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ASIAN TEXTILES

MAGAZINE OF THE OXFORD ASIAN TEXTILE GROUP

NUMBER 47 OCTOBER 2010

Changing fashions in Qing China

Also in this issue: Ajraks of Sindh, Silk Road at the V&A pt 11 and much more...

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Asian Textiles now available online in full colour!

This edition of *Asian Textiles* is available on-line in full colour in a Pdf file to download, view and/or print. Access to the .pdf file is either via http://www.oatg.org.uk/magazine.htm whilst it is the current issue or always via the back issues page http://www.oatg.org.uk/magazine-backissues.html by first clicking on the cover image thumbnail.

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Cover photograph: An embroidered medallion from a mid-nineteenth century Chinese woman's robe. See article p13.

Rear cover: A Chinese boy's dragon robe. Second half of the 18th C. See article p5.

Editorial

This edition of Asian Textiles contains three very substantial articles, so I apologise in advance for the fact that there is little space in the magazine for news. Our regular contributor Azra Nafees has written another excellent article on the textiles of her home country, Pakistan. This time she has concentrated on Ajraks, the wonderful resist-dyed cottons that can be found throughout the south of the country. She explains the processes that go into producing Ajraks and also the history of these textiles.

A new contributor, Pauline Le Moigne from Paris, has written a wonderful article about changes in Chinese women's clothing during the Qing dynasty. Through a careful examination of the garments held at the Musée Guimet's Krishna Riboud Collection, she has been able to show how one style merged into another.

Another regular writer for *Asian Textiles*, Susanna Reece, continues her journey along the Silk Road, courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum course she attended. In this, the second of three articles, she writes about Ottoman, Safavid and Qajar textiles. Her final article on the course will be on China, Japan and South-East Asia and will be published next summer.

Readers who have not done so already are reminded that back issues of *Asian Textiles* are available to OATG members at our website. Recent issues can be found there in colour.

The Editor

My postcard for this issue has very few clues to its origin or who it portrays. The caption on the front simply says 'Malay bride'. As you can see, she is wearing a sumptuous headdress and what appears to be a silk bodice or dress embroidered with beads and florets. Any ideas where she comes from?

OATG EVENTS PROGRAMME

Wednesday 27 October 2010
AGM at 5.45 followed at 6.15 by a talk
Legacy in Cloth: Batak textiles of Indonesia.

Dr Sandra Niessen
Sandra is coming to Oxford to talk about her current project *Back to the Villages.* She has taken her book back to Sumatra so that weavers can regain access to their textile heritage and take pride in their ancient skills.

Wednesday 17 November 2010 at 5.45pm
Ikat Weaving in Central Asia: History and contemporary production

Dr Mary Dusenbury
Research Curator, Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas

With roots in the spectacular *ikats* of 19th century Central Asia, and a decline in the 20th century, production has been revived in parts of Uzbekistan and China. Production practices are varied and complex.

Saturday 22 January 2011 at 11am
At the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford 11am to 1pm
Japanese Textiles

Clare Pollard, Curator of Japanese Art, and Aimée Payton will be exploring some little known textiles that have been in deep storage for some years.
Please contact Fiona or Rosemary by 10 January to book a place.
Numbers will be limited.

Sunday 6 February 2011
Susanna Reece, well known to members from meetings and her articles in *Asian Textiles*, has invited members to her house in Headington, Oxford from 2.30pm. Members are encouraged to bring textiles for discussion. Susanna has some wonderful pieces and could also show creative knitted items she has made or acquired.
Please let Fiona or Rosemary know by 1 February if you would like to come

Members are encouraged to view the website www.oatg.org.uk regularly for the latest news. From time to time events are arranged at short notice as our speakers cannot always confirm their travel arrangements and availability in time for publication in Asian Textiles. We don't want you to miss out.

Talks are held at the Pauling Centre, 58 Banbury Road, Oxford.
Refreshments from 5.15pm.Visitors welcome (£2)

Programme Coordinators:
Rosemary Lee 01491 873276 rosemarylee143@btinternet.com
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Children’s garments at the Guimet Museum

A new exhibition at the Guimet Museum in Paris highlights the extraordinary world of children's clothing in Asia. Based on the Krishna Riboud Collection held at the museum - as viewed by OATG during their trip to the museum last year - it will include, tours, shows, films, lectures and activities, as well as the garments themselves.

Children's Costumes: Mirror of the grown-ups, curated by Aurelie Samuel, who is in charge of textile collections at the museum, concentrates on textiles from India, China, Japan and Korea and is itself a tribute to Mrs Riboud, who was particularly fond of these textiles, which occupied a special place in her collection. It will show some of the amazing clothes worn by children during state ceremonies, religious celebrations or in day-to-day life.

As the introduction to the exhibition says: "Often mirroring those of adults, children's costumes are so much more than mere adornments of the body, they also give of vibrant testimony of the hopes for the future their elders put in these small-beings who will be their ultimate legacy on Earth."

The exhibition will include a display of as yet unpublished photographs by Marc Riboud and showcases of contemporary art including works by Issey Miyake, photographs by Jeong Mee Yong and installations by Surekha. There are activity booklets available free of charge to children aged between 7-12.

The exhibition will also include several conferences, including a talk by Edith Parlier-Renault on *'Depictions of child-gods in Indian art'* on 6 November and a talk by Charlene Veillon on *Today's 'pop culture' in Japan: Sweet Lolita, cosplay, The cult of the schoolgirl and various child-related fashion fetishes* on 13 November.

Guided tours are available at 2pm on each day except Tuesday. Access to the exhibition costs 8 euros for adults, 6 for children. It runs from 20 October until 24 January 2011. The museum is located at 6, place d'Iena, 75116 Paris. Tel 0033 1 5652 5300. www.guimet.fr.

Above: Young girls dress (*kediyun*) from Kutch in India. 20thC.

Right: Cotton girl’s jacket with lunar symbols from the Dong minority in south-west China. 19thC

Photos courtesy of the Guimet Museum

Ajraks — printed textiles that are the pride of Sindh

Azra Nafees writes about the distinctive resist-dyed textiles of southern Pakistan—a tradition that has existed for thousands of years, but is now under threat

The people of the Sindh region in southern Pakistan, centred on the great seaport of Karachi, are world-renowned for their highly developed sense of colour combination and for the women's bright coloured dresses. Ajrak resist-dyed textiles have always been one of the most fascinating and captivating Sindhi handicrafts. They are mentioned in the Bible and it is said that when Christ was born he was wrapped in a cloth called "*Sindon*". It is thought that this kind of cloth has being exported for millennia from Sindh, which even more than 2,000 years ago had trade relations with other countries in the Middle East and Asia.

One of the earliest representations of an Ajrak cloth can be seen on a small statue of the King Priest of the Mohenjo-Daro civilisation in the Indus Valley, which dates from around 4,000 years ago. It shows him clothed in a printed textile with a print like that of the Kakar Block of the Ajrak. What is significant is the trefoil pattern etched on his garment interspersed with small circles, the interiors of which were filled with a red pigment.

Excavations elsewhere in the Old World in Mesopotamia and Egypt have also yielded similar patterns on various objects, most notably on the royal couch of Tutankhamen. This symbol

Many patterns used on Ajraks are ancient, with some dating back more than 2000 years

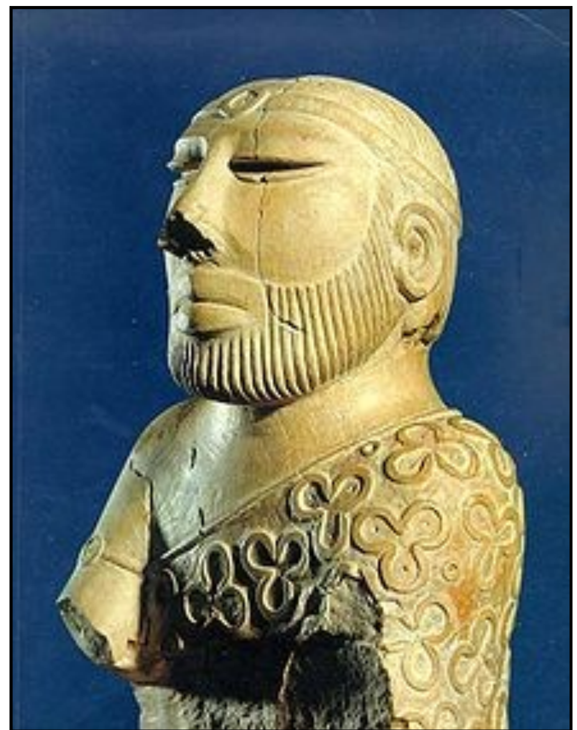
illustrates what is now believed to depict the fusion of the three sun-disks of the gods of the sun, water and the earth. Similar trefoil geometry is evident on many of the recent Ajrak prints.

