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Adam Smith Albion is an Institute Fellow writing about Turkey's regional role in the former Soviet bloc and the emergence of independent Central Asia. He is based in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Silk, Pomegranates and Dancing

TASHKENT, Uzbekistan **October 19, 1996**

By Adam Smith Albion

THE QUESTION OF TASTE

Yesterday's major achievement was to shock and alarm a salesgirl, not intentionally, in the State Department Store. What an ill-lit, unfriendly, uncheerful place *that* is. And what a surly lass was she, on guard at the entrance to the women's clothing department, gloomy as Cerberus. Akin to sales staff throughout the ex-USSR, she was fully occupied with the task of ignoring the customers. Statue-like on a wooden chair, she was scrutinizing the floor with wrathful intensity as I walked by and did not look up. Her section was practically deserted. I had come for the *ikat*s. They made a sorry show, carelessly hung along the aisle on plastic racks, their colors washed out in the dim light, and their sheen — that makes them flash and coruscate outdoors — flattened and vulgarized under the fluorescent lamps, as if the material were overlaid with a patina of verdigris. Nine days out of ten I would have passed them without looking twice. But since visiting Marghilan, *ikat*s — the silk and satinette dresses that comprise the standard wardrobe of the Uzbek woman — have become a minor obsession.

It has taken me seven months to wake up to *ikat*s. I have never paid much attention to women's clothes, preferring for the most part to focus on what was in them. Style, cut, materials, accessories — in short, the fine points of fashion — have always eluded me. This is not an eremite's indictment of worldly things, much less a sermon against female vanity. It is probably a reflection of an English upbringing, in a country not exactly known for sartorial daring. The fastidious ladies of Mayfair and Belgrave Square match their palettes to the dour London skies and the grey shades of abbey cloisters. Only in England is it actually considered *elegant* to paint one's self in grisaille. Strange to say, but I was educated to believe that chromatic deprivation was emblematic of refinement; and that the psittacine creations sported on the Continent by *au fait* mademoiselles, signorinas and the occasional fraulein were, well, rather gauche.

By these lights, the majority of Central Asian women dress in shockingly bad taste. Color combinations that would leave the fashion editors of *Vogue* gasping and sputtering are quietly admired here by both sexes. The Uzbek *ikat* is as flamboyant as any traditional costume I have ever encountered. There is nothing remarkable about its cut, a plain shift, usually short-sleeved and extending to the ankles. The magic is in its bold patterning. As many as ten dyes might be applied to a single piece of cloth, the dominant hues being reds and cadmium yellow. The colors run together, yielding symmetrical, abstract designs *via* a technique reminiscent of tie-dye. Such fabric is known to textile specialists as *abr*, Persian for "cloud," since the designs are blurred, dreamy, literally nebulous. One legend attributes the invention of *abr* to a master dyer inspired by the reflection of clouds in a lake.

The English translation for *abr* is *ikat*, apparently a Malaysian loan-word. (So I have been informed by local connoisseurs, whose advice I am following, although I cannot find *ikat* in my Webster's.) Russian speakers refer to *abr/ikat* as *khon-atlas*, "royal satin" (wrongly, since properly this is the Arabic/Uzbek designation for best-quality silk whether or not it has an *abr* design). The etymology is explained in a competing legend about the fabric's origin. A khan in his declining years took a fancy to a poor man's daughter and demanded she report to the palace for the *leveé* (or, more likely, the *coucheé*). Instead, the father himself requested an audi-

ence with the khan to plead for his daughter's honor. The potentate agreed to forgo his *droit de seigneur* in exchange for something even more desirable. And the inventive pauper came up with the pure-silk *khon-atlas*. The khan was delighted with it — so much so, in fact, that he instantly decreed that no one of humble birth could wear it. So the poor man was cheated of his own discovery, in a way; but at least he redeemed his daughter. The legend reflects the status of *khon-atlas* as the luxury garment of the oases in the nineteenth century. When embroidered with gold thread and draped in velvet, it was virtually the Central Asian equivalent of the royal purple, the caste symbol of the highest grade dignitaries in the Bukharan Emirate and elsewhere. Today, however, *ikat*s are donned by only women.

