

Journal of the Oriental Rug and Textile Society





ORIENTAL RUG & TEXTILE SOCIETY

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The Oriental Rug and Textile Society was founded in 1977 to encourage interest and enthusiasm in the carpets and textiles of the Orient, and now of the whole world. We also aim to advance understanding of the processes involved in their creation and to promote knowledge of the traditional centres of weaving.

Members receive details of up to eleven events (lectures, visits and trips abroad) each year and three journals.

Annual membership subscriptions: Individual £30 with digital journal, or £42 with hard copy by post. Student under 25 years £10. See the website for further details.

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Do join us!

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Cover image : Basket of Jim Thompson silk skeins © Jim Thompson Silks/The Thai Silk Company.
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A Message from Louise Teague

It is with considerable sadness that the committee heard that our wonderful Chairperson of 17 years Louise Teague has decided to step down. Sue Jones has very kindly agreed to serve as Acting Chairman until there is an AGM. We hope to publish reminiscences of highlights from Louise's time in office in future issues of the journal. For this issue she has sent us this message :

Thank you for 17 years as Chairperson of the Oriental Rug and Textile Society



Trip to Turkey, 2008. Participants include: Elizabeth Jackson, Margaret Broadbent, Rosalind Blachowska, Liz Ashurst, Louise Teague, Ann Willetts and Mary Rawitzer.

My husband Ken was a founder member of ORTS. In 1976 he went to the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh for the exhibition 'The Lion Rugs of Fars'. There a group of ethnographers and museum curators decided that they and also the dealers, collectors and enthusiasts of rugs and textiles would benefit from a society to promote the study and enjoyment of Oriental Rugs and Textiles. Thus ORTS was born. So the exciting programmes came to our house. Lectures were on Tuesdays when I did evening surgery, and we had young children, so I could not go. But as soon as I retired I threw myself into the fun.

ORTS had lots of wonderful trips to Eastern Europe led by Peter Young, head of painting conservation at the V&A. On these I got to know other

members. I was put on the committee, which was very joyful as meetings were held at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden. The committee were led along corridors overlooking stored scene sets and stage props, with the glorious sound of the rehearsal music soaring through the building.

Elizabeth Bridges was chairperson then, and I listened and watched with admiration her competence and style, dealing with awkward members of the committee (there always are some). Her important role as Personnel Director at the Royal Opera House conflicted with the demands then of an ORTS chairperson. She was getting up at dawn before work to put our mailings into envelopes, address, stamp and post them. Hugh Roe, the tax adviser to ICI, phoned and asked me to be Chairperson. I said no. When he phoned again a week later, I said yes.

I am told the lectures used to be held at the Polish Hearth Club; then due to booking difficulties they moved to SOAS, where we had a small class room, and about 20 people came to lectures. Then about when I took over as chairperson, parts of SOAS were being hired out by a private company and it was very badly run. The class rooms were dirty, often did not have the full equipment, and were changed at the last minute. So Elizabeth and I ended up frantically running from the Brunei Gallery to the main building putting up notices showing the changed venue, just before lectures. It was a difficult time.

Penny Berkut suggested the Swedenborg Hall, as it had a kitchen where we could prepare nibbles, and it allowed alcohol paid by donation. She rightly thought this would give a welcoming atmosphere. I viewed the premises and interviewed the gentle secretary. The prices were manageable, so I booked some dates.

Autumn programme

It was not easy there. They had a most unfriendly property manager, who got nothing ready for us, so the start and end of lectures were furniture removal time. The Swedenborg Society are heavily into angels. One of our members noticed a leaflet 'Is sex better in heaven?', and muttered 'Some hope'. Finally the poor lighting and oppressive atmosphere sent me round church and other halls in Central London until St James's Piccadilly was found.

And indeed we had several very happy years there. We were well looked after by the room hire vergers, and the extra room adjoining the lecture hall, laid out with drinks and splendid nibbles, created a welcoming relaxed atmosphere for members to meet and chat. The only problem was the lack of a lift for those scared of falling down the iron stairs. When the price went up a second time we had to find an affordable venue.

Sue Jones suggested her club 'The University Women's Club'. We have had our first two lectures there, which were excellent and the elegant drawing room was packed. It seems we are now home and out of the red, led by our treasurer Elizabeth Bridges. Our committee is superb. The increasing membership list is kept up to date by Margaret Broadbent on Excel. The newsletter, once black and white, is now a glorious coloured journal created by Philomene Verlaan, and now edited by Fiona Kerlogue. The lecture programme organised by Clive Rogers creates so much interest and pleasure.

Thank you all for 17 happy years as chairperson of this super society.

Louise Teague

ORTS events programme Summer and Autumn 2020

The world seems to have turned upside down in the last few months, as a result of the epidemic of Covid-19, and this has had repercussions for ORTS as it has for most other societies. As we go to press, there are signs that some degree of normality may be returning, but the possibility of arranging the kind of meetings we have grown used to still seems distant.

Events postponed from this year's summer programme include a lecture by Maria Wronska-Friend, visits to Brighton Museum and the house of Professor Paul R Benjamin, and the Summer Lunch Party. We hope to rearrange all these events in the future. The Show and Tell, which would normally have followed the now postponed AGM, was instead offered online, with an array of splendid examples of textiles and rugs on show on the website.

As we go to press the committee has confirmed a special talk via Zoom:

Chris Aslan will be speaking on Tuesday 14th July at 5pm. His talk is entitled: 'Unravelling the Silk Road: a Textile Journey.'

Members are advised to check the ORTS website and to look out for e-news for the latest updates.

Events tentatively scheduled for the autumn are as follows:

September 7th to 23rd Trip to Georgia with Mary Spyrou.

Wednesday, October 21st Antony Hazeldine: Talk on Navajo Rugs.

Wednesday, November 18th Eleanor Sims: Talk on Carpets and Textiles in Persian Painting of the 15th and early 16th centuries.

Wednesday, December 16th Jennifer Wearden: Talk on the South Kensington Museum's Collection of Carpets: what they are, how and why they were acquired. The talk will focus on carpets acquired between 1876 and 1899.

Textile book covers in the Shan manuscript tradition

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Manuscript textiles in mainland Southeast Asia

Southeast Asian manuscript traditions are very diverse and colourful. Palm leaf manuscripts, paper folding books, bound books as well as texts written on ivory, cloth, metal and bamboo have been well researched, especially illustrated and illuminated manuscripts, which are often outstanding examples of manuscript painting and decoration.

However, in mainland Southeast Asia the focus has been on the manuscript traditions of national ethnic majorities, such as the Thai, Burmese, Lao, Khmer and Vietnamese (Kinh). Although manuscript collections in minority languages have been and continue to be discovered, digitised and researched, no major work has been published about ethnic minority manuscript cultures.

During the curation process of a major exhibition on Buddhism at the British Library an unexpected number of manuscript textiles came to light, including some rare examples from the Shan manuscript tradition. The Shan are an ethnic group mainly living in the Shan State in Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Yunnan in China, and Assam in India. In all these countries the Shan are an ethnic minority, although their total number is estimated between four and six million.

Overall, in mainland Southeast Asia there is a great variety of manuscript textiles which include textiles that are used to wrap around manuscripts to protect them from damage and dust, but also textiles that contain information about manuscripts (binding tapes), bags for the storage and transport of manuscripts and textiles attached to manuscripts. Often the textiles are custom-made for one particular manuscript, and in this case these objects could be made from valuable hand-woven silk brocades, printed cotton or imported materials like chintz and silk damask. Specially designed textiles were commissioned to add meritorious value to a manuscript or to an entire set of manuscripts. However, sometimes discarded textiles like monks' robes, used clothing, complete or partial wall hangings or leftover pieces of cloths made for other purposes were used to create manuscript textiles.

The provenance of these manuscript textiles is often difficult to establish due to the lack of recorded information in the library's catalogue and historical handlists. It is obvious that some of the manuscript textiles are of a later date than the manuscripts themselves, and some originate from a different place than the manuscripts they belong to since there was a practice to replace worn out manuscript textiles with new ones. Manuscript wrappers, for example, could get very dusty or mouldy over time and had to be replaced frequently. Therefore, the manuscript(s) found with such wrappers are often older than the textile itself.

The manuscript wrapper shown below is an excellent example of a textile that was never recorded in a library catalogue or handlist, and therefore it is difficult to establish its provenance history. It consists of a



Textile wrapper belonging to a Buddhist cosmology on palm leaves in Burmese language. Burma, 19th century. British Library, Or 15283.

19th-century Bengali block-printed silk handkerchief of the type known in trade records as a 'choppa' (i.e. printed) with a floral design in red and black (communication with Rosemary Crill 19.5.2020), which is sewn together with a lining made from a piece of plain white cotton. This wrapper belongs to a Burmese Buddhist cosmology on palm leaves dating back to the early 19th century

Textiles of high value were sometimes specially commissioned for particularly important Buddhist manuscripts, or for manuscript sets containing the entire Pali canon. George Coëdès, who was director of the National Library of Thailand (formerly Vajirañāṇa National Library) from 1918-29, wrote that "It was an old custom in Siam for fine cloths formerly used as garments but worn out, or

Textile book covers in the Shan manuscript tradition

belonging to deceased persons, to be presented to the priests for use as wrappings for their manuscripts. A considerable number of the manuscripts in the National Library are wrapped in old and beautiful cloths of every description; some delicately embroidered, some made of Indian or Siamese brocade, and others of a special kind of cotton, printed in India with Siamese designs" (1924, p.17). The latter refers to chintz imported from the Coromandel Coast region in India.

Shan textile book covers

What Cœdès described for Thailand (formerly Siam) is valid for all Theravada Buddhist cultures in mainland Southeast Asia, including the Shan manuscript culture. The Shan have a very rich manuscript tradition which includes palm leaf manuscripts, paper folding books and a special type of manuscript that is most frequently found among the Shan and some other Tai-speaking ethnic groups like the Tai Khuen and Tai Lue: the scrolled bound book (in Shan "pap ken"). These books, sometimes also called curled bound book, are made from long sheets of bamboo shoot paper or mulberry paper which are folded and bound together at the top with a cotton thread. Bamboo shoot paper is also known as silk paper, which refers to its smooth, thin and silky character. At the "spine" where the folios are bound together usually a piece of cloth is sewn on which serves as a cover when the book is scrolled. This piece of cloth or textile cover for the scrolled book could be made from locally sourced handwoven cotton and silk, but also from imported textiles including silk or cotton brocades as well as printed cotton and silk damask from India, China and Europe.



