

CORA GINSBURG

Material Translations



TITI HALLE CORA GINSBURG LLC



SUMMER 2021 Material Translations



by appointment

New York NY Sharon CT 212 744 1352 info@coraginsburg.com coraginsburg.com

FOREWORD

Cora Ginsburg is pleased to present our Summer 2021 catalog, *Material Translations*, a showcase of textiles and costume spanning three centuries from around the globe.

This catalog highlights pieces that illustrate how influential cloth is across time and cultures—an interest that Cora and I had in common and that I take pleasure in sharing with others. Some objects, like the Soviet cottons, are recent finds thanks to my love for Russian pattern; others, like the Chinese embroidered aprons, were presciently collected by Cora herself decades ago and squirreled away.

Just as the objects in this catalog cover three continents, a global effort from colleagues and friends across North America, Europe, and Asia brings these pieces to life again. I would like to thank Karina H. Corrigan, Francesca Galloway, Peter Lee, Susan Meller, Tom Murray, and Karun Thakar for sharing their invaluable input and expertise, which helped shape some of the texts you are about to read. I especially thank Cora for introducing me to the thrill that the study of textiles brings.

We hope you enjoy reading about these eclectic though very much connected textiles and costume.

Titi Halle, Owner
Cora Ginsburg LLC

1 EMBROIDERED SILK CREPE DRESS

American, the embroidered silk Chinese, ca. 1810–1815

Following the War of Independence, America began to trade directly with China, which had been prohibited under British rule. In 1784, just one year after the Treaty of Paris, the appropriately named *Empress of China*, was the first American sailing vessel to make the journey from the newly independent United States to Canton. Subsequently, many other ships from Boston, Philadelphia, New York, and Salem entered the lucrative China trade to bring back commodities to which Americans had been introduced as former colonists. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, tea and textiles—silks and nankeen, a sturdy cotton—were the most sought-after goods imported from the Far East.

Although Chinese silk taffetas and satins were popular fabrics for women's gowns at the turn of the nineteenth century, crepes—or “crape,” as it was generally spelled—were also desirable. The soft hand and drape of crepe made it particularly suitable for the high-waisted columnar silhouette that was dominant at the time as seen in this elegantly simple gown. The wide square neckline, short sleeves, flat skirt front, and fullness at the center back waist suggest a date of about 1810–1815. Similar to the understated white-on-white cotton embroidery on muslin gowns from the same period (see pages 47–50), this cream-colored silk crepe dress features matching embroidery around the hem. The band of stylized flowers and foliage, delicate vine, and shallow scalloped edging are worked primarily with twisted threads in satin and stem stitches. The skirt is constructed from three 19-inch selvage widths—one at the center front and two at the back—and two side gores. The embroidery is continuous over all the seams except the center back, indicating that the panels were intended to be made up into a fashionable European or American dress.

A long-sleeved dress of Chinese export silk crepe with a similarly embroidered hem, dating to about 1795–1805, is in the collection of the RISD Museum (S1986.040).







2

SILK-AND-WOOL SHAWL WITH *BOTEHS*

French, ca. 1815–1820

115 x 51 in.

The vogue for finely woven Kashmiri shawls in France took hold at the end of the eighteenth century. Popularized primarily by soldiers of Napoleon's army following their return from his Egyptian campaign (1798–1799), who brought them back as gifts for female relatives, they quickly became the *de rigueur* accessory for wealthy stylish women. Lightweight, warm, and colorful, they complemented the sheer white cotton dresses that constituted the height of neoclassical fashion around 1800. Their long rectangular shape could be arranged on the body in a variety of ways that demonstrated the wearer's artistry in draping her shawl.

Napoleon's continental blockade of 1806 that prohibited the importation of any goods—including Indian textiles—that had been carried in British ships spurred French manufacturers to produce imitations of shawls in response to the ever-growing demand for these accessories. Although they replicated Kashmiri models in size, shape, decoration, and palette, early French shawls differed from Indian imports in their materials and weave structure. The latter were fabricated in one piece using the exceptionally fine and soft underbelly fleece of Central Asian wild goats, with the distinctive *boteh* border motifs woven in interlocking twill tapestry. The former relied on silk warps for the field and silk, cotton, or wool wefts that were woven *au lancé*—extending from selvage to selvage—with the excess threads on the back subsequently clipped to make the shawl less heavy.

During the First Empire, the field and four borders were made separately and then sewn together. In this example, while the two narrow side







borders are stitched to the main shawl, the white silk warps of the twill-woven field continue into the deep end borders, a development that occurred during the Restoration (1815–1830). Additionally, the polychrome corner elements that appeared around 1810 and the eight *botehs*, rather than ten seen on the earliest French shawls, suggest a date of about 1815–1820.

From its inception in 1797, the leading French fashion periodical, *Journal des Dames et des Modes* (1797–1839), featured illustrations of women carrying or wearing shawls. Although the shawls depicted in the early years of the publication were undoubtedly “des Indes,” by the end of the First Empire, they were likely of French manufacture. A plate from 1815 (No. 1512) shows a woman in a rose-colored “Robe de Cachemire” with a sprigged white border at the hem and a floral-patterned white shawl over her shoulder.



“Turban de Tulle et Satin, Robe de Cachemire,”
Journal des Dames et des Modes, Costume Parisien (October 5, 1815), pl. 1512.
Bunka Gakuen University Library Digital
Archive of Rare Materials



3 TRAINED DRESS OF COTTON GAUZE POSSIBLY IMITATING *JAMDANI*

American, the cotton possibly English (Manchester?), ca. 1800–1805

The young American woman who wore this diaphanous dress flaunted her daring and fashionableness. Although women of means in the early Republic avidly followed both English and French modes, the latter were considered too revealing for virtuous “Daughters of Liberty.” This gown’s low wide neckline, high waist, narrow skirt, and sheer cotton would have left little to the imagination in terms of the wearer’s physical charms.

Popular in the West since the early seventeenth century, Indian muslins were particularly fashionable for women’s dress in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when the neoclassical silhouette was at its height. The city of Dhaka in Bengal was renowned for the fineness of its cottons due to the exceptional quality of the locally grown raw material and the contributions of skilled female spinners and male weavers. Among the myriad varieties of Bengali muslins, gauze-ground *jamdani* were the most highly prized. Woven exclusively by Muslim men, *jamdani*’s shadowy brocaded patterns required prodigious dexterity; the slightly heavier supplementary wefts, wound on spools, are inserted by hand around fragile, individual warp threads.

This cotton’s design and execution are unusual for Dhaka production, however. Stripes composed of small squares enclosing circles with diminutive floral sprigs alternate with double rows of stylized hearts. This coarser brocaded patterning could be a very early attempt to imitate *jamdani* using nascent European technologies. By the early nineteenth century, Manchester’s cotton mills already utilized power looms. The largest panel’s width—just 19 inches, compared to much wider Dhaka cloth—also supports the possibility of a Manchester origin, which would make it even rarer than true *jamdani*.

The columnar shape, rounded neckline, trained skirt, close-fitting elbow-length sleeves, and back closure of this gown suggest a date of about 1800–1805. On the elbow-length sleeves, the tulle insertions and gently scalloped cuffs embellished with tambour embroidery provide an openwork decorative element in keeping with the muslin’s transparency. By 1806 in France, trains went out of fashion for day dresses, necklines were squared off at the outer corners, and sleeves were short and puffed.