Like any traveler from the dismal North, I was taken at once by Central Asia's "local color," of which *ikat*s are an indispensable component. They are the eye-catching highlights in any tableau of Uzbek life. Splashy and brash as Fauvist paintings — it is no coincidence that Gaugin, perhaps the first Fauvist, drew his inspiration from southern climes — they make any scene lively. Conversations with my neighbors supervising their children in the park would be duller without *ikat*s. The busses and trams, often crammed with color, would be no more than means of transport. The markets — which always remind me of tropical aviaries — would be less kaleidoscopic. I have endlessly photographed old women, gorgeously done up, squatting on the streets over their bags of sunflower seeds. I have risen before dawn to catch this summer's young brides, dressed as if for a ball, sweeping the front porches of their new homes as ostentatiously as possible to demonstrate to the *mahalla* that they were responsible and hard-working. I am certain the sensuous colors would top many a Western visitor's list of Uzbekistan's most exotic features. Undoubtedly street life would seem depauperate and jejune if Uzbek women put away their *ikat*s and began wearing tweed, not to mention chadors in this nominally Islamic country.

But I never considered *ikat*s beautiful in their own right. They were beautiful *in context*. They ornamented the society in which I was living; but as much as I tried to appreciate the aesthetic values of that society, I did not pretend that I had assimilated those values myself. I felt like an unimplicated anthropologist, observing local custom from the outside and perhaps collecting a few specimens for his museum back home. If forced to admit this, I might have said, "Yes, I accept other people's critical judgement that *ikat*s are beautiful, but in my heart I know that they are not to my taste. Certainly they might look fetching on the natives — so, for that matter, do three-foot-long phallocrypts worn by New Guinean tribesmen — but I would not care to see a member of my own family in one."

There is the crux: we may *admire* Gaugin, but we do not *wear* him. Thus we are all imprisoned in the fads of our times. It is worth recalling that until quite recently — approximately the accession of Queen Victoria — Europeans did not consider striking, gay apparel incompatible with good taste or dignity in either sex. Kierkegaard wore canary-colored breeches and the Duke of Wellington wore amaranth jackets with gold buttons. Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther* sparked a fad for yellow waistcoats. But nowadays we are all toned down — especially men, of course. Even a brown suit is considered racy in the City of London after 6 p.m.; strictly speaking, the district's dress code requires blue or black for evening wear. I never imagined the day would come when I would pore over an *ikat*, its gaudy colors clashing like cymbals, and truly enjoy the artistic subtlety of its designs.

Then one day I was eating *plov* at a sidewalk restaurant opposite a woman and her fifteen-year-old daughter. They wore *ikat*s, cut from a single piece of cloth — burgundy, gold, green, blue... The girl's hair was braided and woven with ribbons. Her cheeks were rouged and she was smeared with scarlet lipstick, as if she had been surreptitiously playing with her mother's cosmetics box. Her eyebrows were painted thick and dark, matching her mother's, and connected into a single line with a mascara pencil. She was just about of marriageable age. Her face seemed eager and fresh, she was young and bright, energetic, kinetic, like the brilliant colors of her *ikat*... I nearly gagged with surprise when it struck me that I found her altogether beautiful. I was seeing with new eyes my environment, not to mention underage Uzbek girls. She and her mother rose to go. I was left in a whirl, thinking the strangest things, some of which are probably jailable in the United States. I felt as if a curtain had lifted; as if I had come a small step closer to understanding Uzbekistan. My true appreciation of *ikat*s dates from that day.

SILK PRODUCTION, FROM SOUP TO NUTS

A single factory in the whole of Central Asia still produces hand-made silk *ikat*s. This is the "Yodgorlik" Collective Enterprise (*Jamoa Korxonasi*) in Marghilan. It is an undistinguished city of 150,000 in the Ferghana valley, Uzbekistan's most traditional area. The Thursday market on the edge of town is now a shadow of its old self. It used to be famous in equal measure as the bazaar Time forgot, and as Uzbekistan's major hub of black-market trading during perestroika. Now most of the town's commercial activity, legal or otherwise, seems to take place in sight of the central mosque. At least five stallholders informed me proudly that this mosque, restored last year, was originally founded by Alexander the Great. So much for their level of knowledge about Islam, even though the Ferghana valley is often supposed to be the seedbed of some kind of fundamentalist upsurge in Central Asia.

I approached the factory gates with a letter of introduction from the Director of the Museum of the History of Uzbekistan, and I was accompanied by the museum's Senior Researcher, Irina Bogoslovskaya. I wish to express my gratitude to them, and to the factory's Artistic Director, Davlatjon Imariliev, who walked me

around four acres of workshops with indefatigable enthusiasm. He not only explained *ikat* production in meticulous detail but also permitted me generous access to the enterprise's financial records. My days in Marghilan were some of the most interesting of my whole fellowship.