Above and right: Scrolled bound paper book containing the Mahasupina Jataka, with indigo-dyed cotton cover and a cotton binding cord. Shan State, Burma, 1860. British Library, Or 3494.

have to be folded over before the text can be written on so that the ink does not seep through the paper. The cover is made from a single handwoven piece of cotton cloth which has a pattern that is typical for a man's headcloth that is worn like a turban. Originally it seems to have been of white or cream colour with the striped or chequered pattern of a slightly darker tone. This piece of cloth has been dyed with indigo before it was repurposed as a book cover. Attached to the left side of the binding is a braided cotton cord in pink and white colours to wrap around the scrolled book when it is stored.

In contrast to the scrolled book described above which only has a two-piece cloth cover (single sheet of textile and cord), textile manuscript covers that consist of three or four parts are very common. The four parts are: a mostly colourful outer piece of cloth, a plain lining of cream or white colour, a red or white frame sewn around the outer piece of textile, and a binding tape or cord.

The manuscript on the right contains a text written in Shan script with the title "Tanasaksesanathauktikha" on 59 folios bound together to form a scrolled book. It is estimated that the manuscript was made in the first half of the twentieth century. The attached printed cotton cover has a red, green and blue coloured leaf pattern and a cream-coloured frame. Judging from the pattern, the printed cotton was industrially made. On the inside is a plain white cotton lining. Attached to the lower rim (opposite

The example on the left contains the Mahasupina Jataka, a Birth Tale of the Buddha, written in Shan script in a fine calligraphic style on 20 folios made from bamboo shoot paper. Because this type of paper is very thin the folios



Scrolled bound paper book, containing a Buddhist text in Shan language, with printed cotton cover and attached felt binding tape. Shan State, Burma, first half of the 20th century. British Library, Or 15368.

the binding) is a green felt binding tape to wrap around the scrolled manuscript. The binding tape is woven in the style of Burmese *sazigyo*, but without the woven-in text that is usually found on *sazigyo*.

This manuscript is from Søren Egerod's collection. He was an eminent Danish sinologist and Southeast Asian linguist. His academic career took him to China, Taiwan, Japan and Thailand. He was particularly interested in ethnic minority languages. The collection of Shan and Thai manuscripts which he brought back from China and Southeast Asia was acquired by the British Library after his death in 1995, aged 71.

Generally, textiles imported from India and Europe were frequently used to make manuscript wrappers or covers for scrolled books in the Shan and Burmese traditions. The scrolled book shown below, made from 42 folios of bamboo shoot paper, has a cream-coloured cotton wrapper with an industrially printed design of tiny cylinders in 3-D shape, combined with a red silk damask frame and white lining. Attached is a hand-woven binding tape made from red, black and yellow threads. A handwritten note on paper provides the following information: "A Shan translation of one of the books of the Belagat or Pali scriptures. It was obtained by Mr. Cushing, an American missionary of my acquaintance, in the Province of Theinnee some 28 years ago. J E Halliday, 16 January 1895". Such valuable provenance information is rarely found. In this case it helps us to establish that the manuscript must have been created before 1867. For this age the manuscript and especially the textile cover are in outstanding condition.

Josiah Nelson Cushing was an American Baptist missionary appointed to the Shan State in 1866. He spent four decades there, travelling the country, and translating the Bible into the Shan language (published 1892). In this process, he also compiled a handbook of the Shan language (1880), the first Shan-English dictionary (1881), and a grammar of the Shan language (1887).

To understand the use of imported textiles for the production of manuscript covers in the Shan States in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries one has to take a look at developments in Burma and India under British rule. From at least the seventeenth century onwards it is known that imported textiles from India and China into Burma included exquisite fabrics like chintz, muslin, satin, velvet, damask, brocade, as well as painted and printed cotton. The trade of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) with Burma began

formally in 1634 when the Dutch established three factories in Burma: a main office in the port city of Syriam with subsidiaries in Ava and Pegu. Indian textiles and red cotton yarn were the main products to be traded with Burma. Whereas exquisite and expensive textiles served the elite world of royals, coarse and simple functional cloth traded in the marketplaces formed the base of the VOC's trade with Burma which came to an end around 1670.



Scrolled bound book containing a Buddhist commentary on the Paṭṭhāna section of the Abhidhamma, written in Shan language, with a cotton and silk cover and hand-woven binding tape. Shan State, Burma, before 1867. British Library, Or 4858.

Britain began to export industrially produced yarn and cloth to India in the 1780s. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the East India Company ruled a large part of India, and subsequently the British Crown took control of the governing of India, so that finally the Company came to an end in 1858. By this time Britain was already producing its own 'Indian' textiles with machinery and newly developed synthetic dyes. While exports of low-cost fabric and the application of tariffs on imports of Indian cloth enabled Britain's textile industry to grow rapidly, the development of India's own textile industry was seriously affected.



Reverse of the unscrolled bound book with the textile cover and binding tape in outstanding condition. Shan State, Burma, before 1867. British Library, Or 4858.

Developments in Burma and the Shan States were connected to what was happening in India. In 1870, textiles and textile products accounted for 61% of imports into British Burma, although in the mid-1870s

Textile book covers in the Shan manuscript tradition

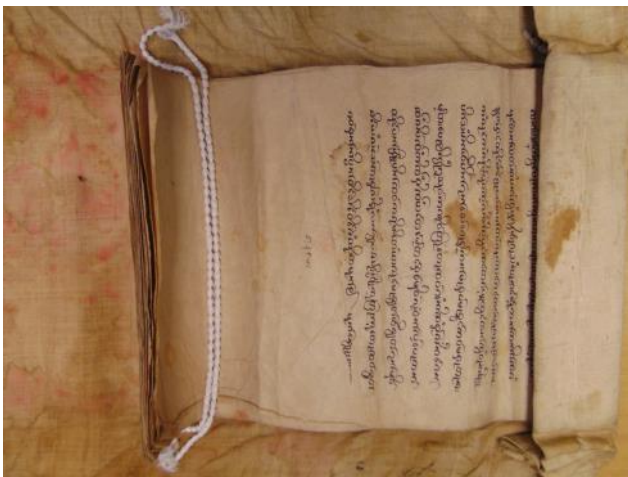
hand-loomed operated by women were still found in every household. By 1900 the Burmese textile industry had declined seriously and was effectively destroyed as a home industry by 1930 when 75% of Burma's cotton textile needs were provided by imports (Resnick, p. 57). Only the silk weaving industry continued in Upper Burma and catered for wealthier Burmese who could afford it.

It comes as no surprise that many Shan manuscripts are equipped with imported textile covers. The example shown above (scrolled) and below (unscrolled and detail) containing a Buddhist text in Shan language on 45 folios of bamboo shoot

paper has a printed cotton cloth wrapper with a mainly red and yellow floral pattern. On the inside is a cream coloured lining which, as one can see here, not only provides additional protection from dust but also helps to prevent stains from bleeding from the dye from the outer layer of the cover. The scrolled manuscript is fastened by three small braided knots and loops sewn on to the cover.



Cotton cover of a scrolled book containing 'Lik anicca sapho' in Shan language, a treatise on the nature of impermanence (anicca). Shan State, Burma, before 1892. British Library, Or 4571.



Scrolled book in Shan language in half-unscrolled state showing the cotton lining of the cover and first folio. Shan State, Burma, before 1892. British Library, Or 4571.

some liquid. The tasteful printed design in mainly red and orange colours, with some smaller elements in light green and white tones on a bright yellow background, depicts floral patterns and birds spreading their wings.

Conservation challenges

Due to the fact that in older library handlists the textile covers of scrolled books and manuscript wrappers were not usually described in detail or even mentioned at all, the recent discovery of numerous textile objects as parts of manuscripts in the Southeast Asian collections came as a great surprise. However, our excitement was dampened when we realised that many of the newly discovered textiles are in very poor condition and in urgent need of conservation treatment. In the context of Shan manuscripts one needs to bear in mind that the primary purpose of the textile covers was to protect the scrolled paper books and the texts contained in them from dust, moisture, mould, light, insect damage and smoke depending on where a manuscript was stored. This means that the covers may have been exposed to some or all of these damaging environmental conditions for relatively long periods of time (years or decades).

The scrolled book shown on the next page is a particularly good example to illustrate the significance of traditional storage conditions. It contains a Birth Tale of the Buddha (Jataka) in Shan language in black ink on eighteen sheets of bamboo shoot paper. It is dated to 1856. Sewn on to the binding is a printed cotton cover whose original beauty was only discovered once the book was unscrolled. While the part of the cover

The manuscript was acquired by the British Museum from George Hulls on 12 November 1892. Due to the condition of the paper and the textile cover, we can assume that it had been in use for some time, possibly years or decades. One third of the cover (below) that is closest to the binding is still in very good condition, whereas the rest is badly stained as a result of bleeding

when it came in contact with



Detail of an undamaged part of the cotton cover of a Shan scrolled book. Shan State, Burma, before 1892. British Library, Or 4571.

that faces the outside of the book and is exposed to the environment is heavily discoloured and torn, with some losses, the part that is on the inside and in direct contact with the paper has retained its original

colours: a fine combination of blues and ochre on cream background. The design is dominated by large and small flowers and leaves, and it seems to be part of a bigger whole. It is possible that this book cover, which has a plain cream-coloured cotton lining and frame, is a piece of cloth that originally



Scrolled book containing a Jataka tale (Catakā-kamong-rhwai-sui) in Shan language, with a printed cotton cover. Shan State, Burma, 1856. British Library, Or 12811.

served a completely different purpose, perhaps as a curtain, backdrop or household cloth.

The severe discolouration is probably the result of smoke, judging from the smell of the manuscript. In Shan culture manuscripts containing religious texts are not necessarily kept in Buddhist monasteries or temple libraries. Often such manuscripts were and still are stored in the homes of families who commissioned the manuscripts, or in the homes of scribes, copyists and authors who could accumulate large collections of manuscripts. One popular storage place for manuscripts in family homes is in the kitchen, on top of the lattice ceiling above the stove or fireplace where the smoke keeps insects away. Of course, the smoke has a very damaging effect on the outer part of the textile book cover, but the most important part of the manuscript - the text - is well preserved with this method. Apart from some mechanical damage around the edges of the paper and some minimal insect damage, the paper sheets are in an overall good condition.



Detail of the printed cotton cover of a Shan scrolled book containing a Jataka tale. Shan State, Burma, 1856. British Library, Or 12811.

