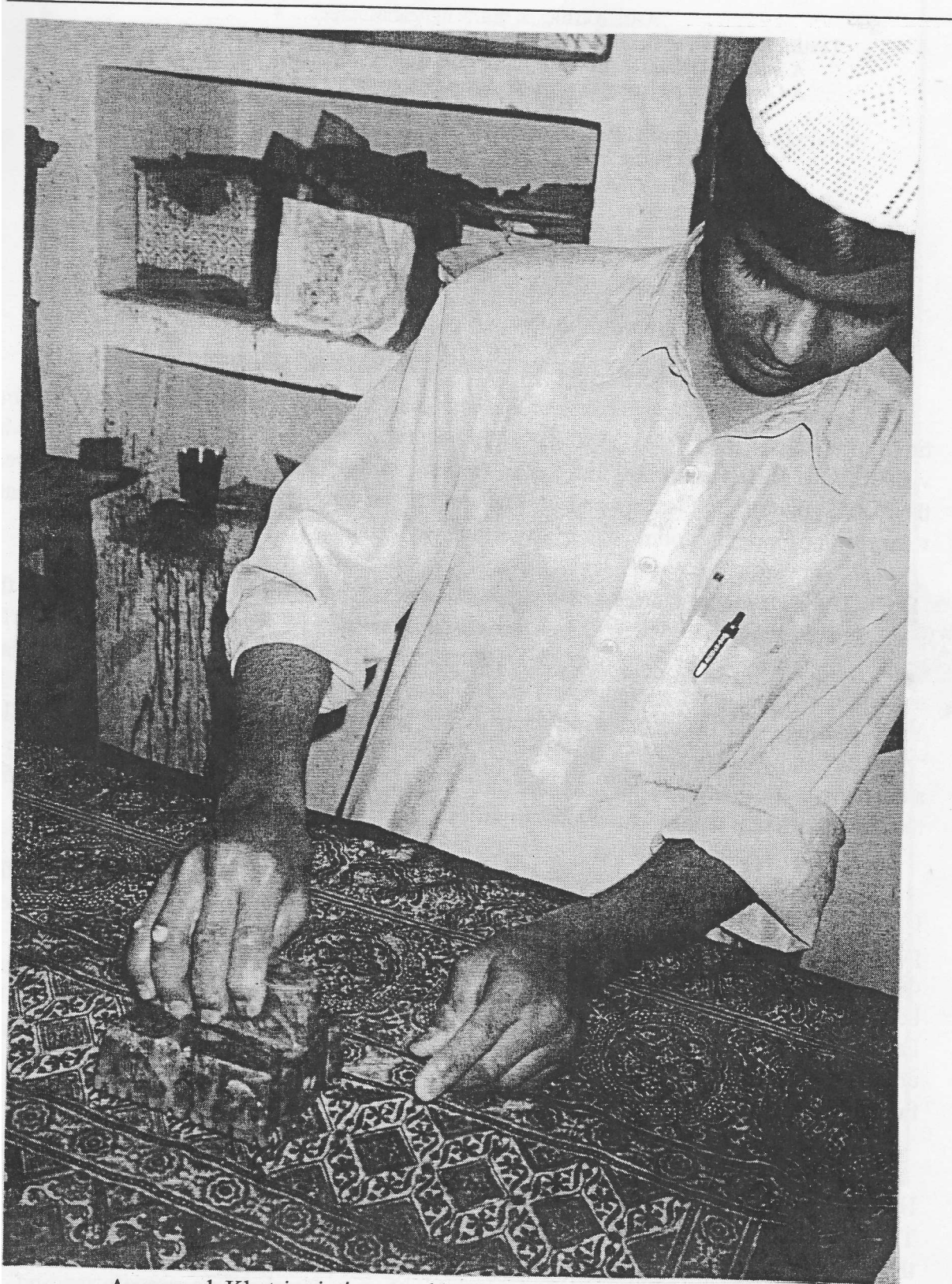


OXFORD ASIAN TEXTILE GROUP

Newsletter No. 25

June 2003



Aurangzeb Khatri printing *ajrakh*, Dhamadka, January 2001 (see p.6)

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EDITORIAL

In the early 1960s my husband was involved in a UN project which took him four times to what was then Yugoslavia. Each time he brought back a rug, and those of you who visited me at Hewel Barn may have noticed them in the hall. After forty years hard wear they have gone to the cleaners and on their return can look forward to almost equally hard wear in our new dining-room, which has been newly decorated to receive them.

The next requirement, of course, was curtains, so I went to Southbourne Grove, the local suburban shopping centre only a few minutes walk away, where is the most wonderful fabric shop I have seen in years. After three visits I still had not seen all their curtain materials, but had seen enough, for I had discovered one harmonizing in colour with the Yugoslav rugs and decorated with some of the same motifs. Surprisingly, it was called "Apache" and was apparently inspired by Amerindian designs. Just one more example of something that never ceases to fascinate me: the way similar or identical motifs and patterns turn up in different cultures thousands of miles apart.

Another example: some months ago I gave a gallery talk at the Ashmolean entitled *Greek Key or Thunderline?* Have you ever noticed how similar are these motifs on Greek pots and Chinese bronzes 3000 years ago? Did the Chinese pick it up from the Greeks? or did the Greeks pick it up from the Chinese? Or did they both get it from somewhere between? After all, what is now known as the Silk Road, linking the Mediterranean with the Far East, is a very ancient line of communication - for instance, apples are known to have originated somewhere along its route, and they were being planted in southern Europe by the third millennium B.C.

Or were these and other universal patterns something innate in the human mind? Have you ever observed the unconscious doodlings of someone in conversation on the phone? These often reveal the same motifs, especially scrolls, which are just a curvaceous version of the Greek key. The rectilinearity of the latter convinces me that it originated in textiles and was invented independently by weavers everywhere. Greek vases notwithstanding, the nature of a pot just asks for the freely flowing scroll.

PROGRAMME

Thursday 12 June at 5.45 p.m.
Pauling Centre, 58 Banbury Road

OTTOMAN EMBROIDERY

An exploration of the motifs and techniques of the historical embroideries by
Marianne Ellis

* * *

Friday 11 July at 12 noon
Eric North Room, Ashmolean Museum

EDWARD LANE DISCOVERS 19th CENTURY CAIRO

Gallery talk in the exhibition *An Englishman's Travels in Egypt* by
Jason Thompson
(American University, Cairo)

* * *

Tuesday 23 September
Pitt Rivers Centre for Musical Instruments and Textiles, 60 Banbury Road

AN INTRODUCTION TO OMANI TEXTILES

The Gigi Crocker-Jones collection of over 400 items collected in the 1980s/90s
including fabrics, basketry, leather and dyes introduced by
Julia Nicholson and Rachel John
(of the Pitt Rivers Museum)

Thursday 9 October at 6 p.m.
Pauling Centre, 58 Banbury Road
A.G.M. (members only) followed by

ANALYSING THE SOCIAL FABRIC

Changing patterns of production, use and exchange of embroidered textiles in
Kachchh district, Gujarat by
Eiluned Edwards (see below pp 6-11)

Meetings at the Pauling Centre are open to all: members free, non-members £2
Other meetings are for members only and numbers are limited. Apply to:
Rosemary Lee (01491 873276; rosemary.lee@talk21.com) or
Fiona Sutcliffe (01491 872268; J.V.Sutcliffe@talk21.com)

ASIAN TEXTILES IN BANKFIELD MUSEUM, HALIFAX

Part of the Calderdale Museums and Arts, Bankfield has been collecting costume and textiles since its inception as a public museum and gallery in 1887.

Many of the founding collections were inherited from the Halifax Literary and Philosophical Society. The Society included many leaders of the civic, cultural and commercial life of Halifax and the collection reflected their personal interests and travels. Prime items acquired from China and Japan, including a mandarin's outfit (dress, hat and neckpiece) and a fine samurai warrior's costume, now on display in the Calderdale Collects Gallery at Bankfield.