(*Asian Textiles* readers may know that the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford has an incomparable collection of Indian resist-dyed textiles assembled by Professor P E Newberry and donated to the Museum in 1946. The 1225 pieces in the collection, many of them fragments and dating from as early as the 13th Century, were imported from India into Egypt, which is where Newberry collected them. They can be divided into three groups – those dyed blue with indigo, those dyed red with madder or morinda root and those which combine both red and blue. See Dr Ruth Barnes' paper: *Indian Resist-Dyed Textiles: The Newberry Collection*, The Ashmolean, No 22, 1992 – Ed.).

The level of geometry on textiles results from the usage of woodblock printing, in which the dyes are transferred from geometric shapes etched onto the carved wooden blocks by pressing them hard onto the fabric. It is believed that this technique was first used in ancient China – where in a modified form it was also used for printing books - and then transferred, via the silk route to Egypt.

On its way through the populous regions of the Indus Valley in what is now Pakistan, this technique of fabric printing was adopted at the ancient city of Mohenjo-daro. This ancient city was one of the largest city-settlements of the Indus Valley Civilization – sometimes known as the Harappa civilisation – and is situated in the Larkana District of Sindh in modern-day Pakistan. Built around 2600 BCE, the city was one of the early urban settlements in the world, existing at the same time as the civilizations of ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Crete.

The tradition still prevails centuries later and people still use the same methods of production that were used in the earlier days to create an Ajrak cloth. The garment has become an essential part of Sindhi culture and the apparel of a Sindhi person. Men use it as a turban, a cummerbund or they wind it around the shoulders.



A 4,000 year-old statue of a Mohenjo-daro king showing him wearing what appears to be a printed textile which is likely to be based on an Ajrak technique

Women use it as a *dupatta* or a shawl - and sometimes as a makeshift swing for children. Ajraks are usually about 2.5 to 3 metres long, patterned in intense colours, predominantly rich crimson or a deep

indigo, with some white and black used sparingly to give definition to the geometric symmetry in design.
Ajrak is an integral part of Sindhi culture. Its usage is evident at all levels of society, and the cloth is held in high esteem, with the utmost respect given to it. According to Sindhi traditions Ajrak is also presented as a gift of hospitality to guests and is worn on festive occasions such as weddings.

Tools

Wooden Blocks

The blocks are hand carved from the wood of *Acacia Arabica* trees. Several different blocks are used to give the characteristic repeated pat-

terning. Making the blocks is a considerable challenge since the pattern has to synchronize perfectly with the whole of the Ajrak as well as cover various areas against dye. Block makers (*orporegars*) use the simplest of tools, and carve blocks in pairs that can register an exact inverted image on the other side.

From the seasoned wood, a block is cut to the required size and sanded on a stone to get a level plane surface which is then checked out by the edge of a steel ruler.

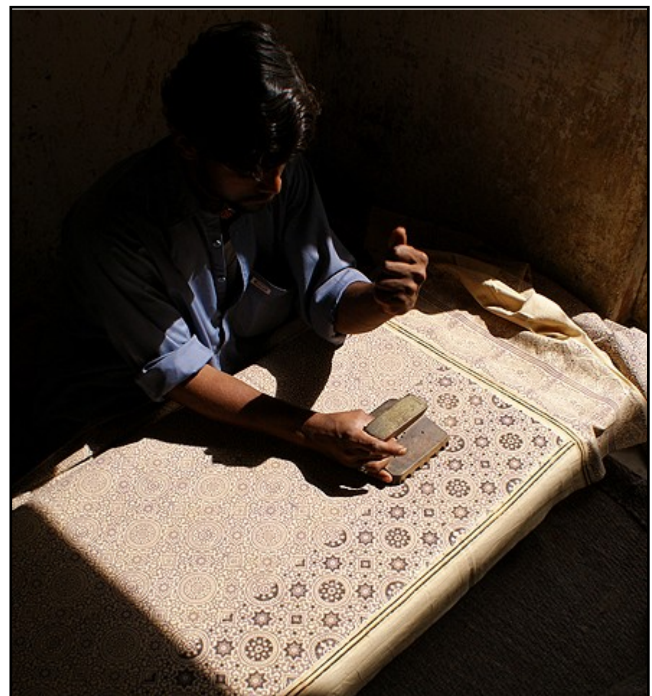
The surface of the block is dipped in water and then in *wari* (dry, powdered clay) and rubbed against *rohi* (granite). With the friction, a whitish layer is formed on the surface of the block. A base line is drawn with the help of a steel ruler; a compass is then used to verify right angles so that a square is constructed accurately.

Diagonals are marked and the square is quartered and then further divided into sixteenths. The pattern, which has previously been

drawn onto paper, is transferred by etching fine lines on the surface of the block.

Other Tools

A wooden table is used by the blockmakers to place the fabric for printing. It has around 40-50 layers of fabric on it so that it becomes easy for the main fabric to absorb color when it is printed. Babul wood is used for the making of the table as it is cheap. A wooden *jaali* (net) is used in a wooden container which has the resist paste in it. It helps the thick layer of fabric to float over the paste so that the block picks up appropriate amounts of colour. A needle is used to carve the blocks. The thickness of the tip of the needle depends on the amount of intricacy required in the design.



Printer using a traditional block pattern carefully applies dye to the cotton.

Colours
The traditional craft of Ajrak uses only natural vegetable dyes. The usual colours of the craft are red, yellow, blue and black. However green and some other secondary colours are also used nowadays. They are generally made by mixing the basic colours. Being made from all natural materials the dyes are not poisonous, unlike the chemical dyes used in more recent times, which although much cheaper, are very harmful to the health of the workers.

Making of Ajrak
The authentic Ajrak is printed on both sides by a method of printing called resist printing. The printing is done by hand with the hand-carved wooden blocks. Several different blocks are used to give the characteristic repeated patterning. Making the blocks is a considerable challenge since the pattern has to synchronize perfectly with the whole of the Ajrak as well as cover various areas against dye.

The process by which the Ajrak is made is considered intuitive to the Ajrak makers. It is part of the existence of the craftsman and therefore not a 'job' but a form of life. When worn and washed, the colours of the Ajrak become more brilliant and luminous. This is the most tedious and time consuming process and very few craftsmen today go through all the stages.

Preparation
The fabric used is usually *latha* (pure cotton/ calico). Forty pieces of five-metre lengths are torn to make one lot.

The pieces are washed in the river or a pond. The cloth is also soaked in a solution of sodium bicarbonate and water.

The fabric is steamed on a special mud stove called a *khumbh* for about 16 hours to remove the impurities. (Chemical finishing) and then washed again in the river and beaten to dislodge the impurities.

Camel dung is soaked in water and the fabric is soaked in it to make the fabric soft. It also acts as a bleaching agent (alkaline) and helps in the printing of the fabric.

The fabric is then soaked in a solution of a special oil and sodium bicarbonate. This is quite a complicated procedure and takes sev-

eral days. The treatment is alternated and there are several steps involved in it. By the end, the oil is completely impregnated into the fibre. This is what gives the suppleness to the Ajrak as well as making it virtually indestructible.

The next stage prepares the fabric for the printing. *Gurrh* (molasses), dried lemons, castor oil, *Sakun* (tamarisk) and water are used to make dough. This dough is mixed in a big vessel with water and the cloth is soaked in it.

Above: washing dyed cloths to remove gums, alum and dung.

Below: resist-dyeing the cloths

Printing

1.Gum and lime is mixed with alizarine for *Kiryana* (printing of the white outlines). Blocks are soaked in the solution (brown) and the white outlines are printed over. This will be washed later to give the white outlines.

2. *Kut*: Printing of the black areas: This uses gum, iron sulphate, Fullers earth and water to make the black outlines.

3. The fabric on which *Kut* and *Kiryana* have been printed are now reprinted with the *Kiryana* mixture. This ensures that when the cloth is soaked in dye these areas will remain sparkling white or black and the colour will not dye these areas.

4. The next step is printing over the red areas. Amongst the ingredients used is *Ata* (wheat flour), *Phitkari* (alum), *Gurrh* (molasses) and *Saunf* (fennel). The areas to be dyed red are printed and while still wet are dusted with ground cow dung or rice husk to protect against the indigo dye to be printed later.

5. Indigo, *Chuna* (lime), soda and *Gurrh* (molasses) are used to dye the indigo parts of the Ajrak.

6. The dyed and dried Ajrak is taken to the river to be washed. The Ajrak is submerged in water to dislodge the gums, alums and dung.

7. The Ajrak is then dyed with red dye which dyes the parts left over. Care is taken that the white areas are not dyed inadvertently.