Sericulture, the art of raising silkworms, is said to have originated with a Chinese empress in 2640 B.C., but was little known outside China until Justinian founded the Byzantine silk industry in the 6th century A.D. Western Europe only began producing its own silk in the 12th century. Nevertheless, silk masters in Marghilan claim their forbears were practicing sericulture in the Ferghana valley two thousand years ago, and that the tradition has extended unbroken to this day. They may be right: Marghilan first appeared on the map in the second century B.C. along one branch of the silk route. Cotton may be the country's flagship industry, but historically speaking sericulture is much more deeply rooted in Uzbekistan.[1]

Admittedly, cotton makes a more attractive adornment to the state seal than the silkworm, an extremely unprepossessing insect whose voracious appetite for mulberry leaves is well known. The minuscule grubs begin eating in April and within four weeks have become caterpillars six or seven centimeters long. Then they begin the transformation to inert pupa, spinning oval cocoons around themselves made of a single, glutinous fiber held together by gum secreted from their heads. This process takes about a week. The imago, if Nature is permitted to take its course, is a whitish-grey moth.

The factory does not practice sericulture itself. The arduous business of keeping the silkworms fed and nursing them to the chrysalis stage is nowadays in private hands. It has become a widespread cottage industry in the villages around Marghilan. The factory purchases their cocoons and sets about unwinding them, after first neutralizing the pupae inside. These are the first two of twenty-two distinct operations involved in transforming a sack of cocoons looking like white, gauzy peanuts into a brilliantly-colored *ikat*.

Three separate workshops are devoted to unreeling the cocoons. All the workshops have names. In *Charx* (Spinning Wheel) the art of unwinding by hand is preserved. First the cocoons are boiled in small vats the size of cooking pots to suffocate the larvae and soften the gum. The ends of the filaments are teased out, much thinner than the elements of a spider's web, and hooked onto wooden wheels that are turned with handles. These are the size of large cartwheels, with spokes; using one, a worker can unwind 3-5 kilograms of cocoons a day. One cocoon yields an astonishing 2,500 meters of thread — double that, if the cocoon is of especially good quality. The thread will be one continuous piece unless the cocoon is damaged. Thirty to thirty-five of these tiny filaments will later be braided together to make a single strand of usable yarn. Precisely 4,356 strands are required for a piece of cloth 65 centimeters wide.

Devcharx (Giant Spinning Wheel) houses three much larger wheels, three meters in diameter, that look as if they came off a paddleboat. These too are operated manually. The work is quicker but obviously less delicate because of the wheels' dimensions, so the silk is more likely to get twisted. Interestingly, they were the gifts of well-known Marghilan residents and philanthropists, Obidjon-aka and Bokdjon-aka, who donated them to the factory in the early 1980's expressly to encourage the tradition of manual unreeling. Both pious Muslims, they donated the wheels in accordance with one of the Five Pillars of Islam that mandates almsgiving to the value of one fortieth of one's possessions.

Seventy percent of the factory's 500 employees are women. The highlight of the tour was meeting the dozen or so toiling in the "Cocoon-unwinding" workshop. The large hall painted grey and green reminded me of a ship's engine-room. It was filled with steam from the cocoon vats, sucked up by thick pipes suspended from the ceiling. The floor was dotted with puddles. The women sat in a long row along one wall