Despite this foundation, it is fair to say that the collections at Bankfield remained a little stagnant until the arrival in 1900 of Henry Ling Roth as the first Curator. Important to Bankfield and the broader museum world, Ling Roth set out to create at Bankfield "a record of textiles from the ancient of times up to the passing of the handloom".

Originally from London, Ling Roth had travelled extensively in Russia, Australasia and the South Seas. He was a member of the Royal Anthropological Institute and spent time recording details of different cultures and customs he encountered on his journeys.

Eventually Ling Roth settled in Halifax, working as a secretary to an engineering company in the town centre. He continued his social observations here, however, and was struck by Halifax's importance as a textile producing area.

Although generally superseded in the late nineteenth century by the larger manufacturing cities of Bradford and Leeds, Halifax had been a major producer of textiles since the 1800s. Benefiting from the soft water, hilly lands and prolific sheep, the area had supported a thriving cottage industry of woven woollens. These were not only sold in Britain but also exported to South America and eastern Europe and were a source of considerable wealth for the area.

Ling Roth felt that this contribution to the textile industry was too important to ignore. Once appointed as Curator he therefore set out to reflect this within the collections at Bankfield, as set out in what we might now term his "mission statement", quoted above.

As Halifax was heavily mechanized in its textile production by 1900, Ling Roth looked to those areas that were still producing textiles by hand, as well as the ancient civilizations of Egypt and Peru. In gathering material for the collections, he used the knowledge acquired during his travels and his contacts through the Royal Anthropological Institute. These include examples of contemporary weavings and looms from West and Central Africa, including Shoowa cloths and related equipment collected in the then Congo by Emile Torday; beadwork neck and body pieces from South Africa; burial fragments from Egypt (first century AD) and Peru (600-900 AD); a Chilkat blanket from north west North

America; Backcloths from Fiji, New Guinea and Tonga; and ikat woven cloths from Indonesia.

Ling Roth's particular interest, however, was in what he termed "the four Eastern Empires" of Burma, India, China and Japan. He sought to represent aspects of these countries through documentation in his notebooks (still at Bankfield) and through the collection of textiles, spinning wheels, looms and baskets.

Of these, the most significant material is that from Burma. Acquired by E.C.S. George, a career diplomat working in the country from 1890-1900, this includes an extensive collection of skirts, coats, bags and hats of different peoples from the area: Warmish, Tai and Palaung. Given the extent of the material and the context, it is fair to say that this collection is probably only exceeded by the Durham collection of Eastern European textiles in importance to Bankfield,

Other significant items from these countries include, from India - jewellery, embroidery, sari edgings, shawls and headcloths, white work and shisha embroidery; and from China - embroideries, whole costume and part pieces, and braids.

Ling Roth retired in 1925 and succeeding curators have sought to build on his work. Most important of all was George Carlin, his immediate successor. It was during Carline's term of office that Bankfield acquired a significant collection of weavings from Nagaland, Given to the Museum by Mills and Hutton, these include a series of body cloths of fine weaves, fringed with dyed dog hair, painted and decorated with iridescent beetle wings.

Calderdale Museums and Arts continues to add to these collections and has been active in doing so since the late 1970s. Highlights of these recent additions are: a series of ikat weavings from Indonesia, southern Laos and India including a double ikat woven piece; embroideries, costume and decorative hangings from India and Pakistan (*cholis*, *chaklas*, hats and body decoration); material from late nineteenth century China acquired by Christian missionaries; basket weavings (containers and headwear) from Indonesia; a banner with calligraphy and rag weaving from Japan; and contemporary baskets and textiles, including prayer flags, from Bhutan.

Calderdale Museums and Arts is fortunate to hold at Bankfield an exceptional collection of costume and textiles from around the world. This is a testament to the work done by curators over the years in collecting systematically and seeking to contextualize the material acquired through documentation and supplementary information. Above all, however, we are indebted to the work of Ling Roth, begun in 1900. The challenge for us now is to preserve this collection, encourage access to and awareness of it, and to build on this for the future.

Examples of many of these collections can be seen in the permanent galleries at Bankfield. Others are included in the regular programme of changing exhibitions. Items not

on display can be viewed by appointment Please contact me if you would like to arrange a study visit or for further details on the collections.

Bankfield is on Boothtown Road (A647) five miles from Halifax town centre. Admission is free and the Museum is open Tuesday to Saturday and Bank Holiday Mondays 10 a.m. - 5 p.m., and on Sundays 2 - 5 p.m.. Telephone, 01422 354823.

June Hill
Museums Manager
(e-mail: June.hill@calderdale.gov.uk)

TEXTILE TRADITIONS OF GUJARAT: Block-printing and Dyeing of the Khattris of Kachchh

INTRODUCTION

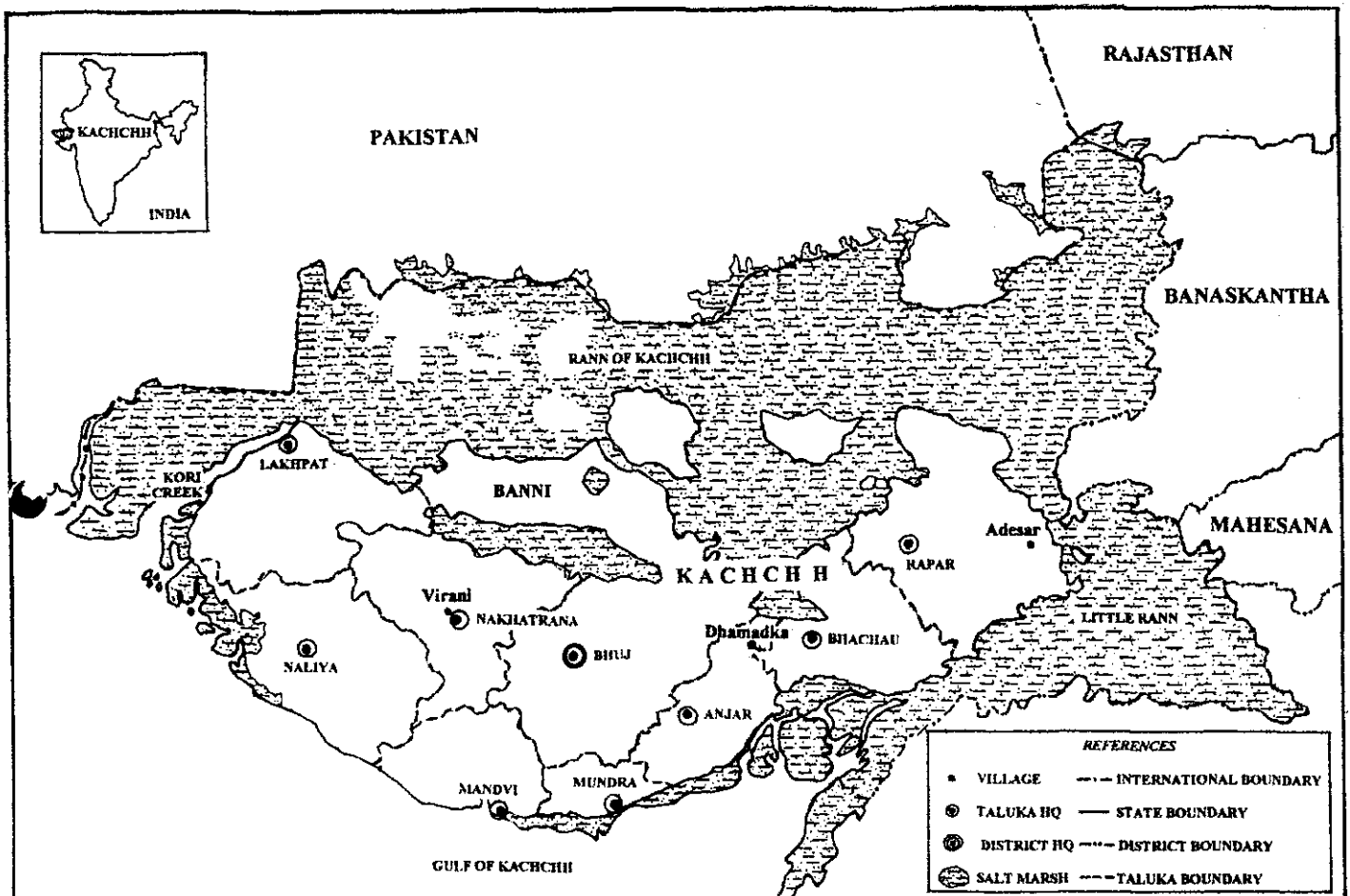
The social matrix of Kachchh district in the state of Gujarat in western India has been composed traditionally of herders, farmers and artisans. These groups are followers of either Hinduism or Islam, although religious practice in the district is known for its syncretism, and the shrines of local *pirs*, or saints, are sites of worship for both Hindus and Muslims alike. Among the artisanal castes, the Khattris, who are mostly Muslims, are recognised for their consummate skill as dyers and printers of textiles. Originally from Sindh Province in what is now Pakistan, they came to the district under the patronage of Rao Bharmalji I, who ruled Kachchh between 1586 and 1631. The Rao gave them land and they established their villages where there was a good supply of running water - essential for the different stages of dyeing and washing cloth.