8. The Ajrak is treated with camel dung and water to brighten the whites and make the colours brilliant.

9. The Ajraks are again washed in soda water and in the river they are beaten to remove the dung.

After drying they are ready for *meena.*

10. All the areas except the ones dyed in indigo are covered by block printing with a mixture of alum, gum and wheat flour. The resist print is then dusted with dry powdered dung to dry it.

11. The Ajrak is again dyed in indigo (natural or chemical).

12. The Ajraks are washed in soda and water with bleaching powder to give a sparkle to the colours. Ajraks are spread on river banks for quick drying. Viola! Finally the Ajrak is ready.

Variation in Designs

Many other processes of Ajrak are variations on the same theme except that some short-cuts or substitution method is used. In the old days, only natural vegetable dyes were used for the Ajrak. Now, chemical dyes have been substituted, of course resulting in a variety of colours. Natural in-

Top: typical Ajrak pattern resist-dyed onto cotton.

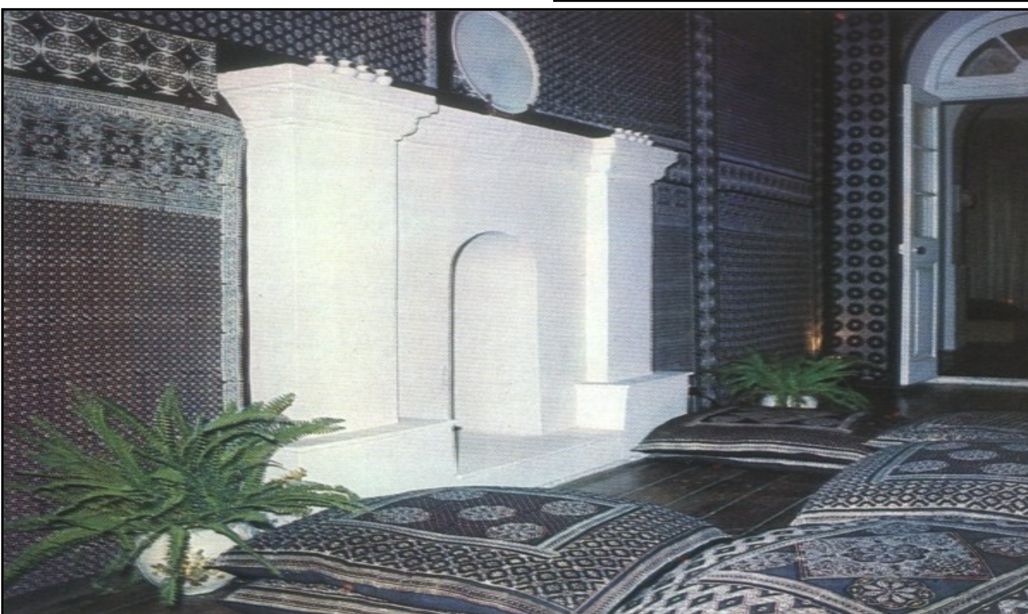
Left: Bedspreads using traditional Ajrak patterns

digo is grown in Pakistan and is cheaper; therefore it is still used by some craftsmen.

Nowadays, beside the traditional Ajrak shawls and headgears, Ajrak prints have taken many other dimensions and are stretched over a long list of products which include bedspreads, floor and couch cushion covers, pillow cases, quilt covers, ready to wear outfits and last but not the least, wall panels!

The craft is an art in decline. Profit margins are low since the craftsmen are dependent on wholesalers who keep large margins and pay very low prices for the Ajraks. The cost of blocks is high in relation to the margins of the Ajrak, making new investment in blocks difficult. Of course, no credit facilities are available to the craftsmen. As a result, the younger generations are being weaned away from the traditional source of livelihood. The original Ajrak is disappearing; modern, quicker printing methods of copying the original patterns are fulfilling local demand.

The author of this article, Azra Nafees, hails from Dir in Pakistan and is a teacher trainer by profession. She holds a Masters Degree in Economics, English and Education from the University of Peshawar. She also edits the monthly online magazine SAHAR The Voice of Pashtuns (http://khyberwatch.com/Sahar/).



Examples of Ajrak fabrics being used for a wide variety of different purposes—bedspreads, traditional garments, wall coverings and cushions.

Merging styles in Chinese women’s dress

Pauline Le Moigne discusses changes in Chinese dress styles during the Qing dynasty and shows how differences gradually fuse into each other

The suggestion that Chinese dress tradition is immutable - once axiometric - has long been cast aside(1). Joint studies of the costumes in museums, archaeological, textual and pictorial sources have shown the existence of very significant changes in clothing. Some of these major changes were made during dynastic successions - such as the abandonment of horsemen’s tailored clothes and the adoption of loose-fitting, expensive silk cuts with the advent of the Ming (1378-1644) (2). But other changes have happened rapidly in the course of a single dynasty.

A study of women's semi-formal and informal garments under the Qing (1644-1911) dynasty will allow us to cast a more definite light on the appearance of new styles that indicate important stylistic changes.

One of the most striking developments of the Chinese female wardrobe lies in the gradual fusion of the Han and Manchu clothing traditions. Indeed, at the beginning of the dynasty, the differences between women’s clothes among these two minorities were very apparent, after which they gradually faded.

Through mutual aesthetic influences and formal exchanges, the length of jackets worn by Han women increased while the sleeves of jackets worn by the Manchu women were made wider. In fact, details were copied from one another to such an extent that, by the late Qing period, the distinctions had become entirely blurred (3).

Beside the extensive binary dynamic which marks the whole period, other small changes, both decorative and structural, attest to a creative renewal and evolution of informal women's apparel, particularly during the late Qing era (1821-1911).

Thus, while airy and naturalistic compositions of flowers and rocks remain favoured decorations in jackets until the mid-nineteenth century(4), others that are denser and heavy with auspicious symbols, soon take their place. Sleevebands - bands of embroidered fabrics sewn onto the cuff of the sleeves - could be purchased separately in order to replace the ones originally sewn on the garment when they became outdated or worn out(5).

Finally, the emergence, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, of small straight collars on jackets, coats and dresses is further evidence of formal renewal(6). In light of the rich study of Antonia Finnane, these short-term changes can be regarded as an expression of a true sense of fashion(7). In her book, she quotes an author who pointed out, in the 1850s, rapid renewal of the taste of women: “A garment made one year (…) would be abandoned in the wardrobe the next.”

The numerous works which have dealt with the topic of clothing under the Qing dynasty brought a true understanding and accurate knowledge of the female wardrobe of the time. Types of existing garments – such as skirts, coats, dresses, waistcoats – have been defined according to formal criteria. So also have certain characteristics that define the garments as belonging to a particu-

lar tradition or ethnicity, such as the Han or Manchu. These categories have been further refined by classifying the garments in terms of their purpose and the occasions for which they were worn. However, these classifications depict a static picture of women's semi-formal and informal wear and must be put in perspective to account for the changes those clothes have gone through.

The purpose of this paper is to emphasize the dynamics and creativity that can be found in these women's clothes. Our study will focus on three jackets from the collection of Krishna Riboud kept at the Musée Guimet in Paris. These three high quality garments are from the mid-nineteenth century and belonged to women of the middle or upper class. They would have been worn on special occasions by the former and on a daily basis by the latter. Through these three original examples, we will explain three different forms of change: the renewal in decorations themes, the development of decorative borders and the reusing or revising of the garment.

One form of change the first jacket (see below) bears witness to is the profound renewal of embroidery themes. Embroidery is one of the most used decorative techniques in the ornamentation of women's clothing from the late Qing period. Its patterns derive from the large repertoire of auspicious symbols found in Chinese culture. Even if some of these symbols - such as butterflies, flowers, bats - come up quite often, this does not show any ornamental immutability.

The iconography of embroidery has been enriched with new themes over the years. For example, the red satin jacket MA 9170 is embroidered with eight medallions containing figurative scene from the famous 18th century novel, written in vernacular language, *The Dream of the Red Chamber*(8).

The book recounts the history of the Jia family at the times of the Qing dynasty, through the actions and torments of the main character, Jia Baoyu, who is in love with his cousin Lin Daiyu, a fragile and sensitive woman, who loves him back. However, he is promised to another of his cousins, Xue Baochai. In the end, he marries Xue Baochai without knowing her real identity

Red satin jacket MA 9170 embroidered with eight medallions illustrating an 18thC novel

Detail of red satin jacket MA 9170 medallion

and will soon join the heartbroken Lin Daiyu in death. The scenes illustrated on the medallions are clearly identifiable and refer to chapters from the book.

