



Volume 24, Number 4 - Winter 2017

# Queen Amina Embroidery: A Hausa Women’s Hand-Embroidery Project

Elisha P. Renne

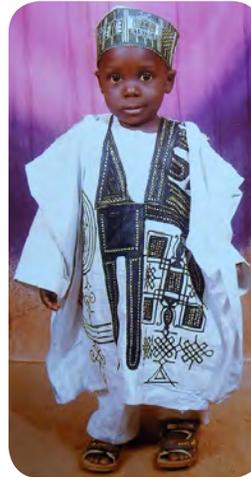
In 1994, a group of women in Zaria City in northern Nigeria, formed Queen Amina Embroidery. Named in honor of the 16th century ruler of the Zazzau Emirate, Queen Amina, the group began marketing hand-embroidered work—bags, placemats, pillows, and wall-hangings. In the past, hand-embroidery in Zaria City consisted mainly of men’s robes embroidered by men which



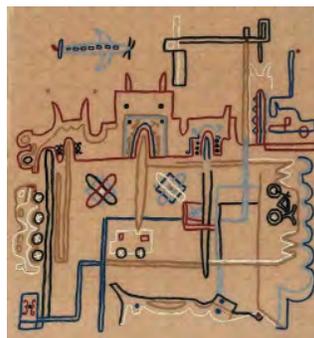
Hassana Yusuf, left, has worked as the manager for the group since its inception.

reflected a distinctly gendered division of labor—men wove narrow cotton strips used for robes and also dyed, embroidered, tailored, and finished them, while the cotton used for weaving cloth strips and for embroidering robes was carded and spun by women. However, during the 1970s, the “oil boom years” when the demand for both machine-embroidered and hand-embroidered *babban riga* (the flowing wide-sleeved robes typical of the area) grew, a few women began to embroider *babban riga*.

Thus, Queen Amina Embroidery had a fortuitous beginning as many excellent women hand-embroiderers were producing *babban riga* robes at the time the group began in Zaria City. For women, hand-embroidery (*dinkin hannu*) has been an important source of income and is more accessible because it does not require a large outlay of cash. Initially, fifteen women were identified for their hand-embroidery expertise. Embroiderers were given embroidery materials to produce specified items in two particular Hausa embroidery styles. The first style utilizes embroidery designs and stitches used in *babban riga* robes (including chain stitch, button hole stitch, and rosette button-hole stitch) made into table linens,



An embroidered *babban riga*



Raised pattern design on the Zaria Post Office building

## Creating A Connected Textile Community

### MISSION

To foster a global network of enthusiasts who value the importance of textiles to grassroots economies

### PURPOSE

Exchange information

Raise awareness of the importance of textile traditions to grassroots economies

Mobilize textile enthusiasts

Create conversations that result in action

### CORE VALUES

Textiles are an important component of the human experience.

Networking and sharing information creates an environment for constructive action.

Making connections between textile artisans world wide promotes positive social change.

Interacting with people who have similar values enriches our lives.

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# "Imagine" and "Travel" with Your Favorite Doll to the Mayan World of Guatemala

Lynn Persson

For Mayan women from the highlands of Guatemala, the traje (traditional dress) is a statement of her cultural and personal identity. Through her weavings she has an important role in both clothing her family and keeping the threads of the Mayan culture and cosmos together. Each Mayan village used to have its own style of weaving and dress, and while not consistently true now, you can often tell which village a woman is from the style of her traje. Traditionally a woman weaves her own huipil (blouse) on a backstrap loom. Making a fine huipil often takes three (or more) months.

I first learned about these traditions and met Mayan weaving families in 1995, while vacationing in Guatemala. The weavers' skills and huipiles were incredible, but they were having trouble paying for their children's supplies for the school year that starts in January. I wanted to help.

I was a scout leader and had been amazed by the number of 18" historical dolls the girls had and how much their families spent on doll clothes. I wondered if there might be a market for fine handwoven ethnic doll clothes that would allow me to provide a fair wage to Guatemalan weavers and give children in North America a chance to experience and support the living Mayan culture.



Juana and granddaughter from Patzun

In 1999 Terra Experience (TE), started with three families producing miniature doll huipiles that fit 18" dolls such as American Girl Doll®. Now TE has doll clothes made by backstrap weavers from 15 villages.

The Patzun huipil is usually a shade of red and is handwoven on a back-strap loom often with small vertical stripes. The

daily use huipil has colorful flowers hand-embroidered around the neck. The ceremo-



Maria from Santiago Atitlan

nial huipil has a Mayan Calendar design. Juana and extended family weave TE's doll huipiles and live in a small farmstead. At last



Josefa from San Juan la Laguna

count Juana had over 54 grandchildren and great grandchildren. Juana's granddaughter (pictured in 2004) is now studying nursing and at least two others are in the university.

