's superb exhibition of war rugs from Afghanistan

Imagine an exhibition of objects lacking the following information: exactly when and where the objects were made, who made them and under what circumstances, and what they mean.

This information void is one of the most striking aspects of *Battleground – War rugs from Afghanistan* (at the Textile Museum of Canada until January 2009). Nevertheless, our comment books are filled with remarks like this from a visitor from Sweden: "War is always a catastrophe, no matter where it may occur. However, what gets to me the most is the creativity of these people (and I guess all war victims in a sense). Creativity is like hope, it stays with us, and looking at some of the rugs, it holds on longer than hope. God bless the people of Afghanistan."

A new kind of oriental rug appeared in Afghanistan during the 1980s.

The Russian invasion and occupation of 1979-1989 brought with it an avalanche of weapons: helicopters and fighter jets, tanks and armoured personnel carriers, AK-47 rifles and grenades, land mines and missiles. After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the military chaos continued. Now Afghans were fighting among themselves in a catastrophic civil war that lasted another decade. Then came 9/11 and the foreign armies returned, bringing even more weapons. The war rugs – like television news – reported the events.

The Afghanistan countryside is full of weapons, and so are the fields and borders of the rugs. Afghan rugs that used to show abstract geometric figures, plants, flowers and birds, now show the machinery of war.

These are rugs that were made within the last 25 years, and yet less is known about them than about, say, Caucasian or Turkmen rugs a century and a half old. The war rugs are the most significant political textiles of the past two decades – and the hardest to accurately decode.

Afghanistan is a difficult place these days, and research there and in Pakistan about the origin and meaning of the war rugs is impossible. There is a mountain of speculation and hardly a

Left: War rug with map of Afghanistan and family wounded by land mines .

Top right: Salt bag constructed from a remnant of a large soumak rug

grain of hard data. The weavers themselves are inaccessible, and the dealers in the long supply chain from maker to museum are unhelpful. The rugs are left to speak for themselves.

Are war rugs pro-war or anti-war? Whose side are they on? It is hard to tell what a particular rug is supposed to mean when its history is hidden and its maker is unknown. That is the case here. The war rugs in this exhibition have travelled a long way from where they were made. An Afghan weaver might give a rug to her husband who passes it to a friend of his brother, who knows a trader who will sell it to someone in Pakistan who will send it to Miami where it will appear on the internet and then, perhaps, end up in a museum. At each step of the way, sellers are unwilling to say anything about their sources, or they simply don't know.

In the past, the materials and weaving techniques of an oriental rug were a clue to its origin. People of different ethnic groups, in different places, made rugs in different ways. Today millions of people from all over Afghanistan have been mixed together in refugee encampments and villages, sharing and mixing images and techniques. As a result, the old methods of sorting rugs into categories no longer apply.

What's left are the rugs themselves – eloquent anonymous documents of a world turned upside down.

Imagine you are a rug weaver, living far from any city or town. Imagine that war comes and your world is bombed and mined. You flee for your life, together with four million others – the largest refugee population in the world. You head east toward Pakistan or west toward Iran, and on the way you encounter something astonishing: A city. The city is like nothing you've ever imagined, a jumble of buildings and traffic and war. And for the first time you see images of other cities in magazines, on postcards, on billboards. You remember those images. You weave them into your rugs.

Oriental rugs have never been primarily concerned with naturalistic perspective. But some war rugs break with this tradition by their sudden use of "photographic" western perspective. Weavers discovered new styles of representation as they moved through cities and refugee camps and saw propaganda brochures and food packages with photographic images.

The television imagery of CNN and al-Jazeera has also influenced rug weaving during the recent Afghan wars. Fractured scenes with multiple images and moving lines of text appear on the rugs, just as they do on television screens.

A review of *Battleground* by R. M. Vaughan in *The Globe and Mail* ("Canada's National Newspaper") began like this: 'When was the last time you read the words "Afghanistan" and "beauty" in the same sentence? Perhaps never?'

An entire generation has grown up in Afghanistan knowing nothing but militarism. One may suspect that the creative impulse itself has been hijacked by the endless fighting, and that now, war-making is the national art form. But one would be wrong. If nothing else, *Battleground* proves that self-expression is as vital to survival as food and water. People will always make things of beauty, no matter how awful the world around them.