From a curatorial point of view conservation treatment of this vulnerable manuscript cover would include surface cleaning to remove particles of dust and potentially dangerous substances like dry mould to enable safe handling of the manuscript. Interestingly, attempts (by the previous owner?) to repair a large tear in the lining are visible. These stitches should be preserved as they may hold clues to the provenance of the item. Further treatment should include stabilisation of broken stitching of the textile cover where it is attached to the book binding and stabilisation of localised loss.



Scrolled book containing a Buddhist text (Vineya-pari) in Shan language with a cotton brocade cover. Shan State, Burma, 19th century. British Library, Or 15369.

The main part of the cover, a brocade woven in supplementary weft technique, is thought to have been imported from India. The warp is formed of thin green cotton threads whereas the wefts are made of a slightly thicker yellow cotton yarn with metal foil sparingly wrapped around it. The complete size of the three-part cover is 700 mm x 535 mm.

Another challenging case in regard to conservation is a scrolled book from Søren Egerod's collection containing a Buddhist text concerned with monastic discipline written on twenty folios (left). Attached to the binding is a finely woven cotton brocade cover with a floral design set in a red cotton frame and white lining at the back of the

Overall, the manuscript is in relatively good condition. The paper has some minor insect damage, but the text is very well legible and the binding appears undamaged. Apart from some stains resulting from usage of the scrolled book there is no major discolouration of the cover. However, significant tears and localised loss of the fabric of all three parts are present as well as damage of the seams.

From a curatorial perspective conservation treatment of this piece of cloth would include surface cleaning with a soft brush or low vacuum suction to remove particles of dust, substances stuck on the fabric and potentially dangerous substances to make the manuscript safe to handle. Special attention will have to be paid to the stabilisation or consolidation of the damaged seams as well as the tears and localised loss to prevent further damage when the manuscript is being handled.

Conclusion

Although the collection of around one hundred Shan manuscripts at the British Library is a rather small one, it is representative of the diversity of Shan manuscripts both in regard to contents and materials. A good number of the scrolled books in this collection are equipped with textile book covers consisting of a wide range of materials including handwoven Shan fabrics, imported silk and cotton textiles as well as imported brocades. Apart from providing information regarding the production, use and storage of Shan manuscripts these textiles give us an idea of local and regional trade relations and the popularity of certain imported fabrics.

Unfortunately, many of the textiles had previously been neglected in regard to cataloguing and as a result also in relation to preservation. Many of the textiles are vulnerable and in urgent need of conservation treatment to prevent further damage, but also to make them safe to handle by library staff and in the reading room. In principle, all manuscripts are available for viewing to library users whose health and safety are of paramount priority.

Conservation treatment of manuscripts is usually agreed between curators and the library's experienced conservation specialists. This includes also the arrangement of suitable storage solutions to preserve the manuscripts as well as textile objects or other artefacts attached to them. In addition, digitisation will help to reduce the frequency of manuscripts being handled.

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Full view of the three-part cover - cotton brocade, red frame and white lining - of a scrolled book. Shan State, Burma, 19th century. British Library, Or 15369.

Jim Thompson : *The 'King of Silk' whose fabrics enriched 'The King and I'*

Denise Heywood ©



Jim Thompson. Photo © Jim Thompson House.

Of the many different varieties of Oriental textiles, the shimmering silk of Thailand is especially admired. It became famous in the film *The King and I*, bringing the beauty of Thai silk to an international audience. It owes its renown to another king, the 'King of Silk', Jim Thompson, a man whose life and achievements were as glittering as the film.

James Harrison Wilson Thompson, born in 1906 in Delaware to a prosperous family and educated at Princeton, was parachuted into Thailand in 1944. He was sent to help liberate the northeast and started the Office of Strategic Services, a forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency. When the war ended he worked in Bangkok for the American Legation. With a group of influential friends, some of whom were royalty, he embarked on a project to restore the dilapidated 19th century Oriental Hotel, now one of the finest hotels in the world. But after a disagreement, he withdrew.

An art collector and aesthete, he rapidly discovered pieces of hand-woven silk when rummaging in Bangkok's antique shops for *objets d'art*, and found he could sell them at the Oriental Hotel and make a living. Realising that the skills these represented were vanishing in the aftermath of war, superseded by an influx of machine-made silk from China, he began studying silk in the National Museum and sought out old weavers in the

Bangkruea district of the city to commission pieces from them.

Silk weaving was an ancient craft in Thailand, brought from China, and an intrinsic part of ancient kingdoms such as Sukhothai, Ayutthaya and Lan Na. But by the 19th century, machine-made textiles and imported materials from Europe had displaced traditional handicrafts and production started to decline. Throughout Southeast Asia the weaving of precious textiles was charged with symbolism and religious significance. Silk weaving was a fundamental part of the way of life, linked to Buddhist rites and animist practices, and carried out in rhythm with the seasons and the annual cycle of rice growing. Weaving was sacred and was, according to mythology, taught to women by guardian spirits through a male intermediary. Passed down from generation to generation, designs of weaving were intricate, based on Buddhist iconography, zoological, floral and natural motifs, animistic beliefs and images of harmony and rhythm. All women learned to weave (although not exclusively, as men could too). Many simple palm-thatched houses on stilts had a classical wood loom with vertical heddles - cords or wires - where women wove elaborate designs and motifs, handed down from mother to daughter, a complex system of knowledge, based on region and ethnic group. Even princesses were expected to acquire the skills to create the illustrious silk costumes worn at court, for so labour intensive and luxurious was this material that it was reserved mainly for royalty. Ceremonial coats and jackets were richly embroidered with gold, and Siamese monarchs and princes would hold court on a raised platform decorated with mats and cushions covered in silk embroidery and couched gold and silver metal wire. Garments reflected hierarchies, with particular colours and patterns of embroidery corresponding to social status. Weft ikat, or *mat mi* was used, the technique of resist-dyeing the weft by tying groups of wefts with natural or plastic binding, practised throughout Southeast Asia.

The cycle of silk production harmonises with that of rice growing, so that when land is prepared for the rice crop in the dry season, mulberry trees are pruned. When the monsoon rains begin, rice seedlings are planted and cotton is sown, while silk worms are raised from the silk moths' eggs. Mulberry trees proliferate in the mountainous regions of northern Thailand and it is on the leaves of this tree, of two species, the *Morus alba* and *Morus australis*, that silk worms feed. The best Thai silk is made by the caterpillar of the *Bombyx mori* silk moth, which exists only in captivity, on sericulture farms.

Researching these ancient skills and traditions, Thompson's efforts were rewarded and in 1949 he decided to form The Thai Silk Company, with a colleague, George Barrie, giving his weavers shares in the company. It went rapidly from strength to strength as he recreated detailed patterns and radiant colours, for which he had an innate taste and sensibility, favouring the rich magenta, purple, crimson, rose and cerise pink beloved of Thais, by using special artificial dyes that would last. Creating such a luxurious product in the beleaguered post war years, he soon found a market in America through his contact with the editor at Vogue magazine, Edna Woolman Chase. With her impeccable taste she immediately featured it in the next issue, in a dress worn by the celebrated model Valentina. Thompson was launched.

Shortly afterwards, in 1956, his silks were chosen for the film of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *The King and I* by its designer, Irene Sharaff, to adorn the charismatic star Yul Brynner as the 19th century King Mongkut and his captivating 80 children and their English governess Anna. In an era of American western films featuring rugged cowboys in denim jeans and leather boots, Brynner's appearance in silk and sequins, an earring dangling from one lobe, invented a new image for dashing masculinity. The questionable portrayal of the revered monarch, much criticised since, did nothing to diminish the success of the film. Its glittering costumes in dazzling colours brought Thompson wealth and fame.

As a result, visitors came from all over the world to buy from his first silk shop in Surawong Road, renovated in 2016. They were intrigued to meet an adventurous American in Southeast Asia whose hospitality became as renowned as his wares. From this success emerged the realisation of his dream of having a traditional Thai house filled with the objects that he had already started enthusiastically collecting. As William Warren writes in *Jim Thompson: The House on the Klong*, his decision to 'erect a traditional Thai house and live in it was a novel decision in the 1950s'. Wealthier people, he adds, would have used it as a 'quaint touch of nostalgia' for entertaining but would actually live in a Western building.

Thompson had, over time, bought six old houses, *ruen Thai derm*, mostly from Ayutthaya and the central region, and reassembled them as one house on land which he had acquired close to the Bangkruea weavers, alongside a *klong*, the Saen Saeb canal. Architecturally the vernacular Thai house in wood and bamboo is

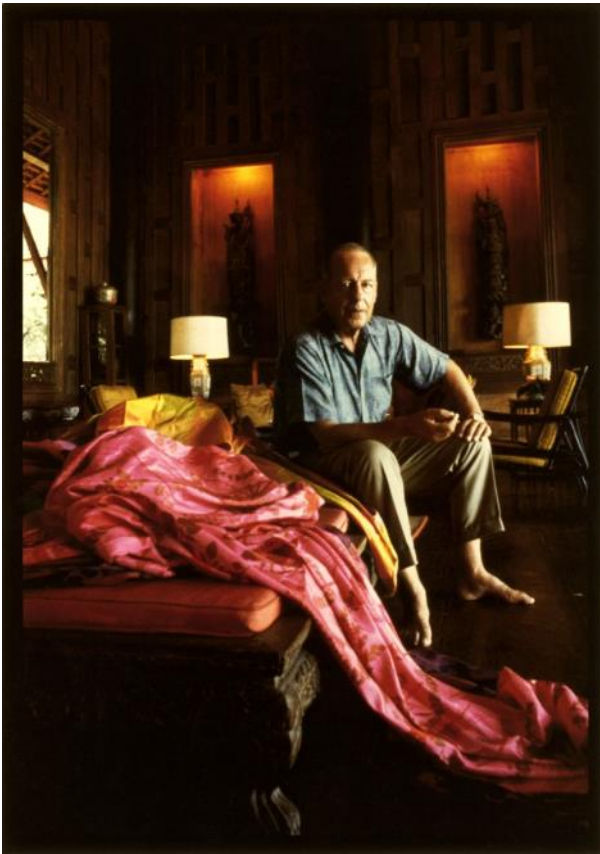


Jim Thompson House. Photo © Jim Thompson House.

ideal for the tropics, raised on stilts to protect it from flooding in the rainy season, with open verandas for cool breezes and gabled, steeply pitched roofs for shade, the materials lending themselves to a rural way of life integrated harmoniously with the environment. Thompson's own house, whose construction had been blessed by monks in an inaugural ceremony on 15 September 1958 was officially opened with ceremonies on 3 April 1959. Set in a tropical garden, abundant with foliage and flowers, this historic teak wood house is filled with antique Thai furniture, sculptures, bronzes, wood carvings, porcelain, ceramics, paintings, calligraphy, manuscripts, votive plaques and sacred Buddhist and Hindu objects, displayed within an

atmospheric décor of shimmering silk in vibrant colours. Today this is the Jim Thompson Museum.