Let us take one medallion as an example. The scene takes place in a garden. The set is defined by two architectural elements, a pavilion and a small bridge, and wrapped around by a water pond on which float lotus leaves, blooming trees and strangely-shaped stones. A young woman is standing on the bridge. Thin, she is lavishly dressed and carries a garden hoe over her shoulder, from which hangs a small cloth bag. A young man is standing near the water pond, holding a scroll in his hand. This embroidered picture specifically illustrates a passage from chapter 23 (9):

[…] Baoyu set off for Drenched Blossoms Weir with the volumes of Western Chamber under his arm, and sitting down on a rock underneath the peach-tree which grew there beside the bridge, he took up the first volume and began, very attentively, to read the play. He had just reach the line "The red flowers in their hosts are falling" when a little gust of wind blew over and a shower of petals suddenly rained down from the tree above, covering his clothes, his book and all the ground about him. He did not like to shake them off for the fear they got trodden underfoot, so collecting as many of them as he could in the lap of his gown, he carried them to the water's edge and shook them in. […] When he got back he found that a lot more of them had fallen while he was away. As he hesitated, a voice behind him said,

"What are you doing here?"

He looked round and saw that it was Daiyu. She was carrying a garden hoe with a muslin bag hanging from the end of it on her shoulder and a garden broom in her hand.

"You've come just at the right moment" said Bayu smiling at her. "Here, sweep these petals up and tip them in the water for me! [...]"
" It isn't a good idea to tip them in the water" said Daiyu [...] "In that corner over there, I've got a grave for the flowers, and what I'm doing now is sweeping them up and putting them in this silk bag to bury them there, so that they can gradually turn back into earth. [...]" (10).

We could also mention another medallion, depicting a young woman seated in a pavilion, playing a lute. A young man stands before her, curious. This composition was created by combining two parts of chapter 86: one in which Lin Daiyu explains to Jia Baoyu the treatise on lute-playing that she is reading and another, in which she plays her instrument.(11).

The presence of illustrations from *Dream of the Red Chamber*, a work from the late eighteenth century, on a garment created in the following century is a novelty in itself. Popular illustrations from this same book, such as those by Xu Baozhan (1810 -?) or Gaiqi (1773 -?) (12), have certainly helped disseminate such scenes and their reproduction on textiles. The depiction on other garments, of actors wearing makeup(13) or scenes from novels like *The Peony Pavilion* reflects the permeability of embroidered designs to new sources of inspiration from theatre and literature.

The second jacket in our study, MA 10143 (see below), gives an example of a different type of evolution: the appearance and spread of applied edgings. Its decorations are not embroidered like they were on the previous one, but made of decorative borders - an expression used to qualify all the elements sewn on the edges of the clothes made from a different material to the one used for the main part of the garment. They can be made of a simple bias-cut binding or of a more complex set, with additional bands of fabric (plain or wearing adornments) and ribbons.

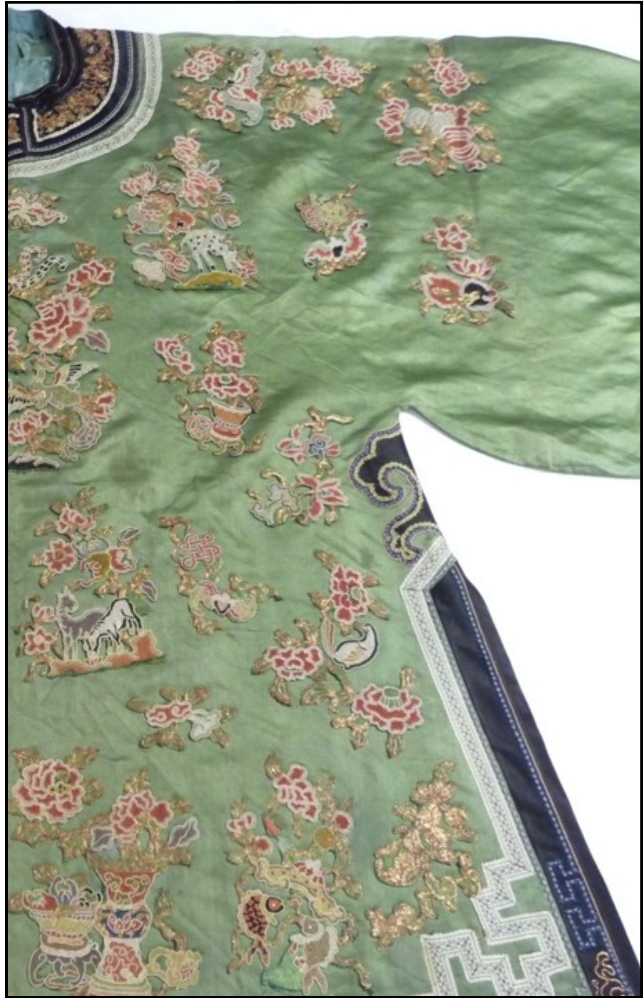
Applied edgings appeared on this type of women's clothing during the late eighteenth century. At the time, they simply consisted of a thin black bias-cut binding. But the taste for trimmings gradually grew and, around the mid-nineteenth century, blossomed into a true fashion. They started to adorn all types of clothing, cover all available areas of the fabric and to become heavily enriched with rich embroidered bands and colourful ribbons.

Jacket MA 10143 showing applied edgings

During the reign of Emperor Xianfeng (1850-1861) (14), they are subject to such a frenzy that they sometimes occupy the majority of the available area of a garment, the original fabric being visible only on a small part of the jackets. This type of heavily decorated jacket became called "hearts of satin" (15).

The facings that adorn the MA 10143 jacket are quite extensive. Not only are they deployed largely on the garment itself - around the collar, along the side closure, the hem and side slits - but also on the extremities of the sleeves. However, their composition is complex, containing no fewer than two bias-cut black satin edges, a band of embroidered white satin and four different ribbons. The dissimilarity between the ribbons and the embroidered bands facings of the neckline, hemline and cuffs brings further refinement of the piece.

In total, 14 ribbons, all of different sizes, colours and patterns, were applied to this jacket. These are ribbons in figured tabby with flushing warp pattern. Their patterns, made during the weaving process,



Jacket MA 8996 shows how embroideries were cut from old jackets and re-used on a new garment

were crafted using floats of supplementary warps. In order to follow the curve of the collar and scrolls (*ruyi yuntou*) on the top side of the lateral slits, the ribbons are supported by the seam. In other words, the stitches, more or less tight, guide each ribbon and attach it to attain the desired shape.

One factor favouring the rise of the applied edgings fashion was the increase in the production of silk ribbons. This was helped by the introduction of Jacquard mechanical looms in China in the 1840s(16). Ribbons remained expensive and were thus still reserved to the upper class(17). But despite their price, these items were extremely popular at the time because it was the latest fad in fashion:

"Ribbons give the fashionable woman her flourish, […] they are the main influence for the leading taste in clothing and the latest fancies in fashion". It is in these precise and definitive terms that Isidore Hedde (1801-1880) described the situation in 1845. A ribbon manufacturer in St. Etienne, between1843 and 1846 in Guangzhou and Jiangnan he collected samples of textiles and ribbons representing the tastes of Chinese customers(18).

The development of the applied edging on the MA 10143 jacket is an interesting account of the changes experienced by women's apparel during the late Qing dynasty. This feature, found on many other clothes, attests to a change in taste over time: it is a genuine fashion.

The last jacket in our study, MA 8996, reflects a practice that reveals the dynamic nature of clothing: re-employment. This jacket was actually crafted from embroideries taken from another garment, either worn-out or outdated. The embroidered patterns were cut out and then arranged and sewn on the jacket where decorative borders had already been applied. The fabric of the old garment, a green satin with a shade close to that of the jacket, is still visible on the perimeter of the embroidered patterns.

The relative lack of care with which some parts were cut and then sewn on the new jacket suggests that this work was not done by professionals but rather in a domestic context. Several reasons may explain this reuse. From a financial standpoint, embroideries are a technical work of quality that represents an obvious cost, in terms of time spent as well as of monetary investment.

The decor is embroidered in knot stitches and couched stitches. Knot stitch embroidery gives a more textured feeling to the pattern, thanks to the juxtaposition of dozens of little needle-shaped stitches(19). The couched stitches are here used to apply a yarn made of a fine metal foil wrapped around a silk core. The gold metal wrapped thread is couched, meaning that it is held in position on the fabric using a very thin yarn.

From an aesthetic point of view, the re-employment of these ancient embroideries has helped create a new garment fitted to the tastes of the time with decorative borders (bias-cut edge,

Close-up of jacket MA 8996 showing the embroideries taken from an older jacket

embroidered bands and ribbons).

A garment is not immutable or set in stone. The materials used to craft it allow a large number of transformations. During its period of use, a garment could be modified to follow changes in clothing tastes, for the presence or absence of small decorative details could make it either trendy or already outdated(20).

