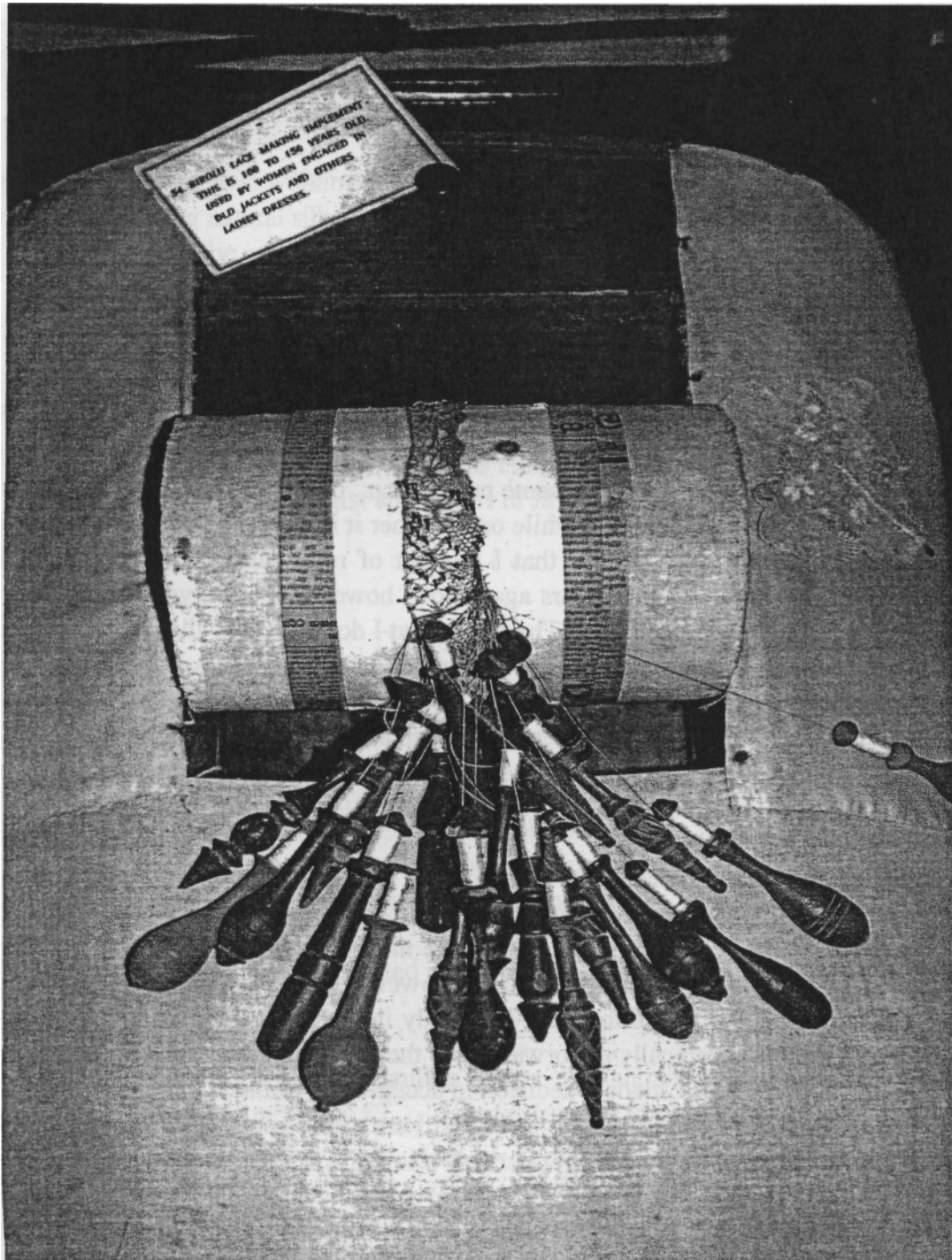


# OXFORD ASIAN TEXTILE GROUP

Newsletter No. 30

February 2005



*Biralu kotte*, the pillow-like structure for creating pillow lace, dating from the mid-late 1800s.

The intricately carved *biralu* (bobbins) are made from timbers such as ebony and jackfruit

(Photo courtesy of Norrie Peel. See p. 9)

## CONTENTS

A New Resource for Central Asian Textiles: Stein Collections at the V.& A. ...	4
Lace Work in Sri Lanka ...	9
The Joseph Kane Collection of Dresses from the Middle East...	13
Reflections on <i>Through the Surface</i> ...	15
Reports of O.A.T.G. Meetings ...	19
Obituary: Alison Smith ...	21
Museums Round-Up ...	23
Book Reviews ...	24
Other Book News ...	28
Exhibition: <i>Patterns of Culture</i> at Leeds ...	29
Other Exhibitions...	30
Symposia...	31
Lectures and Events ...	32

## EDITORIAL

You may have noticed before you turned the page, that this is newsletter no. 30. In other words, I have completed ten years – I might say ten happy years – of producing it for you. I have said before, and I still believe it in principle, that ten years is about the right length of time for an editor to produce the same publication: on the one hand it gives her time to establish a stable network of contacts, while on the other it is not long enough for her to get stuck in a groove. You may remember that I thought of relinquishing the post when we moved away from Oxford nearly two years ago. Now, however, I crave your indulgence in putting up with me for a few more years. The fact is that I do not feel at all stale; I enjoy the job, and it keeps me more in touch with the Group now that I am no longer able to attend many meetings. Indeed, since I am not so heavily involved with the Ashmolean, I find I have more time to devote to the newsletter. There have been a few hiccups since the move, which I hope are now a thing of the past. But please, please, whenever you think it is time for a change, do let me know, I shall not feel hurt or take offence – remember my principle!

Having said all that, I should like to add that I welcome feed-back, and am always open to suggestions for innovations or improvements – not least to keep me out of that groove!. Many of you are so kind as to congratulate me on the publication, and criticisms have been gratifyingly few. One serious criticism, however, has been of the quality of some of the illustrations in the last two issues, but especially in no. 29. All the offending images were either sent to me electronically or forwarded to the printer electronically or both, and I apologise for them. I have now made a decision to accept only prints in future and hope that will solve the problem, at least until the time, which I am afraid may come, when good old-fashioned prints are no longer on offer; but perhaps printers will have improved by then.

Application forms for membership of the O.A.T.G. invite you to say what your special interests are, though not everybody fills this section in. I find the information helpful in identifying the right person to ask to review a book or report a meeting, and I am sure the programme secretaries find it useful too. Unfortunately a jinx has reduced Joyce Seaman's database to a state of chaos. We should be grateful, therefore, if you could again let her know what your interests are: tel. 01865 558558 or e-mail: [e-art-asst@ashmus.ox.ac.uk](mailto:e-art-asst@ashmus.ox.ac.uk)

**PROGRAMME**

TUESDAY 22 FEBRUARY at 5.45 p.m.

**Carpet Riding in Khiva**

by Chris Alexander

Chris Alexander has been working in Khiva, Uzbekistan, for the last six years and has set up workshops reviving natural silk dyeing, making Timurid design carpets and cotton suzani. He will describe income generation schemes that benefit the local community.

\* \* \*

WEDNESDAY 27 APRIL at 5.45 p.m.

**Batik from East Java**

by Rens Heringa Anthropologist and expert in  
Javanese batik, Leiden

\* \* \*

TUESDAY 10 MAY

**Visit to the Textile Conservation Centre in Winchester at 11 a.m.  
and the Hampshire Museums Reserve Collection at 2 p.m.**

TCC combines education, research and practice in textile conservation. Members will get an insight into the complexities of conservation and a unique opportunity to observe work in progress on a variety of valuable and delicate materials.

Alison Carter, Senior Keeper at the Hampshire Museums also has some interesting textiles to show us.

Numbers are limited, so if interested please contact Fiona Sutcliffe as soon as possible.

Talks are held at the Pauling Centre, 58 Banbury Road, Oxford Non  
members £2 Refreshments from 5.15 p.m.

For further information or to book places on the Winchester visit, contact  
Fiona Sutcliffe, tel. 014991 872268, e-mail: [J.V.Sutcliffe@talk21.com](mailto:J.V.Sutcliffe@talk21.com)  
or Rosemary Lee, tel. 01491 873276, e-mail: [rosemary.lee@talk21.com](mailto:rosemary.lee@talk21.com)

## A NEW RESOURCE FOR THE STUDY OF CENTRAL ASIAN TEXTILES

### Stein Textiles in the Victoria and Albert Museum

Since the late 1920s, hundreds of sand-laden textile fragments from sites in Central Asia lay in storage at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Locked away in a high cupboard, there was little incentive to study them. The V&A, in any case, was not predisposed towards excavated material and had a different trajectory from the British Museum, one that was founded on issues surrounding design rather than archaeology. Already bearing complicated inventory numbers when they came into the V&A, these textiles were not incorporated into the museum's own cataloguing system and as a consequence have perhaps been perceived as slightly outside the remit of the museum. Because of these several hindrances, few curators and scholars, apart from some very honourable exceptions such as Donald King, formerly Keeper of Textiles at the V&A, and Krishna Riboud, the indefatigable scholar of early Asian textiles, have engaged with these fragments. For their European discoverer, Sir Marc Aurel Stein (1862-1943), however, they were texts to be read. By ordering them and classifying them, along with a range of artefacts in other materials, he sought to produce a representational understanding of the roots of European history by looking at cross-cultural influences in the area we know today as the Silk Road. Although we now question the imperialist ring to this enterprise, the advances in technology, still far from perfect as we found out during the Stein Textile Project, have made possible, in part, Stein's aim.