Thompson's silks cover every piece of furniture, from beds to chairs, stools, tables and sofas. These were the lustrous fabrics that attracted visitors of the time who included Cecil Beaton, Somerset Maugham, Edward and Ethel Kennedy, Gore Vidal, Truman Capote, Senator Robert Kennedy, Edward Luce, founder of Time, actress Anne Baxter, Barbara Hutton, the Woolworths heiress, Doris Duke, the 'richest girl in the world', whose collection of Asian artefacts is in the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, and the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, and ultimately Queen Sirikit herself who bought his silks for her clothes designed by French couturier Pierre Balmain. His home, where every night he invited guests, enchanted visitors. Thompson also invited scholars and teachers from the University of Fine Arts to view his collection, graciously providing refreshments. The living room where his dinner parties would become legendary, often accompanied by Thai classical dancers (Thompson was on the board of the *Ballets Russes* in Monte Carlo), a Thai orchestra, and an assortment of animals such as Cocky his cockatoo, bantams and domestic



Jim Thompson in his living room with silk spread out on his Thai bed, circa 1966-1967. Photo © Jim Thompson Silks/The Thai Silk Company Limited.

pets, was like a theatrical stage. The doors could slide open completely on to the garden filled with the perfume of tropical blooms such as jasmine, frangipani, flame of the forest and numerous palm trees, arranged by Thompson.

Guests would be seated at a 100-year-old carved teak table that once belonged to King Chulalongkorn (as a gaming table rather than for eating since diners would have been seated on the floor for meals) and could gaze up at a 19th century crystal chandelier from a former palace, or at the Chinese blue and white porcelain that Thompson admired, today immensely valuable. Innumerable paintings on cotton from the *Vessantara Jataka*, tales which originated in Sanskrit from India relating the 550 previous lives of the Buddha, decorate the wood panels of the walls. They were displayed throughout the house and visitors were able to immerse themselves completely in an artistic vision and romantic evocation of a bygone era.

By 1967, Thompson had lived eight years in his house. At the pinnacle of his success, recipient of the highest awards from the government in recognition of his work, with silk established as the country's most celebrated product, he decided to spend Easter with friends, the Lings, in their Moonlight Cottage in the Cameron Highlands of Malaysia. Accompanied by Connie Mangksau, a fellow art collector and dealer, they spent Good Friday and Easter Saturday there. On Easter Sunday afternoon, 26 March, Thompson, aged 61 years old, went out for a walk. He never returned.

Extensive searches over the following months yielded nothing. Conspiracy theories flourished, particularly over his connections with the CIA, with allusions to kidnap and abduction. Rumours circulated of Thai rivals who were jealous of a foreigner's success and collection of Thai art. Biographer, Joshua Kurlantzick, in *The Ideal Man, The Tragedy of Jim Thompson and the American Way of War*, believes he attracted hostility during a troubled time of war in Southeast Asia. The mystery attracted worldwide attention but nothing has ever been proved. After seven years he was declared dead.

In 1976 permission was obtained from the Thai government by the court-appointed administrators for Thompson's property for it to become a foundation bearing his name. The property was vested in the foundation and the house and collection were officially registered as a national museum.

In addition, there are now 36 Jim Thompson silk shops in Thailand and branches in Europe and America. Jim Thompson Silks is the world's largest producer of hand-woven fabrics, all created with their own silk farms, mills, design studio and research and development operations. They design unique fabrics of exceptional quality and beauty, from fibre preparation, yarn spinning and dyeing to weaving, printing and finishing. They grow the mulberry trees and raise silkworms on their own farms, with 50 work shops on 93 acres of landscaped grounds, with the co-operation of thousands of other family owned farms, totalling 1,100 acres. Master weavers, spinners and dyers have been with them for more than 30 years. They adhere to Thompson's original ideas.

Thanks to this dedication, the King of Silk's legacy is accessible to all who come to the house to see a unique collection of Thai art and antiques. But they come, above all, to admire the visual beauty of the shimmering silk of Thailand, introduced so memorably in *The King and I*.

Jim Thompson Museum: Rama I Road, Khwaeng Wang Mai, Khet Pathum Wan, Krung Thep Maha Nakhon 10330

Jim Thompson Silk Shop: 9 Thanon Surawong, Khwaeng Suriya Wong, Khet Bang Rak, Bangkok.

www.jimthompsonhouse.com

Katagami: Just a Paper Stencil. Part One

Mamiko Markham

This article is the first part of two. Here I explain the basics of Katagami stencils, what they are and how they are made, and I outline the historical context - the effect of rising production of Katagami - and the professional techniques used.

Katagami (finely cut paper stencils) are used in the patterning of cloth, typically long bolts of cotton, silk, or other cloth used for kimono and other Japanese garments. Katagami stencils are made from layers of Washi (traditional handmade Japanese paper) bonded together with Kakishibu (persimmon tannin), rendering the paper stiff and waterproof. These are then carved with openwork designs.

'Katazome' is a Japanese method of dyeing fabrics using a resist paste applied through a stencil. It is an art form whereby patterns are created through a complicated process: drawing patterns, then producing "Katagami", by cutting a Washi stencil paper in accordance with the drawing, and then placing resist paste over the blank space so that dye will not penetrate. It is a totally different process from painting. It requires several different crucial processes. Countless talented and highly skilled craftspeople have been involved in developing this Katazome method over many centuries in Japan.

Katagami stencils have long been used for decorating Yukata cotton (summer kimonos), Edo Komon (usually silk or ramie textiles dyed with minute, repeating patterns), and Yūzen silks.



Katagami with arabesque chrysanthemum flower pattern from 1718. In this Katagami the lines which express the petals and vines are all different; the design has a feeling of movement due to the flexibility of the hand-carving; the patterns all flow naturally together. Photo: OKOSHI-KATAGAMI Inc.

Katazome in the Edo period

From the 17th century to the late 19th century, when Japan kept herself in isolation from the outside world, kimono culture flourished among all classes of people, and the techniques and designs of Katagami stencils grew dramatically.

Under the regime of the Tokugawa shogunate from 1603 to 1868, Edo (later to become Tokyo) was the business capital of Japan, whilst the artistic manufacturing base was Kyoto, which since the 8th century had been the royal capital of the Imperial Household. A main road connecting Kyoto and Edo was developed, called the Tokaido, which became an important route, both politically and economically. By the mid-18th

century, Edo had a population of more than one million and Kyoto more than 400,000. Many other castle towns grew as well. Whilst Edo was the metropolis for the supply of food and essential urban consumer goods, Kyoto boasted busy craft production centres. This period was characterised by an unprecedented series of economic developments and cultural maturing. A wide variety of designs and decorative techniques were used in kimono, especially those worn by country feudal lords, the kabuki opera actors of Edo and the courtesans of each city.



Ukiyo-e (woodblock print) of the Theatres in Sakai Cho, Edo, by Utagawa Hiroshige, Edo period (1615–1868).

At this time, Ukiyo-e (woodblock print) artists were depicting the landscape of the Tokaido, and the celebrities and entertainers of the pleasure districts of Edo; Ukiyo-e were the tabloids of their time and depicted current fashion. Common people were influenced by these prints and bought used kimonos to enjoy the fashions. Guilds of merchants and craftsmen nationwide began to meet the growing demand for decorative kimono among ordinary

people by producing new ones. The kimono industry grew, using increasingly sophisticated methods for Katagami stencils and dyeing.

In Kyoto, kimono designs had been highly sophisticated since the 17th century. In the southern part of the city Katajigami (the plain sheets from which Katagami are cut) were made using high-quality Washi from the town of Mino. A specific Kyoto design style developed with advanced carving techniques, mostly for dyeing white silk (not cotton) for kimono worn by the middle classes and above. Not far from Kyoto was Ise district (Mie prefecture today), part of the feudal estate of the Kishu Tokugawa family, close relatives of the Shogun. Stencil cutters in this district enjoyed the patronage of their feudal lords and it became the centre of Katagami production, sending supplies throughout Japan. Especially in the areas of Shiroko and Jike, Katagami merchants prospered greatly under the patronage of the Kishu Tokugawa and with successful merchandising this heralded the 'golden age' of Katagami.

During the time of peak production of Katagami in the Edo period from the 17th to 19th centuries, Katagami makers created vast quantities of designs to correspond with changes in fashion and clients' needs. Katagami merchants contributed to this demand. They traded Katagami to dyeing studios and the resultant kimono patterns were depicted in the popular Ukiyo-e woodblock prints; Hokusai's design books also reflected them.



Ukiyo-e by Torii Kiyonaga showing a scene from a Kabuki production in 1783. A male actor plays a popular courtesan wearing the latest fashionable kimono.

Katagami: Just a Paper Stencil. Part One

The process of making Katagami Stencils

Looking at kimonos, it is readily apparent that great skill and artistry lie behind the production of such beautiful garments. Not so apparent is the extraordinary development of the disparate crafts required. In Japan, both woodblock printing and Katagami stencil dyeing were undertaken before the 17th century, but during the Edo period especially, as a result of the unification of Japan and the absence of conflicts, Katagami stencil dyeing was actively developed on a huge scale. Katagami merchants worked together with craftsmen to spread a nationwide kimono culture.

In general, the practices involved in the production of Katagami procedure in the Edo period were: the procurement of raw plant materials for and production of Mino Washi handmade paper; the procurement of raw materials and production of Kakishibu tannin adhesive; the bonding of the Washi together with Kakishibu adhesive to produce Katajigami (plain sheets ready to be cut into stencils); the design of the art work; the planning and cutting out of the design from the Katajigami to produce the Katagami; the retailing of Katagami stencils by merchants to dyeing studios nationwide; the positioning of Katagami on the fabric and repeated application of glutinous rice resist paste along the bolt of fabric in a dyeing studio; the dyeing of the fabric when the resist paste is dry; and the washing out of the resist paste and drying.

These processes are like building blocks, each relying on the skilful perfection of the previous one; should there be a mistake, it would mean an enormous waste of craftsmen's work and time and of materials. So these artisans displayed true commitment to perfection. For those few craft people involved in Katagami today, these principles still hold good.