All of the rugs in the Battleground exhibition are illustrated on the website of the Textile Museum of Canada www.textilemuseum.ca.

A marvellous textile trip to Liverpool

Once again Fiona Sutcliffe and Rosemary Lee organised a marvellous textile trip, this time to Liverpool. Three days of visiting galleries and being guided by experts to selected Asian textiles on display as well as being taken 'behind the scenes' to look at textiles that are not usually on show.

The afternoon of day one on 11 March took us to the ethnology section of the World Museum which has a collections of approximately 2,400 items from Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan. The Tibetan collection is one of the most comprehensive in the UK, and of particular interest are the personal collections of several Political Officers stationed in the Himalayas in the early part of the 20th century, including those of Col.Francis Younghusband, Sir Charles Bell, Lt. Col.F.M.Bailey (and his wife), John Claude White and Sir Hugh Richardson.

Emma Martin guided us to the textiles on public display and explained how they were obtained. Exquisitely embroidered imperial court garments from China, a Chinese temple hanging from the 18/19th century, a hat of tie-dyed silk, a colourful helmet of the Paro Penlop's bodyguard from Bhutan dated 1900, and several *thankas*. Many of the textiles on display were donated by Lt. Col. Eric Bailey (1882-1967) and his wife who collected a large number of costumes and textiles from Central Asia during his career as a diplomatic officer

The following morning saw the group again at the World Museum where Emma had selected four costumes from the Reserve Collection for us to see and handle (with gloves of course). What a treat! We looked for the symbols that characterize and distinguish the different royal robes, admiring the skill of the people who embroidered them. These highly skilled people were not allowed any artistic liberties - they had to adhere strictly to the prescribed patterns, and indeed not a stitch or colour is out of place.

Emma had taken out some costumes complete with all the accessories; one for example from Bhutan once belonged to Lady Bailey: a pink silk under blouse and rather plain trousers, covered mostly by a splendidly and brightly embroidered cloth rather like a sash; a sash consisting of two contrasting lengths of silk and finished off with a rather plain short jacket with a chequered lining which is typical of Bhutan. Then there were the jewellery, the hat, the shoes, the personal

OATG members pore over a Chinese court costume at Liverpool's World Museum

chopstick holder and bag which completed the ensemble.

A train ride and a hurried lunch later found us at the Lady Lever Gallery in Port Sunlight Village. This Gallery was founded in 1922 by William Hesketh Lever, the first Lord Leverhulme, in memory of his wife. The gallery displays works collected by Leverhulme throughout his life. We were shown a collection of 17th century embroideries which Lever started collecting in the early 20th century before they were sought after by collectors.

Themes included religious scenes, battles, portraits, landscapes, all on a linen, satin or canvas base, embroidered with silk, metal thread, beads, pearls, spangles, etc. Many were three dimensional. These embroideries were generally done by younger girls of better off families.

The cellar storage contained many more treasures: an amazing embroidered and appliquéd sewing box from 1668, drawers full of embroidered gloves, pouches and other little bags, and a drawer with embroidered high-heeled shoes.

We then had time off to explore the galleries, an unrivalled collection of 1770s English Neo-classical furniture (I do not think I have ever seen so many -monstrous- commodes in one place) and Tudor and Stuart furniture (1590-1690) as well as many Victorian paintings, especially by the Pre-Raphaelites.

On our last day, Pauline Rushton, textile conservator at the Walker Gallery, showed us around the Craft and Design Gallery. In this otherwise permanent gallery, two large cases of fashion display change every two years. The Museum has 10,000 costumes and 10,000 textiles in store of which very few go on display. Pauline explained how they sourced their mannequins (a story in itself) and that they try to show how costume design does not happen in a vacuum but is motivated and inspired by outside influences.

The Yves St Laurent 1970s safari suit, for example, was inspired by 1935 safari suits and has now been taken up by gays. The current display mostly features fashion from the second half of the 20th century; a classic Jean Muir dress, a polyester lilac designer sweat suit of the type much worn by wags.

Then it was back to the World Museum to meet Vivien Chapman whose special interest is textile conservation. She took us over exhibits we had previously seen, now explaining in detail when and how they had been restored and how many hours it had taken. A very illuminating talk.