Santiago Atitlan's huipil is known for the intricate birds and flowers hand embroidered on back-strap loomed white, blue, *continued on page 4*



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The deadline for  
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Spring issue of the WARP  
newsletter is  
February 2, 2018

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the newsletter to:  
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edited or shortened at the  
discretion of the editor.



# WARP 2018 Annual Meeting, Decorah, IA, June 8 – 10, 2018!

Plans are coming together for our annual gathering, this year to be held in Decorah IA, home of Vesterheim, The Norwegian-American National Museum. We will have field trips, receptions, and our welcome circle, as well as speakers and the annual meeting itself. We will stay on the campus at Luther College, in contemporary dorms, our vendor Marketplace will be set up at Luther, and our annual meeting will be held there. Meals will be provided by Luther College catering.

Our schedule is planned to be a little different than in the past: we arrive Thursday afternoon in time for dinner, with the welcome circle following in the evening.

Friday morning we will have several speakers. Our roster of speakers for the meeting includes Mary Anne Wise of Cultural Cloth, and Diane Nesselhuf of Sharing The Dream Foundation.

After lunch Friday we will tour the Seed Savers Exchange, an organization that endeavors to conserve heirloom and culturally diverse seeds for future generations.

Saturday morning brings more speaker sessions plus talks by our 2018 Alice Brown Scholarship recipients. Saturday afternoon brings a reception at Vesterheim with demonstrations of traditional Norwegian crafts by local guild members and a chance to get a close-up look behind the scenes in the collections storage room at the historic textiles and costumes brought to the US by Norwegian immigrants.

Saturday evening is our live auction/silent auction fundraising Gala and re-

ception, and Sunday morning we will gather for our annual meeting.

There will be optional tours of local sights and shops. After the meeting, Cultural Cloth will offer an 'open studio' tour of shops, galleries, and fiber ranches in a nearby region along the Mississippi River.

<http://www.luther.edu/>  
<http://vesterheim.org/>  
<http://seedsavers.org/>



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## Weave A Real Peace Membership Information [www.weavearealpeace.org](http://www.weavearealpeace.org)

### 2018 Annual Dues

- \$50 - Individual in US/Canada
- \$90 - 2 year special - Individual US/Canada
- \$40 - International Individual Simple living - Choose an amount you can live with
- \$50 - Guilds/Organization
- \$30 - Sister/Gift Subscriptions
- \$75 - Business
- \$75 - Supporting Individual
- \$100 - Friend of WARP
- \$150+ - Patron of WARP

All memberships are for 12 months, and expire 12 months from date of joining.

Members have access to annual Membership Directory through a secure 'members-only' section of the web site, a quarterly newsletter, and can participate in the WARP Google Discussion Group.

Dues are used for printing, mailing, and office expenses. Weave A Real Peace (WARP) is designated a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization by the Internal Revenue Service.

All donations to WARP are tax deductible in the United States.

For membership or additional information, please send you name, address, telephone number, and email address with appropriate check, money order, or Paypal information in US funds payable to WARP to:

Weave a Real Peace  
c/o 6182 Pollard Avenue  
East Lansing, MI 48823

or join online at  
<http://www.weavearealpeace.org>

Shop Fair Trade this holiday season!  
Visit [www.fairtradefederation.org](http://www.fairtradefederation.org) to find shops in your area, as well as online resources.



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# From the WARP Office

Rita Chapman

Most of you are seeing your membership renewal letters arrive in your email, and I'm grateful for everyone who has renewed already. Thank you for your continued support of Weave a Real Peace, and the work we do! Your membership dollars are the chief source of income, helping to pay for our electronic outreach, our wonderful newsletter, and various administrative costs. It helps tremendously when you renew on time. If you can, consider upgrading your membership to the next level, and purchase gift memberships for friends who have shown interest! Let me know if I can help in any way.

One important budget item is our scholarship fund, originally sponsored by a gift from Alice Brown. The scholarship committee will begin work soon to find new recipients for our 2018 meeting in Decorah, IA! In 2017, WARP was able to



sponsor three terrific young women for the meeting. In fact, there were over a dozen young WARP members at the meeting this year, several of whom received some financial help to join us in Oaxaca, Mexico. With your support, we hope to repeat these outcomes again and again!