Mino Washi

Washi is a type of paper made only in Japan, using fibres of the bark of the Kozo (mulberry), Mitsumata (paperbush) and Ganpi trees. The paper is made by soaking the fibres in water and using the extracted bast fibre as the main raw material. The fibres are long, strong and supple and the paper very different from paper made mainly from tree trunk wood pulp. Mino in Gifu prefecture, a place blessed with plants and clear water streams for making paper, has been producing thin, strong, high quality paper since the 8th century.

The technology of papermaking had been transmitted from China to Japan around the 7th century. In the 8th century the Imperial Court set up a facility in Mino for making handmade Washi to supply Buddhist sutra paper. In the 8th century Washi was supplied for the sliding doors used by the aristocracy. The

collaboration between Ise Katagami and Mino Washi began in this period. The demand between the two production areas, about 74 miles apart, was supplied by porters carrying more than 500 pieces at a time on foot.

Left: Kozo plant (mulberry) and bark.

Below left and right: Traditional Washi-making.

Photos : Corsoyard Mino Handmade Washi.



Persimmon Tannin Juice and Katajigami

Kakishibu (Persimmon tannin juice) is used to bond the layers of Washi together and to render them waterproof. It is a natural reddish-brown organic liquid prepared from the fermented juice of unripened green astringent persimmon fruits, aged for more than three years to gain the maximum tannins. Kakishibu has been used for various purposes since the Heian Period (782 – 1182 AD). In Shiroko Katajigami have been made from Mino Washi and using Kakishibu since the 17th century.



Above left: Astringent persimmon fruits. Above right: Kakishibu. Photos on this page courtesy of Osugi Katagami Factory.

Osugi Katagami Manufactory in Shiroko is a Katajigami maker established in 1946; they still use the traditional handmade manufacturing methods from the 17th century. They use astringent persimmon from Gifu prefecture in a production process of 14 stages. Katajigami Master Mr. Nishiguchi Jiro of Osugi Katagami Manufactory has been engaged in this profession for over 54 years, whilst also teaching many disciples. During the busy 1970s, 50,000 pieces of Katajigami were produced every month.

A sheet of Katajigami is normally made by bonding three sheets of Washi together with Kakishibu. In the Osugi Katagami Manufactory, the front and rear faces use Mino Washi with the fibres running longitudinally, while the middle sheet is Tosa Washi (from Shikoku province) with fibres running laterally.

Below: Master Nishiguchi making Katajigami from Mino Washi and Tosa Washi.



To complete the Katajigami process the sheets are dried in sunlight, then smoked, using cedar wood sawdust, for more than 7 days. About 250 or more Katajigami are in the smoke room at a time. Then the Katajigami are coated again with Kakishibu, dried in the sunlight and smoked for a further 7 days. The process has taken about 50 days by this stage. After the Katajigami in the smoke room have cooled down, their surfaces are wiped with cotton swabs and inspected before finally being laid out for three to six months to stabilise before shipping.

Below left to right: drying in the sunlight; smoking; Master Nishiguchi in the smoking room.



Katagami: Just a Paper Stencil. Part One

The process of providing Katagami with the exact properties needed for applying openwork carving requires enormous care. They must have a soft texture, but also be tough enough to withstand the rigours of use. They must have a smooth surface for marking out the design prior to the cutting of the top face (that is the side placed on the board when it is drying). The rear surface (that which is exposed to sunlight when drying) is a little rougher and this helps prevent the stencil moving on the fabric when rice paste is applied.

In the dyeing studio, the completed stencil is placed on the fabric and glutinous rice paste resist is applied with a spatula. The stencil is then lifted and replaced, with the bottom of the cut-out pattern coinciding with the top of the 'printed' resist pattern. This is repeated around 50-60 times along the 12-metre bolt of fabric needed to make a kimono, forming a continuous pattern.

Creation of Katagami Designs and Carving a Small Template

The pattern designer must always consider aspects of the carving and dyeing. Steps in the openwork carving are carefully thought out beforehand; many Katagami cannot be simply cut to reflect the pattern. For a repeating pattern, which most are, a decision needs to be made as to where the start/end parts of the design coincide. This determines the need for extra stencils. And the method of dealing with isolated 'islands' in the pattern needs to be determined.

In addition to the whole Katagami pattern being repeated along the fabric, in most cases there will be a repeating pattern within the Katagami itself. In such cases, the carver may elect to produce a small carved template.



Left: Creating the design of a small template. Right: Carving a small template. Photos: OKOSHI-KATAGAMI Inc.

The template's pattern is then printed, repeated over the whole Katagami using a water-based charcoal ink.



Left: The completed template. Right: Printing the template pattern. Photos: OKOSHI-KATAGAMI Inc.

These are important tasks: perfect alignment of the template in all directions is required, otherwise it would compromise the ability of the Katagami to form the repeated pattern on the fabric accurately. When the printed guide is completed, the carving of the Katagami itself can begin.

Millions of Katagami and their templates were produced from the 17th to the 19th century. However, although there are vast collections of Katagami stencils in the West, few if any museums have examples of templates to show how these were used. In Japan, the drawn designs and carved templates often still remain with Katagami makers, providing us with invaluable information about the making of Katagami. The firm OKOSHI-KATAGAMI Inc. maintains a collection of old drawing designs. This fascinating material allows us to compare the drawing design with the actual Katagami.

Katagami: Just a Paper Stencil. Part One

The Katagami illustrated below left forms part of a set of three, a design for a woman's summer kimono made in the 19th century. It has been coloured to assist in visualising the completed dyed fabric. It would be the first stencil to be used, to apply resist paste to the fabric. The images on the right and below are digitally created to indicate in pairs the application and effect.



The 1st Katagami, used to apply resist paste to the fabric where it will not receive any colouring.



The yellow shading indicates the applied resist paste on the fabric. When it has dried, the second Katagami is used.

19th century Katagami with colouring. All photographs on this page courtesy of OKOSHI-KATAGAMI Inc.



The 2nd Katagami. The process differs from usual practice. Coloured dye (black) is applied directly through the stencil.



Fabric after both resist paste (from 1st Katagami) and black dye application (from 2nd Katagami).



The 3rd Katagami. Indigo (dark blue) is applied directly onto the fabric through the stencil.



The fabric with dark blue colour added.



The completed design on fabric.

The whole fabric has been dyed in light blue indigo colour and the resist paste washed out.

Intended for dyeing four colours, the openwork areas of the three stencils display a highly developed design; particularly towards leaving the white background of the kimono by applying resist with the first stencil. And it is necessary to adopt an accurate openwork design plan at the pattern creation stage before carving.

Techniques of carving

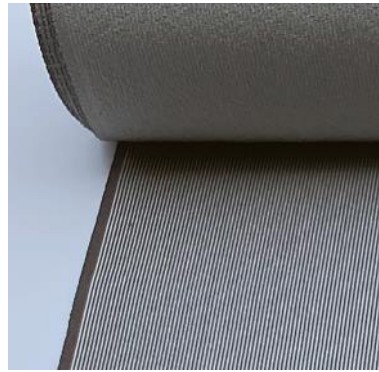
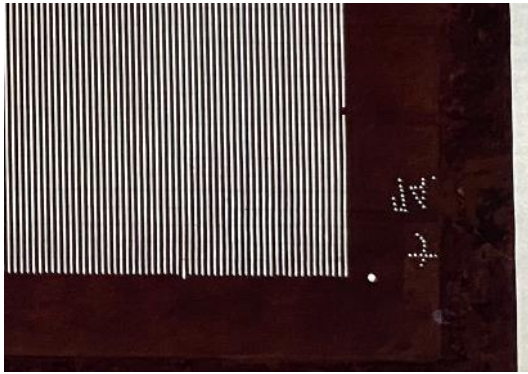
There have been four principal cutting techniques used, past and present. A craftsman can usually master only one of these. Katagami carvers make their own cutting tools for the techniques they are trained in. Some keep their methods secret, just as their master did. Traditionally, until around the 19th century, a male trainee carver only became independent after he had trained in his master's workshop for more than 10 years. Even today, carvers' roles are divided according to their specific meticulous skills because mistakes cannot be undone. The four carving techniques are as follows:

Tsukibori (push cutting) is where the craftsperson cuts by pushing the tip of the stencilling knife away from him. For Tsukibori it was usual to cut six Katagami together at a time. They were held in place on all four sides by twisted paper string. Tsukibori knives must be razor-sharp and are sharpened by the artisans before use.



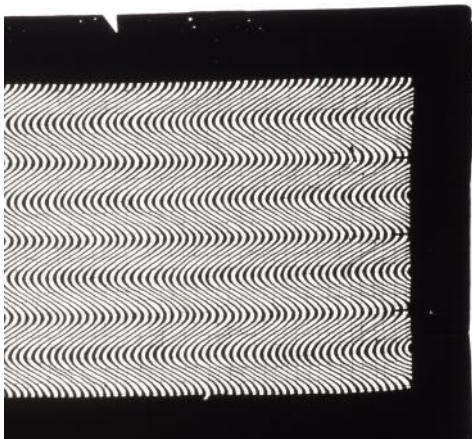
Tsukibori cut Katagami. Collection of MoDA. Photograph courtesy of MoDA.

Shimabori (pull cutting) Striped lines are mainly cut using a rule. The carver cuts the stripes by pulling the stencilling knife toward himself against the rule. In the most detailed work, there may be as many as 31 stripes per Sun (a traditional Japanese measurement equating to 3.03cm).



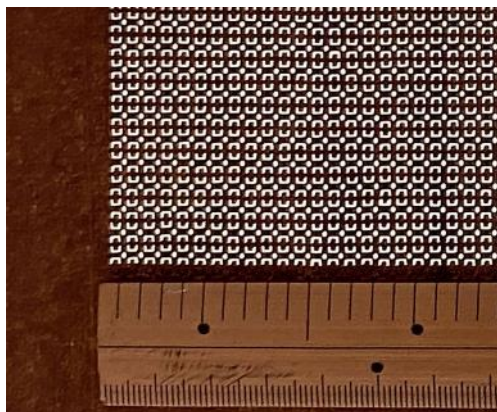
Left: Shimabori cut Katagami. Right: Shimabori fabric by Okoshi Katagami. Photos from: OKOSHI-KATAGAMI Inc.

Itoire (insertion of threads) In patterns with many openwork push cut (Tsukibori) or pull cut (Shimabori) sections or delicate detailing, there is a concern that the stencils could tear or the pattern be distorted during the dyeing process. In these circumstances the stencil would be reinforced; the layered papers of the Katagami are peeled apart into two, then bonded together with persimmon tannin whilst sandwiching a web of silk threads between. From the 17th century until the 1920s, this work was carried out by women artisans.



Left: Itoire Katagami. Right: Itoire Katagami (detail). Photos: MoDA.