Apart from supplying textiles to the royal family, the traditional local trade of the Khattris was with the *maldharis*, the herders of Kachchh, for whom they made key items of caste dress. These textiles included tie-dyed veil cloths and skirts, block-printed turbans, shoulder cloths and *lunghis* (wraps for the lower body). The most complex of the printed cloths was *ajrakh*, a mordant-dyed resist-printed textile traditionally dyed with indigo and madder that was printed on both sides of the fabric, now produced in only two villages in Kachchh - Dhamardka and Khavda. *Ajrakh* is still prized, particularly by the Muslim cattle herders of Banni in north Kachchh. This trading relationship continued largely undisturbed until Independence in 1947.

PATTERNS OF ADAPTATION

The years following Independence saw the rapid industrialization of India, which brought comprehensive change to all spheres of activity, notably in Kachchh to agriculture, pastoralism and artisanry. Irrigation schemes changed the pattern of dry farming, which impacted on the herders, especially pastoral migrants such as Rabaris who started to sedentarize and sought alternatives to pastoralism to make a living. As occupations and

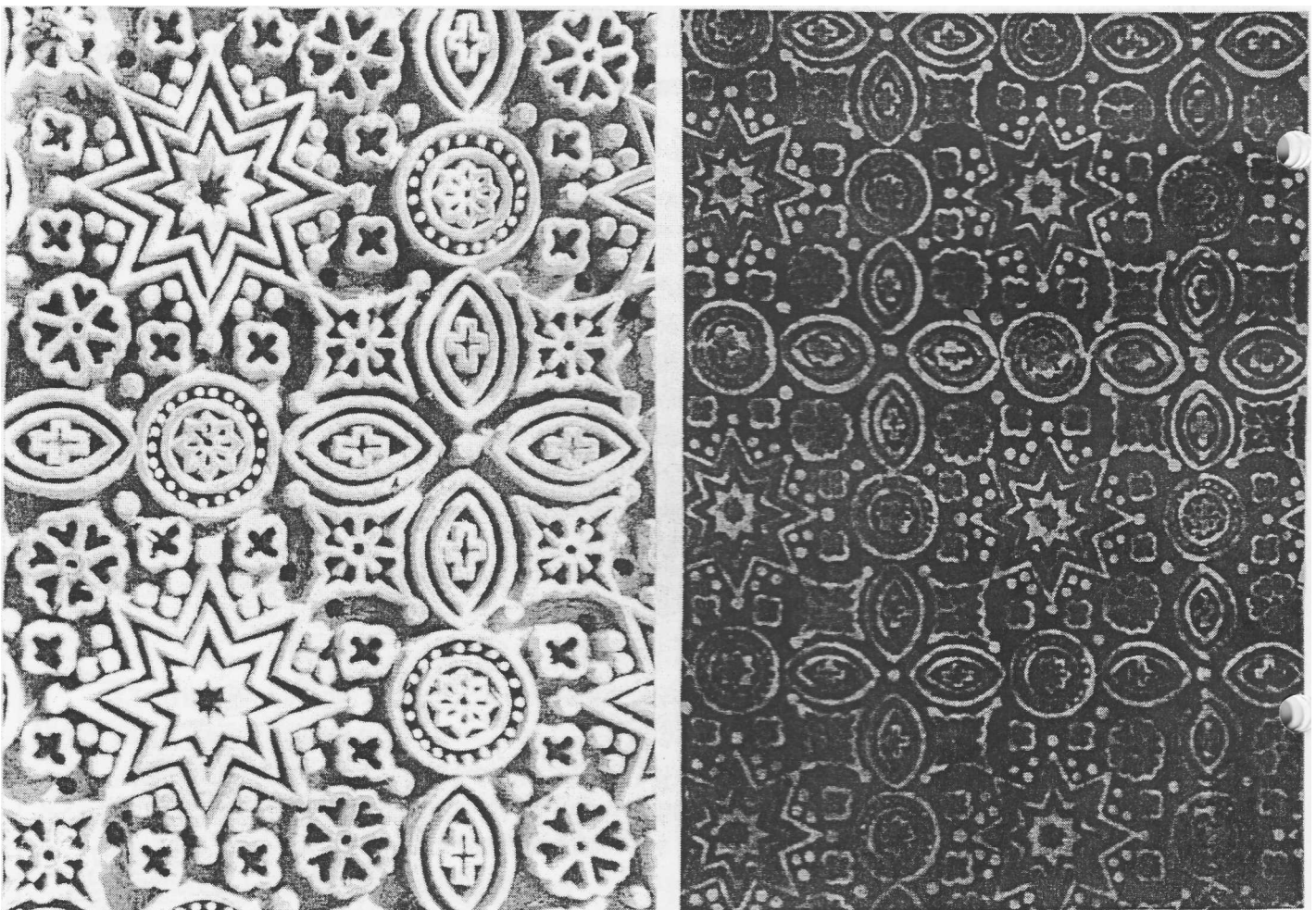
working practices of the different castes of Kachchh have changed, so, too, have their patterns of consumption. This has had a marked effect on the local market for traditional handcrafted goods such as textiles produced by the Khattris. Advances in textile technology slowly became evident in the district, the subtle palette of natural colours used to dye traditional *khadi* (hand-woven cotton made from hand-spun yam). wood, *mashru* (fabric woven with a silk warp and a cotton weft) and silk had all but gone by the 1950s, replaced by aniline dyes which were cost-effective, easy to use and produced bold colours popular with the local clientele. By the 1970s synthetic cloth had reached the district. It was initially a comparatively expensive, exclusive item, which was very often brought from the Gulf countries by returning migrant workers who were attracted by its sheen and lurid colours. The association with the Gulf was evident in its local name, which was "muscat". Synthetics are now widely available, and their production is relatively local, the main manufacturing centres being Sura in south Gujarat, and Mumbai. The arrival of factory-produced polyester versions of *bandhani* (tie-dye), *ajrakh* and other block-printed textiles, in tandem with the changing sartorial codes of Kachchh has all but eradicated the local market for the Khattris' goods and many have now abandoned their vocation.



MAP OF KACHCHH DISTRICT

In the early 1970s state intervention in the craft sector started to generate new opportunities for artisans throughout Gujarat. This was congruent with policy at national level, which saw crafts development as an integral part of rural development. The Gujarat

State Handicraft Development Corporation (GSHDC) and its retail outlet *Gujari* were established in 1973. In Kachchh some Khatri and other artisans benefited from these initiatives. Liaison between innovative designers such as Laila Tyabji on behalf of GSHDC, others from the National Institute of Design (NID) at Ahmedabad, and artisans such as the late Khatri Mohammad Siddik of Dhamadka village, initiated the adaptation of traditional designs and products for urban and international markets. This initiative has been consolidated and expanded by the work of a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in Kachchh, such as Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan (KMVS) and *Shrujan*, whose input in terms of design and product development, and marketing continues to be crucial.