English and American fashion periodicals affirmed the desirability of gossamer *jamdani*-style muslins. In September 1804, *The Lady’s Magazine* reported that “leno [gauze] muslins worn over coloured silk, and trimmed with lace, are much approved for dresses” (p. 492), and, in January 1808, *La Belle Assemblée* announced that “Train Dresses in Leno and fine India Muslin, with new and beautiful borders” were available at the London-based W. Forest’s Linen Warehouse. (p. 49). The prior year, on May 25, 1807, “Figured, piquet and leno Muslins” were advertised in the *Portland Gazette and Maine Advertiser* (p. 3).







4 COTTON BORDER WITH SILK-AND-SILVER EMBROIDERY

Indian (Deccan), early 18th century
22.5 x 76.5 in.

Artisans and laborers working for the Deccan Sultanates and subsequently for the Mughal court produced some of the most luxurious arts of the early modern period. This silk-and-silver-embroidered cotton once comprised part of the border of a grand floor spread that would have been used in summer. From the early eighteenth century, related Deccani embroideries were exported outside of India to the Ottoman Empire, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Japan. It is likely that this embroidery remained on the subcontinent as Deccan and Mughal tastes are both present, evidence of the transfer of power and artistic patronage after the regions were absorbed into the empire during the seventeenth century. The florals show a continuity with those seen in earlier painted cottons used in the Deccan (like tent hangings), while also adapting to the sparser compositions of Northern Indian tambour embroideries favored by Mughal rulers.



Sprays of two varieties of magenta pink flowers extend along the double border, executed primarily in satin stitch vibrant silk floss and couched silver-wrapped silk threads—distinguishing elements from the chainstitch embroideries of the north. The cotton ground is false quilted with white silk using a running stitch of precisely rendered parallel lines that create an overall pattern of concentric white diamonds, against which the multi-dimensional florals and foliage pop. The stylized curling leaves resembling botehs placed at intervals are an uncommon motif in embroideries from this period.

An identical border, presumably from the same floor spread, was sold at Christie's South Kensington, October 10, 2013, lot 550.

Provenance: Spink & Son Ltd





5 LINEN COVERLET IMITATING DECCANI AND GUJARATI EMBROIDERY

English, early 18th century
61 x 46.5 in.

In the early eighteenth century, the British East India Company kindled a taste for Deccani embroideries like the example shown on the previous page, back home in England, where they were valued as hangings and covers in the homes of the aristocracy and landed gentry. Like the tussar silk embroideries of Bengal that inspired the British needleworker who made the cushion covers on pages 15–18, the textile products of Deccani and Gujarati workshops were additional sources of design inspiration for professional and domestic needleworkers in England. The present coverlet section, embroidered in colored silks on a homespun linen, directly borrows in color and in composition from both Deccani embroideries and those produced in Gujarat. The diminutive frames of arabesque vines and tiny pink flowers also incorporated similar flourishes inspired by Deccani work. The central field's composition, with densely packed flowers blossoming forth from a network of thin, serpentine stems, appears to have been inspired by the florals found in Gujarati tambour embroideries imported into England for use in furnishing and dress.

This talented amateur needleworker married the overall design of Indian embroidery with more familiar, local forms in the way of flora. The remaining top border depicts alternating sprays of pink and red carnations, daisies, and tri-petalled flowers. Standalone plant cuttings or “slips” were popular additions in English embroidery from the late sixteenth century; indeed, the term “slip” also refers to cutout appliqués of flowers, plants, and fruit, although all of these flowers have been worked directly on the linen ground. The central field is occupied by a serpentine arrangement of charming carnations, tulips, roses, daisies, and wildflowers, which are distinctly English in both flavor and workmanship, using long-and-short, stem, satin, bullion stitch, and French knots against a typically Queen Anne diaper pattern of backstitch. The drawn design is visible in several areas, indicating that the embroiderer spontaneously modified the composition, for instance replacing what looks to be a holly leaf with another variety of foliage. Altogether, this imaginative coverlet combines the regal exoticism of Indian artistry with the growing fashion for horticulture closer to the maker's home.

Illustrated in Jennifer Harris, *Textiles: 5,000 Years* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1993), 208, fig. 247; and *Flora: The Flower of the Textile Arts* (London: Bernheimer, 1990).

Provenance: Bernheimer Fine Arts Ltd.











6 CUSHION COVERS IMITATING SATGAON EMBROIDERY

English, late 17th century
13 x 18.5 in.; 11.5 x 16.75 in.

The distinctive and elaborate tussar silk-embroidered textiles of Satgaon, Bengal were coveted commodities in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe, where they were imported via Portuguese and later British trade. European consumers regarded their fineness and “cunning workemanshippe” as such “that it cannot be mended throughout Europe,” as Dutch traveler Jan Huyghen van Linschoten wrote in 1598. In a letter to the British factory at Surat (Gujarat) in 1620, Robert Hughes noted that he had acquired “quilts of Sutgonge [Satgaon], wrought with yellowe silke, at reasonable rates; and have already halfe a score in possession, and am promised more dalye [daily] as they come to town.” Used in European interiors, they appear in inventories, as in a 1601 inventory of Hardwick Hall including “a quilt of yellow India stuff embroidered with birds and beasts.”

Although these Satgaon embroideries had fallen out of fashion by the beginning of the eighteenth century, their reverberations in English textile design continued. The present cushion covers are examples of the circuitous and long-lasting influence that Bengal textiles had in Europe. The pale goldenrod palette and fantastic compositions were subsumed into the vocabularies of commercial embroidery workshops and domestic needlework in England (as well as Spain and Portugal).



The charming irregularities of these cushions reveal that they were made at home, perhaps using a professionally drawn pattern. The inked design is worked using typically European techniques of chain, satin, and buttonhole stitch as well as French knots, while the overall composition—a central medallion and a demilune-shaped register at each corner divided by a series of floral and geometric borders and frames—and monochromatic palette are indebted to Satgaon capes and *colchas* (the Portuguese term for large-scale hangings and covers). The animal and figural motifs, however, take inspiration not from Indian embroideries but rather from Chinese sources. A regal phoenix dominates the center, and figures dressed in robes and carrying parasols—probably inspired by those seen on imported blue-and-white porcelain or a Delftware adaptation—are situated at each corner.

Provenance: Harbin family, Newton Surmaville House, Somerset, UK; by descent to Sophia Wyndham Rawlins (née Harbin, 1909–2006)









7
COLCHA EMBROIDERED WITH TREE OF LIFE AND ALLEGORY OF THE SENSE OF SMELL

Portuguese (Castelo Branco), 18th century
86 x 70.5 in.

In Portugal, the textile tradition of embroidered *colchas*, or coverlets, is firmly associated with the town of Castelo Branco in the Beira-Beixa region. Domestic production of these distinctive bed furnishings began in the second half of the seventeenth century and reached its height in the following century. The materials used to create *colchas*—flax and silk—were cultivated locally, facilitating their manufacture and popularity. Although Castelo Branco coverlets demonstrate a shared sensibility and needlework techniques, each piece is nonetheless unique.