It was an inspiring, extremely well organised trip, and a real treat to be out for a few days with like-minded textile friends. I am looking forward to the next trip.

Dymphna Hermans

Pip Rau's ikats at the V&A

The first time I saw the Pip Rau collection of late 19th - early 20th century central Asian ikat textiles was in 1988, and I remember it well. The exhibition was at the Crafts Council gallery when it was still in Waterloo Place, just off Piccadilly, before it moved out to Islington. Re-reading the catalogue was a very good prelude to visiting the V&A's display of the collection.

I had lived in Indonesia and Malaysia in the early 1980s and had become quite familiar with the *ikat* styles of South-east Asia and the *patola* cloths from India, but at that time central Asian *ikats* were something new to me……those really *stunning* large-scale patterns and huge blocks of strong colours. The book, *The Dyer's Art* (published 1976), had introduced me to the existence of these bold designs, but to see the real thing was unforgettable.

So it was wonderful to hear that OATG had arranged a gallery talk by Ruby Clark, who had both curated the V&A exhibition and written the accompanying book: *Central Asian Ikats*. In Kabul in 1976, Pip Rau saw *ikats* for the first time and had started to buy them. Clark noted that not only was Rau in the right place at the right time but that she had a good eye for the best pieces.

Clark made the point that although, for a long time, *ikat* textiles had been studied within the context of the Silk Road – collected as part of a hippy aesthetic – the V&A exhibition sought to place them in a 19th century urban context. Their production was responding to a market for the Bukhara elite, as well as supplying 'robes of honour' – coats and other textiles that were given to special guests. Just look at the 1890 photograph of the Bukhara tax collectors (V&A catalogue, page 30), for instance, or call to mind the *ikat* coats of the Ashmolean's Robert Shaw collections.

We had an enjoyable and informative tour around the displays of coats and wall hangings. Then, after some discussion and questions answered, we were free to go round again at our own pace and view the film explaining the techniques, which brought home the intricate processes involved, and therefore how amazing it is that there was so very little 'slippage' in the final patterns.

One of Pip Rau's ikats at the V&A

I particularly enjoyed seeing the motifs taken from everyday life: for instance, the ram's horn – so reminiscent of the motifs that we have seen in amulets in Sheila Paine's collections. In a cloth from the V&A's own collection (bought in the 1870s) was a comb design, like a protective hand. And then there was the hammer and sickle motif, a symbol of the industrial and agricultural workers, from an early 20th century cloth when Uzbekistan had become part of the Soviet Union.

A gallery talk is always a great treat – a privilege to hear the curator explaining the ideas that underlie an exhibition. To attend such an event as part of an OATG visit makes the experience even more interesting – the chance comments, the cross-referencing, the shared appreciation. An excellent morning.

Felicity Wood

Jenny Parry's braid journey to Kyoto

Jennie Parry gave us a fascinating talk in March on *kumihimo* - Japanese braid making, showing us many beautiful and intricate examples of this unusual textile. She has been making and developing the craft for 22 years and had recently returned from the First International Kumihimo Conference in Kyoto.

The craft has a long history and we were shown how different patterns of braid are made depending on which of five types of loom are used. The process seems a little like lace-making as many weighted bobbins wound with silk or other fibres are plaited and threaded in many complicated ways to make the braid.

In her work Jennie uses unusual fibres and experimental techniques. The beautiful and complex results are quite unlike the lace that we know.

There are five main types of loom; the *takadai*, used by Jennie is square with the silks hanging over each side, the *marudai,* a circular wooden loom, the *ayatakedai* a square loom incorporating a bamboo rod from which the silks hang, the *kakudai*, another square loom and the *karakumidai*.