I want to take this opportunity to offer a hearty Thank You to Leesa Duby! Leesa took on the very large task of mailing our newsletters every quarter. (We now have a printer who provides this service directly from their shop, thereby saving that extra week between printing and mailing.)

Before you receive this newsletter, you'll have seen a notice that WARP is providing an updated annual directory of our members. We know how important this directory is, and I hope you take full advantage by contacting other members! You'll see members' geographic regions of interest, textile interests, and more!

Contact Rita Chapman at [info@weavearealpeace.org](mailto:info@weavearealpeace.org) for any questions.



## Mayan Dolls in Traje

*continued from page 2*

or lavender cloth. Maria's mom weaves and Maria embroiders and finishes TE's doll clothes following these traditions. Their village lies on beautiful Lake Atitlan and its inhabitants are proud Tz'utujil speaking Mayans, many of whom (including some men) wear their traditional "traje".

In San Juan La Laguna, one of my favorite villages, older women still wear the traditional backstrap woven red huipil with embroidered neck. Located on Lake Atitlan, San Juan is the home of painters, fisherman, coffee growers and, depending on the year, 25 to 30 women's weaving groups. Many groups have revived the natural dyeing of cotton and use their backstrap looms to weave beautiful scarves and textiles for export. The younger women have less time for weaving their own huipiles and wear styled "blusas" of commercial cloth for daily use. Josefa and her family make TE's doll hammocks and traditional doll huipiles.

Because it's hard to earn a living from the painstaking fine art of backstrap weaving, the weavers and I refined the doll huipil designs and weaving process to take less time, while retaining their traditions and inherent beauty. Following fair trade practices, I place an order one year, pay half down, and pick it up the following January paying in full. Neither I nor the weavers can sustain our families off the sale of 18" doll clothes. But the regular flow of cash in January, when school starts, has helped the weavers keep their kids in school. It has been a fun and educational experience for me, the weavers, and those who experience the Mayan culture through their work. All the weaving families would love to weave more doll clothes.

*Lynn retired in 2007 from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources after 32 years working in water resources management and pollution prevention. You can contact her at [Lynn@terraexperience.com](mailto:Lynn@terraexperience.com) or on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/TerraExperience>*



# Member Profile

## Joan Ruane: "People involved in fiber art seem to live a longer and happier life than many around them"

Gloria Miller

Joan Ruane's passion for fiber, especially for spinning cotton has taken her to many places and she has mentored many spinners both in person and through her writing, videos, and generous online resources. At 82 she is currently "house sitting" in Tucson, AZ after selling her home in McNeal, AZ where she lived on 28 acres of beautiful desert with fruit and nut trees and a garden. She continues to travel to teach workshops all over the US and abroad.



A year's move to New Zealand in 1971 introduced her to spinning when she took classes in spinning wool and her husband gifted her with a wheel. She was fortunate to connect with exceptional teachers from the beginning—Ruth Reed in New Zealand and Persis Grayson in the US. It was while working with Persis that she fell in love with cotton, a passion which led her to pursue Harry and Olive Linder who were the experts in cotton spinning. She has continued to seek out the top spinning teachers all these years even as she teaches many classes herself. She weaves with her handspun and the garments she wears to workshops display her fine work.

In 2012 she was approached by Allen Nansubuga in Kampala, Uganda who had

found Joan's website. Allen works with a women's group called Crochet4Life making items to sell and asked to Joan to join the group. Initial projects were made of poor quality acrylic yarn and Allen hoped to help the women learn to spin local cotton which is sustainable and produces much higher quality products. Joan assisted them to begin spinning their own cotton sending instructions as well as Takli spindles for hand spinning then other tools and wheels over time. Despite illness and problems with studio space, the women continue to crochet hand woven cotton and develop products that showcase their work and provide much needed income.

Do take a look at her website at [www.cottonspinning.com](http://www.cottonspinning.com) with its generous links to many lessons by Joan as well as others who work with cotton. Videos are also available at [www.taprootvideo.com](http://www.taprootvideo.com). She makes following her advice to "never stop learning" easy with so many resources and with her evident passion for spinning. She loves conversations about fiber arts and is happy to connect with WARP members by email: [spincotton@yahoo.com](mailto:spincotton@yahoo.com)

*Gloria Miller is a Sister of Mercy and has been working with a knitting group in Peru for many years. She became connected with WARP when she started weaving in 2006 and continues to enjoy weaving and her weaving connections all over the world. She can be reached at [gmillersm@gmail.com](mailto:gmillersm@gmail.com)*

### Travel Opportunities...

Mayan Hands has a few openings on their November 7-14, 2017 and January 17-27, 2018 Fair Trade Artisan Tours. Anne Kelly writes, "We'd love to have WARP members join us to meet our amazing artisan partners and experience Guatemala's beauty!" For details, including tour itinerary, please visit: <https://www.mayanhands.org/pages/tours>, or contact Anne Kelly at [anne@mayanhands.org](mailto:anne@mayanhands.org) or call the Mayan Hands' office to talk with Brenda Rosenbaum or Anne at 518/729-1900.