This refined *colcha* illustrates Portugal's long and well-established relationship with the East in its blending of exotic elements with Western taste and embroidery style. A central Tree of Life dominates the composition with sinuous branches laden with oversized fruits and flowers both Asian and European. Figures in fashionable eighteenth-century dress depicting the Senses often appear in *colchas*. Here, the representation of Smell is represented by two women flanking the tree trunk and a solitary man hovering above a branch—all of them enjoying the scent of the buds near their faces. Peacocks and smaller birds perch in the tree and on delicate floral sprays growing from the imbricated mound at the tree's base and swoop among the branches. Three joined widths of linen are worked with silk floss in a variety of stitches including tied laidwork, satin, stem, feather, herringbone, and eyelet.

Referred to as *filhas dilectas*, or beloved daughters, by the women who made them, eighteenth-century *colchas* were cherished family objects. In the early twentieth century, they were taken out only at festivals and prominently displayed from balconies and windows.

Similar *colchas* are illustrated in Clara Vaz Pinto, *Colchas de Castelo Branco* (1993), pp. 78, 81, 84-5.









8 PAINTED-AND-DYED COTTON PALAMPORE WITH TREE OF LIFE

Indian (Coromandel Coast) for the European market, ca. 1725–1750
101 x 79 in.

Numerous and diverse foreign markets for Indian painted-and-dyed cottons in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when they were among the most desirable and prodigiously produced textiles, led to seemingly unlimited variations on the symbolic Tree of Life associated with the large hangings known as palampores. This example, found in the port town of Nantes, France, combines a typically bold central field with border elements distinctive to the market for which it was created. The dramatic tree, with its oversized florals, scrolling leaves, delicate tendrils, and urns at the sides, features the fineness of detail for which these textiles are known as well as the indelible colors rendered by kalamkars (painters). The leaves, petals, and branches, in rich shades of red and blue, contain within their outlines intricate filigree patterns as well as woodblock-printed fillings. The palampore's border, comprising vivid flowers interspersed with small tufts arranged in half-drop repeats characteristic of the diminutively-patterned block-printed cottons produced in France, reflects a design vocabulary intended to appeal to eighteenth-century European consumers of Indian cloths. In select flowers there appears an unusual shaded effect, associated with warp-printed textiles and ikats. Red linear accents enhance the ombré areas, conveying a painterly gesture and calligraphic effect.

At once exotic and familiar, this palampore would have been perfectly suited to European interior furnishing schemes.







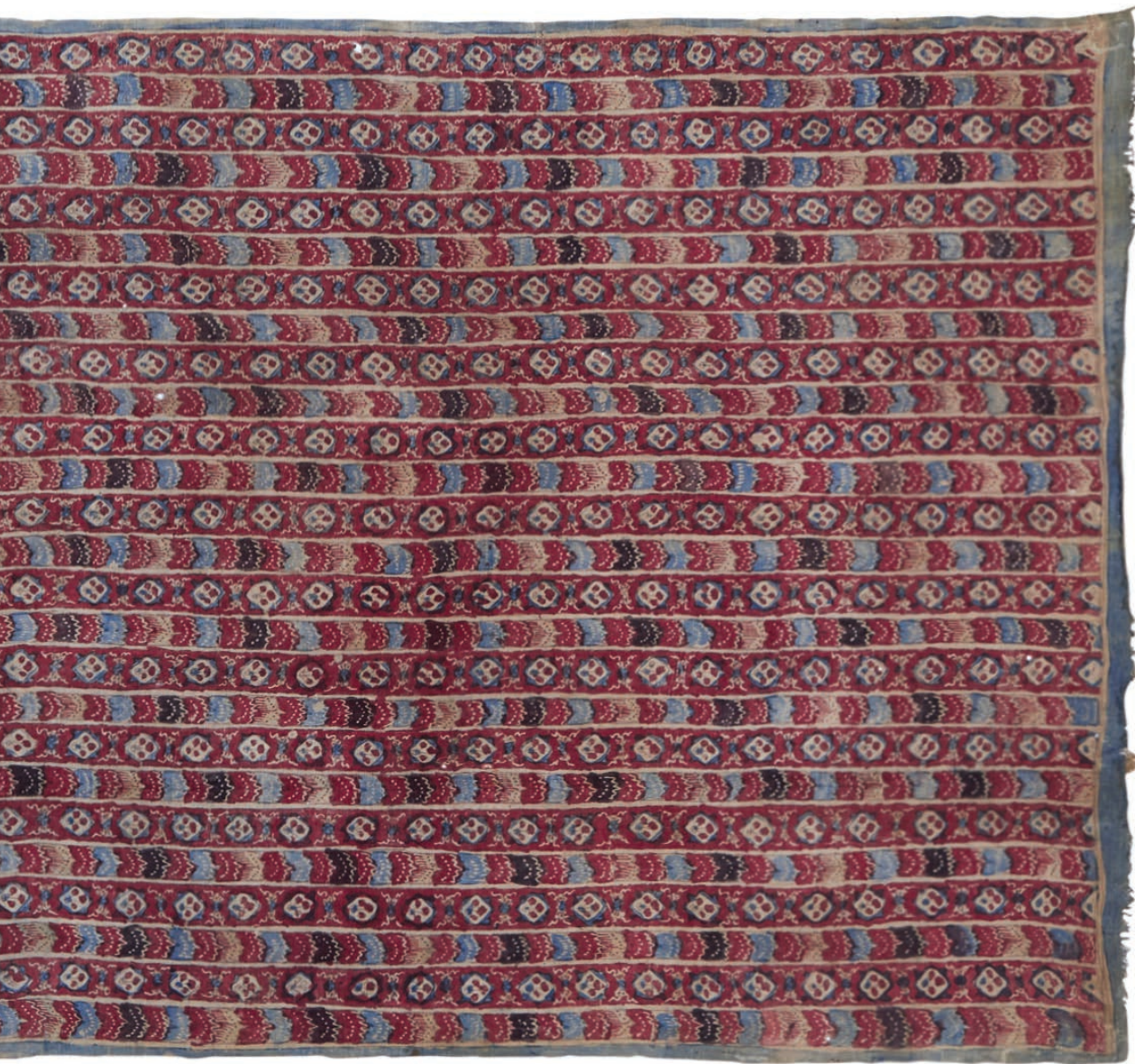




9
PAINTED-AND-DYED COTTON WITH MUGHAL AND EUROPEAN MOTIFS

Southern Indian for the Indonesian market, 18th century
138 x 40 in.

Found in Sumatra, this complete and uncut mordant-painted and resist-dyed cotton speaks to Dutch tastes within the colonial merchant communities of Southeast Asia. The energetic pattern combines decorative elements of both Indian and wider European origin. Stripes containing ribbons and sprays of multi-stemmed flowers, a common motif in Mughal arts and architecture, alternate with bands of stacked and jagged forms that resemble the flamestitch or flamepoint embroidery produced throughout Europe in the eighteenth century (also called “Bargello” and “Bergamo” work). Other painted cottons with flamestitch



elements survive, including a ceremonial cloth used as a floor spread with a large-scale Bargello-style design in the TAPI Collection (04.66). While the present example, with its more diminutive pattern, also remained in Indonesia, similar textiles traveled farther afield for use in furnishing and dress in Japan and Europe. The *Sarasa zufu* (1785), a manual depicting Indian painted cottons then circulating in Edo, includes a woodcut with a striped floral and flame stitch pattern. Related cotton fragments as well as a single lady's oversleeve are at the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum (1973-51-4, 1973-51-64-a/c, 1969-135-1).