The V&A is the guardian of some 600 Silk Road textile pieces from Stein's expeditions. Recovered from this contested region in an age of empire, the fragments in South Kensington today are on loan from the government of India who partly funded Stein at the beginning of the twentieth century. Over the years, visitors to the Stein collection at the V&A have been overwhelmed by the magnitude and variety of the holdings, so much so that most have gone away marvelling but with little solid work achieved. There have been few pointers to guide researchers through the collection. Making the textiles available on the Internet seemed an unproblematic way, first, to signpost their existence in the V&A and, secondly, to disseminate knowledge about them regardless of their physical whereabouts. Following the lead of other institutions worldwide who had started cataloguing their Central Asian holdings electronically, funding was secured from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation of New York to do the same with the V&A's fragments. Two full-time and two part-time staff were seconded to the project which was completed in eleven months. Aside from the recording work, which is described below, the textiles are now in much better storage and are themselves easier to access.

Initially, the cataloguing team spent some time reflecting on how best to describe the Stein fragments. No system is perfect and while it was a huge temptation to try and "nail" every single piece as to fibre, weave, origin and date, we felt, on balance, that this was a step too far and we risked leaving behind yet another uncompleted listing of the material. A standardised template in which to insert information was formulated mostly on the basis of how the fragments looked rather than how they were made. The pieces are, however,

differentiated by whether they are embroidered, plain, twill or pattern woven, resist dyed, painted or knotted for example. Measurements are given and Stein's own site numbers recorded Stein's descriptions of the pieces, though rather hard to find and follow through in his massive multi-volume books, were an enormous help, of course, and the realization that this was so increased as the project wore on. While his beautifully phrased English was not reproducible in an electronic catalogue format, the references are cited for each fragment, however small. Careful decisions about the photography shots had to be made and, as we did not analyse each piece, most items have the reverse photographed as well as the front. The state-of-the-art photography equipment, coupled with the skill of the photographer, means that nearly all the textiles can be analysed on-screen though this facility depends on the quality of the computer set-up of the end user. This close analysis is not possible with the V&A's own Access to Images web pages but will be available in the future on the specialist site to be constructed.

Many of the V&A Stein textiles come from the Buddhist site of the Mogao Grottoes near the town of Dunhuang. The banner section shown here is typical of many items found by Stein in Cave 17.

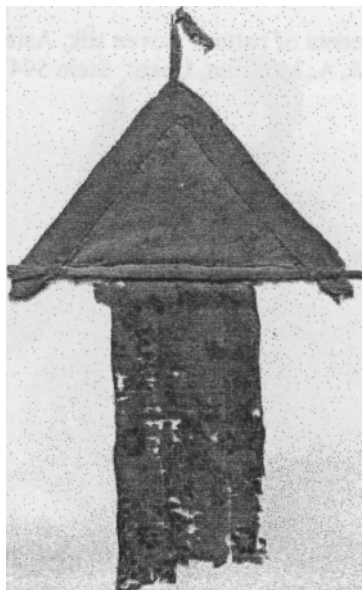


Figure 1. Banner part of plain and pattern woven silk with clamp-resist dyed designs and inserted split bamboo.  
Dunhuang, A.D.700-900. (V.& A. Museum Loan: Stein 545)

Although Dunhuang is perhaps the most famous site visited by Stein, his journeys took him to other areas of Central Asia. Some of these have been little researched and some, like the Astana burial site, have been productively studied both by western scholars and by Chinese archaeologists from the 1930s. Figure 2 is an example from Astana and Figure 3 is from the less well-known Miran Fort site.

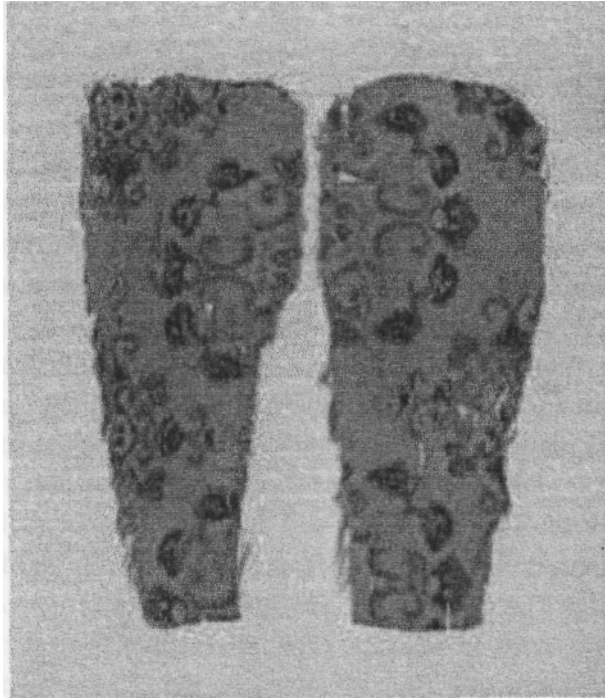


Figure 2. Two fragments of pattern woven silk, Astana, A.D. 200-900  
(V. & A. Museum, Loan: Stein 594)

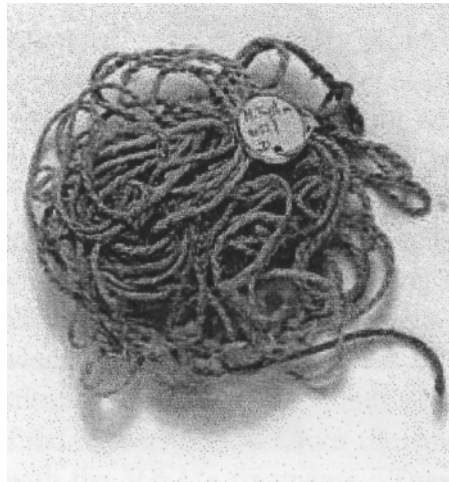


Figure 3. Ball of string, hemp, Mazartagh, A.D. 400-1000  
(V. & A. Museum, Loan: Stein 246)

Some pieces are exceptionally fragmentary while others are immediately recognisable for what they are. A tassel and a duo of black silk are illustrated here as examples.



Figure 4. Tassel of spun silk and forged metal, Dunhuang, AD. 700-900 (V. & A. Museum, Loan: Stein 482)



Figure 5. Two fragments of pattern woven black silk, Dunhuang, AD. 700-900 (V. & A. Museum, Loan: Stein 419)

Among the collection are some unusual objects, difficult to identify both as regards material and use. The small, pouch-like object in figure 6 is one example.



Figure 6. Square of folded grass, Khadalik, .A.D. 700-1000 (V.& A. Museum, Loan: Stein 128)

How can the information about the V&A Stein textiles be accessed? The full database is not yet publicly available though it is to be incorporated into a larger Central Asian project under the direction of the Mellon Foundation, along the lines of Art Store. One of the most enthralling parts of this web facility will be a total 360° view of every cave chapel mural at the Dunhuang pilgrimage site, where many of the V&A's textiles come from. This was an ambitious co-operative project with Chinese scholars and the first one in this series to come to fruition. In the meantime, digital photographs and brief entries of over 500 of the V&A Silk Road textile fragments are available on the V&A's own website. Go to <http://images.vam.ac.uk> and type in 'STEIN' in the search facility. The thumbnails can be enlarged though the quality here may not be of a standard to carry out weave analysis and the contextualization of the pieces is a general overview. This 'Access to Images' site is intended for a broad audience and is part of the V&A's outreach programme. It does not include much of the more detailed cataloguing that will appear on more specialist web pages. The original digital photographs are of a superb quality and the descriptions, though they do not include a full weave analysis, are very informative. As well as being sent to the Mellon Foundation for future use, the V&A data is in the process of being transported to the British Library for their International Dunhuang Project site. This can be found at <http://idp.bl.uk/>. Although at the time of writing, the V&A's pieces have not gone live on this site, nevertheless it has a mass of information about Silk Road collections. The photographs of the region and the maps precisely locating the Stein finds are particularly good. Of course, the textiles themselves can still be studied in the Asian Department of the V&A. Choose which ones you want to see from the V&A Image site and then make an appointment with the Far Eastern Section (020.7942.2244, e-mail [far.east@vam.ac.uk](mailto:far.east@vam.ac.uk)). There are no shortcuts to understanding the Stein material, for it remains a complicated and enigmatic collection. It is hoped that this latest project will supply the researcher with tools to make a positive start.

Verity Wilson



Verity Wilson was a curator in the Far Eastern Section of the Victoria and Albert Museum for 25 years. She directed the Stein Textile Project and her book, *Chinese Textiles in the Victoria and Albert Museum* will be published in the summer.

#### Bibliography:

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### LACE WORK IN SRI LANKA

We are all likely to have bits of lace passed down from our grandmothers. My mother, who had a great interest in anything old, made sure that the family lace pieces created by my great grandmother and great aunts were enjoyed. Lace doilies, pillowcases and table runners were always on display in my home as I was growing up. I don't remember my great grandmother and don't recall my grandmother ever creating any lace pieces, but I do have some slight memory of my Great Aunt Sophie, the spinster, creating elaborate lace pieces that were given as wedding gifts. My aunt carried on this tradition and I too received the traditional lace tablecloth as a wedding gift. However, this was promptly stored away carefully as it did not suit my contemporary home at the time. Not one to wear sexy lace undergarments, my only other connexion with lace was my wedding veil, which was made from my great grandmother's dress and bits of my mother's veil as my mother insisted that I follow the tradition of wearing something old.

While exploring an antique shop in Bentota, Sri Lanka, in 2003, I came across the strange wooden piece with interesting shaped bobbins illustrated on p. 1. I discovered that it was the tool for making pillow lace. This started my interest in lace and in particular its popularity in Sri Lanka. My fascination is not so much with the lace as with the bobbins. I

have started collecting them as they are small and easy to transport and store, in addition to being of very interesting woods with a variety of patterns.

My research started with finding out more about lace in general and led to this study paper presented to the Textile Society of Hong Kong Study Group. Once I started researching I discovered that there were heaps of information available on lace but very little specific to Sri Lanka. I also realized how special my old piece of lace is and it is now treated with the same respect as my Asian textiles.