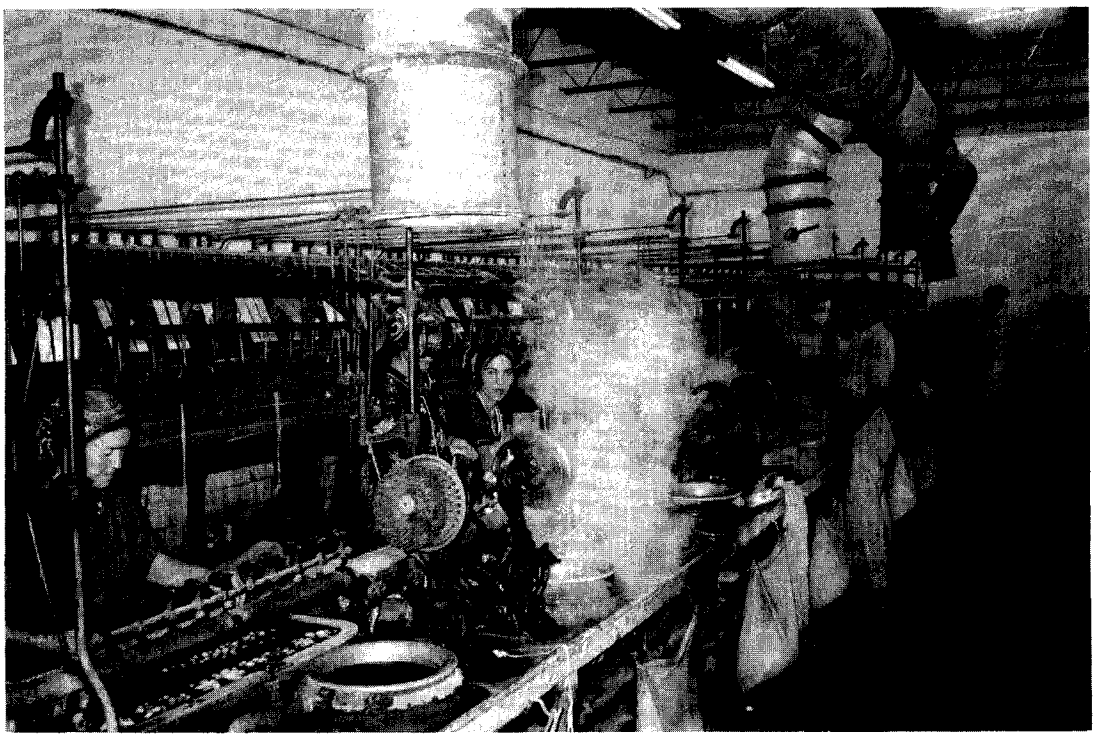
1. Intensive cotton cultivation began in Central Asia after the American Civil War. The shortfall in imports from blockaded Southern plantations encouraged the Tsar to develop a cotton source closer to home.

between two banks of machinery. They were supervising trays of cocoons bobbing in water. The filaments ran out of the trays onto spindles, then doubled back over the women's heads to where they fed into the maw of some giant unwieldly apparatus resembling a 1960's computer. The room resounded with the hum of the machinery. As if to demonstrate that they were unvanquished by their bleak surroundings, the women themselves were wearing the most colorful garments imaginable, bright pink and orange dresses and headscarfs.

They were a merry lot. They laughed and gossiped as they worked, and begged to be photographed. They talked to me about their *mahallas*, their children, even their economic troubles with unfailing good humor. In 1994 with their monthly salaries they could buy ten 50-kilogram sacks of flour; today they earn 1,500 *sum* (U.S.$18.75), the equivalent of one-and-a-half sacks of flour. I was preparing to say good-bye to them when something surprising occurred. They all stood up in a body and turned off the machines. Ducking under the canopy of silken threads above their heads, they filed out onto the factory floor and someone switched on a radio. And to my amazement and delight, they invited me to dance. I do not suppose I shall ever forget that afternoon. If ever asked what Central Asia means to me, I shall think of that improvised party on a wet factory floor. Kumush Saraton was singing. The women moved around me with that slow dignity and equipoise, arms extended at right angles to the body, that characterize Uzbek dancing. We danced for about ten minutes. Then that same someone switched off the radio, we all bowed to one another with hands on hearts, they returned to their seats and soon the workshop was filled again with the humming of machines.

The silk is prepared for dyeing in *Abr-Bandov* (*Ikat*-Knot). This proved to be a shabby room with an official photograph of President Karimov on the wall. Its floor was spread with moth-eaten coverlets on which the workers (all men) sat cross-legged. By this stage the silk had been bunched into ropes looking like narrow horsetails, called *lebits*. Twenty-five *lebits*, each about six feet long, were stretched on a frame resembling a camp bed, at which two men worked. Along the length of each horsetail they wrapped five or six short pieces of black tape, tying them tightly with string. When dipped in a dyebath, these portions of the *lebit* would be reserved, that is to say, unaffected by the dye. Then the *lebits* would be reassembled on the frame, the plastic shields removed and tied elsewhere for the next round of dyeing. The technique is called resist dyeing. The name "*Ikat*-Knot" refers to the black bundles knotted onto the horsetails. Seven separate immersions in dye is the average; ten is the maximum. The staining process works from the warm colors (red, orange, yellow) to the cold end of the spectrum (green, blue). Each time the colors seep marginally into one another, creating the cloud effect. The element of randomness in the blurring makes every *ikat* unique.