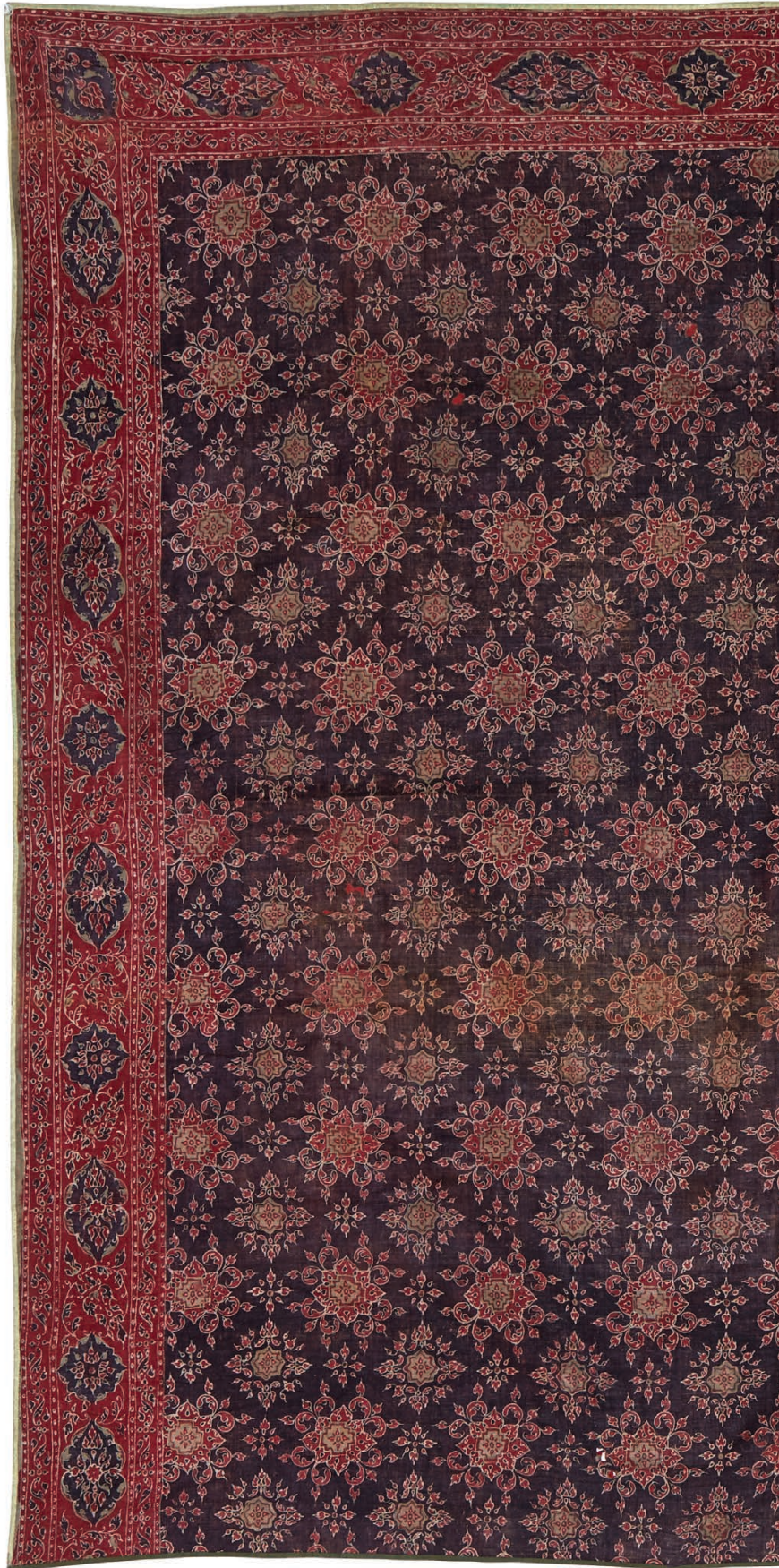


10
**PAINTED-AND-DYED COTTON WITH STEPPED SQUARES
AND FLAME MOTIFS**

Indian (Coromandel Coast) for the Thai market, the silk lining Chinese,
mid- to late 18th century
45.5 x 46 in.

When European traders first arrived in Southeast Asia, they discovered a long existing and deeply ingrained trade network that had at its center Indian cotton as the premier type of currency. This finely drawn cotton is a product of the highly specialized painted cotton trade in the eighteenth century between India and Siam, where the market for such cloths was strictly controlled by the Thai court and nobility well into the nineteenth century.

With a latticework of stylized stars and stepped squares surrounded by flame motifs in the central field and alternating ogival forms and distinctive flame motifs within the border, this cotton typifies the specific design vocabulary of Thai decorative arts as it was translated on Indian painted cottons. The continuation of the border motifs along the three intact ends of the cloth suggests that this textile would have been used in an architectural setting rather than for clothing. The other end's missing border was likely cut down at some point before the twentieth century, possibly for repurposing as a manuscript wrapper, although its dimensions are somewhat large for such use. The glazed red cotton on the reverse and the mitered border of seafoam green Chinese silk damask are probably original, while the forest green tabby-weave Chinese silk used for the remaining border of the lining must have been added when the cotton was cut down. An extremely fine cloth in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (44.71.2) is similarly lined and bears a single red silk tassel at one corner.





11

PAINTED-AND-DYED COTTON WITH BIRDS AND FLOWERS

Indian (Gujarat?) probably for the Indonesian market, ca. 1700
26.5 x 29 in.

Some of the earliest surviving pattern-dyed cottons produced in India were block printed, a technique that has continued to the present day in tandem with freehand drawing on cloth. This charming and highly unusual fragment, probably dating to the early eighteenth century, uses several densely arranged woodblocks and strategically painted-and-dyed areas to create a lively, oversized composition of flora and fowl executed with a repeat nearly twenty-two inches high and wider than its current dimensions. With only one selvage remaining (on the right), it is not possible to know how the design repeated across the full width.

The nearly black blocked outlines are complemented by the vibrant painted tones of pink, red, purple, yellow, green, and the stark ivory of the undyed cloth against the blue ground. The blue—still retaining some yellow which gives it a teal tone—hints at this cotton's possible place of origin as well as its destination. Blue- and green-ground woodblock-printed cottons thought to have come from Gujarat and the Coromandel Coast have been found in Southeast Asia. Like these extant cloths, the present fragment would probably not have been destined for use on the body but rather as a hanging or ceremonial textile.

The motifs depicted on this fragment also reinforce a Gujarati origin. The flowers, including tulips, carnations, and bell- and teardrop-shaped varieties, relate most closely in form to those seen in the fine Gujarati silk embroideries produced for the export market in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Most intriguing are the plethora of bird species, including crested varieties that may evoke chickens, as well as ducks and diminutive songbirds. A brocaded silk in a private collection that dates to the eighteenth century and is believed to be from Gujarat features similar chicken-like creatures. At the bottom right, the head and neck of yet another bird is visible; this may be a *hamsa*, the sacred goose or swan traditionally associated with the Buddha message and sometimes with the Supreme Spirit or Brahman itself. The *hamsa* motif appears on block-printed and painted cloths produced in Gujarat for the Indonesian market as early as the fifteenth century.