Following is a brief history of lace followed by some specific information on Sri Lankan lace.

According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* the definition of lace is “an ornamental openwork fabric formed by looping, interlacing, braiding/plaiting and/or twisting threads. The dividing line between lace and embroidery, which is an ornamentation added to an already completed fabric, is not easy to draw; a number of laces, such as Limerick and filet lace, can be called forms of embroidery upon a more or less open fabric.”

The English origin of the word lace appears to be derived from the French *lassis* or *lads*, but both are connected with the earlier Latin *laqueus*. Early French laces, *passements*, referred to ornamental open work formed of threads of flax, cotton, silk, gold or silver, and occasionally of mohair or aloe fibre, looped or plaited or twisted together by hand: (1) with a needle, when the work is distinctively known as *needlepoint lace*; (2) with bobbins, pins and a pillow or cushion, when the work is known as *pillow lace*; and (3) by steam-driven machinery, where imitations of both needlepoint and pillow laces are produced.

Research suggests that lace dates back to the 15th century in Europe although it may date back to ancient Rome, as small bone cylinders in the shape of bobbins have been found. It is likely that lace originated in Italy or Dalmatia (coastal region of the former Yugoslavia). At the time whitework (general term covering many techniques where the base is white fabric with white thread) was popular (decorative cuffs, christening gowns, ecclesiastical vestments and wedding gowns) and lace is thought to have evolved from the technique of withdrawing threads from a woven cloth, covering the remaining ones with buttonhole stitches, and building patterns from the grid-like formations. It was discovered that the foundation could be built “into the air” by constructing a grid-like network of threads on to a temporary support. The pattern could be traced onto parchment and attached to the temporary support. Upper class, aristocratic ladies and their servants prepared their trousseaux using both whitework and needle lace. The earliest known pattern books date back to the mid-1500s and these guides were targeted at the upper class women.

The fashion spread quickly and lace became popular across Europe and the British Isles. Christian missionaries introduced it abroad to places like Asia. Peasants in eastern Europe were the lace makers, but the opposite was true in western Europe where it became a profession. Peasant women would adorn their festive clothing with lace but typically they

created delicate lace for the wealthy. During the entire Renaissance period lace was a symbol of wealth and power.

Lace went out of fashion during the 18th century but survived and became fashionable again in the 19th century where it became a symbol of goodness and purity. With the industrial revolution, machinery made lace affordable. The first bobbin net machine was introduced in 1818 in France. Black lace became fashionable for mourning clothes at the time of Queen Victoria's death.

Lace has gone in and out of fashion over the past century but as long as women wear traditional lace wedding gowns and lingerie trimmed with lace it will continue to be popular.

Lace is made from many different fibres such as cotton, silk and linen. Metallic threads like gold, silver and copper are also used. Hair (grey) was used to create hair lace, considered to be a very personal gift.



Women working in a small lace enterprise in Galle. The nearer woman is working on a *biralu kotte* to create lengths of lace to be joined for a table runner. The woman behind is working on a simple pillow structure to create a lace doily. Both women are using a combination of old and new *biralu*. (Photo courtesy of Norrie Peel)

Lace work was introduced into Sri Lanka by the Portuguese in the mid-16th century and was further developed by the Dutch in the mid-17th century. The craft thrived mainly in the southern areas due to the proximity of the Dutch Galle Fort, which has now become a World Heritage site. Lace work exists to-day as an undeveloped cottage industry (statistics suggest about 300 families practising the craft) and lace makers can be found mainly in the southern districts such as Galle, Weligama, Dikwella, Matara and Hambantota, and in the central part of the country near Nuwara Eliya. Training centres have opened up in some of the major locations, such as Galle.

Derivations of the Portuguese technical terms are still in existence to-day. *Renda* (from the Portuguese *reindd*) refers to the pattern for pillow lace. The fabulous looking bobbins that carry the thread are known as *beeralu – bilru* in Portuguese. The cushion used for lace patterns is called the *beeralu mostara*, which is derived from the Portuguese word *mostara* meaning “expression of design”.

In Sri Lanka, pillow lace seems to be the most popular technique used to-day. The *biralu kotte* is the pillow-like structure that is designed at the perfect height when seated, and is best described as follows:

“It is made on a pillow-like structure mounted on a wooden base, raised on short pegs a few inches above the ground. One side of the pillow is about a foot high and the other side is about three inches high and filled with coir. It is completely covered with a thick cloth nailed to the base all around.

“At the centre of the taller end of the pillow is a rectangular compartment twelve inches long, nine inches broad and nine inches deep. At the centre of this compartment is placed a cylindrical drum that is about six inches in diameter. This is fully covered with cloth wrappings and has a central axle that fits into two grooves at the centre of the two sides of the central compartment. It can be turned around as the work progresses.

“At the centre of this drum is a parchment or stiff paper on which is found the perforated outline of the design to be knitted. This paper containing the pattern is known as *isbeesalaya*; it is wrapped right round the centre of the drum. At the start of the lace-weaving process, the required number of threads are hung in pairs from pins at the top of the drum with bobbins attached to the loose end. These pins are placed in accordance with the pattern on the *isbeesalaya*. The actual knitting is done by manipulating the bobbins to make the threads cross each other in several ways – such as the twist of two threads, a braid or a plait of four threads, and other complicated combinations. Pins are used to hold the elements of the pattern in place as the work proceeds, while at the same time the drum is turned manually.” (Extract from *Lace Work* – [www.craftrevival.org/South Asia/Sri Lanka](http://www.craftrevival.org/South Asia/Sri Lanka))

The majority of lace produced to-day is for the tourist market and I have not seen much evidence of a sophisticated end product. Most of the modern lace I have seen has been cotton, but silk is used for saris, mainly for wedding use. The *kabakurutthu* – the Portuguese name for a ladies’ jacket with lace decoration on cuffed sleeves and neckline – is popular with some.

The bobbins can be found in some of the antique shops in the southern area.

Norrie Peel

Reprinted from the Textile Society of Hong Kong Newsletter

(This article was published in H.K. and received by me before the disastrous events of 26 December 2003. Ed.)

### The Josephine Kane Collection of Dresses from the Middle East.

In 1976 Josephine Kane accompanied her husband when his work took him to Dubai, Saudi Arabia and Jordan as well as to other countries such as Oman and Yemen. Josephine had always been a keen embroiderer, member of the Embroiderers' Guild, and was attracted by the bright colours and embroidery of the local women's dresses, which she soon started to study and collect. Her interest opened many doors for her and she was welcomed into local groups with a shared interest, groups that are normally difficult for a European woman to contact. They returned to the U.K. in 1990.



Detail of a woman's dress (*Thob of Bayt al Fayt al Faqih*) from Yemen. Black cotton with natural cotton and silver braids in lace like patterns. (Josephine Kane Collection)

Many of you will remember Josephine's collection, which has been the subject of talks, study days and workshops for groups from the Costume Society, Embroiderers' Guild and Asian groups at Bristol and Bath universities, the School of Oriental and African Studies at London University, and others. Also, some of you may have seen the exhibition *Palms, Pearls and Pinnacles*, which was assembled in conjunction with Hampshire Museums and toured museums throughout the county in 1997 and '98.

This collection has now been acquired by the Textile Research Centre at Leiden in the Netherlands. Josephine made contact with Dr Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood, the Director of the Centre, after reading the editorial in the Oxford Asian Textile Group's newsletter last June (no. 28) Dr Gillian came to visit the collection here in Bosham within days and was very enthusiastic. An agreement was soon arrived at.

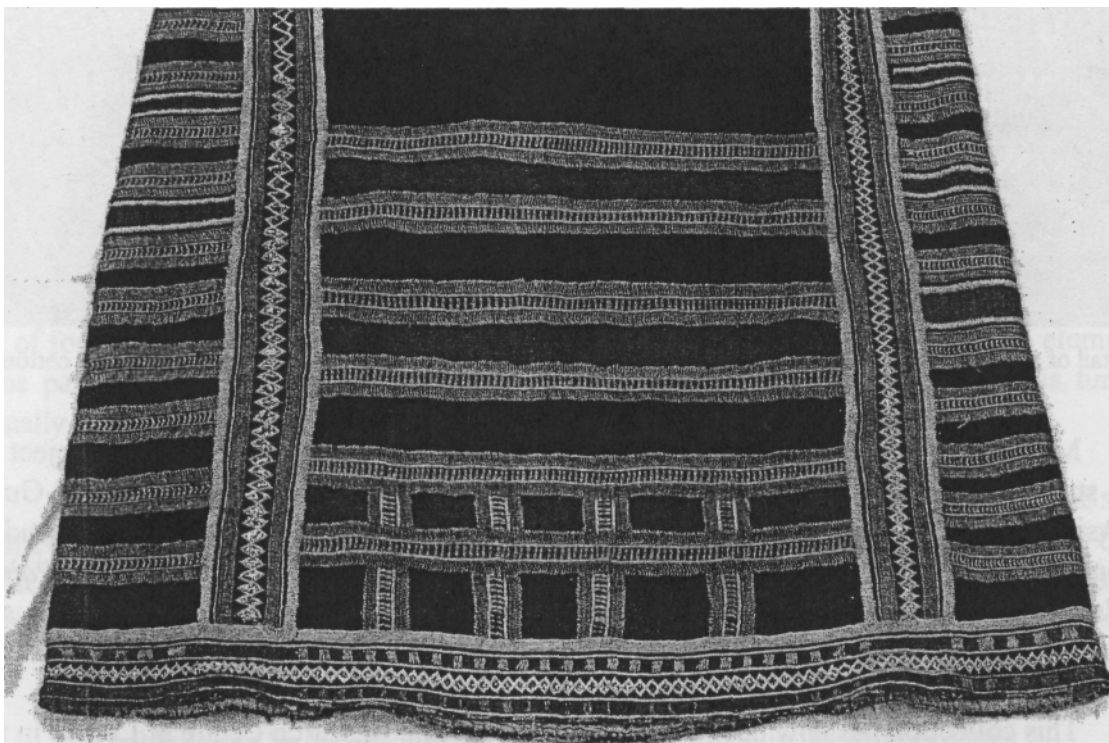
The aims of the Centre include the academic research of dress and textiles and to assist students and others working within this field. In addition they are actively building up a dress collection, which is being established in a fine building, itself a part of Leiden heritage.

