




JOHN GILLOW
NICHOLAS BARNARD

INDIAN TEXTILES

Thames & Hudson



John Gillow &
Nicholas Barnard

INDIAN TEXTILES

with 475 illustrations, 450 in colour and 4 maps

 **Thames & Hudson**

To the memory of my late father, J. G. Gillow

An earlier version of this book was published as *Traditional Indian Textiles*. This edition, in a new format, has been revised by John Gillow and contains new sections by him on Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

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Page 2: A woman's embroidered and mirrorwork wedding shawl made by Lohana women, Umerkot district, Sind.

Page 4, TOP: Ganesh wedding canopy, Saurashtra, Western India.

ABOVE: Embroidered ox-covers, Kanbi farmers, Saurashtra.

LEFT: A *galla*, a decorative hanging that covers the nape of the neck and hangs down from a water-pot carrying ring, Banjara, Deccan plateau.

CONTENTS



INTRODUCTION 6



CHAPTER 1 12 THE HISTORY OF TEXTILE PRODUCTION



CHAPTER 2 30 THE MATERIALS Dyes 32 · Yarn 39



CHAPTER 3 42 THE TECHNIQUES OF TEXTILE DECORATION Handwoven Textiles 45 · Resist Dyeing 48 · Printing and Painting 51



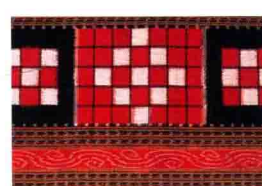
CHAPTER 4 56 THE WEST Embroidery 60 · Appliqué 77 · Beadwork 80 · Ply-Split Camel Girths of Western Rajasthan 83 · Block Printing 84 · Printed and Painted Textiles 88 · Tie-and-Dye Work 92 · Brocade Weaving 102



CHAPTER 5 104 PAKISTAN Sind 106 · Punjab 129 · North-West Frontier Province and the North 134 · Baluchistan 143



CHAPTER 6 146 THE NORTH Punjab and Haryana 150 · Jammu and Kashmir 153 · Himachal Pradesh 158 · Uttar Pradesh 160



CHAPTER 7 166 THE EAST Bengal and Bihar 170 · Assam and the Hill States of the North-East 174 · Orissa 178



CHAPTER 8 184 BANGLADESH Jamdani Weaving 186 · Kantha Quilting 187



CHAPTER 9 192 THE SOUTH Ikats of Andhra Pradesh 196 · Kalamkari Work of South-Eastern India 198 · The Silk Industry of Kanchipuram 204 · Kerala, Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra 206 · Banjara Embroidery 207




CHAPTER 10 212 SRI LANKA

BIBLIOGRAPHY 218 MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES WITH
COLLECTIONS OF INDIAN TEXTILES 219 GLOSSARY 221
SOURCES OF ILLUSTRATIONS 223 INDEX 224

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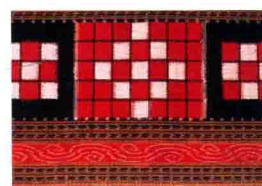
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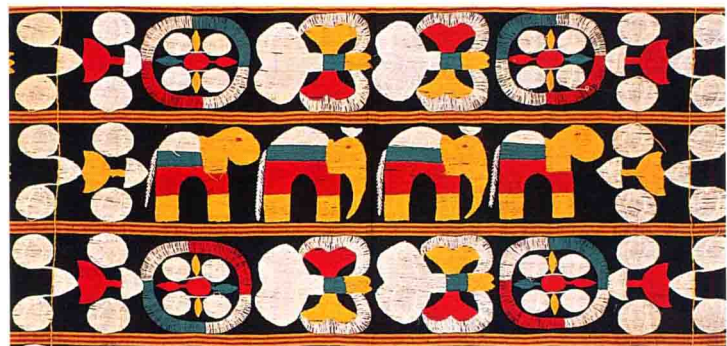


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COLLECTIONS OF INDIAN TEXTILES 219 GLOSSARY 221
SOURCES OF ILLUSTRATIONS 223 INDEX 224



INTRODUCTION



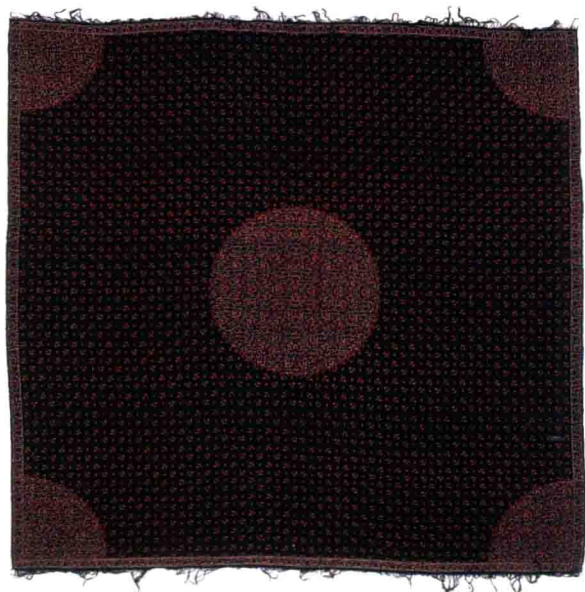
INTRODUCTION

Thirty years ago, after one of those long, dusty, apparently endless train journeys so typical of India, I alighted at last at Bhuj railway station in the far north-west of the country.