12

JACKET (*KEBAYA* OR *BAJU*) OF PAINTED-AND-DYED COTTON

Indonesian (Sumatra), the cotton Indian (Coromandel Coast),
mid- to late 18th century
44.25 x 55 in.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, traditional dress for women and men throughout Indonesia, the Malay peninsula, and modern-day Singapore centered around a type of jacket with gusseted sleeves. Referred to as *kebaya* in eighteenth-century inventories (though distinct from the modern *kebaya*) and *baju panjang* (translated from Malay as “long jacket”) in Malaysia and in the Peranakan community since the nineteenth century, these jackets are thought to have been adapted—like their nearest European relative: the banyan or dressing gown—from the loose-fitting garments worn by Indo-Arabic merchants.

Although tailored in Sumatra, this *kebaya* is constructed of Indian mordant painted-and-dyed cotton. Unlike other trade routes for Indian cotton that predated Dutch colonization (see pages 39–42), cloth like this would have arrived in Indonesia via the East India Company. Red-ground Indian chintzes, which obtained their distinctive vibrancy from madder, were especially popular among Dutch merchants in Indonesia, where they were traded locally in Batavia and on to other parts of Asia and the Netherlands. Here, symmetrical sprays of somewhat naively drawn tulips, carnations, poppies, and other flowers create a pattern typical of the floral cottons destined for Indonesian, Malaysian, and Peranakan communities. The number of extant *kebaya* of red-ground chintz in museum collections reveals the widespread fashion for this style as well as the heirloom quality that these garments acquired over the centuries. This robe's successive old mends in contrasting silk and cotton threads tell an additional tale of longevity and intergenerational legacies. Related *kebaya* include those in the Art Gallery of South Australia (20083A51), Asian Civilisations Museum (2009-01887, 2011-00087, 2011-00089, 2011-00090, 2011-00093, 2011-00094), and the Peranakan Museum (2011-02211).

Provenance: Ex. collection Mary Hunt Kahlenberg (1940–2011)



13

MUSLIN MORNING DRESS WITH WHITEWORK

European, the cotton Bengali, ca. 1810

No discussion of the global textile trade would be complete without one of the oldest and most highly valued fabrics: muslin. Since antiquity, muslins from present-day Bengal enjoyed an unrivaled fame for their zephyrean appearance and their exceedingly high thread counts.

The deceptive simplicity of muslin's appearance belies its labor-intensive manufacture, requiring dexterous handwork and a sharp eye and entirely dependent on weather conditions and time of day. A length measuring about twenty yards by one yard might take a weaver anywhere from ten days to six months to complete, depending on its fineness. Spinning and weaving were the domains of women and men respectively, and a strict caste system dictated the further separation of labor. During the early modern period, production was dominated by the Mughals, with the court alone accessing the highest quality cloths. Later exported to Europe and the Americas, muslins became a mainstay in Western fashionable dress from the eighteenth century.

As British East India Company rule took over the subcontinent, muslins eventually surpassed painted cottons from the Coromandel Coast in profitability. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Bengali artisans received a mere fraction of this revenue; in 1770, Guillaume-Thomas Raynal, abbé de Raynal, commented on the conditions of servitude and near slavery forced upon weavers. By the late eighteenth century, the Company had established a virtual monopoly over muslin production, levying high fines and taxes on local weavers and all but eradicating once lucrative Mughal patronage. In the 1830s, Indian cotton goods exported to Britain had already shrunk by some ninety percent over two decades, while British cottons imported into India increased by fifteen-fold. This period marked the last gasps of the Bengali muslin industry, which had already been decimated during the famine of 1769–1773. Its demise was cemented in the following century by Britain's shift to inexpensive cotton grown in the American south under enslavement and spun and woven cheaply in the working-class industrial hub of Manchester.

In the first years of the nineteenth century, when this morning dress was made, muslin imports into Europe reached their zenith and even dictated the direction of feminine fashions. This morning dress demonstrates the special adaptability of this gossamer cloth to the new Grecian, columnar silhouette. The skirt is constructed of two panels measuring about 37 inches wide and joined at each side to minimize cutting into the fabric, and the rigidly square neckline is softened by gentle gathering, the slightly sloped cut of the back, and the loose, long sleeves, closed at the cuffs with diminutive Dorset buttons.

Muslin also rendered a crucial eighteenth-century accessory, tied-on pockets, utterly obsolete, as its provocative translucency revealed the wearer's every curve underneath—for better or for worse, as British caricaturists of the day joked. The maker of this dress, however, added a modicum of modesty and practicality to the otherwise sheer fabric by dint of a high neckline, lined bust—linings were less common in the tailoring of gowns with closures in the back—and finished pockets set in along the two skirt panels' seams.

Thorny rose sprays, accented with a lattice of drawn thread work, cascade down the front of the skirt and cover the bust and shoulders. The embroidery's disposition down the front of the gown mimics the look of an eighteenth-century open robe with a gradually enlarging vertical band—giving the impression of an underdress. This panel is patterned with satin-stitched rosettes and flanked on either side by the buttonhole-stitched scalloped "hem" of the faux outer garment. The scallop motif continues along the skirt's actual hem.

Such perfect uniformity and execution came at a price, however. These motifs were embroidered to form on the imported muslin once it arrived in Europe. In addition to the atrocities facing the Bengali spinners and weavers, professional embroiderers in early nineteenth-century England were an increasingly female and exploited workforce, stripped of the protections of the prior centuries' guild system and forced to operate within a growing putting out system focused in urban centers. The easy elegance and cheery embellishment of this muslin morning dress obscures the realities of the Asian and European artisans who left their imprints on the material history that we chance to study today.







14 SILK SATIN EVENING DRESS WITH DOUBLE-SIDED EMBROIDERY

English, the embroidered silk Chinese (Guangzhou), ca. 1837–1839

A subtle play of light reveals the intertwining blooms that swirl across the wide skirt of this silk evening dress from the late 1830s. The interplay between the two complementary textile techniques, woven satin for the ground and embroidery executed in satin stitch, relies on closely stacked parallel silk threads to capitalize on the fiber's inherent shine and create a flickering floral light show around the entire circumference of the hem. Enhanced by layers of swinging petticoats, the dynamism of this tone-on-tone design would have been activated by the movement of the body within.

Executed in Canton (modern-day Guangzhou) for the Western export market, the masterful embroidery is all the more impressive because it is worked in an extravagant double-sided technique in which the design is created on both sides of the silk ground. This required two embroiderers to work simultaneously in concert, one on either side of the textile, in order to make the panels entirely reversible, a skill more typically employed in the manufacture of shawls than dress panels. In this case, the interior face would be visible only to the wearer, a direct contrast to the frugal placement of embroidery only where visible on the man's waistcoat on pages 71–74.

The plain and tight corsage, dipping waistline “à pointe,” and short drawn-up sleeves place this gown at the end of the 1830s. Mirroring the V-shaped waist above, the embroidery is disposed to form in a triangular shape across the front of the skirt, gradually widening until it reaches





the hem, where it is encircled with a band of alternating bell-shaped and rose-like flowers. The floral motifs are an amalgam, mixing the pictorial traditions of China, India, and Europe, of stylized peonies, magnolia, and more fanciful blossoms, all supported by serpentine stems with broad and ribbon-like leaves. Zig-zagging and concentric bands of stitches fill the interior of each, adding even more dynamism to the composition.