Dyeshops are always cramped, steamy, smelly, fascinating places and the neighboring workshop was no exception. Dyemasters are a specific type the world over, like blacksmiths — husky, taciturn, with walnut-cracker hands. I watched them for a while pushing *lebits* around in a sort of magenta ink. I plunged a begloved hand myself into the vat and pulled out a repulsive tangle of what appeared to be limp, sodden



The factory floor where the author danced

Tying the lebits *(horses' tails) for resist-dying*

watersnakes. It seemed unlikely that these would become an iridescent, luxuriously textured bolt of fabric.

When completed and dried, the *lebits* are opened up, wrapped into balls and set on iron rods, becoming giant multicolored cocoons. These cocoons hang from the ceiling in the weaving workshops, where there are ninety wooden looms *in toto*. The silk unwinds from them as the *ikat* is woven. The threads run downward at an angle for about 15 feet, fanning out as they go, into the looms' crosspieces. Thus, as one looks down the room along the rows of looms, the view is obscured by long, flat tongues of material criss-crossing one another in the air.

These silken threads become the warp of the *ikat*. Its pattern is already discernible as the diffuse, separate threads come off the giant cocoons, becoming ever more solid as they approach the loom. The wet threads are either yellow or red; being colored themselves, they subtlely complement and deepen the tones of the warp. A roll of material is 240 meters long. A worker (all are women) weaves 3-5 meters a day. I watched a fourteen-year-old girl in the eighth class, employed during the summer holidays, performing the accustomed operations with a bored look. The loom clacked on and on, in an unending systole-diastole. She manipulated its eight foot-pedals as if she were playing an organ but without a hint of pleasure or interest. Indeed, I could not imagine a more tediously mechanical kind of work than weaving, surely the ancient equivalent of Fordism.

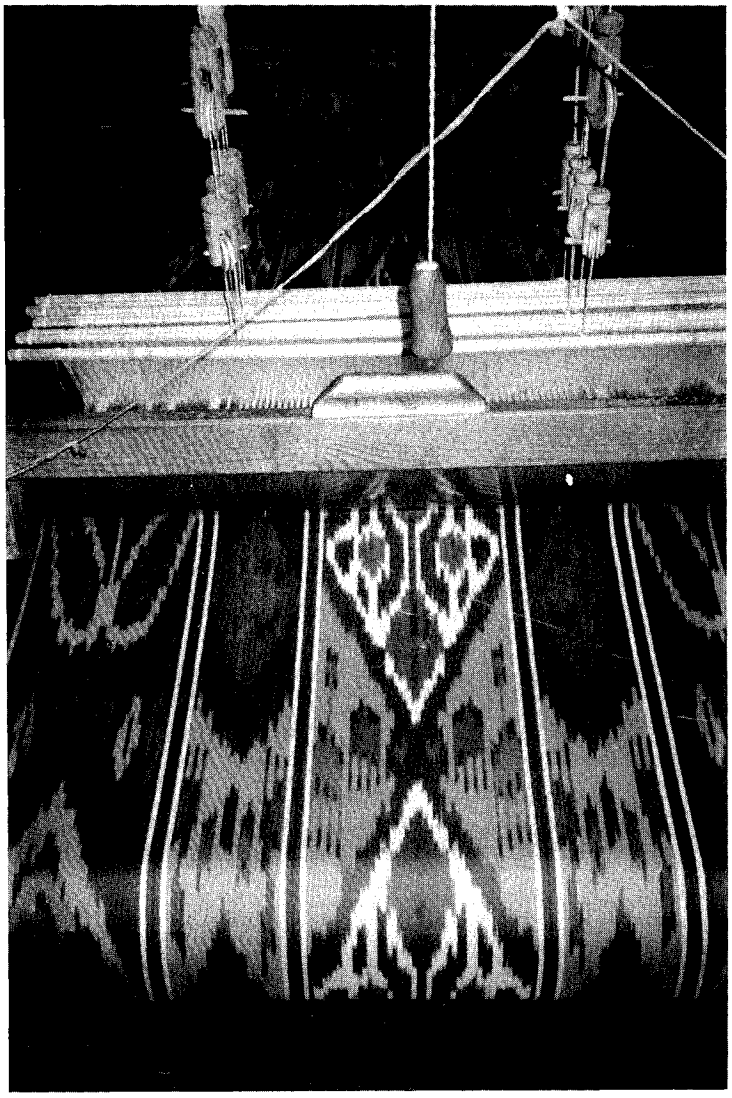
On one loom I saw an unusual fabric — striped turquoise, white and pink, that used black cotton for its weft. The colors were solid and unblurred, and the loom had only four foot-pedals. This is a traditional design called *bekasab* or *bekasam*. However, when interwoven with gold thread it becomes "Presidential *bekasab*," since it is made expressly and exclusively for President Karimov. His office orders from the factory 1,200 pieces a year, each 7.5 meters long, to make into robes (*halats* and chapans) that are distributed as gifts. Incidentally, because cotton is easier to dye and weave, the material is cheaper than silk *ikat*, the gold thread notwithstanding.