The Centre co-operates closely with the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden and the University of Leiden. It has also established many international contacts, including the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford and the National Museums of Scotland.

The collection goes to Leiden with many artefacts including jewellery, as well as books, photographic slides and Josephine's own research material, accumulated over fifteen years living in the Middle East. For some time she had been wondering what to do with the collection and is very pleased to know that the Centre will retain it as a whole. It will be known as "The Josephine Kane Collection" and will be used as a basis for further research.

Contacts:- Josephine and David Kane, 01243 574799. E-mail [djkane.bb@virgin.net](mailto:djkane.bb@virgin.net)  
 Dr. Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood, Textile Research Centre, Leiden, Tel:- 00-31-(0)71-5418442  
 E-mail: [textile@rmy.nl](mailto:textile@rmy.nl)

Josephine Kane



Skirt detail of a tribal Thob from Taif, in the Western Highlands of Saudi Arabia.  
 The decoration is heavy silk thread with inserts of red and blue material and coloured tinsel.  
 (Josephine Kane Collection)

## REFLECTIONS ON “THROUGH THE SURFACE”

At the time that my previous article was published in this newsletter (no. 26, October 2003) we were about to begin the second phase of the *Through the Surface* project – the exhibition. Now, at the completion of the UK tour of this exhibition, and before it is shown in Japan, I have a moment in which to reflect on the project.

The phenomenal success of the breathtaking, monumental, Japanese textile work in my previous project, *Textural Space* (see newsletter no. 18, February 2001, p.23), led to a feeling that the dialogue between textile practitioners in this country and Japan had begun, but not ended. However, what was needed was not another *Textural Space*, – at least not immediately, how ever much this was hoped for - but an initiative utilising our shared textile heritage, examining our different approaches, and providing a forum for exchange and development.

The project *Through the Surface* has been intended to be an exploration of culture and creativity through textile practice; the outcomes of this research presented through the project website [www.throughthesurface.surrart.ac.uk](http://www.throughthesurface.surrart.ac.uk), the exhibition and the catalogue. Those who have followed the development of the project through one or other of the outcomes listed above have been rewarded by insights into the creative and making processes of the artists taking part. All of the artists have taken real risks in their generous admittance these areas of essentially private endeavour, first to another practitioner and, ultimately, to the vast audience for the project – over 80,000 visitors to the exhibition, while the website is averaging 150,000 hits per month, with over 4% spending between 30 and 60 minutes on the site.

It may be that cultural identity as expressed through creative practice is a means of identifying who we are, especially “In a world tied together as never before by the exigencies of electronic communication, trade, travel, environment and regional conflicts that can expand with tremendous speed, the assertion of identity is by no means a mere ceremonial matter.”<sup>1</sup> Our experience indicates that, while the global interfacing of artistic practice does not automatically facilitate cross-cultural understanding, cloth provides a continuous undercurrent between cultures, which is both universal and culture-specific. However, although textiles have a social, political and utilitarian history that “stirs both conscious and unconscious memory”<sup>2</sup>, moving across and between continents and peoples, it is important to recognise that people from different cultures who are connected to each other by an activity, a creative process, will not necessarily arrive at common stylistic outcomes. Teruyoshi Yoshida, a *Through the Surface* participant, writes in the exhibition catalogue “While seeking for the universality of beauty, I also want to remain aware of the importance of individuality and through my works, I hope to raise awareness of this important fact that the universality of human beings should and must accommodate diversity.”<sup>3</sup>

Participants in *Through the Surface* were not expected to produce an actual collaborative work for the exhibition, only that whatever the outcome, it was as a result of the

experience of working together. In the event, several of the partnerships have produced final pieces which are actual collaborations, other partnerships see collaboration reflected in their separate outcomes, and in one partnership the outcomes are in no way collaborative, but are certainly the result of the experience. The clear intention of this project has been that each artist should create work reflecting his or her own culture and practice, and which also draws its energies from the exchange. My hope was that each artist would bring the best practice from her or his own background; a counterproductive outcome would have been one that simply developed certain stylistic similarities. Artists learn to make choices intuitively, based upon the continuity of their practice and the work at hand. The interchange between artists taking part in *Through the Surface* enabled an expansion of choice for all concerned. A successful mentoring relationship is very subtle, in that each partner has something to give and something to receive from the relationship, making it one of delicate symmetry, and in practice one of interdependency in determining outcomes. “Through helping Naoko with her development, I have accumulated unexpected information about Japanese cloth and site. It is interesting that [this information] is revealed by her explanation of the meaning in her work, rather than [by] me asking specific questions.” (Jeanette Appleton, July Journal).

The creative and making processes, the documenting of those processes, and the final outcomes have all been of equal importance to the overall project. This intention that all the work in the exhibition would be new meant that most of the final works were completed just before delivery to the first venue, and the images for the catalogue were, in several cases, of details only. That the exhibition was, to some degree, based on unknown elements, is an indication of the level of trust that had been built over the previous eighteen months between the participants and the Project team – made up of the designer, partner venues and myself. It also gave Opening of *Through the Surface* in January 2004 at The Surrey Institute of Art and Design James Hockey Galleries and at Hove Museum and Art Gallery an extra edginess and excitement for all involved in the project. The energy and fluidity of the exchanges, the aspirations of the participating artists, have informed the design of the catalogue and the exhibition, which reflect the essential intention of *Through the Surface* – a committed and highly charged investigation into different creative processes. In particular, the catalogue takes the format of a workbook, charting the journey each artist has made through their sketches, thoughts and working processes.

There have been many highlights throughout the exhibition tour and below I set out just a very few:

Those visiting the exhibition were invited to become involved, to engage, to experience and to evaluate, with each venue contributing particular qualities to that experience. Of particular interest, because of the contrast they offered as one followed the other in the exhibition tour, were the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts (SCVA) and Bankfield Museum. At SCVA the work expanded into the huge modern space, asserting itself and entering into dialogue with this pared-down and most uncompromising of buildings. Maxine Bristow’s installation of Light Switches in the sweeping corridor between the Upper and Lower Galleries was a perfect synthesis of concept, materials, technical fluency and installation



appropriateness. At Bankfield Museum, the domestic setting of a former house (albeit a large house), gave the works an intimacy, quietude and relationship to human scale, which would have been unimaginable at SCVA. For the artists, and for me as curator, it was a revelation to move from one to the other.

The extensive education programme running alongside the exhibition began with an international Symposium held at the Surrey Institute of Art and Design (originating organisation of the project). This event proved immensely popular with waiting lists for tickets. Speakers from different disciplines were invited from Japan, USA, Holland and the UK to address ideas around cultural difference and creative process – the papers are now published on the project website. All the project artists have given lectures or workshops during the tour, all of which were oversubscribed and I am happy to say that many will also be involved in the education programme accompanying the showing of the exhibition in Japan.

Additions to the core exhibition were the installation works of Teruyoshi Yoshida – *Surface of the Lake* – and Claire Barber, *Sharing rosebud tea across the continents*. The installation comprised a work that already existed and a response to that work. These works, originally intended only for the Fabrica venue in Brighton, were considered so beautiful and successful that they were also shown at Square Chapel in Halifax and at the Yard Gallery in Nottingham. Yoshida's installation is made up from squares of fabric which he has printed and then overlaid with gold leaf. It is a work he has installed in many sacred spaces over the last 20 years - investigating the notion, the philosophy of 'KIRE'. There is an understanding that the slow burnishing of gold brought about through the passage of time carries the narrative of experience. The golden surface of Yoshida's work glows in the enveloping darkness, reflecting back to us and growing steadily brighter. Yoshida speaks at length about the Japanese sense of touch, in particular the refinement and sensuousity inherent in Japanese tea drinking – the holding of the cup in both hands, the feeling of the vessel in the hand – its texture, its shape, the warmth of the liquid, the touch of the vessel on the lips, and the lack of these sensibilities of touch in the West. Yoshida's understanding of "difference" also leads to a heightened awareness of "otherness" and Claire Barber's installation represents an interesting "response" to Yoshida and to Japan in terms of perceptions of difference and the determining of boundaries. While resident in Japan, Claire sent her partner in the UK some Japanese tea and they established a ritual in which they rang each other every day while each drank a cup of this tea. The tea drinking could thus be deemed a means of keeping "in touch]" In the work *Sharing rosebud tea across the continents* Barber has used non-precious and found objects: gates and cups, and her own tent. Through changing the configuration and context of these mundane items, she presents us with a narrative of dislocation and otherness. She cut up the tent's silver coated fabric, its most valuable component essential for regulating the temperature, and covered teacups and saucers with the material, denying access to any physical sense of the cup itself. The teacups contain liquid but because they are covered, the liquid cannot be drunk. The wrought iron gates are erected around the work allowing visual access and egress, but again no touching.

An added bonus for the project has been the Brighton Festival commissioning of Edward Dudley Hughes to compose a work inspired by *Surface of the Lake*. This music was premiered as part of the Brighton Festival, the musicians performing in front of Yoshida's work, while the audience sat round the work. This proved extremely successful, was repeated at Square Chapel in Halifax and has recently been repeated yet again at the Sydney Opera House in Australia.