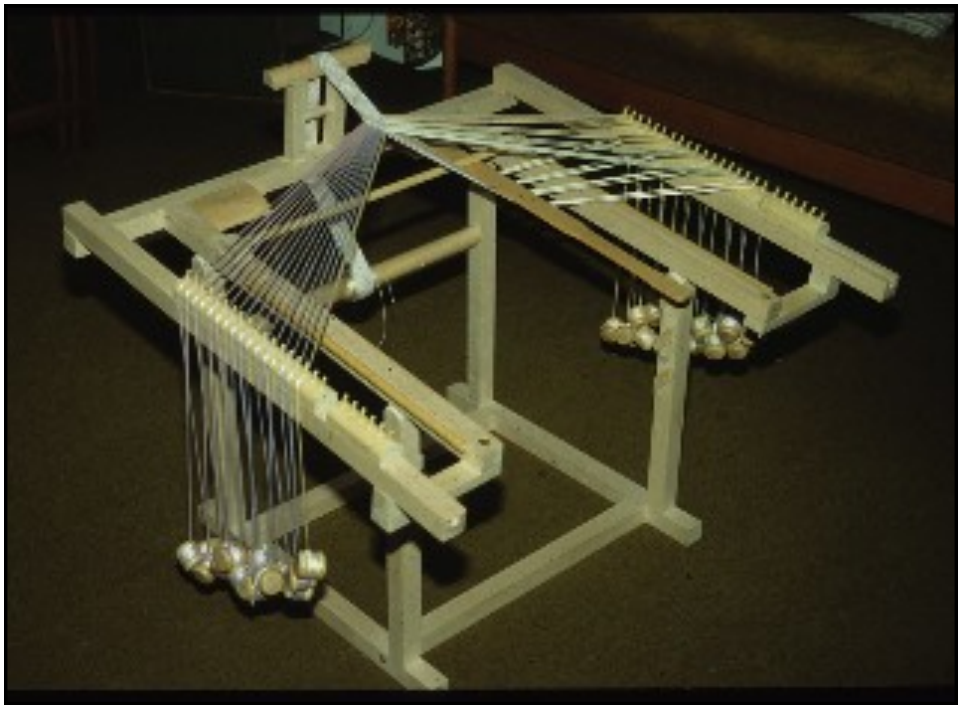
Braiding on this loom is very laborious and Jennie was honoured to meet Akihiko Izukura one of the foremost artists and see his work. A simplified form of braiding without a loom, in which the silk is handheld and braided by exchanging loops was originally used for making long lengths for lacing Samurai armour.

The Kyoto conference attracted participants from eleven countries. Jennie exhibited, taught a class and was herself a student. The whole fascinating experience was personally gratifying as one of her exhibits was used as the conference image.

A brief visit to the Toshima City Museum in Tokyo and the Shoso-in Repository in Nara enabled Jennie to see and study rare and old braids, to meet master craftspeople and to examine complex braiding equipment.

On display were a wide variety of textiles for us to examine closely and thus appreciate the marvels of intricate design, the exciting colour combinations and skilful workmanship. Of particular interest were two vegetable dyed silk woven coats made by Akihiko Izukura, one of which Jennie was modelling.

Anne Brau



A *takadai* loom as used by Jenny Parry

A concise, scholarly study of Chinese fashion

Antonia Finnane, *Changing Clothes in China: Fashion, History, Nation* London: Hurst Publishers Ltd (2007). Hardback, 359 pp, numerous colour illustrations, bibliography. ISBN 978-1-85065-860-3

The incredible depth of Antonia Finnane's research into twentieth century clothing in China is evident in *Changing Clothes in China*. She provides a phenomenal amount of information about the changes in clothing set against the political, social and economic upheavals that China went through during the last century. She describes in detail how the clothing of men and women evolved while explaining what forced these radical changes, focusing on the urban population.

Finnane is careful to ensure that her arguments are from the Chinese viewpoint, using Chinese texts, journals, first hand accounts and fantastic photographs and illustrations. She does point out similarities to Western fashion where relevant but, does not try to understand China's experience of fashion from a Eurocentric perspective.

The introduction, chapter one, challenges the idea of China as a fashionless nation but questions whether the word fashion can be usefully used to discuss changes in Chinese clothing. Finnane makes evident the complex relationship between clothing and politics which was so explicit under Mao's regime in particular. She also points to China's sudden awareness of the rest of the world as a source of many of the radical changes in the Chinese national identity and the logical effect this had on clothing.

In the second chapter, 'Ways of Seeing', she discusses the relationship between China and other countries at length, looking at accounts of how Chinese clothing was described by Western commentators. These views had a direct impact on how China saw itself in relation to the rest of the world.