*Left: Detail of ajrakh print block. The design is known as kanavai kharek,
Right: Detail of ajrakh printed with kanavari kharek design*

However, the benefit of these interventions for the Khatri has been uneven. The community overall remains underemployed. This is also true of artisans from other disciplines (ef Jaitly 2001). The Khatri of Nakhatrana *taluka* (division of a district) in western Kachchh, and Adesar and Rapar in the north-east of the district, for example, remain largely untouched by state and NGO activities and struggle to survive on the diminishing local trade. In contrast, the Khatri community of Dhamadka has seen considerable growth in

business since the 1970s, although this, too, must be qualified: earthquake apart, at present only forty percent of the printers and dyers in the village have sufficient work to keep them employed full-time for twelve months of the year (Personal communication, Pankaj Shah, Marketing Consultant KMVS, 7.12.02). In the specific case of Kachchh's most prominent family of block-printers - that of the late Khatri Mohammad Siddik and his sons, Abdul Razzak, Ismail and Jabbar - their early liaison with GSIIDC gave them the opportunity to carve a market niche: high quality products dyed and printed with natural dyes. They went on to establish the largest block-printing concern in Kachchh and have successfully effected the renaissance of the use of natural dye-stuffs in the district, earning international renown for their endeavours. Significantly, much of the interest in this field has come from outside India. Their sales figures speak volumes: those for 1999-2000, the last full trading year before the earthquake of 2001, reveal that approximately eighty percent of Mohammad Siddik and Sons' business was for the export market (Personal communication, Ismail Mohammad Khatri, 5.1.01).



Woman from the Patel community wearing *sadlo* ("half-sari") block-printed and dyed by the Khatri, 2002

REGENERATION

The earthquake that struck Gujarat on 26 January 2001 left many Khatri villages in ruins. Dhamadka was reduced to rubble, and a hundred and twenty villagers died. A side-effect of the damage was that the chemical composition of the water at Dhamadka has changed and is now no longer suitable for dyeing. It is this more than any other factor that

has compelled the Khattris to move to another site and a new village, known as Ajrakhpur ("village of ajarkh"), is under construction thirteen kilometres east of Bhuj. The Khattris have been working on this massive undertaking in concert with local NGOs, the Jamiat-ulama-I-Hind (a Muslim NGO based in Delhi) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB)¹.

The Asian Development Bank and other agencies are targeting craft as the sector with the greatest potential for job creation in their overall programme of earthquake regeneration in the district. At present a proposal is under discussion by the ADB and *Abhiyan*² (the umbrella organization for a number of NGOs working in the craft sector in Kachchh) for a central handicrafts park to be established in Bhuj, the district capital, that will showcase all the district's crafts. This central park is to be ringed by several "satellite" centres based in outlying villages, each of which will feature a specific craft, including block-printing, embroidery, weaving, leather work, wood carving, etc. The test case for the overall scheme is the block-printers' trade centre, which will shortly be constructed at the new village of Ajrakhpur.

Although there are enclaves of Khattris dispersed throughout Kachchh, it was felt that Ajrakhpur was a positive symbol of the Khattris (and Kachchhis) rising from the destruction of the earthquake. Pragmatically the village's proximity to Bhuj is anticipated to be of benefit to sales and promotion, as the town offers somewhat easier access to accommodation, communications and transport. As a green field site, Ajrakhpur poses few problems in terms of the availability of open land for construction. The centre will be purpose-built to house approximately 250 sales booths/shops, a central stock/storage facility, an exhibition area, a small museum/archive and, importantly, a chaff shop or "hospitality suite".

THE FUTURE

The trade centre is intended to herald a new era of craft development in Kachchh. Its rich heritage is to be underpinned by professional training in marketing, design and product development, language and computer skills. Anil Das of the Asian Development Bank sees it as "long overdue. We have to professionalize craft and the marketing of craft" (Personal communication, 28.11.02). In the meantime, the Khattris ply their trade as they have always done. Inshallah, the time of hardship will soon be over and a positive future beckons.

Notes

¹The Asian Development Bank (ADB) was set up in the late 1970s/early 1980s to assist with the development of the countries of Asia. It has links with the World Bank-Operations in India started in 1992 when funding was released to develop infrastructure in urban and rural areas, chiefly roads and power. It is presently assessing the water sector. The ADB has played a significant role in earthquake rehabilitation in Gujarat. It has funded a road-building programme, aims to provide easy access to potable water for the entire population of Kachchh by June 2003, and is currently tackling "livelihoods" (job creation) in the district.

²*Abhiyan* is the abbreviated title of *Kachchh Nav nirman Abhiyan*, which co-ordinates the activities of twenty-two well-established NGOs, including *Shrujan*, KMVS and *Kalaraksha* which work in the craft sector, and others that work on environmental issues and water management, such as the Vivekanand Research and Training Institute, Mandvi. *Abhors* was originally set up in response to the cyclone that struck Kandla port in south Kachchh in 1998.

Reference

Jaitly, J. (2001), *Vosvakarma's Children*, New Delhi Institute of Social Sciences.

Acknowledgements

Heartfelt thanks to the following for their generosity and help with research:

Ismail and Memuna Khatn and family at Dhamadka

Husain Khatri at Viram

The Khattris of Rapar and Adesar

Ali Mohammed Isha and family at Bhuj

Himansu Dugar

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Pankaj Shah and Meena Raste at KMVS

Anil Das, Project Implementation Officer, ADB

Afzal Khan, Co-ordinator, Jamiat-ulama-I-Hind

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Ahmedbhai Shaikh and family at Gamathiwala

Finally, thanks to the Society for South Asian Studies and De Montfort University for help with funding this research.

Eiluned Edwards
Research Fellow in Dress and Textiles
PRASADA, De Montfort University, Leicester

OA.T.G. SUBSCRIPTIONS

This is just to remind you that subscriptions are due on or before 1 October. We have valued your membership and hope that you will decide to renew. Payment may be made by sterling cheque drawn on a U.K. bank (ask your bank about this if you live abroad), by dollar cheque or by international money order or by bank transfer. We do realize that for those of you who find it difficult to attend meetings and activities, membership may not be a priority. However it does include receiving an excellent newsletter three times a year. If you do not wish your membership to lapse, please send your subscription to the Membership Secretary, Joyce Seaman, or better still, ask her to send you a banker's order form and save yourself the annual hassle. Address: 5 Park Town, Oxford, OX2 6SN; tel. 01865 558558; e-mail: mjseatnan@hotmail.com

A FEAST OF TEXTILES AT THE NEW ASIAN CIVILIZATION MUSEUM IN SINGAPORE

On 1 March this year, the National Heritage Board of Singapore had its inaugural opening of a new Asian Civilization Museum at the recently refurbished Empress Place Building. This magnificent mansion is located alongside the Singapore River in the oldest pedestrian area in the heart of the city, Empress Place, named in honour of Queen Victoria. Empress Place Building is a spectacular colonial building that was built in the mid-1800s. It is now the home of over 1600 precious artefacts that illustrate the history of Asia. The Museum comprises galleries representing the history and cultures of multi-ethnic groups from South-East Asia, East Asia, West Asia, South Asia and the Singapore River.

A team of conservators and museum assistants prepared the artefacts over a period of two years, working from a state of the art repository and conservation laboratories at the Heritage Conservation Centre in Jurong (east of the city). As senior conservator for textiles, I worked on the textile collection. The collection comprises extremely diverse and many rare textiles dating from the tenth to the twentieth centuries, often of mixed media composition -incorporating precious metals, metal alloys, bone, feathers, hair, plant fibre, wood, glass, a variety of paints, inks and pigments. A number of the textiles are also extraordinarily large. All manner of manufacturing techniques are portrayed in this unique, mostly hand-crafted collection, ranging from the decorative weaving techniques of supplementary warp and weft, including *songket* or metal threads, *prada* (glued gold leaf work), embroidery, appliqué, gold/silver metal thread couching, brocades, damask, batik, tie-dyeing, *tritik* (stitch resist dyeing), double, single, weft and warp ikats, *kalmkaris* (hand-painted designs on cotton from India) and *Kossu* (Chinese slit tapestry), to name a few.