My role within *Through the Surface* has been one of an observer, documenting the exchanges, and exhibiting the outcomes. Beyond choosing the initial pairings, which of course was crucial, I have not attempted to influence the course of the project. In the end, it is our universal engagement with textiles that has provided the fertile environment for *Through the Surface*. Textiles, as repository of cultural meaning, offer memories, myths, symbols and identities that can describe a fluid landscape or a bounded space, and the bringing together of practitioners with different levels of experience from different cultures was not risk free. The writer and poet Paul Auster describes such collaboration as being similar to the alteration of the reality of each of "two physical objects, [which] when brought into proximity of each other, give off electromagnetic forces that not only effect the molecular structure of each but the space between them as well, altering, as it were, the very environment"<sup>4</sup>. That point of exchange, the coming together, the collaboration, has affected all of us who have taken part in this project, and these effects will continue as the participants go back into their own practice, passing on to others their experiences through new work and through their teaching. Within collaboration, listening and responding are what can be mutually transforming, providing, as noted in the recent Arts Council publication documenting international exchanges, "new connections and an escalation of emerging possibilities."<sup>5</sup> I hope that we have achieved such an outcome in this project.

*Through the Surface* was originated through and supported by the Surrey Institute of Art and Design, University College.

Lesley Millar  
Project Director *Through the Surface*  
Reader in contemporary Craft Practice  
Surrey Institute of Art and Design, University College

[1] Edward Said. *Culture and Imperialism*, . Pub. Knopf 1993 p. 37

[2] Julia Curtis Introduction to catalogue *Textures of Memory: the poetics of cloth*,. Pub Angel Row Gallery. 1999

[3] *Through the Surface*, catalogue. Ed. Lesley Millar. Pub. The Surrey Institute of Art and Design 2004. p.95

[4] Paul Auster *The Invention of Solitude*, 1980-81, as published in *Collected Prose*, Pub. Faber and Faber 2003. p. 138

[5] Nikos Papastergiadis *Temporary Migration, Freefall*, Pub. Arts Council England 2004. p. 9

## REPORTS OF O.A.T.G. MEETINGS

### Bu-no-mai: The Military Dances of Bugaku

The Group's A.G.M. was held on 21 October 2004, and was well attended. The minutes will be distributed with the October 2005 newsletter, but if anyone would like a copy earlier, please get in touch with me. The business meeting was followed by a very enjoyable talk by Gregory Irvine, Curator of Japanese metal work at the V.& A on *Bu-no-Mai*, illustrated with not only slides, but two video clips, all of which gave a wonderful idea of the magnificent costumes worn by the performers. I must confess, however, that I fell down on the job and forgot to ask anyone to report the meeting for the newsletter, but Greg has very kindly given me the following synopsis of his talk.

Editor

Bugaku is the Japanese dance form associated with the orchestral tradition of Gagaku and both derive from forms in use at the T'ang Court (618-906). The Heian court in Japan (794-1185) modelled itself on the T'ang Court and accordingly all aspects of court life were divided into those of the Left and the Right; every ministry was physically placed to the left or right and courtiers, military guards and court dancers were all designated Left or Right. Each designation had its own allocated colour scheme for court robes; the Left were predominantly Red, the Right predominantly Green.

The 'Left' played Gagaku music whose origins were Chinese (or Indo-Chinese); the 'Right' Gagaku from Korea and north-eastern China. In Bugaku the dancers of the Left (*sah*, equivalent to fifth court rank) wore robes of red, gold and vermilion and performed dances originating from the T'ang Court, India and south-east Asia whose styles are generally determined by the melody of the accompanying music. The dancers of the Right (*uh*, equivalent to sixth court rank) wore robes of green, blue and silver and performed dances originating in Korea which are characterised by the rhythm of the accompanying music.

The dances of Bugaku are broadly divided into three types; Hira-mai is a slow, graceful dance with the performers wearing the costume of Heian period civil servants, Hashiri-mai, a 'running' dance and Bu-no-mai a lively military dance often featuring the performer carrying a weapon. The dances of Bugaku are frequently paired between the Left and the Right. Dances of the Left tend to involve grand and expressive movements while those of the Right are generally more elegant and refined. Bugaku is performed at a number of major temples and shrines as well as at the Imperial Court on special occasions.

Dancers of the Left will approach the stage from the left beside the large drum – *dadaik* – which is decorated with a golden sun and dragon; those of the Right approach from the right and their drum is decorated with a silver moon and a phoenix. A complete Bugaku performance can consist of pairs of related dances of the Left and Right which often mirror each other in movement. The dances can be by individuals, or of groups of up to six.

While many of the dances of Bugaku are performed without masks, there are a

substantial number which do employ stylised masks, some of which can trace their origins along the Silk Road of Central Asia. The masks used in Bugaku are small and light and generally cover the face and top of the head only. They are usually made from dry lacquer (kanshitsu) or carved from Japanese cypress (hinoki). The action in Bugaku dances is stately but dramatic and the masks reflect this quality of freedom of movement and gesture.

The talk concentrated on the costume, weapons “Peace throughout the Land”). The costume worn by the performers of Taiheiraku show significant influences taken from Chinese armour including that depicted on Buddhist Guardian figures, notably the Guardians of the Four Directions (Shi-Tenno). Taiheiraku features four dancers who symbolically fight and subdue the nation but the dance represents a prayer for peace following an act of subjugation. Images shown in the talk are taken from a presentation of Taiheiraku at the Buddhist temple of Shitennoji, Osaka, in April 1998 by the Tennoji Gakuso Garyokai as part of the Shoryoe ceremony for Shotoku Taishi.

Gregory Irvine  
Curator of Japanese Art, V.& A.

### SHIP CLOTHS OF CAMBODIA

Gillian Green, whose award-winning book *Traditional Textiles of Cambodia* was reviewed in Newsletter no. 29, October 2004, visited Oxford on 3 November to talk to members. Her talk, based on ten years’ research, described a variety of the beautiful “ship cloths” from Cambodia which were used as ceremonial wall hangings in the early 20th century.

The cloths are woven using the *hoi* technique, (better known to some members as ikat) in earth tones of predominantly reds, oranges and browns. All illustrate a mastery of the weaver’s art and an understanding of iconography.

Some of the cloths depict ships with great attention to detail; snake-headed bow and stem, rudder, anchor, cabin and even possibly figures. Above the ship are birds and also various land animals, though the kangaroo look-alike was deemed to be some sort of deer. The bottom panel of the hangings often show a big variety of fish and other sea creatures, including lobsters, turtles, sharks and sawfish, some being identifiable species.

Images of some more of these very rare cloths showed more stylised ships, but most are characterised by the *naga*-headed stern and prow and by mirror-image birds. In some of the cloths the “cabin” of the ship is depicted as a substantial superstructure even a pagoda-like motif. The tree of life is a recurrent feature of these cloths.

Although there is, as yet, a paucity of hard evidence, Gillian suggested, most convincingly, that these cloths were a visual representation of a ceremony coinciding with the end of the rainy season. Boats were loaded and launched on the river as an offering. There

may be echoes of this custom in the practice of putting hollowed out banana tree trunks in the river at this season. However, as Gillian pointed out, the turbulent history of the country and the dispersal of so many of the people has meant that many of the old ways have been forgotten. Unfortunately, Cambodia has no collection of ancient textiles that would form a basis for study.

We look forward to hearing about further research in this fascinating corner of Asian textiles.

Fiona Sutcliffe and Rosemary Lee

### **New Year Party**

Unfortunately the announced party and visit to the Woodstock Broderers' wall hangings at Woodstock Town Hall on 11 January had to be cancelled due to lack of support.

### **OBITUARY**

#### **Alison Smith**

Although a Lancastrian by birth, Alison grew up in Derby where her parents pursued their careers as teachers. Her brother recalls that from an early age Alison showed an aptitude for mathematics "at parties she could survey the table and make a rapid and accurate calculation as to how many cakes each child was entitled to eat!". It was therefore perhaps a natural progression for Alison to read Mathematics at St Hilda's College, Oxford. Having obtained an honours degree she then took a Diploma in the History and Philosophy of Science, followed by a Diploma in Librarianship at University College, London. Subsequently Alison became an Associate of the Library Association and followed a career that took her to the library of Chelsea College, The British Library and Queen Mary College, London.

It was through her interest in early music that Alison met her husband Antony when they played recorders in a Baroque music group. They also shared an interest in walking and in later years enjoyed walking abroad, where they combined their architectural and artistic interests.

Like most girls at that time Alison was taught to knit by her mother, but the demands of a career and family left little time for her to exercise her skills, "a scarf was about as far as it went". Then, as Alison recalls in her notebook, she "took up knitting in 1985 after seeing two hand knitted garments with early Fair Isle designs". Although the patterns and techniques of traditional Fair Isle and Scandinavian knitting intrigued her, it was not long before Alison was no longer content simply to follow a pattern; she wanted to create her own.

Alison kept an illustrated notebook recording the development and execution of each piece she made. This reveals that as a skilled mathematician fascinated by pattern Alison took

her inspiration from a rich variety of sources: Islamic tiles, the brickwork of a mosque in Cordoba, baskets from the Congo, wrought iron balconies in Holland Park. It was, however, textiles that remained the dominant influence on her work. Intrigued by pattern, the mathematician in her responded to the challenge of translating from one medium to another and “getting the pattern to fit”. Uzbek kilims, Kashmiri socks, Icelandic embroidery, all provided inspiration for her work.

Colour and texture were also important elements in her work. When commercially dyed yarns failed to produce the desired effect, Alison began to dye her own. Yarns were chosen to make most effective use of their differing characteristics; for example cotton chenille was selected to give a cardigan the depth of colour and raised quality of Palestinian embroidery.