The factory sells its silk either as clothing or as material. (In separate workshops one hundred women cut up the fabric and sew it into dresses, also by hand.) The total cost to the factory to produce one meter of *ikat* is 200 *sum* (U.S.$2.50). The minimum price to the consumer is 260 *sum* (U.S.$3.25). My feeling, after having witnessed the amount of labor involved, is that this is dirt cheap.

Private enterprise

The factory became a private concern in 1994. It is the latest in a series of metamorphoses of the Marghilan silk industry that began during collectivization. In the 1930's the Soviets rounded up local masters into *arteli* or collective associations, one of which became the basis for the factory. All silk workers were male until the war, when women were employed to make up for the male shortfall. The *arteli* were disbanded in 1954 and the *Gorpromkomibat* (Municipal Industrial Group of Enterprises) was formed. This became the Artistic Garment Factory (1961 -1984), then one section of it was split off as the Souvenir-Artistic Factory (1984-1994). In 1994 it changed its name to the "Yodgorlik" [*i.e.* "souvenir" or "memorial"] Collective Enterprise.

On 31 December 1993 the factory was given permis-



Silks coming off the loom

sion, or rather an order, to privatize. The process was not typical for Uzbekistan since, unlike most government enterprises with endless liabilities and no assets, the factory actually turned a healthy profit in 1993. Its net balance at the end of the year was $90,000 (using the exchange rate at the time, 11 sum = U.S.$1). The directors of the factory divided this sum into thirds, as follows. The price to purchase the enterprise from the state was $30,000. They distributed a second $30,000 in the forms of bonuses to the workers. Since at the time there were 1,500 employees, each received around $20. The remaining money was used to buy 70 embroidery machines from Byelorussia at $400 a piece. These transactions left $2,000 in the coffers.

The factory was never divided up into shares, since the profits from 1993 sufficed to cover the costs of privatization. It was explained to me that today a steering committee of benign directors administers the factory in the workers' best interests. This is the Uzbek model of privatization. However, in enterprises where the employees *have* been made shareholders nobody but the bosses seems to have benefited. (Most of Uzbekistan's paper "privatizations" have been nugatory and worthless anyway, and incidentally the World Bank and the IMF are not fooled.) I talked to some potters at the nearby Rishton Ceramics Plant, also recently privatized. For a start, they informed me that the government still submits an annual production plan which the factory is obliged to fulfill! They then became shareholders, when an administrator went around the workshops collecting from everyone the equivalent of $22. This was to pay for their share vouchers, they were told. "So did you receive vouchers?" I asked. "No. He just took the money and disappeared." "Have you been paid any dividends?" "No." "Do you have any say in the running of the factory?" "Of course not!" Needless to say, financial reports or the shareholders' Annual General Meeting remain foreign concepts in Uzbekistan.

The "Yodgorlik" Collective Enterprise has been continuously in the red during the three years since privatization. It had become hopelessly overstaffed under the communists. The directorate's first action was to fire almost 1,000 of the factory's 1,500 workers, including unnecessary plumbers, builders, electricians, cleaning ladies, and forty-five of the eighty administrators and "foremen." Their ruthlessness at least gave the factory a chance of surviving. Its overheads are high by local standards, including 35,000 sum per month for water and 25,000 sum per month for six telephone lines and one fax. It also pays 7 sum per kilowatt (this is monstrous: in my apartment I pay 1.25 sum per kilowatt). Furthermore, the price of silk has risen since the government stopped directly subsidizing sericulture and the factory began buying cocoons from private farms. Nevertheless, "Yodgorlik" is likely to break even towards the beginning of 1997, in part thanks to a 10 percent reduction in various taxes due the state.