Finnane reveals the impact of the Western comments on China in her third and fourth chapters by detailing the clothing of the late Qing dynasty and the changes that slowly started to take place through to the early twentieth century and the Republican era. Refreshingly she introduces us to items of clothing other than commonly discussed bound feet shoes, dragon robes and horse shoe cuffs.

Using period accounts she highlights clothing items that were new and popular such as *wutaixiu*, (five-terrace sleeves), *hudielü*, (butterfly shoes), *xiguading*, (watermelon hats for men) among other garments. The breakdown of the old hierarchy of the Qing dynasty was echoed in clothing which Finnane shows with examples of servants dressing like their masters and fashionable young women wearing clothing worn by prostitutes. There is a long discussion on how the status of the military changed during this period as this had a huge impact later in the twentieth century.

The changes in both men's and women's clothing were incredibly complicated particularly for women. Finnane's discussion in chapters five and six makes these intricacies very clear by explaining the fashion industry in Shanghai during the early part of the twentieth century and the impact on urban women's clothing in China. She looks at the lack of fashion designers and the importance of the department store and individual tailors, citing a specific tailor, *Sun Xiaobin*, from the 1920s.

This sort of detail reflects the depth of research and knowledge throughout this book. Chapter six is devoted to the *qipao* or *cheongsam* which is the dress that we in the West would

recognise as typically Chinese during the first half of the twentieth century. This is not a straightforward garment to understand and Finnane demystifies it through exposing how it was developed, how it was received by the Chinese people and its symbolic meaning to the West. The clothing of men is dealt with thoroughly in chapter seven by looking at the relationship between clothing and modernity, patriotism, changing gender roles and a new found respect for the military.

Chapters eight and nine talk about clothing from the 1950s and through the Cultural Revolution during a period when China was searching for a new national identity. Finnane explains that China at this time wanted to break with the past; clothing with any reference to the Qing dynasty, for example the *qipao*, was despised. There was also a desire to differentiate China from the capitalist West, so adopting Western suits for men and fashionable dress for women was also out of the question, although Finnane does cite some experiments with Western clothing.

She also tackles the incredibly convoluted phenomenon of all the people in this vast nation simultaneously wanting to wear the same outfit, the Sun Yatsen suit or Mao suit. In the final chapter and the conclusion she reflects on the effect this destruction of beauty had on a culture that had once revered intricately embroidered garments and looks at the attempts to fill the void that this has left over the last 30 years.

Changing Clothes in China is a brilliant read, full of well researched and fascinating stories. Finnane's explanation of this extraordinary period of clothing history is amazing. It is clear, concise and scholarly.

Aimée Payton

Another postcard on an embroidery theme, this time from the Philippines. Dated 1924, the card's writer says on the back that the high collars are kept up with wire and thin gauze.

Have you checked out our website recently?

www.oatg.org.uk

An auction catalogue with a difference

Dreweatts, *The Sheila Paine Embroidery Collection*, Tuesday 22 April 2008, (avail. From Donnington Priory Salerooms, Donnington, Newbury, Berks RG14 2JE. £10.00.

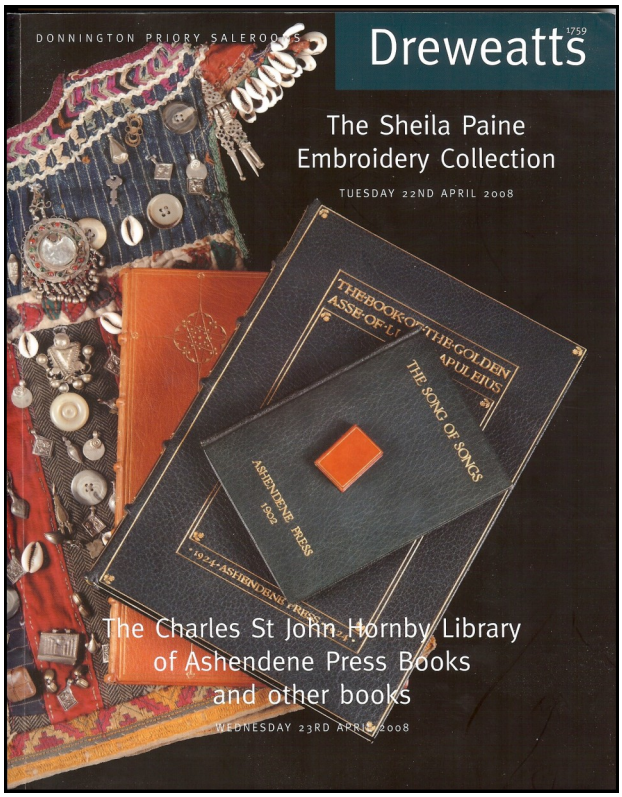
It is not very often that one gets to review an auction catalogue, but the one produced by Dreweatts for the disposal of much of Sheila Paine's collection of textiles should certainly be considered an exception.