Chinese embroiderers were famous for their proficiency in double-sided embroidery. In 1847, Eliza Leslie advised readers of her *Lady's Receipt-Book* how to mimic the technique at home:

The two ladies who are to work at it, must sit one on each side; and as one sticks in the needle, the other must draw it through, and stick it in for the next stitch; to be drawn through by her companion. The fastenings on and off must be neatly concealed under the stitches. By thus working together [...] both sides will, of course, be embroidered *exactly* alike, so that not the slightest difference can be perceptible. It is in this manner that canton-crape shawls are embroidered in China.

In the early nineteenth century, panels like this would have been known as “gown pieces,” and were imported in their thousands by China traders to Europe or the Americas, where they could be made up to conform to the latest Western styles. Records from the 1820s to the 1830s indicate that “crape” shawls and gown pieces, such as those used in the construction of the dress on pages 3–6, far outnumbered those of other weaves like satin or damask, making this a rare survivor.

15 SILK SATIN APRONS WITH DOUBLE- SIDED EMBROIDERY

Chinese (possibly Guangzhou) for the Western market,
ca. 1830–1850
29 x 32 in., 28.5 x 28 in., 29 x 29.5 in.

For the nineteenth-century woman of leisure, a stylish silk apron reflected the primacy of her roles as both guardian of the domestic sphere and consumer of fashion. In “The Gossips of Rivertown; or Lessons of Charity,” a fictional story published in *Godey’s Lady’s Book* in June 1849, the “pretty silk apron” worn by Miss Mitchell, “a very sensible, quiet-looking person,” catches the eye of Harrison Gould, who is in search of a new wife and educator for “his two motherless daughters.” The widower has “a particular *penchant* for a little black silk apron, it always seemed so home-like.”

Dating to about 1830–1850, these three double-sided embroidered silk satin aprons worked in twisted silk threads in satin stitch were produced in China for the Western market. All three feature rectilinear borders with stylized floral-and-foliate motifs, matching corner element at the hem, and pocket slits. Although the ivory satin apron has been made up with ruching at the waist, a silk cord with tassels, and silk fringe, the pocket slits have been left uncut. In the two polychrome embroidered aprons, the flowers are shaded from coral to pink to ivory, while the leaves are executed in dark and light green. An embroidered and painted silk picture by Elena Stefanini, dated 1835, depicts two young women, one of whom wears a beige apron with large, multicolored stylized flowers that resemble those in Chinese exports. In the blue apron, the all-white motifs create a strong contrast against the ground. At the Great Exhibition of 1851, the importing firm, Hewett & Co., located in Fenchurch Street, London, displayed a miscellaneous array











of Chinese goods including jars, flowerpots and stands, and vases and a cigar box, a fan, various lacquer ware objects, and an “embroidered satin apron.”

Decorative silk aprons often accessorized morning dress. In 1832, *Le Follet Courrier des Salons* illustrated a woman wearing a blue muslin dress and taupe silk *gros de Naples* apron with a foliate-embroidered border and pockets and *La Mode* showed a woman in a beribboned cap, spotted green dress, and a grey silk apron with bright red and blue flowers. A drawing by Pierre-Numa Bassaget, dated 1836–37 in the Metropolitan Museum, depicts a young woman surveying four elaborately decorated hats on a table; handwritten notes on the drawing indicate that her dress is printed jaconet (cotton) and her zigzag-edged apron is silk foulard trimmed with satin ribbon. In its “Paris Fashions for the Month” from December 1839, *The Ladies’ Cabinet of Fashion, Music, and Romance* noted that aprons that had “latterly been rather out of use...are now coming very much into favour” and that these “very pretty” accessories “may be adopted or not at the pleasure of the wearer.”

Similar aprons with polychrome floral embroidery are in the collections of Colonial Williamsburg (1971-1545); the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (59.427); and the V&A Museum (AP.52-1872). An apron worked in white silk on a blue satin ground that closely resembles the example here, also in the latter institution, was donated by Miss Layard to whom it was sent from China in 1848 (T.117-1917).



Embroidered and painted silk picture
by Elena Stefanini, Italian, 1835.
Ex. collection Cora Ginsburg; sold at
Sotheby's, London, November 26, 2003,
lot 164.





16

PAINTED SILK GAUZE AND TAFFETA

Chinese (Guangzhou) for the European market, ca. 1770s–1790s
64 x 28 in.; 87.5 x 28.5 in.

In the 1750s, silks painted in the workshops of Canton began to infiltrate the wardrobes and interiors of fashionable Europeans. Despite their popularity, these silks were technically illegal at this time in many countries eager to protect domestic industry, including France, Spain, Sweden, and England, where the ban on importing Chinese silk was in place from 1701 to 1826. Officially, the East India Companies imported these silks strictly for the purpose of being re-exported to other cities in Europe and to the North American colonies. Nevertheless, smuggling was rampant and objects declared “gifts” or “of personal use” bypassed importation bans and were sold or bartered illicitly to meet the fervent demand for novelties from the East.

These silks’ chief attraction was their eye-popping colors and luster, achieved by painting a lead white over the outlines of the design, which was first printed or drawn freehand on the silk base. When pigments such as those made from malachite or indigo were laid on top, they became more vibrant, an effect enhanced by overpainted silver or gold outlines, possibly intended to imitate the gold accents on Indian export textiles.

Also like chintzes, painted silks were used for interior upholstery and hangings as well as for dress. This gauze example, which retains the original bolt end, could have been used in either application, while the painted taffeta border was probably intended for bed valances. Considered particularly feminine, painted silks were often found in ladies’ bedrooms and wardrobes, or accompanied other export objects to create





a “Chinese room,” one of the hottest trends in mid-eighteenth-century England. “My dressing room in London is like the Temple of some Indian god,” wrote critic and *salonnière* Elizabeth Montagu to her sister in 1750, adding, “The very curtains are Chinese pictures painted on gauze.” Lady Beauchamp Proctor described some of the private rooms at Osterley Park in 1772 as being “furnished with the finest Chintzes, painted Taffatys, India paper, and decker work [Dacca embroidery], and profusion of rich China and Japan [porcelains], that I could almost fancy myself in Peking.”

The letters of Emily, Countess of Kildare, reveal the near hysterical delight these silks could prompt. Having seen beds at Woburn, Petworth, and elsewhere hung with painted silk, she asked her husband to procure some 150 yards of “India taffaty” to furnish their bedchambers at Carton House in Ireland in 1759. After great difficulties, he was finally able to acquire it for her. “I am out of my wits at the thoughts of being in possession of what I think the loveliest, sweetest thing in the world.” The enormous cost of £70 (roughly £14,000 today) made her think twice about placing it in her private quarters, however, and she reasoned it would be better to hang the drawing room with it to show it off to visitors. “I dream of it all night, without a joke ‘tis the thing in the world that I have all my life most admired, and not a *whim* or *fancy* that will change.”

Fragments of a similar painted gauze (the remnants of a woman’s dress) are in the collection of Colonial Williamsburg (1995-34A). A length of the same painted taffeta is in the China National Silk Museum.