The extraordinary calibre of textiles incorporated in the exhibition are illustrated by the following items:

The **Kiswa** - the cover of the holy Kaabah in Mecca There are several fragments dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the collection. One fragment, currently on loan to the Museum, is seven metres in length. It has a silk background, mounted upon a cotton foundation, and is embellished with protruding embroidery in silver and gold metallic threads depicting calligraphy from the Quranic verses. Each year the ancient ritual of replacing the Kiswa with a new one, at an estimated cost of £2.5 million, is still practised. Once removed, the old Kiswa is cut up and presented to leaders of Muslim countries, major institutions around the world, and pilgrims.

Tibetan Thangka is 5.40 x 2.75 metres in size and represents the largest textile owned by the Museum. It is a fragment of a much larger ritual hanging, dating back to the seventeenth century, Wanli period, Ming Dynasty. It depicts six arhats, or "worthy ones" (the personal disciples of the Buddha), three cosmic Buddha, two lokapal (the Buddhist guardians) and protective deities of the four directions (north, south, east and west). The thangka comprises three layers: the foundation, which is silk damask; the figures,



Patricia Moncrieff installing a silk ikat ceremonial cloth into one of the world's largest hinged showcases.



Installation of the largest textile owned by the Museum, a Tibetan Thangka, into one of the world's tallest showcases

constructed from a variety of exquisite plain silks, damask and silk brocades, that are appliquéd to the foundation; and finally Tibetan religious inscriptions, which are depicted in fine silk thread embroidery worked upon the foundation.

Amongst the many prestigious costumes is a fabulous **silk and gold brocade jacket and trousers** from Riau Linnga Archipelago, once part of Malaysia. Sultan Abdul Rahman wore this on the occasion of his marriage in 1860. The fabric would most certainly have been imported from India, which is famous for its manufacture of symbolic woven brocades.

A **patola** from Gujarat, west India, depicts the elephant design in the rarest and largest of this type of silk cloth, using the double ikat technique whereby the warp and weft threads are individually resist-dyed and the pattern synchronized in the weaving. Patolas once dominated the textile markets of Asia. The Dutch East India Company (VOC) gave them as gifts to dignitaries and nobility in Indonesia where they were used for highly ceremonious occasions.

There are many sets of **Hill-Tribe** costumes from Thailand, representing the Akha, Yao, Lolo and Karen tribes. These are mostly made from indigo-dyed hemp, incorporating exquisite cross-stitch embroidery, appliqué in silks and cottons, and batik, making them spectacularly colourful and attractive. They are often embellished with silver ornaments, iridescent beetles, beads, feathers and monkey hair, seeds and shells.

CONSERVATION

Most of the conservation work carried out was of a preventative nature and involved close collaboration with the curators and designers regarding their display requirements. It required an innovative and creative approach, encompassing the design and construction of safe mounting systems for both display and future storage. Each textile was individually assessed to ascertain its requirements. It was a challenging and inspiring process and provided results that were successful and greatly satisfying. The mounting and display systems enabled the textiles to be transported and installed safely into showcases and shadow boxes that will subsequently be used for storage purposes. Such an approach has provided efficiencies in the handling of the textiles as well as the use of labour and conservation materials, saving time and money.

INSTALLATION

The technical part of the project culminated with the installation of the textiles. This involved an international collaboration of designers, lighting and technical engineers, conservators, curators, exhibition technicians, museum assistants and registrars.

Four of the world's largest hinged showcases were installed in the Museum to facilitate the display of extraordinary long textiles, some exceeding eight metres in length.

Whilst I have focused on the textiles, I must emphasise that the Museum displays a fabulous collection of other forms of cultural material displayed in a most innovative, creative and educational way - a feast for anyone who enjoys the history, culture and religion of a truly diverse region. I would urge anyone travelling in the region to make a stop in Singapore and see this wondrous and exquisite collection. It is a remarkable tribute to Asian culture.

Patricia Moncrieff
Heritage Conservation Consultant
Perth, Western Australia

A CONSERVATION PLACEMENT AT THE HERITAGE CONSERVATION CENTRE, SINGAPORE

At the beginning of 2002 I spent six weeks on a placement at the Heritage Conservation Centre (HCC) in Singapore. This was the result of a chance conversation with a colleague, and fulfilled a desire on my part to experience textile conservation in a completely different environment. Having been a textile conservator at the National Museums of Scotland (NMS) for eight years it was an opportunity to spread my wings a bit, while still keeping my exciting and hectic position at the Museum.

The HCC, which is a division of the National Heritage Board, is a custom-built facility, the first of its kind in Asia. There are four departments within this conservation and storage facility: Registration, Conservation, Research and Administration/Estates Management

At the time of the placement, the conservators at HCC were preparing objects for display in the Asian Civilizations Museum (ACM), which was to open early in 2003 in the refurbished colonial Empress Place Building, in a beautiful setting beside the river. During my time at HCC I worked on a number of conservation treatments, including royal garments, a rare and unusual embroidered hanging and a tapestry robe panel, and prepared reports on proposed treatments for a number of other objects. I also called on my experience of mounting and installing textiles in discussion with textile conservator Patricia Moncrieff and the designer and curators, to come up with solutions for displaying many of the complex textiles.

My first project was to complete the treatment of the royal garments of Sultan Abdul Rahman Riau-Lingga. The 19th century Baju (jacket) and Seluar (trousers) are of cream silk brocade with red, blue and gold silk threads. They are unlined. The jacket was in poor condition, with broken warps resulting in holes and splits. It was treated by lining with a full support of silk crepe, a fine semi-transparent fabric. A pattern was taken and the support fabric cut to shape and inserted behind each panel of the jacket. Laid thread couching was worked in a silk thread over the holes and areas of damage. A patch of silk crepe was inserted behind the split in the crease along the top of the sleeve and couched. The trousers required much less treatment: damaged areas were given a patch support of silk crepe.

A mount was required to display the costume. Tan, a museum assistant with experience of dressmaking, made a soft sculptured shape of Plastazote (a high-density inert foam) covered with cotton lawn to fit inside the jacket. The sleeve inserts were covered with silk to enable them to slip in easily. Velcro tabs were stitched to the top edge of the trousers to enable them to be attached to a "waist" of Plastazote. This enabled the outfit to be displayed as it would have been worn.

The second project was a rare and unusual 19th century ritual hanging from Sumba Island, Indonesia. It is made of undyed cotton and embroidered in chain stitch with threads of

a thick twisted plant fibre. The fertility symbol motifs, a woman surrounded by female babies, jellyfish and lobster, are normally found on skirts. The use of the hanging is uncertain. It was very crumpled and distorted due to the thick embroidery threads. There were also numerous pink and white coloured stains, particularly across the central section, as a result of mould. There were many areas of weakness and holes across the centre, and at the top and bottom.

Conservation treatment consisted of stitching the hanging to a full support of pre-scoured linen fabric. Running stitches were worked around the heavy embroidered areas. A brick stitch, similar to that used in tapestry conservation, was worked over areas of damage to hold loose threads to the support fabric. The regular pattern of the brick stitching simulated the weave of the hanging. The edges of the linen fabric were herringbone stitched at the edges on the reverse. As the hanging was too long for the display case, it was turned at the top and bottom. Velcro was stitched to the top edge for display.

The front panel of a mid-19th century robe was my last practical project. An example of "Kesi", a silk and gold metal thread Chinese tapestry weave, the beautifully coloured panel had motifs of lotus flowers, clouds, mountains and birds. It had undergone a conservation treatment in the past, of very minimal stitching to a square of gold silk Habutai fabric that had been adhered to an open, plain weave cotton fabric for stiffening. Laid thread couching had been worked over areas of damage. The curator was keen that the panel read as a robe, so the edges of the support fabric were cut to follow the shape of the robe, then turned to the back and stitched. Extra lines of running stitch were put in at regular intervals to secure the panel to the support fabric. The panel was to be stitched to a padded board made of acid-free materials and mounted in a shadow box.