After the fall of the communists in 1991, when it became possible to work independently, many silk masters left the factory, reckoning that they could operate more successfully from home. Those who appreciate silk know where to find them. Despite these financially thirsty times, there is still a market for a luxury product like hand-made silk, especially in the traditionally-minded Ferghana valley, where a bride's dowry should include at least ten silk *ikat*s. In my opinion, the most beautiful *ikat*s were those of Turgunbuy Mirzaahmedov at 316 Marghilan Street. He lived in a tradition-plan house set around a courtyard. His rich garden was overflowing with tomatoes, gourds and *lebits* draped over wooden fences to dry in the sun. A bathtub stained with purple dye reposed incongruously beneath the pome-

granate trees. His loom was beside his bedroom.

His fabrics are cheaper because his costs are less, starting with the silk itself. He buys his silk, already unwound, from the village of Yangi Marghilan for 1,200 *sum* per kilogram. The factory is mysteriously required by the government (despite being privatized!) to pay for cocoons not by cash but by bank transfers; consequently they are more expensive. Moreover, the factory is obliged to buy damaged as well as high-quality cocoons. Overall, by the time my dancing partners have unreeled the cocoons in their workshop, the cost of silk to the factory is 2,000 *sum* per kilogram.

I pointed out to Turgunbuy-aka the pieces I wanted, including a small roll of Green Crow, an emerald and black design that is one of his specialties. He measured its length by folding the silk backwards and forwards between two nails that had been hammered into a piece of wood one meter apart, spiking the material at each turn. Then I was invited to the table. It was piled with Hossaini grapes from the village of Sarmazar, which are even sweeter than the Ladies' Fingers I described in a previous letter. But the Ferghana valley, especially Kuva, is famous for its pomegranates, and they properly formed the meal's *piéce-de-résistance*. We ate cornelian-colored Camel's Teeth. It is a type of pomegranate so-called because its seeds are squarish and all the same size, just like real camels' teeth. So I was told — I cannot personally vouch for the dentition of camels. When I returned to Tashkent I presented my landlady a trim silk scarf. She was appreciative, but her real enthusiasm was reserved for the bag of Kuvan pomegranates I carelessly tipped onto her kitchen table. She even invited the neighbors around explicitly to taste them. Pomegranates are discussed here as if they were fine wines. Anyone acquainted with Uzbek art will know Volkov's *Teahouse Colored Pomegranate* (1924) and that pomegranates vie with *ikat*s as the symbol best embodying the Uzbek spirit.

I asked Mr. Imariliev, the Artistic Director, what plans he had for the factory. Its main shortcoming, in his view, is its lack of a marketing department. None of the silk is exported; in fact, practically nothing is even sold outside the Ferghana valley. As for market research, Mr. Imariliev is the factory's pollster, questioning people in the bazaars about what they like, and observing the choices of tourists who visit the enterprise's small shop. He has concluded that *ikat*s sell best locally when their designs incorporate a lot of bordeaux, and that the red weft is preferred to the yellow. Among foreigners, Americans favored silks dyed brick red or orange, whereas Europeans tended towards cooler hues as long as there were no striking color clashes. Three years ago he tried reviving *adras*, a silk warp/cotton weft fabric popular throughout the nineteenth century until the 1930's, but it never caught on and the factory dropped it. Another idea is to begin using natural dyes again. Next spring he is planning, with UN sponsorship, to visit Indian *ikat* masters in Gujarat, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh, where the art of natural coloring has been retained.

I think Mr. Imariliev has a Luddite streak in him — a man as yet unpersuaded that the modern woman has turned her back on handmade garments, nineteenth-century fabrics and non-chemical dyes. Perhaps there is a bit of Don Quixote about him too, championing his art against a mechanized, banausic world. He seems to think there is still enough interest in handmade silk *ikat*s to save a traditional craft from sliding into oblivion. The happy end to this story is that he is probably right. The factory is creeping back into the black. Ferghana brides are purchasing his creations for their trousseau boxes. Admittedly the silk factory in Nukus turns out *ikat*s at half the price "Yodgorlik" can. But Nukus' fabrics are made by machine, and there are still enough connoisseurs of quality who can tell the difference between machine and handmade — or at least think they can. Speaking for myself, I cannot. But the knowledge of the human labor that went towards producing the silks that I bought, by itself invests them with value.

Then suddenly I felt the salesgirl's eyes on me. She had risen to her feet, but was hesitating, watching me with a mixture of palpable suspicion and open-mouthed astonishment. She had caught me red-handed in what must have appeared an act of perversion. I was stroking her *ikat*s, testing their softness against my cheek, or thrusting my hand up their skirts to feel the lining. They were made of cotton and their quality was disappointing. I moved down the row, molesting her *ikat*s as I went. Then she was beside me, barring my way. She probably thought I was working my way towards the lingerie at the end of the aisle. She glared.