As with everything she did Alison was meticulous in her research and preparation. Antony recalls how, on a trip to Morocco, Alison’s eye was caught by a display of embroidery whereupon she sat down and began to copy the patterns into her notebook. There then followed extensive research into the history, traditions and techniques of Moroccan textiles before she developed a knitwear design based on her original observations.

In 1996 Alison and Antony moved to Oxfordshire to live in a converted chapel in Old Woodstock. Alison joined the Oxfordshire Craft Guild and became an active member of the recently formed Oxford Asian Textile Group. Soon her eye for layout and her considerable organisational skills saw her taking a leading part in arranging the Guild’s annual exhibitions at the Oxfordshire Museum in Woodstock. It was always a pleasure (and a relief) to work with Alison who had an excellent eye for layout. Nothing was left to chance, every “I” was dotted and every “T” firmly crossed and with Alison always on hand to deal efficiently with any crisis that might arise I could relax and enjoy the show!

Alison’s passion for textiles soon saw her providing invaluable support for the Museum’s acquisition of the Stonesfield Embroidery. Subsequently Alison became a member of the Friends’ Committee where her analytical approach to a problem was as valuable as her willingness to wield a tea towel or help man a stall at the annual Woodstock Carnival. She continued to make and exhibit her knitwear whose distinctive colours and strong patterns became a feature of the Woodstock exhibitions.

Her involvement with the Oxfordshire Craft Guild stimulated an interest in ceramics and the acquisition of work by craftsman potters. One of the last things Alison was able to do in hospital was to compile, from memory, a list of her collection of pots with details of the maker and the techniques employed.

Shortly before she was taken ill Alison and Antony were planning an exhibition of woodcuts from their collection to be shown at the Oxfordshire Museum. The exhibition, *Cutting out the Light*, will go ahead in the autumn as planned and will be followed in 2006 by an exhibition of Alison’s own work together with some of the material that inspired it.

Alison died on 7 October 2004, having been diagnosed with cancer in June. It is difficult to believe that she has gone. Alison is greatly missed by her many friends and colleagues and our thoughts are with Antony and her daughter Helen.

Carol Anderson  
Curator, Oxfordshire Museum

### MUSEUMS ROUND-UP

The many of you who know her will be interested to learn that after 17 years at the British Museum, Sarah Posey is on the move. She will be leaving her position as Curator of European, Central Asian and Middle Eastern ethnography to take up the post of Keeper of World Art at the Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, where she will also have responsibility for the Green Centre for World Art. Sarah can be reached in Brighton after 14 March at [sarah.posey@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.posey@brighton-hove.gov.uk) Sarah has been a good friend of the O.A.T.G., writing several articles for the newsletter and hosting visits at the Museum of Mankind and more recently at Blythe House, and I know the Programme Secretaries are already badgering her for a visit to Brighton.

Until Sarah's successor is appointed, all enquiries concerning the collections she has curated at the British Museum should go to James Hamill in the Centre for Anthropology ([jhamill@thebritishmuseum.ac.uk](mailto:jhamill@thebritishmuseum.ac.uk)).

In the last newsletter I reported that Ursula McCracken had given up the Directorship of the Textile Museum in Washington, D.C., after nearly eighteen years in the job. I have just learnt that her successor is to be Daniel Walker, who will take up the post on 1 May. He has served as head of the Islamic Department at the Metropolitan Museum, New York, since 1988 and before that was Assistant Curator and later Curator of Ancient, Near Eastern and Far Eastern Art at the Cincinnati Art Museum. He has published and lectured extensively on various topics related to Islamic art, particularly carpets and textiles, and expressed himself as "honoured and excited" to join the Textile Museum as Director and looked forward to working in an institution where textiles were the primary focus.

Work has begun on the new extension to the Pitt Rivers Museum mentioned in the last newsletter. It will house upgraded research facilities and the collections management and conservation activities underpinning such research, as well as the photograph and archive collections, a lecture theatre, library, teaching facilities, new exhibition, education and reception areas and a lift. The existing Museum galleries will remain largely unchanged although the upper two galleries are closed to visitors during the building period and the textile collections at 60 Banbury Road will be inaccessible to visitors in the summer months of 2005 while they are being moved to new stores.

Editor

## BOOKS

### Patricia Cheesman's Latest Book on Lao-Tai Textiles

Patricia Cheesman, *Lao-Tai Textiles: The Textiles of Xam Nuea and Muang Phuan* Studio Naenna, Chiang Mai [www.studio-naenna.com](http://www.studio-naenna.com) 2004, 21.3cm x 28.7 cm, 298pp, 532 colour illustrations, 53 b/w, 3 maps, hard cover and paperback ISBN 974 272 915 8.

I must declare an interest in advance in that I purchased one of Patricia Cheesman's early books, *Lan Na Textiles: Juan Lue Lao* written with Songsak Prangwatthanakun and published in 1987, on my "road to Damascus" trip to Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai in 1988 when I bought my first two old Lao textiles and was initiated into worship of these fine weavings.

Cheesman has been studying Lao textiles for 29 years and has the advantage of fluent Lao and intimate knowledge of Tai culture from living in Laos for 8 years and in Thailand for 19 years. The book is based on empirical research conducted in the field using only historical textiles older than 50 years in Cheesman's own collection. She has required a minimum of five people to confirm each piece of information and concluded hundreds of interviews over many years of returning to the same villages again and again and building trust. She used original textiles for identification since photographs of textiles were not useful to the majority of informants over 60 years of age and with poor eyesight. Even gifts of eyeglasses did not overcome the problem of lack of experience of two-dimensional images.

Cheesman chose to use the term Lao-Tai rather than Tai, more commonly used in academic research to speakers of the Tai-Kam-Sui-Kadai language groups. The term Lao is the oldest known reference to these peoples and used continuously in Chinese historical documents from 271 BC to 1067 AD.

Whilst originally aspiring to write one book on all the textiles of Laos, after five years she had barely covered half the intended area and for the sake of an in-depth study decided to cover each region in different volumes. The current book focuses on the textiles and clothing styles of Muang Xam Nuea and Muang Phuan. Cheesman retains the indigenous word "*muang*" meaning the control over manpower and covering all aspects of political, geographic and administrative systems of the Tai prior to Western geography. The two Lao-Tai entities studied approximate to regions known today as Houa Phan and Xiang Khoang provinces in Laos but with influence spreading to present-day provinces of Thanh Hoa and Nghe An in Vietnam.

Core to Cheesman's research and classification of textiles is that Lao-Tai peoples used textiles and clothing to express their desire to belong to certain communities whilst pledging allegiance to their chiefs. Clothing styles were outward signs of allegiance and when people relocated to different *muang* under a new chief they changed their clothing and textiles



relocated to different *muang* under a new chief they changed their clothing and textiles accordingly. Thus she identifies textiles by their most recent provenance giving localities in an historical setting. This contrasts to the traditional approach of explicit identities along ethnic lines. Generally Cheesman's research indicated that, unlike clothing, textiles made for household use maintained their original style despite migrations and deportations as they were not publicly seen. Discontinuation of home-produced textiles indicated availability of commercial household textiles.

One of the purposes of the current volume was Cheesman's desire to present a system for the understanding and identification of Lao-Tai textiles. To this end the organisation of the book into its particular chapters is both a help and a hindrance since it may require sight of several chapters to identify a particular textile. Chapters include the usage chapters of: Textiles for women's everyday wear; Textiles for women's ceremonial dress; Textiles for men's clothing; Textiles for shamanic rituals and Buddhist ceremonies; and Household textiles. There are also chapters on Textile motifs and symbolism and Techniques for dyeing and weaving. Where the book really excels is in the profuse use of (generally good quality) illustrations of textiles around descriptive text with clear annotation on each page of each textile. Fellow Lao-Tai textile enthusiasts and I have found it a good aid to examination of our collections and opening our eyes to identification of their use and regional origin.

Although, since Cheesman published her first books in the late 1980s, the amount of literature on the subject has increased substantially, in the current book, as Robyn Maxwell states in her foreword, Cheesman "concentrates on bringing clarity, recognition and cultural understanding to yet another set of the region's traditional textiles in an engaging and accessible style".

As with Cheesman's previous books this volume is self-published through Studio Naenna and only available via the Studio and the local Suriwong Book Centre in Chiang Mai. I am, however, pursuing with the Studio availability of the book since I feel that it is such a worthwhile addition to any serious enthusiast's library.

Pamela Cross

### **Two Offerings from Fiona Kerlogue**

Fiona Kerlogue, *Batik: Design, Style & History*, Featuring selections from the Rudolph G. Smend Collection, Thames & Hudson, 2004, paperback original, 192 pages, 205 illustrations, 168 in colour, ISBN 0500 284776, £18.95

The technique of applying hot wax to cotton cloth and then dyeing the fabric so that the wax designs "resist" the dye is used in many parts of the world. However the word "batik" for this hot-wax resist technique is indelibly associated with the splendid patterned cloths of Indonesia, indeed the first known written reference to the word "batik" is found on a document describing a shipment from Java to Sumatra in 1641. It seems appropriate,

therefore, that in her book on batik, Fiona Kerlogue does not attempt to cover wax resist techniques across the world but focuses firmly on Indonesia.

*Batik: Design, Style & History* starts with a chapter on the origins of Indonesian batik including the simple rice paste resist cloths of Sulawesi and West Java which are widely regarded as vestiges of forerunners of modern batik. Possible early overseas influences are also explored such as the hemp and cotton skirts of the Hmong peoples of southwest China, North Vietnam and the Golden Triangle which are patterned using a copper tool and beeswax then coloured with indigo. Kerlogue notes the possibility that this technique may have spread to the Indonesian archipelago with these people.

