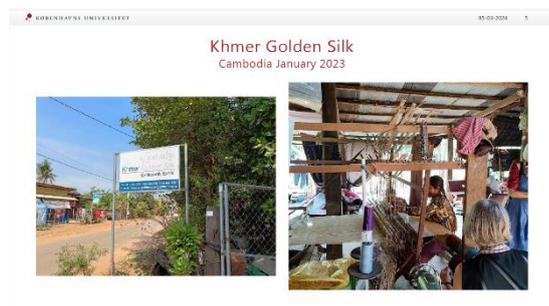
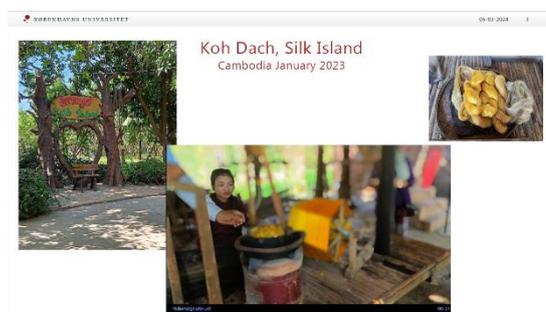


Introductory talk by Prof. Eva Andersson Strand, Director of the Centre for Textile Research (CTR), for the exhibition *The Art of Ikat: A Cambodian Renaissance*. Recorded on February 22, 2024, at The Royal Library at South Campus, University of Copenhagen in Denmark.

Welcome everybody to this fantastic event. To the opening of the Magali An Berthon's exhibition *The Art of Ikat: A Cambodian Renaissance*. My name is Eva Andersson Strand. I have the privilege of being the head of the Centre for Textile Research [CTR], where Magali now has been working as a postdoc fellow. So, we are very proud, very happy to have Magali here. I'm also very proud that I have the privilege to [open] the exhibition, and Magali asked me to say a few words before the opening and Magali's presentation of the exhibition.

So, it has been a journey to work with Magali, really a journey. Last year, she planned a fantastic tour to Cambodia for the whole of CTR team, together with our travelling guide Kerstin Andersson, who is also here today. Unfortunately, Magali couldn't come with us in the end, for special reasons, but we still had a fantastic tour.

Being at CTR, CTR opened in 2005, it has really been a privilege because we have been travelling around the world, visiting many places; and met fantastic craft people, artisans all over the world. And you could ask yourself, traditional textile craft, is that a part of our intangible cultural heritage? Well, when we came to Cambodia, we visited this place for example, Koh Dach, the Silk Island, where they show all the procedures, the processes, how to make silk. From the cocoons to the finished products, and that was absolutely amazing. And it is an organisation, and there is both, above all women working in this organisation, producing both yarn but also fabrics, textiles, cloth. We also visited another workshop, and that was the workshop in the cotton community in Battambang. And that was also something that was organised by the community and there were women working. They bought all their yarn, but they dyed it at the workshop, and then they were weaving textiles that were then sold [at the workshop] but also sold into the cities there.



This is another workshop where we visited, Khmer Golden Silk. Here the women in this community they could, more or less, rent a loom in the workshop. So they could go there and produce textiles [that were then taken care of] and sold [in] the town. And the last visit we did was this, to the Institute for Khmer Traditional Textiles, where they also produced quite a lot of ikat weaving.

So, when looking at all the different workshops we visited, it was quite clear that they were very [differently] organised. For example, [the Institute for Khmer Traditional Textiles]. It was initiated by a Japanese man coming from abroad. And there were several of those type of workshops and there was also workshop, as I said, organised by the community. But what is the same is that it's more or less only women that are working in those workshops, that are producing the textiles. Maybe, sometimes [it's hard for them] to find other Silk works, actually.

But I will take you also to show you some of the places that I have visited during the years. This is a fantastic workshop close to Kayseri in Turkey, that I visited in 2018, in a project that we had there. Here we have two ladies, mother and her daughter, that are weaving those fantastic rugs. This village, they had before the whole income [dependant] on producing carpets that was then sold. Today, those women are the only women left. They are the only [ones] producing those rugs. And what they get paid, for their work, is less than they would get as unemployed, despite the skill they have and the time it takes to produce those carpets.



This is another lady that we met in Turkey. That was another little city, Çavdar, and the same story: they have been producing a lot of different rugs that have been sold. They get the yarn from the buyers, and then they produce those type of textiles. She produces around four rugs a year and get very little paid.

One of my favourite projects is the Bani Hamida Weaving project, where I visited in 2012 and also in 2014. Bani Hamida is a very poor Palestinian tribe and more than fifty years ago [Save the Children, now Jordan River Foundation] decided to support them to produce carpets. They do all the spinning themselves, but they think that the wool in Jordan is not really good enough, so they import it from New Zealand or from Australia. Then they dye it, as you can see, I hope, to the right. But they don't use natural dyes, they use chemical [dyes] from Switzerland because they are more dye fast, and then they weave those fantastic rugs on horizontal ground looms. What is fascinating with this project, I think, is that the rugs they produce, they are quite coarse, they have, they weigh quite a lot. And the textile collectors, they complain about this because the traditional textiles, they were much finer woven; they are much lighter. But those women, they want to earn money and they are paid by weight. And that is really good, because they don't do this to produce traditional textiles. They do this to earn money, to send their children to school, and that is something I think it's important to respect and to remember.



A little bit the same, here is from the weaving village in Varanasi. They do have those pit looms, weaving with silks. Amazing production, amazing textiles. But it's really, really hard to keep this tradition alive, because the weavers, they would earn more money if they had a rickshaw that they could rent [out] and go around with tourists, for example. But still there is a tradition to [weave].

The final place I would like to take you to is the weaving centre in Peru, [in] Chinchero, and here they have a school. To teach, women mostly, [how] to produce traditional textile crafts, the textiles. And they also do the spinning, the dying, the weaving, and then they sell it [mostly to] tourists. I will also mention that there is also, as in Varanasi, you saw the male weavers, here is also men, but they are knitting; fantastic caps and shawls and other knitted things.

So, when I think about all the people I have met during the years, and I haven't mentioned all of them, I think that my conclusion is: that the cultural heritage of textile is a living tradition, often inherited. For example, from mother to daughter or from father to son. But the important [part] is, that even if they are very proud of what they make, maybe most of the craftspeople does not only produce textiles because they want to preserve their traditions. They do want to earn money, and as I said, sometimes they need a salary to give their children a better future, and they are often very, very badly paid. And this is something we must understand and something we must respect. And I think therefore it is very important that we do not just support the craft, but also the artisans. And we can do that in many different ways. One of those ways, is to do exactly what Magali has done in this exhibition: to show and present the fantastic and most complicated work with ikat weaving; and to present and to include the artisans which make us understand their skills and traditions, and give us a possibility also to support this work. So thank you, Magali.

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Courtesy of Eva Andersson Strand

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