"What are you doing?" she barked.

I smiled at her in a sort of weak and watery way. "Don't worry," I said, "I'm only looking. I've just been to Marghilan..." But what was the use? And what was I seeking anyway in this murky netherworld of cheap cotton *ikat*s, when I had ascended the very heights of color and texture in Marghilan? I turned on my heel and fled, conscious of Cerberus' dagger-like gaze at my back. ❑

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4 WEST WHEELOCK STREET
HANOVER, NEW HAMPSHIRE 03755

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Institute Fellows and their Activities

Adam Smith Albion. A former research associate at the Institute for EastWest Studies at Prague in the Czech Republic, Adam is spending two years studying and writing about Turkey and Central Asia, and their importance as actors the Middle East and the former Soviet bloc. A Harvard graduate (1988; History), Adam has completed the first year of a two-year M. Litt. degree in Russian/East European history and languages at Oxford University. [EUROPE/RUSSIA]

Christopher P. Ball. An economist, Chris Ball holds a B.A. from the University of Alabama in Huntsville and attended the 1992 International Summer School at the London School of Economics. He studied Hungarian for two years in Budapest while serving as Project Director for the Hungarian Atlantic Council. As an Institute Fellow, he is studying and writing about Hungarian minorities in the former Soviet-bloc nations of East and Central Europe. [EUROPE/RUSSIA]

William F. Foote. Formerly a financial analyst with Lehman Brothers' Emerging Markets Group, Willy Foote is examining the economic substructure of Mexico and the impact of free-market reforms on Mexico's people, society and politics. Willy holds a Bachelor's degree from Yale University (history), a Master's from the London School of Economics (Development Economics; Latin America) and studied Basque history in San Sebastian, Spain. He carried out intensive Spanish-language studies in Guatemala in 1990 and then worked as a copy editor and Reporter for the *Buenos Aires Herald* from 1990 to 1992. [THE AMERICAS]

Sharon Griffin. A feature writer and contributing columnist on African affairs at the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, Sharon is spending two years in southern Africa studying Zulu and the KwaZulu kingdom and writing about the role of nongovernmental organizations as fulfillment centers for national needs in developing countries where governments are still feeling their way toward effective administration. [sub-SAHARA]

John Harris. A would-be lawyer with an undergraduate degree in History from the University of Chicago, John reverted to international studies after a year of internship in the product-liability department of a Chicago law firm and took two years of post-graduate Russian at the University of Washington in Seattle. Based in Moscow during his fellowship, John is studying and writing about Russia's nascent political parties as they begin the difficult transition from identities based on the personalities of their leaders to positions based on national and international issues. [EUROPE/RUSSIA]

Pramila Jayapal. Born in India, Pramila left when she was four and went through primary and secondary education in Indonesia. She graduated from Georgetown University in 1986 and won an M.B.A. from the Kellogg School of Management in Evanston, Illinois in 1990. She has worked as a corporate analyst for PaineWebber and an accounts manager for the world's leading producer of cardiac defibrillators, but most recently managed a $7 million developing-country revolving-loan fund for the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH) in Seattle. Pramila is spending two years in India tracing her roots and studying social issues involving religion, the status of women, population and AIDS. [SOUTH ASIA]

John B. Robinson. A 1991 Harvard graduate with a certificate of proficiency from the Institute of KiSwahili in Zanzibar and a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from Brown University, he and his wife Delphine, a French oceanographer, are spending two years in Madagascar with their two young sons, Nicolas and Rowland. He will be writing about varied aspects of the island-nation's struggle to survive industrial and natural-resource exploitation and the effects of a rapidly swelling population. [sub-SAHARA]

Teresa C. Yates A former member of the American Civil Liberties Union's national task force on the workplace, Teresa is spending two years in South Africa observing and reporting on the efforts of the Mandela government to reform the national land-tenure system. A Vassar graduate with a *juris doctor* from the University of Cincinnati College of Law, Teresa had an internship at the Centre for Applied Legal Studies in Johannesburg in 1991 and 1992, studying the feasibility of including social and economic rights in the new South African constitution. [sub-SAHARA]

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Executive Director: Peter Bird Martin
Program Administrator: Gary L. Hansen
Publications Manager: Ellen Kozak

Phone: (603) 643-5548
Fax: (603) 643-9599
E-Mail: ICWA@valley.net