In conclusion, these three jackets illustrate three unique aspects of the evolution of women's apparel, informal and semi-formal, during the late Qing era. Whether the introduction of new themes, the enthusiasm for the application of ribbons or the making of a new garment by reusing old materials, all testify to the existence of a creative dynamism in the clothing area. The study of these new trends allows us to measure the social and aesthetic significance of the garment.

The garment is a predominant social marker. In the middle and upper classes where women wore such clothes, new themes and forms in patterns served as additional social distinctions. Considered in this light, figurative scenes from literary works demonstrate a certain level of culture, or at least access to it, and can therefore be regarded as a sign of belonging to an educated elite. Similarly, rich ornamentation with many ribbons shows affluence, which can be interpreted as a sign of belonging to a wealthy class.

In addition, a garment is the testimony of the aesthetic taste of a given era. Examining, for example, informal women's clothing, we are struck by the abundance in patterns and colours. The decorative discourse is not a simple accumulation, but aims to create bold visual associations that structure, rhythm and harmonize the garment. This idea of combining colours and playing on the contrasts is a definite feature of women's fashion in the late Qing era and it is not limited to the decor of a piece of clothing but extends itself to the development of a complete outfit.

The clothes were worn one above the other and the aesthetic trend was to reveal simultaneously all the layers of clothing. So, women played with the different lengths of the clothes or used side slits to reveal the lower garment. Imagine, for example, the sleeves and bottom of a long jacket emerging from a small and short sleeveless waistcoat, a skirt longer than another…. (21)

Thinking about the fact that each of these clothes was of different colours and patterns (22), we can take the measure of the tremendous colourful painting - loaded with shapes and colours, sometimes confusing but nevertheless harmonious - that the outfits worn by women in the late Qing era offered to the eye of the beholder. The symphony of colours created by the clever play of superimposition of these garments found another echo in the additional patterns, colours and shapes introduced by accessories, such as bags, shoes and jewellery, that complemented these elegant and refined ladies' outfits.

Pauline Le Moigne

Pauline Le Moigne is an independent scholar studying chinese textiles. This year she worked at the textiles section at the Musée Guimet in Paris and collaborated with Aurélie Samuel on the exhibition "*Children's costumes, Mirror of the grown-ups* :" (See p5 for details).

Footnotes

1 On this topic, see Antonia Finanne, *Changing Clothes in China* : *Fashion, History, Nation*, Hurst & Company, London, 2007.
2 This change in clothing is the consequence of a political decision, in order for the new dynasty to assert itself, emphasizing a return to traditions and to a Han government after the foreign occupation of the Yuan dynasty.
3 Bao, Ming-xin, *jindai zhongguo nüzhuang shilu, (Chinese lady's daily wear in Late Qing Dynasty and early Republic period*) , donghua daxue chubanshi, 2004, Shanghai, p 186.
4 Vollmer, John, E., AEDTA, *Chinese costumes accessories: 17th-20th century*. Plate 21
5 Wilson, Verity, *Chinese Dress*, the Victoria & Albert Museum, 1986, p.61
6 Wilson, Verity, *Chinese Dress*, p. 49
7 Finnane, Antonia, *Changing Clothes in China*. Hurst & Company, London, 2007. See Introduction and Chapter 3. "Fashion (..) is related to taste, consumption and urbanization. It entails short-term vicissitudes in vestimentary choices,and indicates the presence in particular societies of dynamic relationships between producers and consumers." p. 43
8 The first 80 chapters were written by Cao Xueqin (circa 1715-circa 1763), while the next 40 were added by Gao E. It was published in 1791, under the title « The Dream of the Red Chamber », also known under its original title, « The Story of the Stone ».
9 Cao Xueqin, *The story of the Stone*,Volume 1 "The golden days", Chapter 23, Penguin Classics, 1973
10 Cao Xueqin, *The story of the Stone*, Volume 1 "The golden days", translated by David Hawkes, Penguin Classics, 1973, Chapter 23, p.462-463.
11 Cao Xueqin, *The story of the Stone*, Volume 4 "The debt of tears", translated by John Minford, Penguin Classics, 1982, Chapter 86 p.151-157.
12 ZHOU, Wei-ping, Journal of Zhejiang Ocean University, 2008-02, *On Gaiqi's Illustrations of a Dream of the Red Mansions*
13 Crick, Monique, *Sous la griffe du dragon* : *costumes de la cour de la dynastie des Qing*.Collections Baur. p.114.
14 SUN, Yan-zhen, Qingdai nuxing fushi wenhua yanjiu, shanghai guji chubanshi, Shanghai, 2008, p.52
15Bao, Ming-xin, 2004, Introduction. The Chinese expression to designate those satin jackets is « 缎心襖子 » *duanxin aozi*.
16 Vollmer, John, *Clothed to Rule the Universe*, p.51.
17 Zhou Xibao, 中国古代服饰史, p 485. « *History of Ancient Chinese Costume* ».
18 This campaign was organized as part of the commercial mission in the East Asia set up by the St Etienne Chamber of Commerce between 1843 and 1846
19 In Mandarin, this stitch is called *seed stitch* « 打籽针 "*dazizhen*". Once the needle has left the fabric, the yarn is wrapped around it before putting it back into the cloth, almost at the exact same place it had left it, thus creating a knot.
20 *Der goldene Faden, Bestandskatalog der Textilien aus China, Korea und Japan im Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst Köln*, Wienand Verlag, 2003, p. 86. The wedding jacket cat #76 also illustrates the practice of reusing; embroideries from the 18th century were added to this garment created during the Xianfeng era (1850-1865)
21 Bao Ming-xin, 2004, p.192
22 The matching of colours in outfits only spread to China in the early 20th Century under western influence.

Ottomans, Safavids and Qajars

In this second of three articles about her "virtual" journey along the Silk Road at the V&A last year, Susanna Reece concentrates on Turkey, Central Asia and Iran.

Although the V&A does not have a huge collection of Central Asian pieces, I was pleased that the lecture series included this part of the world as it is the one that first sparked my interest in Asian textiles, including visiting the Ashmolean exhibition about Robert Shaw and the Great Game back in 1994.

Our guide to the textile traditions of this region was Jennifer Wearden, an engaging and entertaining speaker who has now retired as curator in the Department of Furniture, Textiles and Fashion at the V&A to pursue other interests. However, she remains an Honorary Research Fellow and her book on 19th century Iranian textiles is due to be published this autumn.

Jennifer began with two talks on textiles of the Ottoman Empire, looking first at the 16th to the 18th centuries and then the 18th to early 20th centuries. The main V&A collection of these textiles is in the Jameel Gallery 42.

By the end of the 17th century the Ottoman empire consisted of 25 million people and Istanbul had a population of 700,000, larger than that of Paris or London. The Ottoman emperors oversaw a western movement from Central Asia into Anatolia, and twice reached Vienna, although were defeated both times. However, the period from the 1680s to the 1920s was one of slow decline. During this period, textiles formed an important part of both the Ottoman culture and its trade, and in the 1780s there developed a considerable fashion and demand for "Turquerie" in the royal houses and salons of Europe.

Typical Ottoman textile techniques include appliqué which was used for tenting and enclosures and as floor coverings. It was made by men out of cotton, although Italian velvet was also used for more luxurious items. Another trademark textile technique was embroidery using red, blue, white and green, with black outlines and the occasional use of yellow. Typical motifs used were tulips, rosebuds, carnations, bluebells and hyacinths and there is an overlap with ceramic and tile motifs.

An Ottoman turban cover from the V&A collection

Examples can be seen in the Topkapi Palace, Santa Sophia and the Blue Mosque, all in Istanbul. Their use shows the Byzantine inheritance of the Ottomans, as well as Islamic influence. Embroidered pieces were often quite large and used as covers or as wall hangings. Tiled or mosaic walls would be cold in winter and textile hangings provided warmth. The use of cross-over designs between tiles and textiles enabled them to match the décor.

The export trade was highly valued and there was a respect for the importance of luxury fabrics. Italian, Spanish and French lace, silks and velvet were used. Importers included the Russian Orthodox Church and Henry VIII,

who is shown in one portrait standing on a Turkish carpet, symbolising his power. (Such carpets were used as table coverings and were used increasingly throughout the 18th century, dominating the market before Persia took over in the 19th century.) The trade was fluid and textiles were valuable and transportable goods that could be used as a form of currency. One example is Turban covers, which were made out of square cloth with a circular design and used as gift wrappers.

Embroidered Ottoman towel from the V&A

Generally no adjustment was made for scale or size of pattern or garment. It was also rare to match fabric across seams. Kaftans were made in a variety of patterns, for example red or white silk triangles and tiger stripes or the *chintomani* symbol (consisting of three spots which are traditionally associated with Tamerlane, although Jennifer warned us to treat this with caution).