Regional traditions and motifs and meanings are covered very thoroughly in the book. This is a complex area which Kerlogue does not oversimplify. The same motif may appear in batik from more than one place and the interpretations of those motifs may vary. However Kerlogue notes that in the past there were fairly distinct differences in appearance between different districts particularly in the older traditions of court centres, notably Surakarta and Cirebon in Java. Certain designs were set apart for use by the royal family for their talismanic qualities and to express notions of power, fertility and the spiritual qualities embodied in the person of the sultan. Indeed in 1769, 1784 and 1790 royal decrees were published which laid down which motifs were forbidden for use beyond the royal family.

Cirebon's location on the north coast of the island and its trade and other connexions have led to a number of elements being assimilated into their batik designs, notably the cloud motif in gradations of blue colour which derived directly from Chinese iconography. Another motif identified exclusively with Cirebon is a mythical beast made up of elements from a phoenix-type bird, serpent and elephant. It has been suggested that this represents a synthesis of Persian, Hindu and Islamic elements and symbolises the peaceful co-existence of different cultures living in harmony.

One chapter in the book is devoted to batik in costume and includes fascinating historic photographs of clothing being made and worn. It was not until the mid nineteenth century that locally produced batik became sufficiently inexpensive to rival cloths imported from India and Europe for everyday clothing for the majority of the population. However after that point, batik and imitations of batik became the most important material for clothing, especially for women. This chapter covers an analysis of the main cloths that make up costume: the *sarung* and the *kain panjang* (upper body cloths,); the *selandang* (shawl); and the headcloth. Both patterning, folding and wearing styles in various contexts are covered and illustrated extensively. Tailored garments, especially for Europeans, are also featured.

The book does not wallow in an unchanging "traditional" ethnographic present but looks at economic and political changes which have affected batik: Indo-European enterprises, the effect of the First World War on the import of cotton, the Japanese occupation from 1942 to 1945 and the development of batik as a symbol of national identity after independence was secured in 1949. The book also includes comprehensive chapters on modern influences and batik in art.

*Batik: Design, Style & History* addresses the subject in an accessible and comprehensive way which is of interest to general readers as well as regional and textile specialists. It is richly illustrated with 204 plates accompanied by lengthy informative captions, an excellent glossary, bibliography, illustrated index of motifs and list of museum collections of batik.

Julia Nicholson  
Joint Head of Collections, Pitt Rivers Museum

Fiona Kerlogue, *Arts of Southeast Asia*, Thames and Hudson (World of Art), 2004, 15 x 21 cm, 224 pp, 183 col. illus., ISBN 0 500 20381 4, pb., £9.95

Fiona must have had her time cut out to produce two books in one year and neither of them a light task. Whereas *Batik* goes into a single topic at great depth, this volume ranges over a wide area in subject matter as well as in geography to provide a comprehensive cultural introduction to the area.

“In the last forty years”, she says in her introduction, “perspectives have altered in the light of fresh research and there has been an increasing appreciation of work that falls outside the confines of the old Hindu-classical evaluation of Southeast Asian art.” You only need to compare her book with an earlier volume in the *World of Art* Series, Philip Rawson’s *The Art of Southeast Asia* (1967), to see how true this is. The latter could almost have been called *The Architecture and Sculpture ....* These important arts are not neglected by Fiona, but she has been able to take advantage of research, archaeological excavations, and technical advances that have taken place during the last three decades, not only in these fields, but in others not covered by Rawson, and she makes good use of it.

Her material is organized chronologically starting with the important neolithic pottery finds from sites excavated in the 1970s and ’80s, and other artefacts and sculpture from the both this period and the bronze age. This leads naturally to a consideration of indigenous themes, some of which persist from the earliest times to the present day. Outside influences are then examined in the order in which they first occurred in the region and country by country, ending with a look at contemporary art that was an eye-opener to me.

As you would expect with this author, textiles are given the place they deserve, but not to the exclusion of ceramics, metalwork, lacquer and other decorative arts, as well as painting and sculpture. The result is a well-balanced and readable addition to the admirable *World of Art* series.

Phyllis Nye

### Shorter Notices

Ruth Barnes (ed): *Textiles in Indian Ocean Societies*. London: RoutledgeCurzon (2005). 198 pp., 66 b&w ills, frontispiece, map, index. ISBN 0-415-29766-4, hardcover £ 60.00.

This volume concentrates on textiles as a major commodity and indicator of status, wealth and identity in societies around the Indian Ocean. The contributions cover a broad geographic and historical range, from East Africa, Madagascar, Iran and India to South-east Asia, and from late Roman times to the present. It is the latest publication in a series on Indian Ocean studies, of which Ruth Barnes is also the general editor.

Judith H. Hofenk de Graaff: *The colourful Past: Origins, Chemistry and Identification of Natural Dyestuffs*. Riggisberg and London: Abegg-Stiftung and Archetype Publications (2004). 396 pp., 71 col. ills., 74 figs., 12 tables. ISBN 1-873132-13-1 (Archetype, London) or 3-905014-25-4 (Abegg-Stiftung, Riggisberg), hardcover CHF 120.00.

For anyone with more than a passing interest in natural dyes, their history and use, this new publication is essential. Written by a textile chemist with historical training, it provides scientific analysis as well as information on the use of specific dyes throughout the ages. Most dye sources are illustrated by historical textiles in museum collections, the majority of them from the Abegg-Stiftung.

Sabine Schrenk: *Textilien des Mittelmeerraumes aus spätantiker bis frühislamischer Zeit*. Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung (2004). 600 pp., 328 ills. (204 in colour), 21 line drawings. ISBN 3-905014-24-6, hardcover CHF 280.00.

This is volume 4 in the series of publications that present the complete collections in the Abegg-Stiftung. It covers a major aspect of the Abegg collection, and when read side by side with the first volume in the series (medieval Islamic textiles, published 1995) one gains a comprehensive view of early medieval textiles in the Mediterranean region. The textiles are discussed in their iconographic and social context, and detailed attention is paid to the technical analysis. The catalogue is arranged according to the textiles' original function as wall hangings, interior decoration or dress, with line drawings supplementing the superb illustrations.

Ruth Barnes

### Textile Museum Publications

Judy Frater, *Threads of Identity: Embroidery and Adornment of the Nomadic Rabaris*, (2003, first pub. 1995), 216 pp, 146 colour illus,+ b/w photos and drawings, hb. \$55.

Mattiebelle Gittinger, *Textiles for this World and Beyond*, book accompanying the forthcoming exhibition of the same name (see below p. 31) will be available in April, pb, \$29.95

Robert Nooter, Irina Koshoridze and Vahram Tatikyan, *Flatwoven Rugs and Textiles from the Caucasus* (2004), 256 pp, 436 colour illus., hb, \$59.95

### Other Recent Books (not seen)

Mary Dusenbury, *Flowers, Dragons and Pine Trees: Asian Textiles in the Spencer Museum of Art*, Hudson Hills Press, N.Y., 2004, 2312 pp, 23.5 x 35 cm, 124 col. illus., maps, ISBN 1555952380, hb. \$75

The small but important collection in this Kansas museum comprises examples from east, south and central Asia from the 15th to 20th centuries, covering a great diversity of technique and broad range of functions.

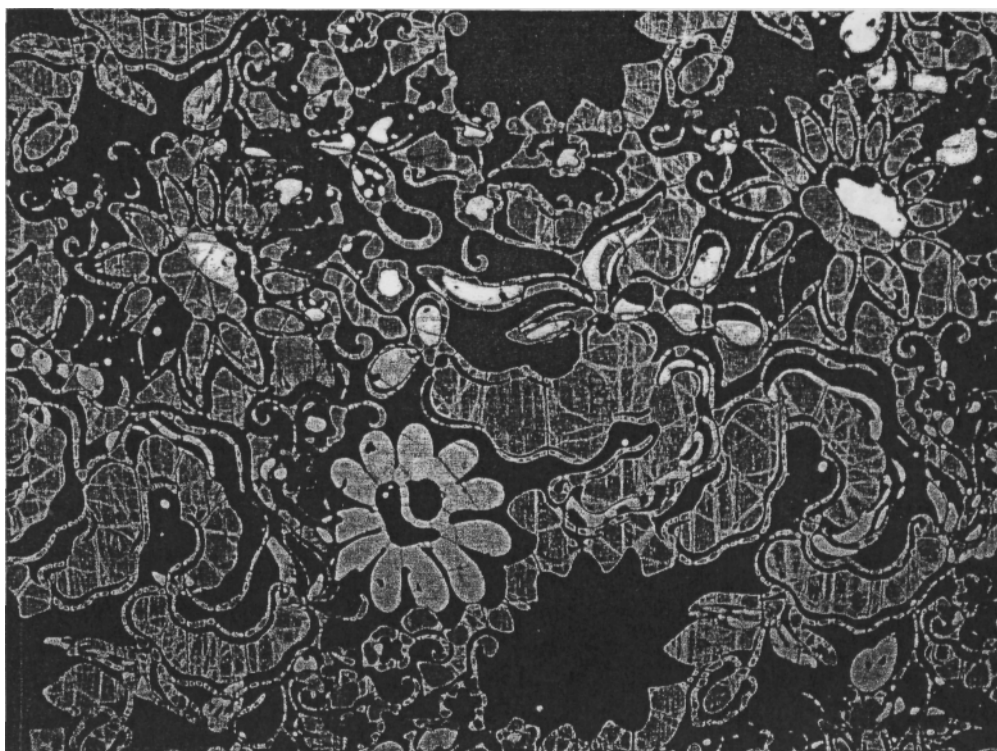
Gregory Irvine, *A Guide to Japanese Art Collections in the U.K.*, Hotei Publishing, Amsterdam, 2004, 204 pp, 15.5 x 21.5 cm, col. & b/w illus., ISBN 9074822746.

Neimonggu Zizhiqiu Bowuguan, *Genghis Khan: The Ancient Nomadic Culture of Northern China*, Beijing, 2004, text in Chinese with English captions, ISBN 7200054208, hb, \$130.