WARP is on YouTube! You can learn more about WARP by viewing our two wonderful YouTube videos. What is WARP? is a two minute version of WARP's fascinating work, background on our mission, and how we network together. The second is a longer, nine minute version suitable for sharing at gatherings, called The World of WARP. Both feature beautiful imagery, and may be used to educate your friends and family. Both videos are available on WARP's main website, <http://www.weavearealpeace.org>



## Welcome to New Members

Sophia Aitken  
Miami, FL

Elizabeth Clow  
Wolfeboro, NH

Therese Williams  
Oklahoma City, OK

Louise Meyer  
Washington, DC

Coralee Eisner  
Denver, CO

Susan Mayo  
Ridgewood, NJ

Nancy Monachino  
Marion, NY

Holly Demers  
Dennis, MA

## Donations

WARP recently received a generous donation from the estate of Mary B. Kelly. Mary was a long-time WARP member who passed away in March of 2016. Mary was a textile artist, a teacher of textile arts, and a writer of articles and books about textiles. She was a good friend to many of us. Mary's obituary is available online at <http://tinyurl.com/y7odqs9s>

## Queen Amina Embroidery

*continued from page 1*

pillow covers, bags, and kaftans, using cotton thread and cotton damask fabric. The second style, formerly used by Hausa women to decorate bedsheets, utilizes brightly colored thread in an interlocking satin stitch on white cotton cloth in depictions of flowers, animals, and bicycles. These embroideries are sold as wall hangings. While this work was sold in various venues in the US—mainly at the African Studies Association annual meeting—and to some Zaria City visitors, the styles and sales of Queen Amina Embroidery work were traditional and small-scale.

Ms. Heather Most, a consultant with Vital Voices, visited Hassana Yusuf and members of Queen Amina Embroidery in the summer 2008 and made several suggestions for design changes for their work. Vital Voices, sponsored by the ExxonMobileFoundation was designed to foster "African Women Artisans Entrepreneurial Empowerment: Growing Arts & Crafts Businesses through Export Development to the United States." Rather than relying on traditional patterns used in *babban riga* embroidery, Ms. Most introduced simpler and stylized designs that were incorporated into new products—small zippered bags, buttons, and abstract wall-hangings. Some wall-hanging designs represented murals and raised pattern designs found on public buildings.

While members of Queen Amina Embroidery have continued to sell their work, it was the group's acceptance in the International Folk Art Market in Santa Fe, NM, which led to the recent development of a new style of embroidery design for the group. Representing Queen Amina Em-

broidery, Ms. Yusuf travelled to IFAM in July 2016 where she displayed hand-embroidered *babban riga* and embroidered caps, wall hangings, small bags embroidered with the Northern knot design. During the market, many people bought examples of Hausa hand-embroidery, which included the sale of two large *babban riga*.

However, it was the connection with the owner of the Ibu Movement Gallery, Ms. Susan Hull Walker, from Charleston, SC, that led to the development of a new style of kaftan. Hassana worked together with Jamie Buskey, an assistant designer for Ibu Movement, who suggested the kaftan design dimensions and pattern-



ing. Hassana then worked with Queen Amina Embroidery members to produce a kaftan style (right), which would appeal to socially- and fashion-conscious US buyers. It is hoped that this collaboration continues with new designs and opportunities for Queen Amina Embroidery in the future.

*Elisha P. Renne is a Professor at the University of Michigan and can be reached at [erenne@umich.edu](mailto:erenne@umich.edu)*

## Newsletter Copy Deadlines

V25N1 - Spring 2018 – February 2

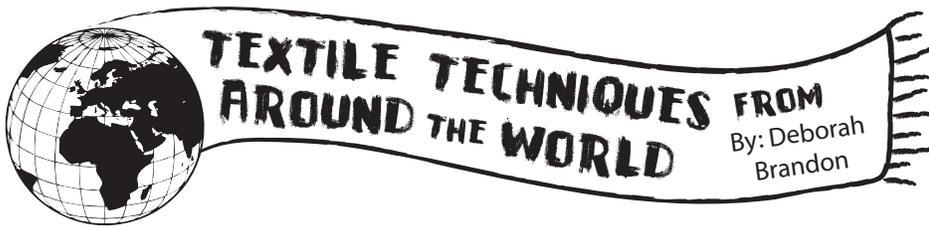
V25N2 - Summer 2018 – April 20

V25N3 - Fall 2018 – July 27

V25N4 - Winter 2018 – October 19

Save these dates and send your contributions to the Newsletter!  
Contact me at [lgtempleok@gmail.com](mailto:lgtempleok@gmail.com) if you have questions. Thanks!