Stylised flowers were also used and the V&A has some examples of geometric patterns, although these are rare. They include examples of ojival (pointed) lattice and parallel wavy stems. Materials used include silk, velvet and damask. As noted above, the 1780s fashion for all things Ottoman spread through Western Europe and portraits show women wearing wide baggy trousers and turbans.

The 18th century saw changes in Ottoman textiles, with new designs, techniques and colours. Fewer woven textiles survive from this period, although it is not known why: it may reflect collections policies or something else. A portrait of a women's room in the Topkapi Palace shows "leisured" ladies spinning and doing embroidery. An embroidered floor cloth under a circular table used for eating is about four feet across and has unusual colouring – blue and red with a dark background. This suggests an influence from the Caucasus. Narrow strips were seamed together and the embroidery added after assembly.

Another picture, of a *hammam* shows the use of embroidery to denote status. In the 1840s and 50s Turkish looped/piled towels were very fashionable and had embroidered additions. Counted thread embroidery was also used. At the same time there is some continuity in the use of motifs: a barber's robe of embroidered linen has the seventeenth century ojival lattice. This also appears on kerchiefs, trouser panels and "pajama" sashes used as a drawstring. Another barber's robe uses different colours and patterns, turquoise and floral motifs done in tambour work.

Bright garish colours are used and there is evidence of ideas moving out from the towns into rural areas. Bespoke garments were commissioned and examples include garters from Jerusalem and a prayer mat that may have been (also) used as a wall-hanging. An embroidered leather wallet with the date 1705 seems to have been sold as a souvenir. There is an increasing complexity in textiles of this period, with evidence of lots of cross-over influences of cultures and traditions.

A cotton shirt in the Topkapi Palace has Talismanic emblems embroidered on it and a portrait of Lord Byron shows him wearing Turkish dress. Ottoman connections have been identified between Albania, Algeria, Tunisia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia, Croatia and Hungary as well as Egypt, Palestine and Syria.

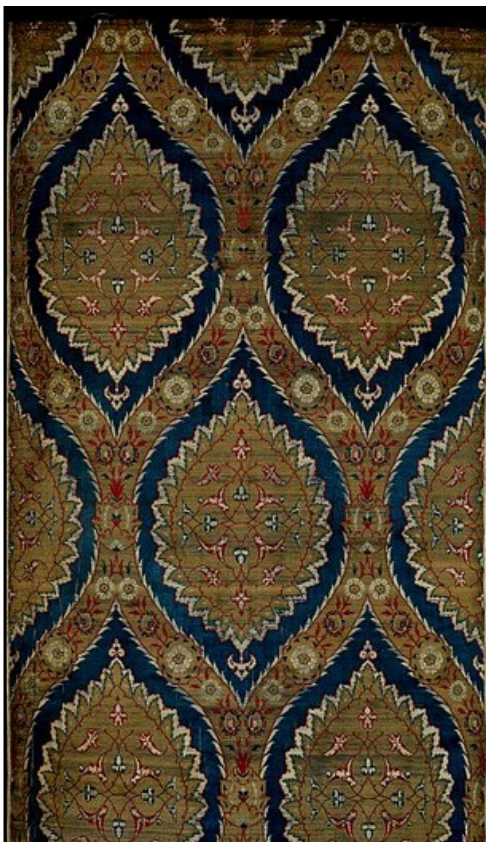
During the 19th century, however, Ottoman influence was fading and there was increased Europeanisation. This had an influence on textile techniques. *Oya* (Gk. *Bibila*) needle lace is seen and one example is a purse with a lion and a unicorn. Textiles also declined in quality and some 19th century examples are fading sooner than older pieces due to poorer dye quality. In the early 20th century there is evidence of Ottoman influence on textile techniques being used in Egypt. The *Kiswa*, a sacred cloth for covering the Ka'aba in Mecca which is changed each year, was manufac-

Sassanid silk twill textile of a *simurgh* in a beaded surround, 6-7th century

tured in Cairo and taken on an annual procession of new textiles for use during the Haj. This was a gift of the Ottoman Sultan and heavy gold embroidery was couched into yellow cotton padding. The cloth was cut up and given to Muslim dignitaries at the end of the festival.

The British Museum has an interesting collection of examples of 1920s and 1930s women's garments from Syria and Palestine using embroidery and appliqué techniques and ikat. These are in bright colours with reversible linings and represent the traditional dress around the coastal areas along the Red Sea which were part of the Ottoman Empire. This ubiquitous influence faded after the last Sultan was deposed in 1924.

In her second week Jennifer concentrated on Iranian and Central Asian textiles, looking first at Safavid Iran in the 16th-18th centuries and then Central Asia and Qajar Iran in the 19th.



Late 16th century Turkish woven silk. Woven in the lampas style

Although the Silk Road is a 19th century term, there is evidence of trade along this route from the 2nd century BC. Both caravan and sea routes were established, the later eventually becoming much more important as maritime trade developed. In medieval Iran and Iraq there is evidence of Yemen ikat dating from the 10th century, and silk with the "lion-strangler" and *Simurgh* or "*senmurv*" motifs, both examples of Sassanian textile art.

A common feature is the use of these motifs in a roundel: one example in Venetian silk had a roundel with a quatrefoil shape in between. A 14th century tapestry in woven silk had gilded leather strips, which Jennifer suggested showed a Chinese influence.

Safavid Iran covers the period from 1501/2 to 1722, the name deriving from the ruling dynasty whose influence spread across what we might term wider Iran, covering the Caucasus, Central Asia, Afghanistan and Iraq, much of which is geographically desert. Influences from all of these regions can be seen in

Safavid velvet silk hanging dating from late 16th-early 17th century Iran showing two men in a flower-strewn garden. From the V&A Collection

the textiles from this period and there is also evidence of Safavid influence on Moghul art. As the Safavids were Shia Muslims, the textiles include human figures, although there are more floral patterns in the 17th and 18th centuries.

The textiles also include literary references, for example the martyrdom of St Shushanik, or Susanna, the oldest tale in Georgian literature, which tells the story of a 5th century Armenian Princess who refused to renounce her Christian faith and was murdered by her Georgian husband who had converted to Zoroastrianism under Persian influence. These textiles were also known as "prisoner silks".

Safavid textile techniques show a complexity of weave and a high level of design skill. A two-person draw loom was used in professional workshops. Rich textiles were also used and there are many examples of voided velvet, a slow, complex and expensive technique that used wires to cut the pile.

The Safavid empire was weakening by the beginning of the 18th century and its territory shrank; however, it left a rich inheritance of buildings and traditions and these were re-used under the Qajar dynasty (1796 to 1925) which harked back to the past and developed no distinctive style of its own. Jennifer's new book will concentrate on this period, about which very little has been written. There is a strong use of lattice techniques, with birds, especially hoopoes, being significant. There is also the possibility of an influence from Chinese cloud bands, which were the subject of a recent OATG talk. The use of the Paisley motif in shawls again suggests an Indian influence.

Textiles used for clothing were dictated by gender, status and religious affinity. Iranian women wore a light-coloured or printed *chador*, a fitted semi-circular length of fabric open at the front, with a *ruband* a long rectangular mesh veil made of pulled thread whitework. These were not seen in the Ottoman Empire. Notions of Islamic modesty may not be what we think of today, with one image showing a woman in a see-through blouse, with her shoulders decorously covered! Zoroastrians, or Parsees (modern Parsis) were seen as a separate group, socially unprotected as they were not "people of the book". This was reflected in dress: they could only buy remnants not fabric lengths and were restricted to yellow cotton.

Different towns became known for different textiles, including Nakshe embroidery and Resht work, a kind of patchwork or appliqué named for a town in Northern Iran. A felted woven woollen cloth with metal threads and chain stitch embroidery, it was used for saddle cloths and home furnishings. Kerman, a town 670 miles south of Iran with a significant minority Zoroastrian

population, has a longstanding tradition of carpet weaving and is also known for embroidery. Printed cottons were also manufactured but from the 1840s there was increasing competition from Europe and India.

The V&A's Central Asian textiles consist mainly of Uzbek pieces from the 1840s, based around the collection of Sir Mark Aurel Stein, which the museum has on loan. Nomadic traditions have influenced the textiles of this region; they needed to be transportable and examples include saddlebags, knotted pile bags, carpets and *susani* wall-hangings.

Carpet designs include the symmetrical geometry of Turkish-influenced motifs and the flowing lines of asymmetric Persian patterns. Different knot techniques were used for these designs. The *symmetrical* knot is the easiest to tie and is used in European and Turkish carpets and in many Caucasian and Central Asian ones, and in Persian carpets woven by people of Turkic origin. The *asymmetrical knot* may be open to the left or to the right, with the latter being more common. It is used in most Persian carpets and in some Central Asian, Indian and Chinese carpets.