The placement was a great experience. I saw a wide range of textiles, not only those that I worked on, but also in the stores. I learned from Patricia's great knowledge of Asian textiles and from meeting other conservators, curators and designers at HCC. Further, I brought back information about the stores and facility generally that will be of use in future projects at the NMS. In all it was useful and great fun, as well as a good exchange both personally and for the institutions involved. I am looking forward to a return trip to Singapore to see the new Asian Civilizations Museum and the textiles that I worked on.

With thanks to the National Heritage Board, the Friends of the National Museums of Scotland and the NMS for assistance in making the placement happen. Particular thanks to Patricia Moncrieff, textile conservator, and Loh Heng Noi, Director of the HCC, for their help during the placement

Lynn McClean
Head of Textile and Paper Conservation
National Museums of Scotland

**THROUGH THE SURFACE:
Collaborating Textile Artists from Britain and Japan**

Readers will remember that two years ago as part of the *Japan 2001* festival, the Surrey Institute of Art and Design arranged, under the title *Textural Space*, a series of exhibitions at various venues of exciting new work by a number of contemporary Japanese textile artists. Such was its success that it is now being followed up by a much more elaborate project building on the relationships established during *Textural Space*.

Through the Surface is a multi-layered title reflecting the many levels of the project; it can mean "something emerging" or "beyond the immediately visible". The emerging relationships within *Through the Surface* are created through collaborative involvement with the surface texture and hidden structure of textiles. The project will explore points of difference and similarity within the cultures of Japan and Britain. The real exchange of ideas, techniques and an understanding of cultural and personal sensibilities as they relate to working practice can best be achieved through close collaboration resulting in practical outcomes.

Young textile artists will travel and work with established artists in their opposite country, exchange ideas and techniques and explore how this can impact on future practice. These placements will be nationwide in Britain and in the Kansai and Gunma regions of Japan, with seven partnerships in total. The emerging artists will stay between ten and twelve weeks and then return to their own country. All the artists will then produce work, some collaborative, some individual, arising from the exchange and with continued contact through the internet.

The partnerships in Britain are:

Maxine Bristow and Kyoko Nitta, who will re-evaluate the traditional techniques of needlepoint and knotting to create interventions within the built environment;

Frances Geesin and Kaori Hosozawa, will be based at the Surrey Institute of Art and Design, Farnham, and will investigate the possibilities of interactive installations through new materials and new technology;

Jeanette Appleton and Naoko Yoshimoto, based at Chester College of Higher Education and the Bankfield Museum, will explore felt and stitch, combining the most ancient cloth-making technique with the most modern technology;

and in Japan:

Teruyoshi Yoshida and Clare Barber, based at Osaka Seikei University, will explore ritual and response to tradition and performance through print, weave and construction;

Michiko Kawarabayashi and Ealish Wilson, also based at Osaka Seikei University will be determining different approaches through print and mixed media to the body and to interiors;

Machiko Agano and Anniken Amundsen, based at Kawashima. Textile School, will knit, weave and construct textiles considering natural forms and links with scientific discovery;

Junichi Arai and Tim Parry Williams will explore the most pioneering cloth constructions and surfaces to be applied to fashion and interior fabrics.

During the exchange collaborations, the participating artists will give lectures or workshops at the institutions to which they are attached.

The website has a central role in the project. All participants will keep a work journal during their involvement and pages from these journals will be published on this website at regular intervals. This will provide maximum access and will create real-time documentation of the Project. Each partnership will also be interviewed and photographed for publication on the website, www.throughthesurface.surrart.ac.uk

Finally the works created through these partnerships will be exhibited throughout England next year and Japan in 2005. The provisional programme for this country is:

18 January - 20 March, the James Hockey Gallery and Foyer Gallery, Farnham, with a site-specific installation at Fabrics, Brighton;

June (building work permitting), the Sainsbury Centre for the Visual Arts, Norwich;

August, Bankfield Museum and Piece Hall, Halifax, with a site-specific installation at Square Chapel;

Mid-September - mid-November, Nottingham Castle Museum and Art Gallery.

The Director of the whole project is Lesley Millar at the Surrey Institute of Art and Design, e-mail lmillar@surrart.ac.uk

Lianne Jarrett
Publicist

REPORTS OF O.A.T.G. MEETINGS

Silken Threads: Lacquer Thrones

At our meeting on 19 February, Susan Conway talked on the Inland Courts of S.E. Asia in the nineteenth century, their dress, regalia and textiles.

This area of present-day northern Thailand was then a series of separate courts. Susan likened them to the states of Renaissance Italy. Each prince ruled within his own valley, his degree of wealth and power based on people, rice and trade.

Bordering Burma, China or Siam, they traded with the major power but also paid tributes. When offering tribute, prescribed robes in the style of the major power were worn. Surrounding hill tribes would raid the courts so, to reduce raids and to signify his own power, the prince would add hill tribe women to his tally of wives, women who came with their own culture and style of dress. The result was a society of princedoms influenced by a rich melange of cultures which gave them a unique character.

Using Burmese and Shan fabrics, Chinese silk, local cotton and coarse silk, enriched with embroidery and sumptuous trimmings, the court workshops made ceremonial dress. The banding of the Pha Sin tubular skirt, in particular "reads" as a history of this culture mix.

In the audience room the prince displayed his elaborate court regalia, surrounded by murals, banners, textiles, carved jewel-encrusted furniture, lacquerware, silver and gold work, all made by the craftsmen of the court workshop.

The end of the century brought dramatic change. Under British influence Victorian court or military style dress was adopted covered by the traditional coat, and tiered crown plus medals with a local flavour. The princesses, fascinated by Queen Alexandra's legacy of leg-of-mutton sleeved blouses, incorporated them into their costumes with lace, stockings and shoes. Change then accelerated with the coming of the railways and Indian and European imports.

When Susan spoke to us six years ago (see newsletter no. 9, February 1998) on Thai textiles, she had found no significant collections during her research. Her source material had come mainly from Thai family heirlooms. For the study on the Lan Na courts, which was the subject of her PhD., she undertook three field trips, but was also able to see the Cheng Mai court collection which is being well preserved by the Thai Bank. She found some other items, less well cared for, in Bangkok and a rich record of photographs and watercolours.

A Frenchman, Gamier, travelling with an artist, mapped these small courts and photographed them in the nineteenth century. There are also missionary collections of photographs of the royal princesses.

Susan's talk was erudite, extremely interesting and accompanied by her own slides, which well illustrated every aspect of the talk. These photographs are included in her new book on the subject, which is the first comprehensive study of it.

Her next project is to be a study of the poorly known textiles of the Isan area of east Thailand.

Pamela Waite

**Visit to the Horniman Museum
as guests of the Friends of the Pitt Rivers Museum**

Our trip to the Horniman Museum began with a welcome cup of tea in the new cafe, which turned out to be very appropriate, because the Horniman fortune was founded on importing tea. Marcus Pugh, the Head of Marketing and Fund-raising, explained that the tea business was started by John Horniman, a prominent Quaker, and passed to his son Frederick, who became one of the ten richest men in England. Frederick was an avid collector, and kept the artefacts brought back for him by tea traders in Surrey House, his home in Forest Hill. The house and collection became the nucleus of what is now the Horniman Museum. Its centenary has just been celebrated with the addition of new galleries and facilities.

Hassan Arero, head of Anthropology, showed us the African Worlds Gallery. The aim of the exhibition is to show Africa as a concept rather than a series of countries and to show that cultures go beyond national boundaries. One of the most spectacular exhibits is the huge mask from Igbo, Nigeria, This is more like a tent than a mask and stands about 3 metres high. It is made of brightly coloured fabric and was used in the *ijele* masquerade.

Marcus then showed us the Natural History Gallery including the enormous walrus on its iceberg plinth. It was brought back from Hudson Bay in 1870 and preserved for the Museum. Unfortunately the taxidermist had never seen a walrus and kept stuffing it until all the wrinkles disappeared.

