

NEWS

from the Worcester Art Museum

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HAND-MADE TEXTILES FROM THE INDUS VALLEY ON VIEW AT WORCESTER ART MUSEUM

(WORCESTER, Mass., August 24, 2007) –The Worcester Art Museum is pleased to announce the opening of **Textile Heirlooms from the Indus Valley, on view September 14, 2007 through February 4, 2008**, a rare opportunity to view seldom seen hand-made textiles from the Indus Valley Region, at the crossroads of the Middle East and South East Asia.



Throughout the ethnographically complex Indus River Valley region, domestic textiles are essential for both auspicious occasions and daily life. Women may live in the snowy mountains, in parched deserts, amid green pastures, or in high hill country; in each environment they infuse heart and creative spirit into weaving and embroidering textiles. Ranging from tunics and shawls to bags and covers, the textiles are created for festivals,

important family events, such as weddings and births, to show suitability as a prospective wife and for dowries.



Collaborative needlework projects strengthen family bonds and friendships. Likewise the language of stitches, lively patterns and talismanic motifs imbue ordinary existence with vibrancy and a sense of protection. Migratory groups often meet and influence each other in this semi-arid, nomadic part of the world. Nevertheless, characteristic combinations of vivid colors, motifs, and materials have traditionally conveyed the origin, tribal affiliation, religion, status and identity of the women who created the works. The exhibition reflects the astonishing variety of textiles from the provinces of Pakistan: Sindh, Balochistan, the Northwest Frontier Province, Punjab, and the Northern Areas; many works date from before Pakistan's partition from India in 1947. Included are also works from western India and the provinces of Ghazni and Nuristan in eastern Afghanistan.

ABOUT THE COLLECTORS

Thomas W. Simons, Jr. completed a 35-year U.S. Foreign Service career by serving as American Ambassador to Pakistan (1996-98). Ambassador Simons and his wife Peggy had developed an interest in textiles during previous tours of duty in Poland, a country known for its pioneers in contemporary fiber arts. While living in Pakistan, they became fascinated by the beauty of traditional textiles made by women in the Indus River

Valley and its adjacent areas. The Simons recall that “it was a joy to sit with dealers and other collectors and to learn about colorful hand-woven or intricately embroidered pieces from places such as the Pamir foothills of the north, the fertile plains of Punjab, the deserts of Sindh and Rajasthan, and the high plateaux of Balochistan, with Afghanistan to its west.”

Traveling around the country, the Simons came to share a deep appreciation for Pakistan’s impressive cultural and artistic diversity. However they were also stunned and saddened by the realization that the once thriving and widespread embroidery tradition is now becoming a vanishing art. In alternating peaceful and turbulent times, the Indus Valley region continues to urbanize and modernize, and the lifestyles of its peoples are changing. Not so long ago, creatively—and laboriously—embellished textiles were considered essential for dowries, for important family events, and for daily household use. Today, as their importance is disappearing even among nomadic tribes, handcrafted textiles are replaced by factory-made, machine-stitched garments, as well as by synthetic fabrics and containers.

The Simons first displayed their textiles on the walls of the American Embassy Residence in Islamabad. Since leaving Pakistan, they have lent textiles to museum exhibitions in Madison, WI, Portland, OR, and Pasadena, CA. By exhibiting some of their finest, regionally most characteristic works at the Worcester Art Museum, the Simons join a handful of other scholars and collectors dedicated to preserving and introducing the stunning textile heritage of anonymous women in Pakistan, eastern Afghanistan and western India. Research still needs to be done, but pioneering textile historians, museum curators and independent scholars. The Simons hope that this exhibit will also help honor and explore the textile arts of the Indus Valley.

Ambassador Simons has taught modern and contemporary Islamic history at Stanford; served as Director of the Program on Eurasia in Transition at Harvard University’s Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies; and lectured on Post-Communist Islam in Harvard’s Government Department. His most recent book, *Islam in a Globalizing World*, was published by Stanford University Press in 2003. Both Ambassador and Mrs. Simons remain active in learning and promoting the textiles of the Indus valley, an abundantly rich, but little known part of the world’s cultural heritage.