Most auction catalogues make very dry reading; a brief description followed by an estimate. But on this occasion the auctioneers recognised that Sheila's collection was about more than the fabrics themselves. Somehow she managed to persuade them that the stories attached to each lot were almost an intrinsic part of their history. And that, of course, is absolutely the case.

Her marvellous books detail the circumstances under which she came across unusual textiles, often in the remotest places. And the catalogue faithfully reproduces many of these stories. Despite the sadness of the fact that the collection has been broken up, this catalogue at least remains as a record of how, when and where many of the textiles were first discovered.

Each section of the catalogue, which is divided along geographical lines, is preceded by a description of Sheila's travels. "When I first went to Turkmenistan," she writes, "I met an actress, Jahan, in Ashgabat, who took me to the Sunday market. At that time there were no tourists at all, whereas ten years later there were quite a lot, particularly French and Italian. Jahan was exiled soon after I met her because her company was putting on a Shakespearean play (I think *King Lear*) and Turkmenbashi (the Turkmen president- Ed) wanted them to rewrite it so that he was the hero. They refused and were exiled, no-one knows where to."

Describing a green cotton frieze from Shurawak, near Dalbandine on the Afghan-Pakistan border (lot no. 83), she writes: "I spent a lot of time in Quetta, staying with the nuns at St Joseph's, either with the Italian team waiting for our NOC certificates to get into Makran (see *The Afghan Amulet*) or on my own trying to get into Afghanistan. I remember particularly a man walking round the town completely naked and no-one taking any notice."



Lot 7 from Cyprus included a linen mat of squares of Lefkara work with spiders' webs and stars, bought in the village of the same name. "Here I was a victim of a 'Lefkara racket', where a young man pretends to have broken down by the roadside and asks for a lift into his village, taking you straight to his 'sister's house'. I refused the large cloths, but had to buy something to escape."

These and many similar stories make this catalogue worth obtaining. As for the sale itself, everything sold, some for good prices, others not so good. Despite my sadness at the fact that the collection was being broken up, I'm not complaining too much. At least I got that Pashtun gun cover from Ghazni I had always wanted.

Nick Fielding

Another admirable Anokhi publication

Emma Ronald, *Ajrakh. Patterns and Borders.* New Delhi: Anokhi Museum of Hand Printing (2007). 92 pp, colour illustrations, cloth samples, bibliography, gloss. ISBN 978-81-903922-2-8

This is the second publication we have seen from the Anokhi Museum in Jaipur (see Newsletter 38), and it once again is an admirable production. It introduces the *ajrakh* cloths of Sindh and Kutch, which are block-printed and resist-dyed cotton textiles traditionally worn by men. The book is small in format, but most effectively concise and informative. The author gives a brief outline of the textiles' history and their former importance as trade cloths, and she proceeds to give a definition of what makes an *ajrakh*: the structure of design principles and patterns. Different versions and varieties are presented in effective diagrams, photographs, and actual cloth samples.

The production process is demonstrated in considerable detail, with indigenous and botanical names given for the resist, mordant, and dye ingredients. Again particular attention is paid to the men and women involved in making *ajrakh*, and the background and history of some of the families is told eloquently in words and pictures.

Once again the photographs are outstanding; they are both beautiful and full of information on the manufacture and function of these attractive textiles. The inclusion of samples in Indian textile publications is not uncommon, but it is carried out with particular care here, often matching a large photograph with the sample. The short bibliography guides the interested reader to more detailed discussions of Indian block-printed resist textiles, but this delightful book certainly serves well as a first introduction.