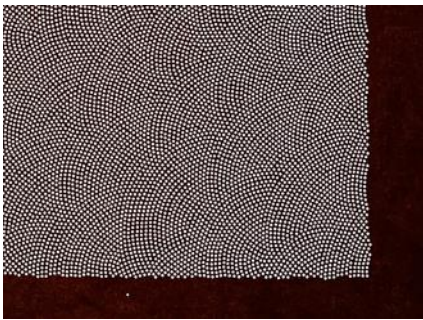
Dogubori (tool punching) The cutting tools are effectively shaped knives, punches shaped to stamp out pre-determined shapes, such as flowers, fans, or wheat stalks and used to create a variety of patterns. More than 50 kinds of geometric shapes are used, created by the craftsman, who has a strong influence on the outcome of the finished product. This is one of the general techniques used to create Edo-Komon (a pattern style consisting of small but complex detail).



Left: Dogubori cut Katagami. Right: Dogubori cut pattern on fabric. Photos: OKOSHI-KATAGAMI Inc.

Katagami: Just a Paper Stencil. Part One

Kiribori (drill cutting) A method of using a stencilling knife with a semicircular blade, using a rotating action to cut out circles. Fine detailing can be achieved, in some cases around 100 holes per square centimetre. Different sizes, arrangements, and distances between holes can produce different expressions and impressions, an incredibly difficult and complex process. This technique was used to create types of Kamishimo (matched sets of stiff-shouldered vest and Hakama trousers) for Samurai in the Edo period in particular.



Left: Kiribori (drill cut) Katagami. Right: Kamishimo, 18th century, Imamura Dyeing Studio in Shimoina, Nagano prefecture. Right: Kiribori cut pattern on Kamishimo fabric (detail).

One last note on Katagami stencils

In the 19th century Edo period, many of the Katagami which had outlived their usefulness remained unused in dyeing studios. Unlike in the West, where they were valued for their designs and workmanship, in Japan they were regarded as merely processing tools. Many were sold off to merchants, destined for Paris and Liberty in London and Japanese antique dealers. Katagami sets were scattered to different collections or even different countries.

Museums and universities in Europe and the United States now have a vast array of Katagami stencils collected from the 19th to early 20th centuries. In the UK, there are about 4000 in the Victoria & Albert Museum collection, about 400 in the collection of the Museum of Domestic Design and Architecture, Middlesex University and about 300 in the International Textile Collection at the University of Leeds.

Although many collections still sleep in storage, some have finally begun to be studied. From 2016 to 2018, MoDA ran 'Katagami in Practice', a project to research their collection, funded through the Arts Council England Designation Development Fund. This provided opportunities for developing knowledge, expertise sharing and appraisal of Katagami stencils. It also strengthened ties with Middlesex University's Faculty of Art and Creative Industries and promoted the collection's value as a source of inspiration for new designers. I took part in this project, analysing the 400 stencils in their Silver Studio collection, a process which continues as I exchange information with the Japanese Katagami research group (<https://moda.mdx.ac.uk/behind-the-scenes/katagami/>).

In the second part of this article I will cover the factors, influences, marketing and less obvious aspects related to Katagami. And I will explain the methods of analysis to verify the origin of Katagami in the West.

Mamiko Markham was born in Osaka and raised in Kyoto in an environment of traditional Japanese arts and became an avid collector of kimono from an early age. Traditional weaving and dyeing methods became her passion and she travelled extensively through Asia to broaden her knowledge as an independent researcher and educator. She has provided material for fashion textile journals, lectured in Japanese universities, worked as a textile researcher and coordinator for NHK television and in several Central Asian countries for UNESCO, educating in fashion development and later organising international fashion exhibitions. She married and settled in Wales where she gained a qualification for teaching in the U.K.

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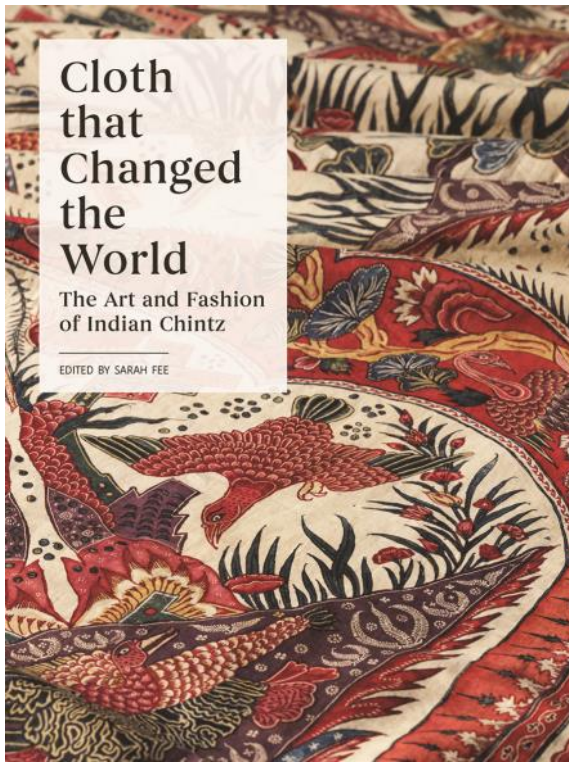
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 OKOSHI-KATAGAMI Inc. <https://okoshi-katagami.com/>

ORTS photo archive



The group photograph above was taken on the ORTS trip to Northern Iran in 2017. Top row left to right: Abbas Rahimi, Fiona Kerlogue, Ann Mir, Christopher Legge, Sue Final, Elizabeth Freeman, Ken Teague. Two in the middle: Jill Nicklin and Maggie Keeble. Next row down: Elizabeth Bridges, Neville Kingston, Margaret Broadbent, Mary Boyle, with Stephanie Bunn on the far right. Lowest step: Louise Teague, Pauline Dickes, and in the green T-shirt Mujtaba, our local guide.

Any members with similar photographs, not necessarily whole group photographs like this one, are invited to send them to the editor at editor.orts@gmail.com, for inclusion in a future issue or for keeping in the ORTS photo archive.



***Cloth That Changed the World: The Art and Fashion of Indian Chintz* edited by Sarah Fee**

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The recently released *Cloth That Changed the World: The Art and Fashion of Indian Chintz* is the companion publication to the highly anticipated upcoming exhibition at the Royal Ontario Museum. Following in the footsteps of *The Origins of Chintz*, the landmark 1970 Royal Ontario Museum/Victoria and Albert Museum publication, *Cloth That Changed the World* offers a beautiful catalogue of the ROM's exceptional collection alongside diverse, authoritative texts.

What exactly constitutes chintz is complicated by the fabric's long history and the wide variety of names it has been traded under. For some, the term evokes a specific style of Indian floral-patterned cotton popular in Western fashions of the eighteenth-century. For others, it refers to the technique of hand-drawing mordants and resists on cotton, as distinct from fully block-printed varieties of Indian cotton cloth. Wider definitions may include industrially-printed multi-coloured cottons made in imitation of or influenced by Indian originals, expanding the term to encompass a huge variety of cotton fabrics produced around the world.

Cloth That Changed the World takes a broadly inclusive approach, incorporating hand-drawing, block-printing and industrially manufactured mordant- and resist-dyed cottons in a wide variety of styles. This approach allows for an expansive investigation into the full impact of chintz worldwide, with new research, recent discoveries and fresh perspectives bringing previously under-explored dimensions to the story. The multidisciplinary group of contributing authors use a global design history framework to investigate the intersections between various production centres and technical methods, market-specialisations, influences on fashion and design, trade patterns, political, economic and industrial impacts, and modern-day re-interpretations.

Part one grounds the reader at chintz's point of origin: India. Sarah Fee's overview of Indian chintz production processes and materials ('Indian Chintz: Cotton, Colour, Desire') is enriched by the fascinating insight of contemporary chintz artist Renuka Reddy ('In Focus: In Praise of Cottons'), whose current research through practice demonstrates how the right density of cotton weave was paramount to achieving the bright, naturally-dyed colours that made chintz so popular worldwide. Rosemary Crill's essay on chintz production for the home market ('Creating for India') further offers an exciting first look at a previously unknown and spectacular set of mid-seventeenth century hand-drawn and painted hangings for a South Indian court - one of the most extraordinary revelations from a private collection to be discovered in recent years (see Crill's article 'South Indian court scenes' in HALI 203 Spring 2020 for more information on this important group).

Part two explores a swathe of global chintz consumption markets, allowing the reader to compare and contrast chintz markets in Egypt and maritime Southeast Asia (Ruth Barnes, 'Early Indian Textiles in Egypt' and 'Indian Textiles for the Lands below the Winds') with those of Iran, Armenia, Thailand and Sri Lanka (Steven Cohen, 'The Specialized Markets of Western Asia' and 'The Specialized Markets of South and Southeast Asia'), Japan (Peter Lee, 'Sarasa in Japan'), and Europe (Rosemary Crill, 'A Revolution in the Bedroom', and Alexandra Palmer, 'Fashioning Chintz'). A valuable introduction to the previously under-explored role of Portuguese private traders and their merchant networks in establishing new markets for Indian chintz is provided (J. Teles e Cunha and M. Joao Ferriera, 'Spreading Desire, Linking the World') alongside a fascinating botanical study of the species of flowers found in Indian chintz patterns (Deborah Metsger, 'The Flowers of Indian Chintz').

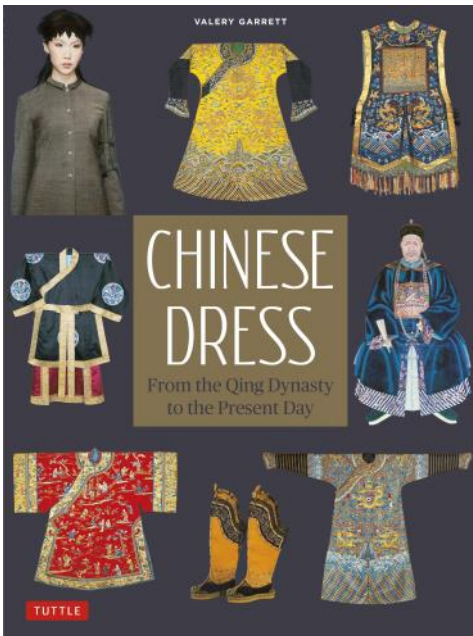
Part three offers a collection of essays focusing on the impacts of chintz on the domestic industries of both its global markets and India itself. A cross-section of the domestic tastes and productions of Europe, Southeast Asia, Africa, Polynesia, North America, and Japan demonstrate the influence of Indian chintz on textile design internationally (Sarah Fee, 'The Flowering Family Tree of Indian Chintz,' Max Dionisio, 'Perfecting the Printed Pattern,' and Sylvia Houghteling, 'Origins in Entanglement'), while the oft-retold story of the European industrial revolution is critically re-examined, revealing how the eventual success of European cotton printing was the result of nearly two centuries of experimentation and technical developments (Philip Sykas, 'Refashioning Chintz in the European Manner' and Hannah Martinsen, 'Printing in Green') made possible only by significant environmental and human exploitation (Giorgio Riello, 'How Chintz Changed the World'). Finally, the British imperialist narrative of the 'decline' of India's printed and painted cotton industry is given a de-colonial re-reading, revealing how colonial-era concepts of value still affect our perceptions of Indian chintz today.