17

BROCADED SILK IMITATING ENGLISH DESIGNS

Chinese for the English market, ca. 1745
51.5 x 23.25 in.

Although Chinese painted dress silks—like the gauze and taffeta on pages 63–68—and silk damasks with exotic-looking florals and foliage enjoyed special popularity among fashionable European ladies during the eighteenth century, brocaded silks produced in China in imitation of Western designs were also imported into Europe.

This brocaded silk panel with a self-figured ground is especially rare in that it specifically mimics the delicate naturalistic style of the flowered silks produced in Spitalfields, London in the 1740s. The silk's width, selvages, and palette, however, identify it as Chinese. At just over 23 inches wide, it is slightly larger than the standard 21-inch loom widths of England, and the temple holes along the selvages are a typical feature of silks made in China. The saturated, almost acidic colors—particularly the vivid lime green and celeste blue (see the blue waistcoat on pages 71–74)—might have also been markers of recognizably foreign products. In addition, the drawing of the motifs demonstrates an interpretation of European models rather than strict copying, though it is known that Chinese silk weavers also precisely replicated European silks, often for use at the Qing court rather than for export.

Palimpsests of gathers along the top as well as light soiling on the hemmed bottom edge also reveal that, like its painted and damask cousins, this silk brocade probably once comprised a European gown or petticoat.





18 EMBROIDERED SILK SATIN WAISTCOAT

English, the embroidered silk Chinese, ca. 1740

While the deep cobalt blue of Ming porcelain first attracted Europeans in the early sixteenth century, by the eighteenth century, a striking new color derived from Chinese pottery glazes entered the Western market and imagination, literally coloring perceptions of the “Celestial Empire.” So-called “celestial blue,” a bright turquoise thought to match the heavens, mimicked the hue found on monochrome Kangxi porcelains.

This waistcoat is another example of European obsession with this particular hue, here in the form of a luxurious embroidered satin. “Waistcoat pieces,” as they were called, were embroidered in China on the order of merchants who imported them to the West as flat panels. Made up and adapted by European tailors, garments such as this were some of the first examples of “fast fashion,” produced in China solely for foreign consumption, available on the Western market.

Evidently, plied yarn embroidery was more valued by European consumers, possibly because of its durability—especially suitable, perhaps, for male attire—when compared to the more delicate “floss silks” used for example on the dress on pages 51–56, which more closely resembled traditional Chinese embroidery produced for the home market. In 1835, Philadelphia merchant Henry Pratt McKean wrote to his representative in China to complain about the embroidered shawls he had recently received: “Some of the shawls that were ordered in twisted silk truly are in Floss Silk, a very great mistake [because] it frays out.”

Produced nearly a century earlier, this waistcoat features satin- and stem-stitch embroidery on satin, incorporating both traditional Chinese imagery such as the peony and the pomegranate as well as motifs clearly derived from Indian chintz, such as the bulbous fruit-like clusters and serrated leaves with filling patterns, seen for example on the showy pocket flaps.

Related waistcoats are in the collections of the Fashion Museum, Bath; the Peabody Essex Museum; and LACMA (M.2007.211.811).







19 EMBROIDERED STRAW BONNET

Chinese in the European style, ca. 1820s
13 in. long

Bedfordshire, England was internationally renowned throughout the eighteenth century for its chief export: fine straw plait for millinery. Until the mid-nineteenth century, only Italian Leghorn straw rivalled that which was produced in the towns of Dunstable and Luton. By the 1860s, however, Bedfordshire had all but lost its foothold as one of Europe's straw-plaiting epicenters, due not only to the advent of mechanization but, above all, to the import of high-quality Chinese straw specifically for hat making at a far lower price than that of local plait.

Chinese straw had long been highly regarded for its fineness. By the eighteenth century, China exported straw matting in large quantities to Europe and the Colonies, where it was used primarily as floor covering during the summer months. Naturally prone to deterioration, woven straw of this type is a rare survival today. This apparently unique bonnet, probably dating to the 1820s, reveals that Chinese straw was used in this context some forty years before the English plaiting industry's decline. The silk-embroidered flowers and insects, vibrant yellow satin lining, and unusual construction from four panels of woven straw all point to a Chinese origin. The general form—with a narrow, elongated shape that would effectively hide the face when in profile—follows that of early-nineteenth-century poke bonnets. However, the seam along the top and crown where the straw panels have been joined, and the separate pieces of woven straw that make up the tip and bavolet, as well as the impressive size of the bavolet—ostensibly to completely protect the back of the neck from the sun—bear little resemblance to hats produced in Europe. Found at Knebworth House, the ancestral home of the Bulwer and Lytton families in Hertfordshire, this bonnet may have arrived in England as a novel souvenir of travels abroad through cities in colonial Asia, where a hat of this style would have represented a compromise between European fashionability and the necessities of a sultry climate like that of Macau.



20 "CHINOISERIE" BROCADED SILKS

Dutch (probably Amsterdam), ca. 1730–1740
47 x 15.75 in. (irregular), 59.5 x 31.5 in., 70.5 x 30 in.

For a brief period in the 1730s, weavers in Amsterdam produced an extraordinary and distinctive array of silks incorporating the latest trend sweeping Europe: chinoiserie. Leading European artists such as Antoine Watteau and François Boucher, along with specialized *ornamentistes* like Gabriel Huquier, François-Thomas Mondon, and Alexis Peyrotte, adapted the discreet vocabulary of eye-catching motifs found in early European travel accounts to construct a vision of China that was playful and otherworldly, an exotic fantasyland full of improbably jolly figures and impossibly gigantic trees from which nearly all decorative arts industries drew inspiration for decades.

Unlike England and France, which enacted bans on Chinese silk to defend their native textile industries, the Netherlands had no such prohibitions, and consumers who desired the latest in fashionable novelties benefitted from the influx of genuine Eastern imports. Nonetheless, that did not stop savvy Dutch businessmen from attempting to capitalize on the demand by producing their own supply of silks that appeared, to greater or lesser degree, like the expensive Eastern originals.

These three silks all incorporate "Chinese" motifs with varying levels of whimsicality. One, with a ground brocaded with gold and silver wrapped threads, seems to have been created to fool inexperienced buyers. A cartouche in its border contains a mock-Chinese (or perhaps mock-Gujarati) woven inscription, presumably intended to make it appear like a genuine Chinese textile. Its overall width of approximately 30 inches—European silks were typically woven between 19 and 21 inches wide—is another characteristic of Chinese silks here adopted to appear more Chinese. The pattern incorporates flowering peony and cherry blossom branches derived from Chinese paintings and textiles, with interpretations of Buddha's Hand citrons and pomegranates. Large cranes, butterflies, and dragonflies dart through the branches. The drawing of the floral elements may have been influenced by Jean-Antoine Fraise's *Livre de*





desseins chinois (1735), which contained engravings of similar branches bearing fanciful mixtures of flowers, fruit, birds, and insects.