Ruth Barnes

In brief.....

Anawalt, Patricia Rieff *The Worldwide History of Dress.* London: Thames and Hudson (2007). 608 pp., 1,000+ illustrations, bibliography, glossary, index. ISBN 978-0-500-51363-7

The emphasis is on ethnographic dress, rather than the history of urban or court dress. But within this scope, it is a superb publication and will be a standard work of reference.

Feng, Zhao, Helen Wang, Helen Person, Frances Wood (eds.) *Textiles from Dunhuang in UK Collections*. Donghua University Press: Shanghai (2007). 356 pp., colour illustrations throughout, concordance, glossary, bibliography, index. ISBN 978-7-81038-324-0/J.064

A detailed and scholarly catalogue of Silk Road textiles from the Stein Collection in the British Museum, British Library, and the Victoria and Albert Museum. All illustrations are in colour, with magnified details to show structural techniques. The publication is essential for anyone with a serious interest in early textiles from the Silk Road, as collected by Marc Aurel Stein at Dunhuang.

Crill, Rosemary *Chintz. Indian Textiles for the West*. London: V&A Publishing (2008). 144 pp., 160 colour illustrations, concordance, further reading. ISBN 978-1- 85177-532-3

The most recent V&A publication on textiles reintroduces the Museum's magnificent collection of Indian chintzes. Although many have been published before, this is the first time all of them are presented in excellent colour illustrations. They are introduced and discussed in detail by one of the most eminent experts in the field.

The Polish Society of Oriental Art –Cracow section (www.sztukaorientu.pl) is organising a conference on 'Oriental Fabric in Poland—Taste whether tradition?' and also in commemoration of the 325th anniversary of the Battle of Vienna. Date 4-5 December 2008 in Main Building of the National Museum in Cracow.

No conference fee. Delegates will be assisted in finding inexpensive accommodation. Contact conference organisers: Dr. Beata Biedrońska-Słota (Head of Branch of Krakow – Polish Society of Oriental Art) bslota@muz-nar.krakow.pl; bslota@poczta.fm;
Mgr. Joanna Kowalska (Polish Society of Oriental Art) joakowalska@op.pl
Prof. Dr. Jerzy Malinowski (President of the Polish Society of Oriental Art)

BLUE, on view at The Textile Museum in Washington from 4 April until 18 September 2008, celebrates the creative vision of contemporary textile artists working with natural indigo dyes and explores the history and significance of blue textiles across time and place. The exhibition is a follow-up to the 2007 Textile Museum exhibition *RED*.

The exhibition features installations by contemporary artists working in Japan, South America and the U.S. as well as 30 historic textiles from around the world – including one of the oldest pair of blue jeans still in existence. Complementing the exhibition is a film by Mary Lance, a work-in-progress of the upcoming documentary *Blue Alchemy: Stories of Indigo*, and a wide variety of educational programs.

Gallery talk, "An Embroidered Sheet for a Wedding Bed from 19th Century Uzbekistan" by Noorah Al-Gailani, curator of Islamic Civilizations. 25 June 12.30-13.00. Burrell Collection, Glasgow. Tel 0141 276 9595 for more details.

In Thailand, the **Silk Innovation Center** at Maha Sarakham University will host "The Workshop for Weaving Silk Textiles 2008" from 28-29 August in Maha Sarakham. The workshop has two goals, to celebrate Her Majesty Queen Sirikit as "The Mother of Thai Silk" and to support the development of technology and the traditions of silk weaving throughout South-east Asia and neighbouring countries.

The workshop will include presentations of papers on silk weaving, a fashion show using Thai textiles, and an exhibition of Thai textiles. The workshop organizers have issued a call for papers, submission deadline 30 July. Accommodation will be available at the Takasila Hotel in Maha Sarakham. Prospective attendees should contact Keiko Yukimatsu (yukimatsukeiko@yahoo.co.jp). Members who read Thai can also check the Center's Website at www.sic.msu.ac.th.