There I looked on to a walled, gated town, whose incongruous centerpiece was a Victorian Gothic tower – part of the Maharao's palace, but better fitted to a public school in the English countryside. I walked through the main bazaar of Bhuj, past silver merchants and shops full to bursting with fine *mashru* satins and shawls. Jostling past me came Sidis of African descent, as well as Ahir and Rabari, Hindu herders in their mirrorwork costumes and ivory bangles, and Kanbi farming women with chain-stitch blouses and skirts. Stalking through them all came tall and lean Jat Muslim herders, henna-bearded men in *ajarakh* block-printed turbans and *lungis*, and women wearing profusely embroidered tunics, heavy gold nose-rings and madder-dyed *bandhani* shawls and skirts. Here were communities and castes living side by side, at peace – and expressing their differences through colour and textiles.

In the workshops, I saw block printers and *bandhani* workers, weavers at pitlooms producing *mashru* satins and *dablo* blankets for





PRECEDING PAGES: A fine appliquéd and patchwork *ralli* quilt, Thar Parkar, Sind.
OPPOSITE, ABOVE, LEFT (DETAIL) AND BELOW, RIGHT: Naga shawl embellished with cowrie shells.

OPPOSITE, ABOVE, RIGHT: Rajput appliqué *dharaniyo*, Saurashtra.

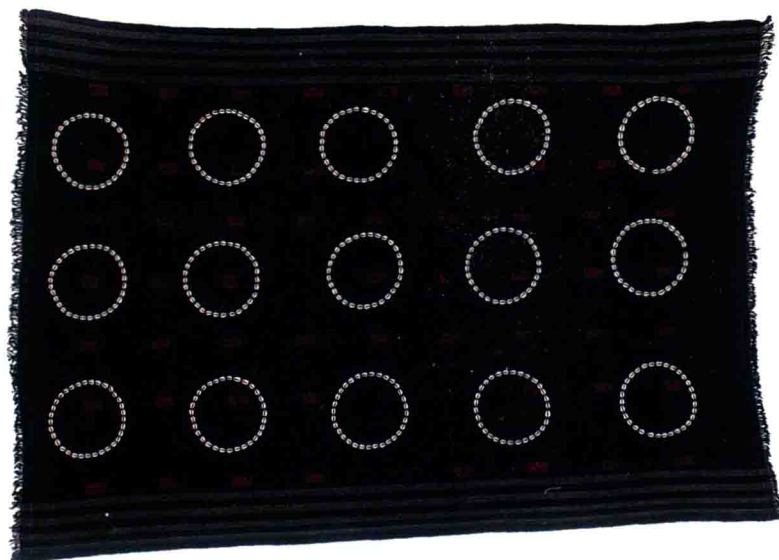
OPPOSITE, BELOW, LEFT: A *kantha* quilt, from West Bengal, decorated with depictions of domestic utensils, animals and birds.

OPPOSITE, BELOW, RIGHT: Shawl embroidered in Manipur for the Nagas.

ABOVE, LEFT: Eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century *jamawar* 'moon' shawl tapestry woven in Kashmir for the Indian market.

RIGHT: This magnificent silk *aba* dress was worn by a Memon bride from Kutch. The very fine embroidery and mirrorwork are most likely the work of professional embroiderers.

BELOW, LEFT: A quilted cover used by the itinerant Mathura people of the Deccan plateau.



the herders and farmers. Later, in the villages, I saw interiors decorated with beadwork panels and hung with embroidered, pennanted bunting setting off highly polished brass pots and silverware, with furniture carved with the recurring patterns of flowers, birds and animals, all against walls decorated with a relief of mud sculpture, whitewashed and inset with mirrors.

No other land enjoys such a profusion of creative energies for the production of textiles as the South Asian subcontinent. The interaction of peoples – invaders, indigenous tribes, traders and explorers – has built a complex culture legendary for its vitality and colour; today, over ten million weavers, dyers, embroiderers and spinners throughout India, Pakistan and Bangladesh contribute their handmade textiles to this melting pot.



From earliest trading records, it is clear that European, Asian and Levantine civilizations looked to India for her textiles. Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Persians and Chinese traded precious metals and silks for the fine and colourful cottons of the subcontinent. The special quality of the light cotton cloth, the embroidery techniques, the ability to respond with alacrity and sensitivity to the demands for new designs and patterns, as well as the fast nature of the colourful dyes, ensured that, until the European Industrial Revolution, India was the world's foremost centre of textile production.

Today, the subcontinent has more than recovered from the disasters wrought by the flood of foreign power loom imports. From the Rann of Kutch to the Coromandel Coast, and from the deserts of Sind and Baluchistan to the North-West Frontier, and in the padi-bounded villages of Bangladesh the hand-loom weavers, block printers, textile painters, dyers and embroiderers work to continue the developing traditions of textile craft in the subcontinent. *Indian Textiles* focuses on the twentieth-century development of this domestic and small workshop industry and is the first comprehensive survey of the handmade textiles of the whole of the South Asian subcontinent with special emphasis on the textiles of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, establishing the historic links between their handmade textiles and those of modern India. Throughout the whole region, the histories of textile traditions are examined, the techniques of dyeing, weaving and embroidering are analysed and the subcontinent is traversed from region to region to explore and highlight the centres of traditional textile production. For the designer, traveller, student and collector, *Indian Textiles* is the essential guide to the most famous of all the crafts of the subcontinent.

JOHN GILLOW

OPPOSITE, ABOVE (DETAIL): Wedding shawl of a Lohana woman from Mithi or Diplo, Thar Parkar, Sind.

OPPOSITE, BELOW: Appliquéd *ralli* with 'hand of Fatima' design, Chauhan farmers, Sind.

RIGHT: Embroidered wedding shawl from Waziristan in the tribal area of Pakistan that borders Afghanistan.





1 THE HISTORY OF TEXTILE PRODUCTION

