



# Textile Research Centre Leiden

## Newsletter April 2017

It had been our hope to have a quiet spring in order to catch up with cataloguing the collection and library books, putting items online and tidying up in general. But as normal, reality has chosen a slightly different path. We have been busy with courses, workshops as well as presenting various lectures and talking with groups both here in Leiden and abroad (including two lectures in London).

In addition, more and more people and groups are visiting the TRC in order to have a chat, look at exhibitions, and to use the collection. The other day a former textile conservator popped in – she had heard about us from someone else – and was excited by the fact that finally there was a textile centre in The Netherlands run by people who loved and understood textiles. A positive comment on the one hand, but rather a sad one on the other, and the lack of appreciation of textiles does not only apply to The Netherlands.

We are well aware that there is a growing need for an international centre for textile and dress studies. This is a niche we can and are filling (as you will see below), but we need serious and continuous financial support to carry out this work. If you would like to become a Friend of the TRC (at any level) please contact [info@trc-leiden.nl](mailto:info@trc-leiden.nl)

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### ***A third accolade for the *Encyclopedia of Embroidery from the Arab World****

We have just heard that the *Encyclopedia of Embroidery from the Arab World* (Bloomsbury 2016) has been awarded a third accolade. The book was first awarded the Dartmouth Medal (2017) for a reference book in January, then in February it was listed among the 2017 PROSE AWARDS of the Association of American Publishers/Professional and Scholarly Publishing Division.

A few days ago we heard that *The Library Journal* (<https://tinyurl.com/best-reference>) has listed it among its highly recommended list of reference books published in 2016. The TRC is consequently getting far more attention, both in the media and in general, thanks to these awards and citations.

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## ***Encyclopedia of Embroidery from..... Series***

As a result of the various awards and citations to the *Encyclopedia of Embroidery from the Arab World*, Bloomsbury (London) is now officially willing to work on a series of encyclopaedias that will cover the world of embroidery, literally. The contract for the next book on Central Asian, Iranian Plateau and South Asian embroidery has been signed, and specialists have been approached who are willing to help with the writing and editing of the book. The TRC is now also actively collecting examples of embroidery from this region, especially from the Indian sub-continent.

In addition, the TRC is looking for people or institutes who are willing to help finance the necessary research, travel, photography, copyright, and so forth. We are looking for €15,000 per volume, with five or six volumes in mind. These will cover:

- Central Asia, Iranian Plateau and South Asia
- Sub-Saharan Africa
- The Americas (North, Central and South America)
- Western Embroidery (Colonial America, Europe, Russia, Western influences elsewhere; this may turn into two volumes).
- East and Southeast Asia (China, Japan, Indonesia, Laos, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, etc.)

The publishers will pay for the design, publication and publicity costs. The necessary research is up the TRC. If you would like to sponsor a volume please let us know as soon as possible. Your name or that of your company will be placed on the title page of the book.

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### **Some recent acquisitions**



Among the recent acquisitions to the TRC Collection are several unusual and interesting groups of objects, including a small number of Yemeni garments given by the family of Laila Ingram. She was the daughter of the famous British writers and explorers of the Arabian Peninsula, Harold and Doreen Ingram. The garments include items for both men and women. One of the more intriguing items is a dress from the island of Socotra, to the south of Yemen.

We are still very puzzled about exactly how this garment is worn, so if you know and/or have photographs could you please let us know at [info@trc-leiden.nl](mailto:info@trc-leiden.nl).

In complete contrast, Pepin van Roojen of Pepin Press (Amsterdam) has donated a collection of textiles and garments that include Islamic fashion, Chinese garments, as well as cowgirl outfits and garments from the USA. The latter is especially welcome as it will help to build up our North American collection. We are planning to create various digital exhibitions about these items.



There was also a large number of old postcards that are going to be scanned and put online for all to enjoy. These include representations of Dutch costumes as well as many from the Middle East. This year will also see the inclusion of these and similar images on the main TRC Collection database (rather than as a separate database just for images).

In addition, among the items given by Mr Van Roojen there are a number of swatch books (from the USA, France and The Netherlands) as well as hundreds (literally) of textile samples dating to the 20th century, which were the property of a professor of art in Paris, who worked with various Parisian fashion houses. Many of these samples are printed and represent typical, and atypical, textiles from the 20<sup>th</sup> century European/Western fashion market.

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## **TRC Collection Online: Europeana**

More and more items are being added to the TRC Collection online. We are currently at about 100 items per week. We have recently taken on two new volunteers to help with the depot and cataloguing in order to help this process. But it all takes time, especially as new items to the collection keep arriving, often from most unexpected sources.

All of the items that are photographed (over 7000 pieces) will soon be available via another site, *Europeana*, an international portal for European culture that includes museum and similar institute's collections. This site can be found at: <http://www.europeana.eu/portal/en> In particular, the TRC Collection will be found in the category of textiles and dress, called *Europeana Fashion*: [www.europeanafashion.eu](http://www.europeanafashion.eu). Although the TRC Collection includes many items from outside of Europe it was felt that it is a European textile and dress collection of note and should be included. A testimony indeed to the growing importance of the TRC Collection, both in its physical and digital manifestations.