He also showed us the stunning Music Gallery, opened last year, in which 1600 of the Museum's 7000 instruments are displayed. Some of them are arranged in themes; others are grouped according to how they make their sounds. There is also a hands-on area and a performance area.

The afternoon gave us time to explore the garden, the aquarium, the Puppet Worlds exhibition and the Centenary Gallery showing the history and range of the collection.

Carol Quarini

(Abridged from Carol's report in the Friends of the Pitt Rivers Newsletter.- Ed.)

Indigenous Arts and Crafts of Anatolia

Selcuk Gurisik is a Turkish textile and fashion designer who has been working on a PhD thesis on traditional feltmaking in Anatolia. His talk to the O.A.T.G. on 17 April was based on his research, which he admitted had grown out of a personal obsession with the felt and feltmakers of Anatolia. Using a combination of video and still images he presented an introduction to the origins and current state of feltmaking in Anatolia.

He described how felt has been found from as early as the fifth century B.C., with production occurring almost universally where there were shepherds and their sheep. The felt tradition in Anatolia grew from the indigenous production combined with influences from the work of Siberian nomads who settled in Anatolia as a result of climate change.

Under the rule of the Ottoman Empire in the twelfth century a Guild of Feltmakers was established at the Ottoman Court. This established co-operative practices, some of which are still observed to-day. The Sultan was presented with gifts made from felt as a way of advertising new products. Typical felt products would include prayer mats, helmets, tents, headdresses and blankets. Light colours and patterns were used on the more expensive pieces, while those for the poor tended to be black.

Felt production declined in the twentieth century. In the modern Turkish Republic the Felt Guilds were associated with old ways and felt fell out of favour, with feltmakers occupying a low status in society. Currently only about twenty traditional feltmakers survive in Anatolia. They are old, and the younger generation is not learning this traditional skill.

Selcuk has been studying feltmaking with one of the old craftsmen for fifteen years. He uses the techniques to produce fabulous contemporary pieces of sculpture and sculptural costume. This summer the Topkapi Palace Museum in Istanbul is having an exhibition of feltmaking which will include traditional designs and Selcuk's contemporary pieces. He hopes that this will raise interest in traditional Anatolian feltmaking and help the craft to survive.

Susan Stanton

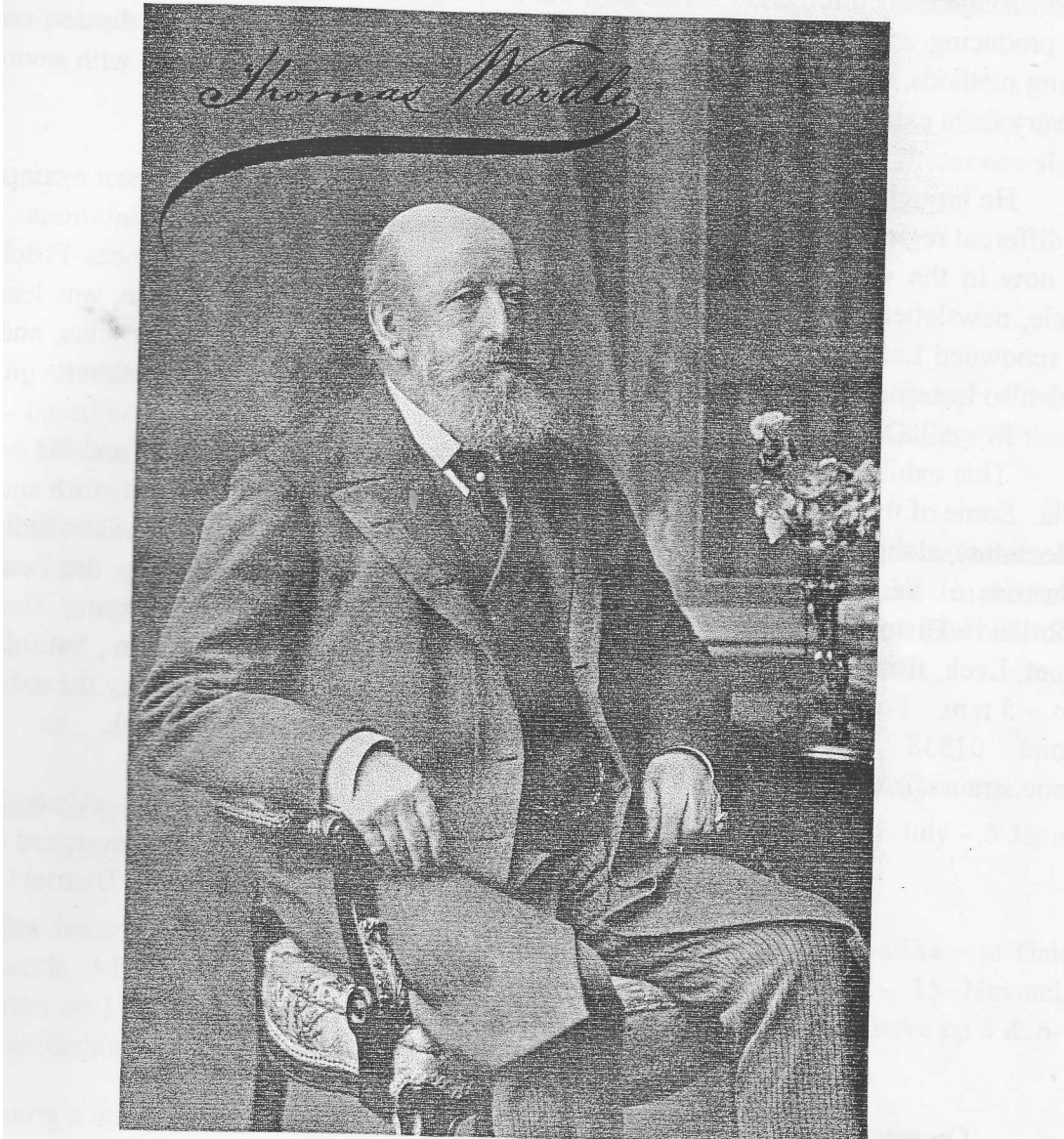
A SPLENDID ACQUISITION BY THE TEXTILE MUSEUM

People of Central Asia have developed a variety of garments to suit their active way of life and the region's harsh climate. One outstanding example, a coat, has recently been donated to the Textile Museum in Washington, D.C.. Possibly made for a Kazakh man, the elaborately embroidered suede coat is clearly a descendant of Central Asian nomadic apparel.

For centuries, an array of clothes worn in layers has been considered a necessity on the steppes of Central Asia. Men typically wore an inner shirt under a longer robe, and over these a leather coat and, if needed, a coat made of felt. An embroidered suede coat, trousers, cap and boots were often produced as a matching set. Such items would have been the best set of clothes worn on special occasions and celebrations - they were a sign of wealth and quite rare. This particular coat is made of animal skin, possibly deer, and intended to be worn loosely over the body, thus not tailored to take the shape of the body. After the coat was sewn together, it was embroidered, lined with printed cotton fabric, and edged with fur.

Sumru Belger Krody
Associate Curator

(Abridged from the Textile Museum bulletin)

EXHIBITIONS**Thomas Wardle in India**

Thomas, later Sir Thomas, Wardle was a leading manufacturer in the latter years of the 19th and early 20th centuries. As the owner of the family dye works in Leek he was a man of wide interests and talents. He was an author, musician and poet, and involved himself in education and scientific and technical research.

He was a great friend of William Morris's and it was to him that Morris turned for advice as to how to perfect the use of natural dyestuffs by which he could obtain the subtle shades he needed for his designs, many of which were first printed at Wardle's dye works. For inspiration Morris drew on many craft and design traditions, but none more so than those of India. This went along with Wardle's interest in India whence much of the silk which he processed came.

Wardle was concerned at the inconsistent quality of Indian silk and in 1886 was asked by the Government to travel there to see if he could help and to give advice. Indian silks faced strong competition and the industry was in danger of collapse. He went to all the main silk producing areas and made recommendations about silkworm rearing, disease control, reeling methods, training, etc. His work was successful and he was credited with saving the industry from extinction.