Part four concludes the chintz story with a look at modern and contemporary Indian hand-printed and painted cottons. An overview of the recent history of *kalamkari* (the technique of hand-drawing mordants and resists) in southern India (Rajarshi Sengupta 'Ruptures, Continuations, and Innovations') is complemented by a short history of northwestern Indian block-printing style revivals (Eiluned Edwards 'Textiles in Bloom'). Both chapters provide summaries of the organisations and community leaders whose work supported the continued development of these crafts through the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, bringing the history of chintz up to the present day. As the home of the ROM, a connection with Canada is given a spotlight in the story of a late-twentieth-century Canadian fashion entrepreneur's relationship with Indian printed cottons (Alexandra Palmer, 'Sarah Clothes'). The book closes with a focus on contemporary Indian designers working with heritage patterns, techniques and artists to innovatively re-define chintz for a new generation of consumers (Divia Patel, 'Fashion').

Overall *Cloth That Changed the World* tells a sweeping story, marrying foundational histories of chintz with new perspectives and exciting recent discoveries. Importantly, it also serves as the first catalogue of the ROM's exceptional chintz collection in colour; previously the collection was accessible only through the black-and-white images in the *Origins of Chintz* publication and a limited selection of photographed pieces in the ROM's online catalogue. While the pandemic has sadly pushed back the opening of the *Cloth That Changed the World* exhibition, the publication suggests it will be a fantastic show.

Avalon Fotheringham

Avalon Fotheringham is a Curator for Asia at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London



***Chinese Dress: From the Qing Dynasty to the Present Day* by Valery Garrett**

Published by Tuttle Publishing, an imprint of Periplus Editions (HK) Ltd, 2019

235 pages

ISBN: 978 0 8048 3633 0 hardback

ISBN: 978-0-8048-5256-2 paperback

This book is a very welcome reprint of Valery Garrett's 2008 book of the same title. Books of this nature do not age, but their small print run frequently deprives a new generation of Chinese textile lovers the chance to acquire knowledge at a reasonable cost and publishers seldom realise the necessity of keeping the information in their books in the forefront of research on a subject.

Living in Hong Kong and being able to visit the Chinese mainland on a regular basis from the early 1970s gave Valery Garrett access to the country as it opened up to the rest of the world. It enabled her to buy fine examples of the imperial costumes worn at court, as well as the decorative informal garments, clothing accessories, the photographs, old books and posters which amply illustrate the change in styles from the early Qing dynasty in 1644 to the fall of Imperial China in 1911 and the enormous changes thereafter up until modern times.

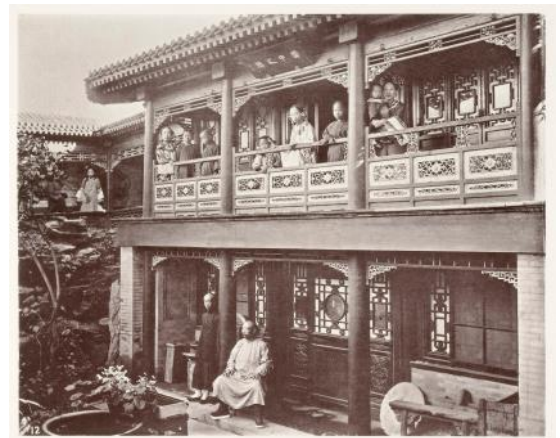
The book's 235 pages deal succinctly with the regulations and dress for the imperial Court, especially since the author covered this subject in her book 'Chinese Dragon Robes'. The importance of hierarchy is apparent in the colours of the court dress: from 'bright yellow' silk reserved for the emperor, who represented the sun on earth, and three imperial ladies: the dowager empress, empress and first rank imperial concubine. Or costumes for the sons and daughter in laws of the emperor, who wore apricot formal robes; dukes and marquises and sons in law of the emperor in brown silk; down to court officials and their varying ranks, dressed in blue. As the chosen dynastic colour, blue costumes are ubiquitous in Qing dynasty pictures of the court, where blue surcoats decorated with dragons cover the ranking colours of court dress. Women of lesser rank were equally subject to a strict hierarchy in their formal dress and followed the rank of their fathers and later their husbands.

All these details are illustrated with a multitude of colour photographs of actual costumes and important photographs from the 19th century. One could wish that the photographs were attributed since they are historical documents: the wealthy Yang family in Beijing, who entertained the famous Scottish photographer John Thomson and introduced him to Prince Gong Yixin, brother of the Xianfeng emperor. The Thompson archive is now in the Wellcome Collection in London. Or the famous photograph of 'Princess' Der Ling, taken by her brother, as she attended the Dowager Empress. Der Ling's brother, Xunling, trained in photography in Paris and this rare photograph is now in the Freer and Sackler Archives in Washington.

However, the book is a serious, if brief, history of the period, but what sets it apart from similar academic books is that there are many background details such as where or why certain customs originated. For example, European snuff boxes were unsuitable for imported snuff since it deteriorated in the humid Chinese climate and it could not be picked up by the upper classes and literati, due to their long fingernails. Snuff bottles were invented to get around the problems: with tiny spoons attached to the stopper so that a spoonful of snuff could be placed on the back of the thumb to be inhaled.

Having dealt with the most formal dress for men, women and children the author moves on to the Mandarins who served the court and the merchants who served the empire.

Members of the Yang family in their Peking house, photographed by John Thomson, a Scottish photographer who was their guest. Photo: Wellcome Trust/Collection.



Mandarin dress is well-known in the West, with its nine grades of rank badges for military and civil officials. In comparison the merchant clothes appear altogether poorer in their plain and damask silks. Yet it was the merchants who were often hugely wealthy as Garrett makes apparent, citing their luxurious mansions with pleasure gardens, the variety of their silk clothes, but with amusing anecdotes about rich and poor alike pawning their fur lined winter robes during the summer so that they could be well-cared for. An official might not appear on the first day of winter wear, but waited until a set of winter clothes was cheaper to redeem. 'Face' was all important, but if lacking wealth an official had to do his best to appear in sumptuous dress even if his income could not support it. The chapter has photographs of merchants posing for their portraits – doubtless wearing their most expensive clothes.

The section devoted to women's attire covers wedding costumes, formal and informal wear and the occasions on which it was worn. An important short section covers the neglected area of Han Chinese women's dress. It is often forgotten that the Han Chinese, the native Chinese one might say, had almost no status at all. After the conquest of China in 1644 by the Manchus they were pushed to one side; subservient workers for the new dynasty, which they bitterly resented. Yet the habit of bound feet continued, despite being banned – symbolising Han women who were rich enough to be kept at home, barely able to walk and thus requiring rich husbands and servants to wait on them.

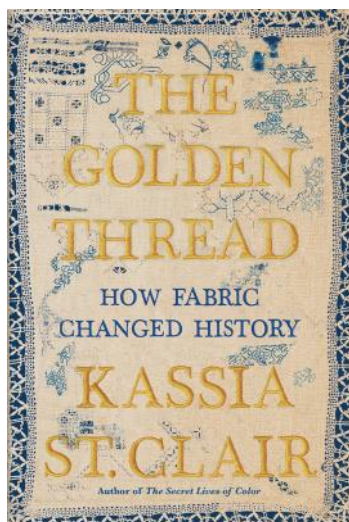
In today's commercial world it is the costumes of the Manchus which are collected in China and the West – not those of the Han Chinese. Yet the women's costumes were often exquisite. The silk thigh-length jackets worn over pleated skirts still followed the 14th century Ming regulations: red for a primary wife; blue for the second wife and green for the third. All were decorated with dragons following the style of the Manchu court, but followed the wide cut of the Ming dynasty robes; the generous amounts of silk accentuating the fact that they could afford the expensive silks, the fine embroidery and gold thread with which they were amply decorated.

Half of the book is devoted to the 20th century; to the Republican period from 1912-1949; to the working classes and finally to the modern era of 1950-2006. This section is illustrated with numerous posters and advertisements for new clothing styles, as well as black and white photographs of rural and city dress and accessories. Although under Mao dress descended to uniform styles for all, there has been a resurgence of design, first aping the West, but now, even since the book was written, a new 'look' is emerging which is wholly Chinese and has its own hierarchy based on couture clothing, eminent designers and wealth.

Jacqueline Simcox



A child's brown silk satin dragon robe for the son of a duke, marquis or son-in-law of the emperor, for whom brown denoted their rank; with eight dragons in couched gold thread, the upper four front-facing, the four on the skirt in profile, each chasing a flaming pearl. The dragons with flames rising from their haunches proclaiming their mythical status. The background with clouds, lotus flowers, auspicious emblems and bats - emblems of happiness - above a border of waves, water and sacred mountains. Mid-19th century. Photograph courtesy of Teresa Coleman.



The Golden Thread, How Fabric Changed History

by Kassia St Clair

Published in hardback by Liveright 2020

Hardcover 368 pages

ISBN-10: 1631494805

ISBN-13: 978-1631494802

It is a pleasure to see published a book about textiles aimed at the general reader. Furthermore it is one which the general reader should appreciate as it is well written with little or no jargon, making it an enjoyable read.

The author's intention is "to take a closer look at the fabrics that you surround and clothe yourself with each day." Rather than focussing on end products (though these are not ignored) it is "the constituent raw materials and the people who fashion them" which take centre stage. This is done by recounting thirteen stories (the author's own word) about fabrics from prehistory to the present day.

This technique is reminiscent of 'Fifty Objects which Changed the World' by Neil McGregor and shares the strength of focussing clearly on a single topic and avoiding the problem of creating a narrative which attempts to provide connections between subjects with an overarching theme. Each section, therefore can be read as a separate entity whilst the book as a whole remains true to the author's intentions despite skipping through the millennia. Textile lovers will have little difficulty in imagining the subjects of several of these yarns, a term referred to in St Clair's too brief examination of the prevalence of weaving terms in everyday language often without an obvious link to their origins, such as the text you are currently reading or perhaps, teasing out or unravelling.