The Silk Innovation Center (SIC), established in July 2000, is Thailand's newest sericulture research and development facility. In addition to its active research schedule, the SIC maintains a strong commitment to interaction with the local silk industry. Local weavers and the silk community in general are encouraged to engage with the SIC and become beneficiaries of the center's practical application and research programs. The SIC plans to continue its aggressive research programs and broaden its horizons in an effort to bring the latest knowledge and technology to the local silk communities. Toward that end, the SIC has developed a working relationship and academic agreement with The Kyoto Institute of Technology in Japan.

In Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia, the **World Eco-Fibre and Textile Forum 2008** will discuss "Textiles and Fibres - The Untold Stories from 12-14 September".

The three-day forum will have nine main sessions. It will also include an International Exhibition and Bazaar of Eco-Fibres and Textiles, a Pua-Kumbu Warp Ikat Weaving Competition and Exhibition, and a gala dinner and international fashion show. For more information, e-mail eoarchi@yahoo.com or check the following website, www.societyatelier.com. Further contact de-

tails are: address: Rumah Masra, Jalan Taman Budaya; 93000 Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia; telephone: 60-82-420042; andfax: 60-82-420043.

The **11th Textile Society of America Biennial Symposium** will take place from 24-27 September 2008 at the Sheraton Waikiki Hotel, Honolulu, Hawaii. "Textiles as Cultural Expressions" will be the theme for the major international arts event being coordinated by Tom Klobe, Director Emeritus of the University of Hawaii Art Gallery; and Reiko Brandon, renowned fibre artist and former Curator of Textiles at the Honolulu Academy of Arts.

In addition to presentations of scholarly papers and panel discussions, there will be an array of textile collection tours and exhibitions that highlight the diversity of this culturally rich Pacific location.

International Symposium and Exhibition on Natural Dyes 2008: From Tradition to Innovation. 22-27 September 2008. To be held in Daegu, Korea. For more information, please contact the secretariat: Tel: +8253 742 5557. Fax =8253 746 9007. email: isend2008@dexco.co.kr. www.isend2008.com.

The Textile Society, a charity whose aim is to raise awareness of textiles and raise funds for textile student bursaries, decided last year, our 25th anniversary, that it was time for a rebrand.

Our annual textile conference "Something Old, Something New" will be held in Winchester on 5-7th September Contact Meg Andrews for further information. www.meg-andrews.com 020 7359 7678.

Conference: 'Ethnic Costumes and non-material cultural heritage preservation'. Special section of the 16th International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences. 15-23 July. Kunming, Yunnan Province. China. Information from Professor Yang Yuan. Tel 86 010 6474 2103. bwgyy@163.com. www.icaes2008.org.

Lecture: 'The Never Ending Threads -- The Journey from the Traditional to the Contemporary Weaving of Thailand' by Jarupatcha Achavasmit. Thursday, 19th June 19 at 10:30 a.m. The William Warren Library, The James H. W. Thompson Foundation, 6 Soi Kasemsan 2 Rama I Road, Wangmai, Phayathai, Bangkok.

In the past decade, there has been a new wave of contemporary textile artists and designers creating their unique woven pieces based on the traditional weaving of Thailand. Each artist/ designer has utilized different traditional weaving elements such as patterns and motifs, colours, compositions and forms as well as weaving techniques within their works. Those creations are blossoming from the nutritious soil of a long standing tradition of weaving and are wonderful examples of how tradition is able to evolve within contemporary society.

In an illustrated lecture, Khun Jarupatcha will be touching on creations of those contemporary artists/designers. She will also discuss her own experiments with the James H. W. Thompson Foundation in the "Tomyam Pladib" exhibition and her design work at Doitung, Mae Fah Luang Foundation.

For more information, please contact info@thaitextilesociety.org.

The Textile Museum Washington, **Fall Symposium**: 'Cultural Threads: Exploring the Context of Oriental Rugs and Textiles'. Friday 17th-Sunday 19 October. Washington.

18 October. 'Talking Cloth: New Studies on Indonesian Textiles'. **The Fourth R L Shep Triennial Symposium on Textiles and Dress**. Los Angeles County Museum of Art. International scholars discuss recent research and discoveries regarding the textiles of Indonesia. More information from shepsymposium@lacma.org.

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Detail of Indian chintz for the European market, Coromandel Coast, c. 1700-1740 Cotton, painted mordant and resist. Height 245 cm, width 132 cm. Ashmolean Museum EA 2008.57. See p5.

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