He brought back with him saris and turban fabrics to represent the finest examples of the different regional craft traditions. These were displayed at prestigious exhibitions. Many are now in the care of the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester (see Frances Pritchard's article, newsletter rip. 18, February 2001). His wife, Lady Elizabeth Wardle, was leader of the renowned Leek Embroidery Society, whose members used Indian tusser silks, and their work also benefited from the improvement in quality which Thomas brought about.

This exhibition tells the story of Thomas Wardle, his life and times and his work in India. Some of the silks he collected will be displayed (on loan from the Whitworth and other collections), along with other items related to the links between the English and the Indian silk industries of the late nineteenth century. The exhibition is presented by the Leek and Moorlands Historical Trust and runs at the Art Gallery, Nicholson Institute, Stockwell Street, Leek, from 24 June to 2 August, Tuesdays to Fridays 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., Saturdays 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.. For information about the workshops and talks that accompany the exhibition phone 01538 483 732, visit website www.staffsmoorlands.gov.uk, or e-mail alison.strauss@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk

Alison Strauss
Arts Development Officer
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

Puppet Worlds
at the Horniman Museum until 2 November

On entering the Puppet Worlds exhibition, you come face to face with a group of Sri Lankan string puppets whose height (about 1 metre) and exotic clothing are the first thing you notice. Other beautifully dressed string puppets in the collection are those from Burma, which have ten strings, allowing them to perform quite complex movements. String puppets are manipulated from above by the puppeteer and in some cases more than one operator is required. Apparently some Chinese puppets were so life-like that their heads were stored separately from their bodies for fear that they might climb out of their boxes.

Puppets can also be operated from below using rods or hand movements in the case of glove puppets. Glove puppets operated by a performer standing in a booth with his hands above his head are typical of open-air puppet shows in Europe, a good example being Punch and Judy. Rod puppets are manipulated by a rod running up the body to the head and many have rods operating the hands and legs. The examples in the exhibition are the *wayang golek*

rod puppets from Java, which again have magnificent costumes. The shadow puppets from Thailand are cut from buffalo hide and operated using rods. They are beautifully coloured and decorated but are designed to be seen in the dark as silhouettes on a translucent screen. There is also a collection of water puppets from Vietnam.

Carol Quarini

(Abridged from an article in the *Friends of the Pitt Rivers* newsletter)

Other Exhibitions in the U.K

Losing the Thread - a small display of work, mainly embroidery, by a group of thirteen U.K.- based artists, based on studies made at the Museum, in the Lower Gallery of the Pitt Rivers Museum, until 7 September. (Tel. 01865 270900)

The Robe: in Focus - An exhibition of Qing period textiles exploring how these reflected the status of the wearers and, through the use of cosmological symbols, their place in the world, at Linda Wrigglesworth's gallery, 34 Brook Street, London, until 27 June. (Tel. 020 7408 0177)

Exhibitions Overseas

The Art of Resist Dyeing - at the Textile Museum, Washington, D.C., 5 July - 5 January 2004. (Tel. 001 202 667-0441)

Textiles from Western India: Block-prints of the Khatri of Dhamadka - at Galerie Handwerk, Max Joseph-strasse 4, Munchen, Germany, 17 October - 15 November. Activities on 17 & 18 October include a lecture by Eiluned Edwards (see above pp 3 & 6-11) and a workshop by Ismail Mohammad Khatri. (Tel. 00 49 89-5119296)

Last Chance to See -

An Englishman's Travels in Egypt, at the Ashmolean Museum, ends 20 July

The Legacy of Genghiz Khan, at Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California, ends 27 July

Carpets of Andalusia, at the Textile Museum, Washington, D.C., ends 10 August Mamluk

Rugs from Egypt, at the Textile Museum, Washington, D.C., ends 7 September.

C O N F E R E N C E S

Carpets and Textiles in the Iranian World, 1400-1700

A conference organized jointly by the Beattie Carpet Archive at the Ashmolean Museum and the Iran Heritage Foundation, with support from the British Academy, will be held at the Ashmolean Museum on Saturday and Sunday 30 and 31 August.

Currently there is a gap between historians of the social, economic and literary life of the Iranian world and scholars focused primarily on objects. Opportunities for the development of new insights through interdisciplinary contacts are rare. For this conference, therefore, concentrating on the Timurid and Safavid periods, the approach will be interdisciplinary rather than object-orientated.

Themes to be discussed are: art historical questions; the organization of production; social function and importance of carpets and textiles; cross-border influences; trade and economy; studies of objects; the history of technology; and the application of scientific techniques to art-historical problems.

Speakers will include Prof Walter B. Denny (University of Massachusetts), Dr Yolande Crowe (Geneva), Dr Christine Klose (Hamburg), Rene Beklus (Institute of Social Sciences, the Hague), Dr Steven Cohen (London), Dr Willem Floor (Bethesda), Jennifer Scarce (formerly of NMS), Dr Jon Thompson (Ashmolean Museum) and Dr Mary Anderson McWilliams (Arthur M. Sackler Museum, University of Harvard).

The number of attenders is limited to 200. Conference fee £40 (£20 concessions), includes buffet lunches, tea and coffee over the two days. College accommodation can be arranged, if required (£33 single/ £87 twin per night). To reserve a place or accommodation, contact emma.dick@ashmus.ox.ac.uk, tel. 01865 278076 or 278078.

Sutra: Threads, Ties and Transformations

A conference on the Indian textile trade to be held at Kolkata, India, 11-16 October.

The Sutra conference will be the first international gathering held in India to focus on the textiles traded from the sub-continent throughout the world and over many centuries. The conference will bring together speakers from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the U.S.A., U.K., Australia and Europe to explore aspects of this global phenomenon which has had such a huge impact on world history, economics and design. Papers will focus on Indian textiles traded to other parts of Asia, from Tibet to the Middle East and Indonesia, to Europe and the U.S.A., and to Africa and the African diaspora, and on the merchant communities that carried out the trade. A special session will also be devoted to the important trade in woven and embroidered textiles from Bengal, of which Kolkata is the capital.

The conference will be accompanied by a special exhibition at the Birla Academy of Arts of Indian trade textiles on loan from the Tapi collection, and by a textile fair selling the finest of contemporary textiles being produced in India to-day.

For further details and information on how to register for the conference, please visit the Sutra website: www.sutraindia.org

LECTURES AND EVENTS

Unfortunately we did not hear of the Trinity Term course of lectures on *Textiles and Carpets of the Islamic World* in time to include in the February newsletter, but there is still time to catch the last two of the series:

Thursday 12 June - *Introduction to Structural Analysis of Carpets*. practical session by Jon Thompson

Thursday 18 June - *Textile Collections of the Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul* by Dr Hulya Tezcan, Curator of Textiles at the Topkapi

Both lectures will be held from 2 - 4 p.m. at the Oriental Institute, Pusey Lane, Oxford.

Three rug and textile appreciation mornings are being held at the Textile Museum, Washington, D.C. on Saturdays 14, 21 and 28 June at 10.30 a.m. (tel. 001 202 667-0441)

Sunday 20 July at 2 p.m. - Gallery talk, *The Story of Silk* The Royal Museum, Chambers Street, Edinburgh, (tel. 0131247 4422)

Wednesday 6 August - *Chinese Felt Treasures*. children's holiday activity at the Ashmolean Museum; 10.30 a.m. - 12.30 p.m. for ages 7-9, 1.30 - 3.30 p.m. for ages 9-11, cost £4 (tel. 01865 278015)

The O.A.T.G. newsletter is published three times a year with deadlines on the first Monday in February, June and October

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE - MONDAY 6 OCTOBER

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Tel/fax. 01202 269092 e-mail: phyllis@nyes.org.uk

STOP PRESS

Reflections of Inherited Tunes - Selcuk Gurisik's exhibition of traditional and contemporary Turkish felts will be on show at the Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, 27 June - 17 September. See www.selcukgurisik.com