A fragment of bright green satin represents a more hybrid style, incorporating C-scrolls and cornucopia-like motifs—vestiges of the so-called “Bizarre” style popular a decade earlier—mixed with chinoiserie elements. Two figures take tea in a garden setting with fantastically oversized flora beside a European masonry wall topped with urns. To the right, a humorously out-of-scale parrot contemplates a giant pink tulip. In another section, a child sits on an enormous quadrilobed pedestal, apparently charmed by a passing dragonfly while a basket full of parasol-shaped flowers looms overhead. The interstices of these main figural groups are filled with a variety of endearingly incongruous animal life: a gamboling pink crane, large moths, dragonflies, and swans. Topping off this menagerie, a pair of flying fish glide through the emerald ground. Woven without any metallic threads, this silk relies instead on the combination of bright white and acidic chartreuse for its brilliance. A similar silk with a red ground is illustrated in Alain Gruber, *Chinoiserie: Der*



Dress (*robe à la française*)
France, ca. 1735, restyled ca. 1770;
the silk Dutch, ca. 1730
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston,
The Elizabeth Day McCormick Collection,
43.1871a-c

Einfluss Chinas auf die europäische Kunst 17.-19. Jahrhundert (Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 1984), pp. 46, 48–49, no. 13.

The third panel uses the same bright green to render both water and plants, along with a profusion of gilt-silver threads that create a shimmering maritime composition full of surprising elements. Against a silvery satin ground, two major figural groups alternate across the 31 ½-inch width of the textile: a group of two smiling fishermen drawing in a catch of pink fish in a ship with a large curving metallic sail; and a vignette depicting a woman bearing a hand fan being rowed in a boat by an attendant. Each scene is accompanied by characteristic immense flora, including versions of palm and pine trees, and a clutch of stylized bamboo sprouting from a huge scholar's rock (*gongshi*). Between these main groups, motifs include porcelain vessels placed on pink mats and stands; men in pink robes seated on riverbanks; large moths, and a frog whose tongue lashes out to catch an insect. The joviality of the drawing of the figures recalls Boucher's chinoiserie designs, which were among the most influential in the eighteenth century. In particular, the boat in which the woman with a fan is seated (with its arched enclosure at one end) resembles the one drawn by Boucher in the early 1740s for the tapestry *La Pêche*, woven as part of the second *Tenture chinoise* by the Aubusson manufactory, and reproduced by Huquier in an engraving.

These silks would have been used for dresses or robes at the time they were originally woven. A dress in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, gives some sense of the original effect these charming silks would have had as part of a fashionable ensemble. This dress is made from a silk identical to the above example, woven in reverse, a testament to the popularity of the intricate pattern.







21
"CHINOISERIE" BED VALANCE WITH *POINT DE*
***BEAUVAIS* EMBROIDERY**

French, early 18th century
21 x 75 in.

The European stylistic trend known as chinoiserie that evoked a fanciful vision of the "mysterious" East was well established by the eighteenth century. As the term implies, China provided significant aesthetic inspiration, but Japan and India might also be evoked in chinoiserie architecture, interior decoration, and decorative arts. In addition to Watteau and Boucher, Christophe Huet and Gilles Marie Oppenordt were among those artists instrumental in creating chinoiserie designs that were widely disseminated and copied. Furnishing textiles from large-scale tapestries—like the two highly successful *Tenture chinoise* series woven at the Beauvais manufactory in the late seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries—to small, embroidered pictures created a new kind of visual ornament.

In elite homes, elaborate bed hangings emphasized the importance of these large furniture forms that served to display wealth, taste, and familiarity with fashionable décor. This chinoiserie valance (and,



presumably, its coordinating curtains) would have transported the bed's occupant to the lands of the fascinating Orient. Worked in bright polychrome wool threads in point de Beauvais on a linen ground—both typical of French embroidery—male and female figures in flowing garments seated on individual islands under baldachin-like canopies convey the leisurely Chinese lifestyle as imagined by Europeans. For instance, the topknots on some of the figures' heads and their sashed robes with funnel-shaped sleeves became sartorial shorthand for “Chinese” and appear frequently across decorative arts media in the chinoiserie style. The border's regularity and symmetry with its meandering floral-and-fruit trail and acanthus-like scrolls topped by floral sprays reflects a European sensibility and is characteristic of the melding of Eastern and Western elements in chinoiserie objects.

The valance is related to a set of bed hangings at the Abegg-Stiftung, Bern (Inv. 2398), including valances and a bedcover found in the Dijon area.







22

SILK IKATS LINED WITH PAISLEY PRINTED COTTONS

Uzbek (probably Bukhara), early to mid-20th century,
the cottons Russian, last quarter of the 19th century
55.25 x 38.25 in., 91 x 60 in.

24

FLORAL PRINTED COTTONS

Soviet (probably Uzbekistan), ca. 1950s–1970s
96 x 38 in., 81 x 17 in.

Turkey-red cottons—the distinctively-dyed fabrics with patterns of botehs (paisley) inspired by Kashmiri shawl designs—are an enduring marker of the cross-cultural currents that linked all corners of Asia and Europe in the long nineteenth century. The production of these highly desirable madder-red textiles proved to be a lucrative industry throughout Europe, with important manufacturing centers cropping up in France, Switzerland, and the British Isles. With the invention of and improvement upon synthetic alizarin, the chemical extracted from the madder plant to create its characteristic crimson color, in the 1860s and 1870s, textile manufacturers drastically cut costs and the once restrictively expensive Turkey-red cotton became a mass European product exported to all corners of the globe.

Only within the Russian Empire, however, did these fabrics become associated exclusively with Central Asian markets. The successive military campaigns between the reigns of Alexander I (r. 1801–1825) and Alexander III (1881–1894) infringed upon Central Asia. With conquest came the Russians' desire to further expand their colonialist reach and force these southern regions into complete reliance on Russian and, later, Soviet products, through the exploitation of already existing trade networks. Russia flooded these areas with its Turkey-red cottons, like the late-nineteenth-century woodblock-printed striped paisley design and the roller-printed pattern with overlapping paisleys, which were used to line these later silk ikat hangings. By the end of the century, Russian factories adapted all manner of Western European designs for cottons destined for the southern reaches of its empire, where these fabrics were quickly



adopted for use in clothing and bedding. The prevalence of these fabrics in areas like Uzbekistan is evident from the photographs taken by Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorskii during his photographic imperial survey conducted between 1905 and 1915. Garments with linings of similar cottons appear in photographs of Samarkand residents (Prokudin-Gorskii photograph collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division).

By the 1920s, the Soviets established textile factories known as combines throughout modern-day Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, where cities like Tashkent and Ferghana were turned into production centers for the new cash crop: cotton. These roller-printed fabrics show the range of floral designs, from the naturalistic designs favored earlier in the century



to later stylized hybrid designs (the above example on twilled rather than plain-woven cotton), produced at these Soviet combines, which churned out textiles for local markets. Together, this group of cottons illustrates the full spectrum of the gradual Russification of much of Central Asia over the course of the twentieth century during a chapter in Russian history that has come to be swept under the rug.

The ikat hanging with blocked cotton lining on page 87 was exhibited in "Uzbek Ikat and Embroideries," The Textile Museum, Washington, D.C., November 1976–February 1977.





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TITI HALLE CORA GINSBURG LLC



TEXT

Martina D'Amato
William DeGregorio
Michele Majer

PHOTOGRAPHY

Rachel Robshaw
Michael Fredericks

DESIGN

Martina D'Amato

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by appointment

New York NY Sharon CT 212 744 1352 info@coraginsburg.com coraginsburg.com

CORA GINSBURG

Material Translations