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## New TRC Gallery Exhibition: *From Kaftan to Kippa: Dress and Diversity in the Middle East*



On April 1st 2017 His Excellency Mor Polycarpus Augin Aydin (Metropolitan of the Syriac Orthodox Church in The Netherlands), opened the TRC's latest exhibition, *From Kaftan to Kippa: Dress and Diversity in the Middle East*. This crowded, colourful and varied exhibition is one of the most complicated (and full) exhibitions ever attempted by the TRC. The opening of the exhibition was attended by over sixty people, who mingled among the mannequins to create an even bigger crowd. The exhibition forms part of the *Fitting In / Standing Out* project of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, funded by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research.



Social Sciences and Humanities



When thinking of the Middle East, stereotype images of bearded men and veiled women tend to come to mind. But this neighbour of Europe is far more diverse than we think. In the past few years, media coverage of the Arab Spring and the dramatic war in Syria and Iraq has placed groups such as the Copts and Kurds in the limelight, but there are many more ethnic and religious groups that are similarly not defined by national borders.

This exhibition showcases the rich dress traditions of some of the groups living in the Middle East, highlighting the intricate history of this region. They include Copts, Bedouin, Palestinians, Druze, Orthodox Jews, Samaritans, Kurds and Zoroastrians. The dress traditions of these groups will be displayed and discussed in relation to

'mainstream' Middle Eastern dress. The exhibition displays more than forty complete outfits for men, women, and children, together with individual garments, footwear, headgear and prayer beads. It also includes an historical section on Ottoman-style clothing, such as the kaftan and the fez, which so often has influenced contemporary clothing traditions in the Middle East. Many of the items on display encompass traditionally woven and embroidered decorative forms.

The exhibition will be on display from Monday 3rd April until Thursday 29th June, from Monday to Thursday, from 10.00 - 16.00. Entrance is free, but voluntary donations are welcome.

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## 5-Day Intensive Textile Course

The next intensive textile course will take place from 16-20 October 2017. The course is being taught in English by Dr Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood, textile and dress historian and director of the TRC. The course is a mixture of theoretical and practical elements, with an emphasis on trying out the various techniques of textile production (spinning, dyeing, weaving), on holding and examining fibres, textiles and finished items, all in order to learn and understand what is happening and why various combinations take place. The aim is to make textiles less 'frightening' and allow people to look at a textile, from virtually any historical period or culture, and be able to understand it.

Do you want to participate in our next course? You can find more information on <https://tinyurl.com/lme4b8f>

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## Banjara Embroidery: Crowdfunding

In order to support a Banjara embroidery group called Surya's Garden (Hampi, Karnataka; <http://www.suryasgarden.org/>) in southern India and as part of the TRC's work on the new *Encyclopedia of Embroidery from Central Asia, Iran and South Asia*, the TRC has launched another crowd funding project

*Suma Bhai working on a large piece in Surya's Garden*

The aim is to raise 1200 euros that will be used to buy a complete, embroidered Banjara outfit for a woman, as well as many examples of Banjara embroidery that have recently been made by a group of embroiderers working at Surya's Garden. These embroideries will be provided with information about materials, stitches, designs, symbolism and so forth.



The [crowdfunding website](#) is in Dutch only. You can make a donation through our bank account: NL39 INGB 0002 9823 59 and contact us at [info@trc-leiden.nl](mailto:info@trc-leiden.nl) to let us know your donation is intended for this project.

When you make a donation of 25 euro or more, you are entitled to receive a Banjara embroidered coin purse, bag or panel as a gift from us. For more information about these 'thank-yous', feel free to contact us at [info@trc-leiden.nl](mailto:info@trc-leiden.nl)

#### UPDATE

We have almost reached our target amount of 1200 euros! All donations that come in will be used to purchase Indian embroidery, even if we collect more than 1200 euros. The option to donate 25 euros with a coin purse as a gift from us, is temporarily unavailable on the crowdfunding website, but will be back soon. Keep an eye on the crowdfunding website or send us an e-mail!

## Recommended books

More and more people are discovering the TRC Library! We are now constantly having visitors come to use this important facility, including academics, fashion students, and those who are looking for specific inspiration or background information about textiles and garments they may have at home. There are now over 2600 recorded books in the library and thanks to publishers, donations and purchases the library is rapidly going towards to the 3000 mark (we would eventually like to have a library of c. 10000 items, so there is a little way to go). The March 2017 list of selected books is, as normal, diverse and includes items about historic trade routes, Opus Anglicanum, Indian embroidery as well as jewellery from Yorkshire in England. You can find the recommended books here: <https://tinyurl.com/books-march>

## Wednesday workshops

The workshops creative darning and card weaving in respectively April and May are fully booked, but will both be repeated next autumn. The creative darning workshop will be repeated November 9, the card weaving workshop November 29. You can already sign up by sending a mail to [info@trc-leiden.nl](mailto:info@trc-leiden.nl). There are some places left for the prayer bead workshop on June 28. If you want to participate, please let us know: [info@trc-leiden.nl](mailto:info@trc-leiden.nl)

## TRC Blog

Are you reading our blog? We have added some interesting entries over the last period, including:

Subversive stitching: the pussy hat (<https://tinyurl.com/k8ypmjx>) and

Back in time: Two new and fascinating acquisitions for the TRC Collection  
(<https://tinyurl.com/lrrmp9>)