Embroidered *susanis* were often bridal pieces using five widths of material. Examples have been found in Scotland as troops stationed on the North West Frontier used them to wrap things to bring home with them. Regional designations have often been proved to be inaccurate but there is a suggestion of a link to herbal traditions in some of the motifs used. Ikat techniques were used in a variety of textiles, as well as a *moiré* (watered) effect with two colours squashed unevenly between heavy, ribbed rollers. Silk, velvet and cotton were used.

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Indian influences on the dyes and textiles of Thomas and Elizabeth Wardle

OATG Meeting, 7 July 2010. Guest Speaker: Dr Brenda King

The year 2009 was the centenary of the death of Thomas Wardle, one of the pioneers of better design and production of dyed and printed textiles and a colleague of William Morris in the Arts and Crafts movement of the late 19th century.

In her talk Dr Brenda King recreated the early life of Wardle as a master dyer in the Staffordshire town of Leek, close to the silk weaving centre of Macclesfield. Wardle was dissatisfied with aniline dyes and devoted much of his life to experimenting with natural dyes sometimes using raw material imported from India. He was passionate about improving the quality of silk and in particular the wild tussur silk from India, eventually discovering how this very special silk could be bleached and processed so that it would accept a wide range of dyes. These findings and his work on mordants were of great benefit to the Indian craftsmen and also to the European silk industry.

Wardle worked closely with Morris and with designs from others, such as Sydney Mawson, to produce block printed fabrics to the very highest standard for such retailers as Liberty & Co and Heal. His aim was to achieve consistent colours in a wide range of subtly blending shades and which were also resistant to fading.

His wife Elizabeth was closely involved with his work. She was a skilled needlewoman and developed stitches and techniques which enhanced the natural beauty of the silk threads. She founded the Leek Embroidery Society whose reputation extended far beyond the local area. The ladies stitched many designs with names such as *Champa Chrysanthemum, Poona Thistle* and *Allahabad Marigold*, all clearly derived from Indian sources. Church architects including Shaw and Horsley regularly commissioned altar frontals and other ecclesiastical pieces from the Society. Some can still be seen in local churches.

Dr King knew that extensive records of Wardle's experimental work on dyes must exist, but it was not until a call from Jenny Balfour Paul, the expert on indigo, alerting her to their whereabouts that she was able to 'rediscover' the volumes in India. So, in February of 2010 in the Indian Museum in Kolkota, Industrial Section, Botanical Survey of India, she opened the first of 14 large bound volumes containing 3,500 samples of fabrics dyed with Indian dyes. Each small piece was carefully annotated with the dye material, and percentages of the different mordants used. The Indian press and authorities were as excited as she was about this find and the significant part Wardle had played in improving the local silk industry. Gratifyingly, trips to hand weaving centres in Orissa confirmed that some craftsmen still using natural dyes are part of the modern Indian textile industry.

Dr King's well illustrated and enthusiastic presentation brought to life the importance of the couple in the history of textile production and design, and the determination of Thomas Wardle to promote Anglo Indian silk trade and share his findings with the silk producers in India itself.

Fiona Sutcliffe

Haslemere's remarkable handicraft museum

OATG's visit to the Haslemere Educational Museum, Monday 19 April 2010

For me this visit had some memory lane aspects because, as a child, I had lived in Haslemere for a few years. When OATG arranged this visit, naturally, I signed up.

We met up at a very good cafe across the road. At the appointed time we went over to the Museum and were met by assistant curator Kate Braun, and by Freda Chapman, an OATG member who is also a volunteer at the museum. The study room had been set out with a long table and some coat-racks of clothes so that we could see a selection from their textile collection, mostly with Asian connections.

Freda gave us some background to the collections and the museum. The railways had arrived in Haslemere in 1859, thus making this rural Surrey town easily accessible to artistic and literary figures in London. By the turn of the century the town had become quite an arts community. The Haslemere Educational Museum was founded by a surgeon, Dr Jonathan Hutchinson. In 1897 the Haslemere Weaving Industry was set up by Joseph and Maude King. Geoffrey Blount, a William Morris enthusiast, who was married to Ethel, Maud's sister, followed them to the area.

A third sister was married to Dr Greville MacDonald, a throat specialist but also treasurer of the Peasant Art Society. Later this became the Peasant Art Guild. Their aim was to promote handicrafts. Weaving and embroidery workshops were set up and the textiles were sold in a shop in Haslemere and also in London, together with pottery imported from Germany.

In order to provide inspiration, European peasant work was collected not only by King and Blount but also by the Reverend Gerald Stanley Davies, a schoolmaster living locally. Davies felt that by collecting vanishing peasant crafts he was saving a profound truth in a material form. When Davies moved to a teaching job in London he wanted to sell his peasant art collection. In 1909 Greville MacDonald agreed to buy it.

Davies made two conditions: 1) that the material should be kept together and 2) that it should never be transferred to any museum in London lest it be damaged by smoke. After various moves within Haslemere, in 1925 the collection of the Peasant Art Guild was moved to the same building as the Haslemere Educational Museum. The handweaving industries are long gone but the museum survives as a very special place.

As Freda unfurled this story there were so many things that started to make sense. Ah! –

A nineteenth century child's jacket from Sindh in what is now southern Pakistan

that's why the Dolmetsch family had set up recorder and harpsichord workshops in Haslemere – and to this day there is still an early music festival. And our cleaning lady's house had been a weaver's shed. And the museum – it's the reason why, ever since, I have loved museums.

Freda talked us through the items. What a fabulous mixture! There was a shepherd's coat and hat from Chitral, a 19th century child's jacket from Sindh, embroidered hand towels from Russia and an Albanian coat of heavy red felt. Although originally the Haslemere collection had been of European origin, obviously, later it had grown to include items worldwide.

The pieces had almost all been acquired from people living locally and many had a story attached. An exquisite Chinese collar was displayed next to a page with explanations about Chinese knots and Pekinese stitch. The donor's father had been in the Navy and used to bring back pieces and she could remember, as a child, using it for 'dressing up'. A wonderful Chinese rain cape made of a grass had been presented by a Mr Watkins of Hindhead. A wool jacket, with an overall flower pattern beautifully worked in wool, had been brought back from Kashmir in 1947. The piece that fascinated me most was part of a bodice thought to be from Papua New Guinea. It was only just a 'textile' - more of a net, with grey seeds known as Job's tears attached. We finished our visit with tea and delicious cake. Thanks to Kate and Freda for a fascinating afternoon.

An exquisite embroidered Chinese collar

Felicity Wood

**The images in this article are reproduced courtesy of Haslemere Educational Museum*

Textile Society's Antique Textile Fair

Textile Society London Fair, Sunday 26 September 2010, Kensington Town Hall.

The OATG committee decided this year not to take part in the Textile Society's first London Antique Textile Fair at Kensington Town Hall this year. However, I put the date in my diary and went along on the day.

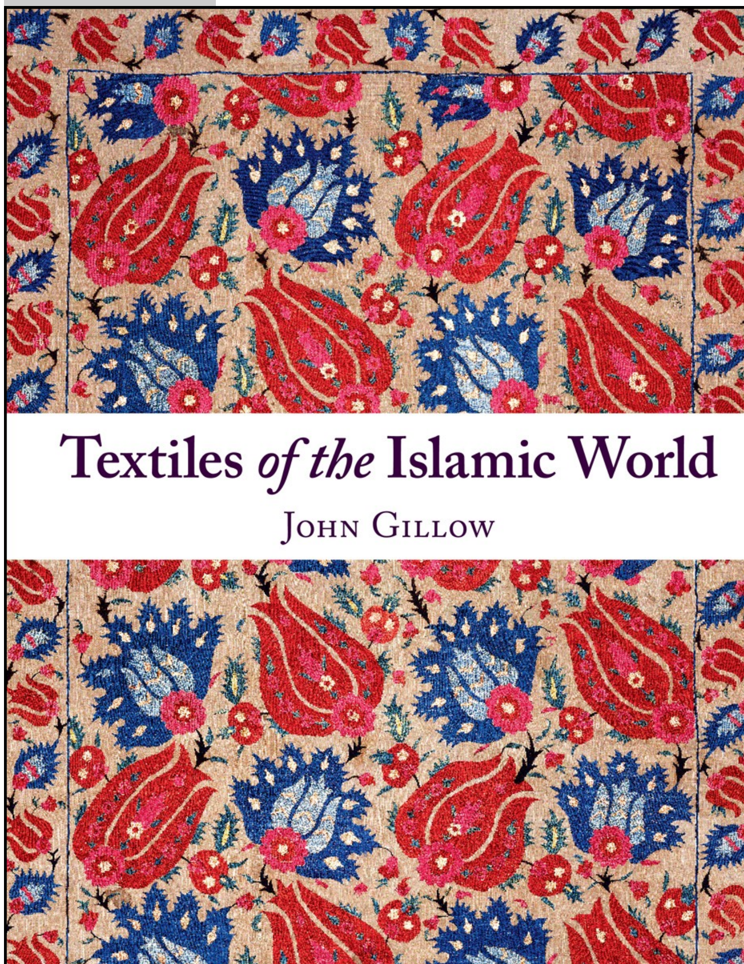
I found it disconcerting just how many tube trains were closed and mainline rail lines were also undergoing engineering works. There was no parking at the venue, but there were buses, if you knew your busroutes!