Listing all thirteen would make for tedious reading and might also spoil a curious reader's enjoyment in wondering what they all are. However it seems necessary to mention a few, both the obvious and the less expected.

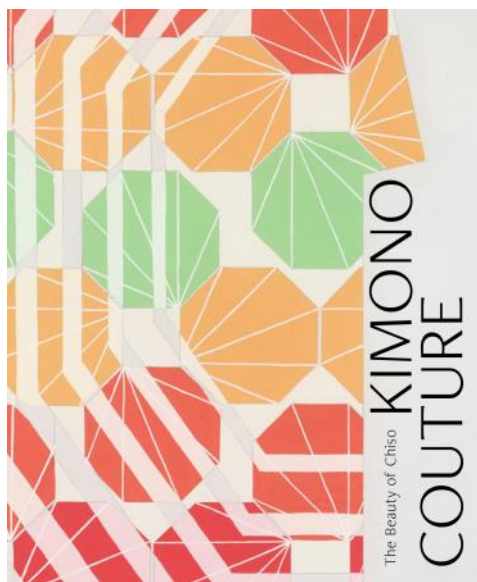
An early chapter relates the story of the Silk Roads and Aurel Stein's discoveries at the Dunhuang caves with the tremendous exchange of goods and ideas which flowed back and forth along the Silk Roads even reaching as far as Scandinavia where a ship burial dating from AD 834 was found to contain over 100 scraps of silk fabric. Information about the English wool trade includes details of the huge quantities of wool exported to the continent bringing about the expression 'carrying wool to England' used in a similar way to 'taking coals to Newcastle.' Nearer the present day St Clair tells us about rayon and its calamitous effects on those who made it and the, to me, surprising account of the effect sports' fabrics can have on athletes' performance.

Each narrative is put together from an impressive variety of sources, for example the chapter on the Silk Roads has 38 references from 25 different authors ranging from Pliny and Horace to a 2015 internet article. This is a notable research effort even allowing for the fact that one good find will yield others from its own bibliography. It is even more remarkable that St Clair weaves these threads together into a seamless yarn (to use just four textile terms in one sentence).

Slightly strangely for a book which is aimed at the non specialist it contains comprehensive end notes and an impressive bibliography consisting of 15 pages of small print including gems such as *The Journal of Fiber Bioengineering and Informatics*, the letters of Vincent Van Gogh and Stubbes, Philip, *Anatomy of Abuses in England in Shakespeare's Youth* 1879. There is also a clear index and a glossary of textile terms which is adequate for a book aimed at the general reader rather than textile specialists.

Kassia St Clair has, however, been badly let down by her publishers. Her book only has a single black and white line drawing illustrating each chapter whilst it cries out for a plethora of colour plates and perhaps a larger format than the standard octavo 6" x 9" (16 x 23 cm). Readers deserve to have their visual sense stimulated by images in a book like this and the price of £20 seems high for one with so few. Nonetheless, *The Golden Thread* can be recommended for the clarity Kassia St Clair throws on each of her well chosen and wide ranging topics.

Roger Hardwick



KIMONO COUTURE: The Beauty of Chiso

edited by Vivian Li and Christine D. Starkman

Published by D. Giles Limited, 2020

Hardcover 112 pages

ISBN: 978 1 911282-66-2

This beautiful book, produced to accompany an exhibition at Worcester Art Museum in the United States, is a paean to a very special Kyoto-based drapers emporium, Chiso by name, which has been in existence for 465 years! This puts our own Harrods & Liberty somewhat on the back foot in terms of the longevity of our own houses of distinction. Chiso is committed to textile and design innovation and to guarding the beauty of the kimono. It is the oldest and most prestigious of kimono makers operating in Japan today.

From its foundation in 1555 Chiso was primarily concerned with the manufacture of Buddhists' vestments. Then, in the Meiji period (1868-1912), the government tried to separate Shintoism from Buddhism in order to abolish Buddhism. The decline of religious patronage meant that Chiso began instead to produce decorative textiles and kimono for the imperial family, luxury kimono for the diversifying domestic market, and kimono-inspired garments for foreign clientèle. Chiso supported many celebrated artists who practised the Japanese style of painting, starting with Kishi Chikudo (1826-1897), who himself taught painting to Chiso's enlightened owner Nishimura Sozaemon X11 (1855-1935).

Chiso also collected art works, including painted screens, as sources to inspire original designs. In the Meiji period it was the first kimono firm to commission and collaborate with artists, themselves looking for new patrons. It is from Chiso's collections that the curators selected material for the exhibition.

The book begins with an essay by the exhibition curators, Vivian Li & Christine D Starkman, entitled 'From the Everyday to Couture: CHISO and Contemporary Kimono', outlining the process of research of the collections and of Chiso's role as art patron. The curators also describe a visit to a master of the technique of barrel tie-dyeing, known as *okedashi*.

The second essay, by Kikuchi Rio, focuses on the 20th century trend to treat the kimono as an object of artistic appreciation. In 1950 the kimono was designated as one of Japan's Cultural Properties, which gave a legal framework to its cultural status and the establishment of standards. During World War 2 the wearing of kimono had been banned. Afterwards, western dress was rapidly adopted by the Japanese. Some of the daimyo or leading great families began to sell off their traditional robes, which soon found a market in Europe and America.

The Tobunken Institute's collection of catalogues of sales of kimono and exhibition catalogues from the 1930s onwards proved an invaluable research source. Exhibitions from the 1930's featured textile artists such as Nakamura Katsuma (1894-1982), who in 1955 was designated 'An Artist of Important Intangible Cultural Property'. He began to sign his works, much as painters do their canvases. Such exhibitions have increased since the 1960s and kimono are increasingly regarded as works of art, as was shown in the V&A's recent superb show, sadly closed to us now as a result of Covid 19.

The colour plates which make up the second half of this very beautifully produced and lovingly photographed book speak for themselves: scrumptious silk embroidery, intricate *shibori*, stencilled designs. A series of photographs of several ladies of the Nishimura family in their kimono, from 1913 on, ends with the 15th Madame Kawakami Masako Nishimura wearing the beautiful Palace Garden design. She looks stunning in it with all the necessary accessories: *obi* sash, fan and resplendent hair decorations on a face-framing hairstyle. Opposite is a full-size colour photograph of the actual kimono, made for her in 1971. It was *yuzen*-dyed, with embroidery & gold leaf on woven silk. A treasured picture of Chiso House elegance.

The star of the show is a sumptuous wedding kimono commissioned by Worcester Museum of Art for the exhibition. With its intricate geometric design based on maple leaves, it is a superb example of modern design. by the Master Imai Atsuhiko, who in conversation with Monica Berthe and the curators takes us through his career and design ideas. Atsuhiko proposed 10 designs for the Worcester Art Museum's director and curators to choose from. They chose the 10th, as it had the most flexibility in expression, was

the least traditional & above all, was the most experimental. It is indeed, as can be seen from the detail on the splendid cover of the book. It also happened to be Imai's favourite design. I leave the last words to him: "It was the most distinctive design and it incorporates where Ideas and Beauty coalesce."

Sheelagh Killeen

ORTS Show and Tell 2020



Although we were unable to gather for this year's Show and Tell in the convivial atmosphere at the University Women's Club, with refreshments and the ability to handle items, members were able to enjoy seeing the textiles and rugs on the website, and to read comments from owners and others.

Contributions were sent in by more than 20 members, reflecting the Society's broadening area of interest, with examples from South America, Africa and Europe as well as from our more traditional regional focus of Asia.

As usual, the Show and Tell included several contributions which might just as easily have fallen under the heading 'Show and Ask'. This made for a pleasingly interactive event, and the site received nearly 140 views in the first week.

Contributors:

Alison Barr, (an embroidery from Dagestan); Alison Stattersfield (a Kachin shoulder bag, Bhutanese shawl and Marsh Arab embroidered blanket); Ann Hambley (a rug purchased in Peshawar by her grandmother); Christopher Jeans (a tribal rug); Clive Rogers (photos of carpets from Yalta, an Azeri rug and a coverlet from Tibet); Dimity Spiller (a Bhutanese carpet and a Bosnian carpet); Elizabeth Bridges (a textile from Bali); Fiona Kerlogue (an *ulap doyo* textile from Borneo); Gavin Strachan (a Swedish bench cover); Geoffrey Saba (a cuirass from Irian Jaya); Graham Mercer (an Afshar *khörjin* face, a Tekke *mafrash* panel and a Baluch *khörjin* face); Louise Teague (two Kyrgyz plait covers); Paul R. Benjamin (an Afshar vase and floral rug), Peter Gent (a Lijiang shoulder bag and two Bolivian shoulder bags); Rachel Hamand (an Ottoman embroidery); Roger Hardwick (a Persian carpet and a mystery item); Rupert Smith (a Tibetan throne back); Sheelagh Killeen (a Central Asian *abr* bed cover); Sir Terence Clark (an Azeri *kelim* and a Caucasian woven square); Sue Ubagu (an Adinkra cloth from Ghana) and Susan Denyer (a mystery weaving).

TALKS

Talks are held at the University Women's Club, which is behind the Dorchester Hotel.

Buses 13, 16, and 36 go from Victoria Station to Park Lane. Bus 38 goes to Piccadilly, Hard Rock Café bus stop. Nearest tube stations: Green Park and Hyde Park Corner.

Doors open at 6 pm. Please sign your names at reception, and go upstairs to the elegant first floor drawing room, where there will be complimentary nibbles and a pay bar.

Non-members are welcome to attend for £7 a single lecture, students £5. Lectures are free for members. **Membership** of one year for up to 11 events is from £30.

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The ORTS journal is published three times a year. Contributions are welcomed from members and non-members. Please send ideas for articles and proposals for book or exhibition reviews to Dr Fiona Kerlogue on editor.orts@gmail.com

Deadline for autumn issue October 1st 2020



*A rare blue silk imperial dragon robe, embroidered with the Twelve Imperial Symbols, longevity characters, flower heads, clouds and bats, for happiness, worked in satin stitch against a background of scrolling gold and silver couched thread. The blue costume indicated that it was for the exclusive use of the emperor, worn only for the period of fasting and prayers, before the state sacrifice at the Round Altar in the Temple of Heaven for the annual sacrifice for Rain in the fourth lunar month - the first month of Spring. Mid-19th century. This photograph appears in *Chinese Dress*, by Valery Garrett. See book review by Jacqueline Simcox on page 27. Photograph courtesy of Teresa Coleman.*