STATEMENT FROM MUSEUM DIRECTOR, JAMES A. WELU

“At this point in history, we are exposed to media images of this part of the world in conflict and change. *Textile Heirlooms* displays a different perspective of this region—the artistic tradition of women—intricate, colorful treasures that are crafted by grandmothers, mothers and daughters. These heirlooms, and the techniques used to make them, are handed down through generations, and each embroidered stitch is rich with family and cultural history. This is a rare opportunity to view works from the Indus Valley, and we thank Tom and Peggy Simons for sharing their collection with us.”

RELATED EVENTS

Lecture: Tales from the Indus Valley, Thomas W. Simons Jr., former US Ambassador to Pakistan

Sunday, September 16, 2pm

Conference Room, Higgins Education Wing

Free with Museum Admission

Join former Ambassador to Pakistan Thomas W. Simons Jr., as he recalls the years he and his wife Peggy spent collecting and traveling in the Indus Valley region. Having lived in the Middle East as a boy and again as the U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan in the 1990s, Dr. Simons' experience will lend a unique vision to this important collection.

About the Worcester Art Museum

The Worcester Art Museum, which opened to the public in 1898, is world-renowned for its 35,000-piece collection of paintings, sculpture, decorative arts, photography, prints, drawings and new media. The works span 5,000 years of art and culture. View paintings by Cassatt, Gauguin, Goya, Monet, Sargent and Whistler; admire floor mosaics from the ancient city of Antioch; see cutting-edge contemporary art; and discover the Museum's many other treasures. Special exhibitions showcase the masterworks, seldom-seen gems, and important works on loan. Enjoy a delectable lunch in the Museum Café, and browse the Shop for unique gifts and mementos.

Dedicated to the promotion of art and art education, the Museum offers a year-round studio art and art appreciation program that enrolls over 7,000 adult and youth students each year. Public tours are offered Saturdays at 11am and Sundays at 1pm, September through May. Audio tours are also available in English and Spanish.

Museum hours are Wednesday through Sunday, 11am-5pm, Third Thursdays of every month, 11am-8pm, and Saturday, 10am-5pm. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors and full-time college students with current ID, and FREE for Members and all youth 17 and under. Admission is also FREE for everyone on Saturday mornings, 10am-noon (sponsored by Fidelity Investments, The TJX Companies, Inc. and National Grid).

The Museum is located at 55 Salisbury St., Worcester, Mass., easily accessible from the Massachusetts Turnpike (I-90), Route 290 and Route 9. Free parking is available near entrances on Salisbury, Lancaster and Tuckerman streets. For more information, call (508) 799-4406 or visit the Museum web site at www.worcesterart.org.

Electronic images available.

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Textile Heirlooms *from the Indus Valley*

September 14, 2007 - February 4, 2008

WORCESTER ART MUSEUM EXHIBITION CHECKLIST



SINDH PROVINCE, PAKISTAN

- 1. Dowry Cloth**, Sindh Province (Pakistan), first half of 20th century; cotton embroidered with silk, cotton and metal-wrapped threads, mirrors; main stitches: detached interlacing, satin, square chain, buttonhole, roman, double-running, Indian mirror; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.
- 2. Rifle Cover**, Sindh Province (Pakistan), first half of 20th century; cotton embroidered with silk, cotton and metal-wrapped threads, mirrors; main stitches: detached interlacing, satin, square chain, cross, buttonhole, raised chain band, roman, double-running, Indian mirror; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.
- 3. Woman's Wedding Tunic**, Sindh Province (Pakistan), first half of 20th century; satin-weave silk lined with cotton, embroidered with silk and cotton and metal-wrapped thread; sequins, beads, mirrors, sand, machine-made braids, lace, cording; main stitches: various types of chain stitches, double buttonhole, couching, Indian mirror; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.