The venue itself was pleasant and spacious. As promised, there were "60 stands piled high with textiles and garments from all over the world from the 17th century to the 1970s, plus conservators and second-hand booksellers".

The fair had a good 'feel'. I found the exhibitors to be more international than I had expected. There were lots of Asian textiles on display and several old friends, including Joss Graham, John Gillow and Ron Smith. Disappointingly, visitor turnout was low but from a visitor's point of view I enjoyed myself. I saw a few of my friends from Quilter's Guild days and the Pullens were there. From walking around I heard various stallholders greeting old friends.

OATG made the correct decision not to participate, but I would recommend members to visit if it is held in the future—but to make sure they have sussed out transport arrangements!

Pamela Cross



A region-by-region guide to the glorious world of Islamic textiles

John Gillow, *Textiles of the Islamic World*, Thames & Hudson, London, 2010, 318pp, £45.00.
ISBN: 978 0 500 515273

John Gillow, who is no stranger to members of OATG, has written what will undoubtedly become the definitive work on Islamic textiles in this, his latest publication. Produced in the same format as his earlier *World Textiles*, *Indian Textiles* and *African Textiles*, this book is both comprehensive and sumptuous.

Gillow explains that it was a schoolboy trip to Istanbul 40 years ago that first hooked him into an interest in textiles. The Grand Bazaar, still today a magnet for textile enthusiasts, entranced him and shaped the rest of his life. “If I look in retrospect at my travels, my pathways criss-cross the world of Islam like a latter-day Ibn Battutah, only concentrating on fabrics rather than scholarship”, he notes. These words will no doubt ring true for many OATG members also, who have also been captivated by the beauty of Islamic textiles.

In his introduction, Gillow notes how the establishment of Islam led to the growth of a massive political and trading empire and huge movements of people. Characterised primarily—but not always—by abstract designs and rich ornamentation, Islamic textiles incorporate older traditions, but in new and exciting forms. By their very nature and desire to avoid portraying the human form, Islamic textile patterns are often based on geometrical and mathematical patterns, seldom written down but carried from generation to generation in the heads of their creators.

From the birth of Islam in the seventh century CE until the opening up of maritime trade routes between Europe and the Far East in the sixteenth century, the hugely important trade in luxury goods from China and India—and in particular silk and other valuable textiles, including carpets—terminated in the Middle East. Moslems dominated this trade, servicing the camel trains that traversed the Silk Road from China, providing the guides and manpower to carry goods across

Asia to the entrepots of the Mediterranean. Our words for textiles—silk, cotton (from the Arabic *qutn*), calico, damask, muslin—all bear witness to the important role played by Islam in their origination and dissemination. We cannot think of the splendours of Ottoman Turkey or Mughal India without being reminded of the exquisite textiles that adorned the rulers of these lands and their kinsmen. Lampas work, ikat, carpet knotting, tie-dye—these and many other techniques originated in the Islamic world, which spreads like a girdle across much of southern Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

Particularly outstanding in this book are the hundreds of illustrations. Not only textiles are shown; there are also many wonderful contemporary pictures and even postcards illustrating specific garments or weavings. Readers will find the text straightforward and not too dominated by technical issues or terms. Where it has been possible to simplify the text and to avoid over-complex terms and phrases, Gillow has done so and the book is better for it.

The book is organised geographically, working its way through the Ottoman world, Spain and North Africa, the Arab world, Persia, Central Asia, the Mughal World, East and Southeast Asia and finally sub-Saharan Africa. There is also a very useful glossary and a list of textile collections in museums of the world.

Nick Fielding

How Indian cloth colonised the High Street

Christopher Breward, Philip Crang & Rosemary Crill (eds), *British Asian Style: Fashion & Textiles/Past and Present*, V&A Publishing, London 2010. 208pp, £24.99.
ISBN: 9781851776191

This collection of essays pieces together the remarkable relationship between Britain and the textiles of the Indian subcontinent. From the golden age that started with the colonisation of India in the early sixteenth century until Indian independence in the mid-twentieth century, Indian textiles—and in particular dyed Indian cotton—had a profound impact on British fashion. In the first essay in this splendid book, Rosemary Crill explains how it all happened.

Eiluned Edwards continues the theme with an essay that shows how Indian textiles penetrated the High Street. Susan Roberts looks at the recent search to produce specifically British sari patterns, while other essays look into hippy, bohemian and chintz fashions, smoking jackets and suit linings, the development of British Asian retailing spaces and contemporary British Asian fashion designers.

As noted in the introduction: “This book is the first to consider the ways in which these intertwined histories, of engagement through production, commerce, aesthetics, retail, display and migration, in colonial and post-colonial times, have contributed to a vibrant and under-represented aspect of Britain’s cultural heritage and contemporary creative environment.”

The book is divided into three sections; the first looks at textiles and their history; the second looks at styles, in order to articulate the British Asian ‘look’ and the final section looks at spaces in order to investigate the presence of Asian textiles in British shops.

The exquisite textiles of Banaras

Tarannum Fatma Lari, *Textiles of Banaras: Yesterday and Today*, Indica Books, Varanasi, India, 2010, 258pp, Rs 1750.
ISBN 81-86569-90-1

Banaras—also known by its ancient name of Kashi, or Benares or Varanasi—has been famous for its textiles for more than 2,000 years. Located in the fertile land of the Gangetic plain in northern India, it is amongst the seven great sacred cities of the subcontinent. Its textile tradition, as mentioned in Hindu texts, goes back to the time of the Buddha; it is said his mortal remains were wrapped in the polka-dotted muslin woven in Kashi.

Cotton fields surrounded the city from the earliest times and there are descriptions of tools and spinning wheels. Writing in the 1660s, the French traveller Tavernier describes courtyards in the city of Benares where bundles of cloths were sold by the weavers themselves, without a middleman. In the 19th century British writers described the splendid cloths, including the *zaris* and brocades. Mrs Collin Mackenzie wrote: “There is no comparison of the superior quality of the brocade cloth of Banaras with European brocade”.

The local textile industry traditionally covers silk, cotton and mixed fibres, although today it is mostly known for its silk cloth, made with gold and silver thread. Ms Lari’s book presents a very comprehensive history and background to the industry, illustrated with examples in local museums . Much of this history is largely unknown outside the world of specialised scholars and it is remarkable that the author has been able to pull so much information together.

She explains in detail how *Karchobi* work and *Hathari* work are done and by whom. Around 400,000 people are still employed in the textile industry in the area and the author estimates that there are around 120,000 handlooms . Most of the weavers are moslems, with specific styles tied to particular districts. Behind these simple facts lies an extraordinarily complex social structure involving castes, families, traditions and techniques that Ms Lari gallantly explains. Here you can learn about darners and comb makers, warp stretchers and dyers, printers and embroiderers. You can also learn something of the traditional patterns, their origin and use.

The last section of the book contains colour plates illustrating the beauty and complexity of Banaras textiles. This is followed by a section of line drawings of some of the patterns, a glossary and a very detailed bibliography. Overall a very useful book for anyone interested in Indian textiles.

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THE TEXTILE SOCIETY

for the study of the history, art and design of textiles

The Textile Society's

Manchester Antique Textile Fair

Sunday 6th March 2011

Antique and Vintage Costumes and Textiles, Accessories and Books. The Quilter's Guild; The Society of Spinnrs , Weavers and Spinners; The Knitting & Crochet Guild and the Button and Braid Societies will all have stands. Lectures throughout the day.

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www.textilesociety.org.uk or e Deborah Roberts atf@textilesociety.org.uk or 077193 47512

The Textile Museum in Washington DC is holding an exhibition called *Colors of the Oasis: Central Asian Ikats* from 16 October 2010 until 13 March 2011. The exhibition will explore the artistry of Ikat in Central Asia, with a focus on the textile's historic production, aesthetic principles and socio-cultural significance in the region. It will feature more than 60 selections from the Museum's never-before-exhibited Megalli collection, including cradle covers, wrapping cloths, hangings and fragments.

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