An extensively illustrated and lavishly produced catalogue of treasures from Northern China under the rule of Genghis Khan, including gold and silver artefacts, jades, weapons, costumes, and treasures from other minorities and religions.

### EXHIBITIONS

#### Patterns of Culture: Techniques of Decoration and Coloration



Silk ikat - India

Following last year's highly successful exhibition of Qing Dynasty silks, *Dragons, Unicorns and Phoenixes*, the University of Leeds International Textiles Archive (ULITA) launches *Patterns of Culture – Techniques of Decoration and Coloration*, comprised of resist-dyed (tie-and-dye, ikat and batik) and block-printed textiles from West Africa, India, Pakistan and Indonesia. Interpretative text accompanying each exhibit is focused on explaining the relevant technique of production and is directed mainly to the needs of a non-specialist audience. A scholarly monograph, under the same title as the exhibition\*, presents a concise explanation of resist-dyeing techniques and, in particular, identifies the wide range of variants associated with each.

Probably the most visually-dramatic results of the tie-and-dye technique are the large bound-resist cloths of West Africa, traditionally dyed using indigo, of which there is a good example in the exhibition, as there are of the fine effects associated with parts India and Japan. Some of the tie-and dye exhibits have had small pebbles, glass beads, beans, grains of rice or seeds tied into the fabric to give decorative variation to the resultant dyed piece. Ikat from Indonesia, Japan, Southwest India, parts of Africa and South America are well represented, mainly in cotton, but also in silk (see illustration above), as well as some fine double ikats. There are examples of batik from various parts of Asia, especially from Java where the technique has probably reached its highest level of excellence. Particularly interesting effects are achieved by combinations of these techniques, such as some sari fabrics produced in S.W. India combining ikat with supplementary-warp or -weft decoration. Another example, of an ajrak cloth from Sindh, involves the use of indigo and madder dye-baths and block-printing pastes which either attract the dye (mordants) or act as a barrier to the dye (resists).

Although ULITA hosts only two exhibitions per year, in each case the exhibition is allowed to evolve through responding to the comments of visitors and the needs of local schools. Exhibitions are therefore refreshed on a regular basis; new textiles are added and those they replace are put back into storage. Further information relating to ULITA can be found on the website [www.leeds.ac.uk/ulita](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/ulita).

M.A. Hann and J.A. Smith

\*M.A. Hann, *Patterns of Culture Techniques of Decoration and Coloration*, Foreword by D. Holdcroft, Ars Textrina No. 35, a monograph in the Ars Textrina Series published in association with ULITA, 2005, £5.

### **Postponed Exhibitions**

Members will be pleased to hear that the postponed *Forbidden City* exhibition is not lost and gone forever. It will now be held from early in 2006, but at the Royal Academy, not the British Museum as originally planned.

On the other hand, the ULITA exhibition *Seven Weddings and a Groom* announced in the last newsletter as to be held from January to July this year has been postponed indefinitely and replaced at this time by *Patterns of Culture* (see above).

### Other Exhibitions in the U.K.

*Matisse and the Colour of Fabrics* – focusses on the artist's fascination with textiles as a source of colour and decorative pattern. This is the first time that some of his paintings have been shown alongside textiles from his collection, which includes Eastern silks, Indian hangings and fabrics from Africa and Polynesia. It will be on view at the Royal Academy, 4 March - 30 May. Tel. 020 7300 8000

*Amulets: a World of Secret Powers, Magic and Charms* – An exhibition of amulets and charms from the collections of Sheila Paine, Saturday 18 June to Sunday 14 August, Tue.-Sat.10am-5pm, Sun. 2pm-5pm Admission free. For further information and details of the accompanying lecture programme, tel. 01993 814103.

### Exhibitions Overseas

#### Two at the Textile Museum, Washington D.C. (Tel (202) 667-0441)

*Beyond the Bag: Textiles as Containers* – until 5 June. An individual strip woven on a loom can be folded and sewn to form a bag; it can be woven into a distinct shape instead of a strip before being sewn; or it can be left in strip form to be used as a wrapper or carrying cloth. The resulting containers often have symbolic or ritual functions as well as utilitarian ones. Examples from the Museum's collection come from all over the world, but a high proportion of those in the exhibition come from Asia.

*Textiles from this World and Beyond: Treasures from Insular Southeast Asia*, 1 April-18 September (the batik section will be open from 3 March). Textiles may be rigorously prescribed gifts, symbols of contractual alliances and obligations, and invitations to gods and spirits as well as items of beauty and conceit. Exhibits include Iban warp ikat *pua* from Sarawak and West Kalimantan, sarongs and wrappers from the Lesser Sunda Islands, batiks from Java, and skirts and shoulder cloths from Sumatra and the Malay peninsula.

#### Last Chance to See...

*Turks: A Journey of a Thousand Years, 600-1600 A.D.* – at the Royal Academy of Arts closes on 12 April 2005. Nearly 300 exhibits, principally on loan from the Topkapi Palace Museum and the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art in Istanbul, include paintings, arts of the book, textiles, carpets, and other decorative arts, many of which have not been seen outside Turkey before. Tel. 020 7300 8000

*A Garden of Shawls: The Buta and its Seeds* finishes at the Textile Museum, Washington, D.C., on 6 March. Tel. (00 1) 202 667 0441

### SYMPOSIA

The Third International Felt Symposium, organized by the Central Asia Crafts Support Association, will take place from 22 July to 3 August in Kyrgyzstan, at Bishkek and around Lake Issyk-Kul. Participants will visit Bishkek museum and places of interest around the lake as well as living and working with local artisans who will teach felt-making and traditional embroidery as well as all the steps in the construction of a yurt. Participants will need to find their own way as far as Manas International Airport; the fee, covering transport from there and all subsequent transport, all symposium expenses and full board, ranges from US\$895 to US\$1125 depending on the type of accommodation chosen in Bishkek. For further information, visit [www.catgen.com/cacsa](http://www.catgen.com/cacsa) or e-mail: [cacsa@infotel.kg](mailto:cacsa@infotel.kg)

A second symposium organized by the James H.W. Thompson Foundation in conjunction with the Jim Thompson Thai Silk Company will be held in Bangkok from 4 to 7 August. Entitled *Status, Myth and the Supernatural: Unravelling the Secrets of Southeast Asian Textiles*, it will focus on the traditional role and function of textiles in Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, the Philippines and Thailand. Speakers are expected to include Patricia Cheesman, Susan Conway, Vibha Joshi and Robyn Maxwell. The meetings on 4 & 5 August will be followed by an optional three day excursion to weaving areas in north-eastern Thailand. For further information, complete list of speakers, and registration form, visit

[www.seasiantextiles.com/jt\\_symposium](http://www.seasiantextiles.com/jt_symposium). (The papers of the first symposium, *Through the Thread of Time*, held in 1999, were published last year and reviewed in O.A.T.G. newsletter no.29)

## LECTURES AND EVENTS

Gallery talk – *An Eighteenth Century Turkish Prayer Rug from Ladik*, by Noorah Al-Gailani, Curator of Islamic Civilizations, at the Burrell Collection, Glasgow, 16 February, 12.30 p.m. Tel. 0141 287 2550

Meetings of the Oxford Guild of Spinners, Dyers and Weavers, the following Saturdays at Stanton St John Village Hall. Hall opens at 11 a.m., formal meeting starts at 2.15 p.m.:

19 February – *Around the World in 80 Rugs* by Margaret Rohifing

19/20 March – *Silk and Sand*, travels through Asia from a textile angle by Martin Weatherhead.

Workshop – Warp brocade on Inkle loom

16 April – *The Faulty Towers School of Felt Making* by Lynn Griffith

21 May – *Ethnic Embellishments* by Jennie Parry

For further information please contact the Secretary, Carole Thorpe, tel. 01993 869210; e-mail: [thorpe.carole@virgin.net](mailto:thorpe.carole@virgin.net)

Meetings of the Oriental Rug and Textile Group in Scotland:

Wednesday March 9 at 7 p.m. – Film, *Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life* (1925), b/w, 70 mins, about Bahktiari migration, at Daniel Stewart's College, Queensferry Road, Edinburgh.

Wednesday May 11 at 6.30 p.m. – Visit to Lauriston Castle, Cramond Road South, to view the collection of carpets and textiles. Charge £4.50,

For further information and details of membership, contact Margaret Campbell, tel. 0131 443 3687.

Rug and Textile Appreciation Mornings at the Textile Museum, Washington D.C., Saturdays at 10.30 a.m.:

19 February – *Fine and Finer: Craftsmanship in 20th century silk Turkish rugs*, Colin England

26 February – *Carry-All: Khorin of Kurdistan and Persia*, Gordon W. Priest, Jr

5 March – *Batik Traditions in Indonesia*, Judith Livingston

12 March – *Tulus and Sleeping Rugs from, the Anatolian Plateau*, Saul Barodofsky

26 March – *Rug Collecting 101: An Introduction from a Collector's Perspective*, Gerald Thompson

Visitors are invited to bring clean and well-vacuumed examples relating to the title of the programme. For more information or to register, visit [www.textilemuseum.org](http://www.textilemuseum.org), tel. (202)6670441, ext 64, or e-mail: [reception@textilemuseum.org](mailto:reception@textilemuseum.org)

Celebrity Lecture – *Travels in Pursuit of Indigo* by Jenny Balfour-Paul (who, as the premier indigo scholar, I am sure needs no introduction to members of this Group) at the Maria Assumpta Centre, 23 Kensington Square, London (nearest tube station Kensington High Street), 7 p.m., Wednesday 15 June. This Celebrity Lecture is organized by Region 1 of The Quilters' Guild of the British Isles, and will be accompanied by an exhibition of contemporary quilts incorporating indigo-dyed fabrics. Tickets £7. Details from V. Huggins, tel. 020 7515 0701

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### DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE – MONDAY 6 JUNE

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