- 4. Embroidered Dagger Belt**, Sindh Province (Pakistan) or Rajasthan State (India), first half of 20th century; leather covered with silk and lined with cotton, embroidered with silk and metal-wrapped thread; main stitch: underside couching; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.
- 5. Woven Cloth for Turban**, Thatta, Sindh Province (Pakistan), late 19th century; length of woven silk, cotton and metal-wrapped threads; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.
- 6. Dowry Cloth**, Sindh Province (Pakistan), first half of 20th century; cotton embroidered with silk; main stitches: surface satin, slanted satin, overcast, double running, Indian mirror; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.
- 7. Dowry Cloth**, Sindh Province (Pakistan), first half of 20th century; cotton embroidered with silk, beads, sequins, tassels, mirrors; main stitches: surface satin, slanted satin, Indian mirror, overcast; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.
- 8. Dowry Bag**, Sindh Province (Pakistan), first half of 20th century; cotton embroidered with silk, cotton and metal-wrapped threads, mirrors, tassels with beads; main stitches: variety of chain stitches, satin, slanted satin, double buttonhole, lazy daisy, feathered chain, couching, Indian mirror; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.
- 9. Bag with Pompoms**, Sindh Province (Pakistan), first half of 20th century; cotton piecework and cotton lining quilted with silk, pompoms, cotton string; main stitches: double-running, cross, couching; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.
- 10. Woman's Blouse Front**, Sindh Province (Pakistan) or Kutch, Gujarat State (India), late 19th century; silk embroidered with silk, metal-wrapped thread, pleated metal rosettes, beetle wings, mirrors; main stitches: square chain, buttonhole, cross, detached interlacing, blanket, stem, Indian mirror; gift of W. Howard Dilks, Jr. and Walter F. Fletcher, in accordance with the wishes of the late Millicent M. Coss, 1950.109
- 11. Textile Fragment**, Hyderabad, Sindh Province (Pakistan), first half of 20th century; cotton embroidered with silk, mirrors; main stitches: buttonhole, radiating satin, satin, slanted stain, Indian mirror, cross, feathered chain; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.

Indian Miniature Painting

- 12. Sohni Crossing the River at Night to Meet Mahiwal**, Provincial Mughal, Lucknow, ca. 1770; (Punjabi folktale); watercolor on paper; gift of Alexander H. Bullock 1953.80



- 13. Woman's Tunic Neck Panel, Cuffs and Pocket**, Balochistan Province (Pakistan), first half of 20th century; cotton with silk, metal-wrapped thread, mirrors; main stitches: roman, chain, couching, two-needle chain, surface satin, herringbone, knot, Indian mirror; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.
- 14. Small Bag**, Balochistan Province (Pakistan), first half of 20th century; cotton embroidered with silk, tassels, cowrie shells; main stitches: brick, chain, two-needle chain, surface darning, edging, insertion; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.
- 15. Small Bag**, Balochistan Province (Pakistan), first half of 20th century; cotton embroidered with silk, tassels, braided cord, plastic beads; main stitches: chain, satin, surface darning, two-needle chain, edging, insertion; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.

16. *Small Bag*, Balochistan Province (Pakistan), first half of 20th century; cotton embroidered with silk, metal-wrapped thread, beaded tassels, cord; main stitches: detached interlacing, chain, satin, edging, joining; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.

17. *Woman's Dress*, Balochistan Province (Pakistan), first half of 20th century; silk and cotton cloth, embroidered with silk, mirrors, metal-wrapped thread; main stitches: square chain, detached interlacing, herringbone, surface satin, surface darning, couching, cross, roman, knot, running, buttonhole, edging, Indian mirror; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.

18. *Small Bag*, Balochistan Province (Pakistan), first half of 20th century; cotton embroidered with silk; lined with polyester print knit, tassels; main stitches: brick, couching, chain, edging, insertion; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.

19. *Small Bag*, Balochistan Province (Pakistan), first half of 20th century; cotton embroidered with silk; braided cord and tassels and cowrie shells; main stitches: detached interlacing, surface satin, surface darning, herringbone, couching, edging, insertion; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.

20. *Small Bag*, Balochistan Province (Pakistan), first half of 20th century; cotton embroidered with silk, tassels; main stitches: detached interlacing, surface darning, herringbone ladder, cross, couching, edging, insertion; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.

21. *Small Bag*, Balochistan Province (Pakistan), first half of the 20th century; cotton embroidered with silk, tassels, cord and beads; main stitches: chain, double-chain, two needle chain, couching, satin, edging, insertion; on loan from an anonymous collector.

22. *Small Bag*, Balochistan Province (Pakistan), first half of the 20th century; cotton embroidered with silk, beaded tassels, braided cord; main stitches: cross, edging, joining; on loan from an anonymous collector

PUNJAB PROVINCE, PAKISTAN

23 a-c. *Three Bowls with Lids*, Punjab Province (Pakistan) or Punjab State (India), 20th century; painted wood; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.



24. *Cushion Cover (side A)*, Hazara, North-West Frontier Province (Pakistan), first half of 20th century; cotton embroidered with silk, mirror and cord edging; main stitches: cut-and-drawn using woven-bar, gobelin filling, encroaching upright gobelin, brick, cross, surface satin, running, double-running; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.

25. *Cushion Cover (side B)*, Hazara, North-West Frontier Province (Pakistan), first half of 20th century; cotton embroidered with silk, mirror; main stitches: gobelin filling, encroaching upright gobelin, cross, surface satin, running, double-running, Indian mirror, edging; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.

26. *Silver Neck Ring*, Swat valley, North-West Frontier Province (Pakistan), 20th century; silver; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.

27. *Silver Neck Ring*, Swat valley, North-West Frontier Province (Pakistan), 20th century; silver; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.

28. *Silver Neck Ring*, Swat valley, North-West Frontier Province (Pakistan), 20th century; silver; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.

29. *Woman's Shawl*, Hazara, North-West Frontier Province (Pakistan), first half of 20th century; hand-woven cotton embroidered with silk; main stitches: surface satin, encroaching satin, surface darning, split, insertion, double-back; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.

30. *Woman's Shawl*, Waziristan, North-West Frontier Province (Pakistan), late 19th or early 20th century; woven cotton with silk and metal-wrapped threads; applied bands of raw silk; tassels; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.

GHAZNI AND NURISTAN PROVINCES, AFGHANISTAN

31. *Small Bag*, Ghazni Province (Afghanistan), first half of 20th century; cotton lined with printed cotton, embroidered with silk, metal-wrapped thread, metal discs, mirrors, beads, cowrie shells, cloves, beaded tassels; main stitches: detached interlacing, double-running, chain, raised chain, couching, buttonhole, Indian mirror; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.

32. *Cover*, Ghazni Province (Afghanistan), mid 20th century; silk lined with cotton and embroidered with silk; machine-made metallic braid; main stitches: chain and double chain, satin; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.

33. *Purse*, Ghazni Province (Afghanistan), second half of 20th century; materials: Cotton embroidered with silk; lining with metallic thread on flap, beads, pompoms, beaded tassels; main stitches: chain, couching, edging; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.

34. *Man's Tunic*, Nuristan Province (Afghanistan), mid 20th century; two layers of hand-woven cotton embroidered with cotton; main stitches: double-back, running, square chain; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.

INDUS KOHISTAN, NORTHWEST FRONTIER PROVINCE, PAKISTAN

35. *Child's Vest*, Indus Kohistan, North-West Frontier Province (Pakistan), first half of 20th century; cotton embroidered with silk, printed cotton lining, beads, and buttons in plastic and metal; main stitches: cross, tent, stem, running, surface satin; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.

36. *Child's Hat*, Indus Kohistan, North-West Frontier Province (Pakistan), first half of 20th century; cotton embroidered with silk, printed cotton lining, wood sticks, beads, and buttons in plastic and metal; main stitches: cross, tent, stem, running, surface satin; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.

37. *Child's Vest*, Indus Kohistan, North-West Frontier Province (Pakistan), first half of 20th century; cotton embroidered with silk, metal-wrapped thread, buttons in plastic and metal, beads, zippers; main stitches: tent, cross, surface darning, double-running, stem; on loan from the collection of Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas W. Simons, Jr.