## Ireland: Aran Sweaters

Bleak, harsh, stark—adjectives that have been associated with the climate and terrain of the Aran Islands. Until tourism became a dependable source of income, the locals subsisted off fishing, farming, and harvesting seaweed.

In contrast with these gloomy descriptors, adjectives such as rich, intricate, and elaborate, come to mind while admiring a classic Aran sweater embellished with Celtic-style cable patterns.

Contrary to popular belief, the art of Aran knitting is not ancient, nor were the ornate Aran sweaters, as we know them today, the traditional wear of local fishermen.

The earliest samples of patterned Aran sweaters, which now reside in Dublin's National Museum, date from the 1930s, around the time when Aran hand-knits first went on sale.

Evidence suggests that what we now refer to as Aran sweaters emerged some time between 1900 and the late 1920s. The Irish government set up The Congested Districts Board to combat the poverty caused by the potato famine. In the early 1900s the board taught the locals how to knit cable stitches, encouraging them to knit garments for sale to supplement their meager income.

Until the late 1940s, when written patterns for Aran sweaters first came out, all designs, however complex, were memorized. Knitting on the islands was primarily a communal activity—many a woman came away from such events having observed a new stitch, and hurried home to try and reproduce it.

Aran patterns are three dimensional in nature, consisting of a variety of bobbles and cables. The bobbles are made by increasing and decreasing stitches over a small area. And cables are formed by

crossing a group of stitches over another, using a cable needle to hold the group currently at rest.

Knitted from yarn that was hand-spun from raw wool, with fine gauge knitting needles, early Aran sweaters were stiff and hardy. The advent of larger needles and softer yarns was more cost effective and made for more marketable products.

Nowadays, machines can replicate in minutes a sweater that a hand-knitter would take a week or more to finish. Even though such machine-made replicas are inexpensive, authentic hand-knit Aran sweaters are still very much sought after.

Susan Weltman, on a recent visit to the Aran Islands, had to revert to plan B and purchase an Aran sweater on the mainland. The declining number of Aran knitters cannot keep up with the demand—most hand-knit sweaters are produced on the mainland, from Irish wool.

Susan wrote, "What we couldn't figure out is what they do with SO much wool—there are sheep everywhere!"

### Resources:

The Aran Sweater, by Deirdre McQuillan, Appletree Press, 1993

Traditional Aran Island Knitting, by Pam Dawson, Search Press Ltd, 1991

Knitting Around the World from Threads, Amy T. Yanagi, editor, The Taunton Press, 1993

Knitting Around the the World: A multi-stranded history of a time-honored tradition, by Lela Nargi, Voyageur Press, 2011.

Susan Weltman, current WARP president, private communication, 2017.

*Deborah Brandon is a multi-talented mathematician and former board member. She can be reached at 412/963-7416 or at [brandon@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:brandon@andrew.cmu.edu)*



*Traditional Aran patterning*

**Porfirio Gutiérrez and family featured in NY Times article**  
Many members met Porfirio at this year's annual meeting in Oaxaca. This article about Porfio appeared in the September 18, 2017 edition of the NYTimes .

In Mexico, Weavers Embrace Natural Alternatives to Toxic Dyes  
Concerned about the health impacts of textile chemicals, traditional artisans are producing vivid colors from crushed insects and forest plants.  
<https://mobile.nytimes.com/2017/09/18/science/mexico-textiles-natural->



# From WARP's President.....

Susan Weltman

WARP on the Web - <http://www.weavearealpeace.org> features WARP history, annual meeting information, member access to the directory, and past newsletters. You can join or renew your membership online.

"Like" WARP on Facebook - Find 'Weave A Real Peace' in the search bar on your personal Facebook account to follow what WARP members share and to make posts to the page. Click 'Invite Friends to Follow' to promote WARP to other Facebook friends.

WARP Blog - To subscribe to receive an email when a new article has been posted, click on 'Blog' in the main menu at <http://weavearealpeace.org>. Enter your email address where you see 'Subscribe to the WARP Blog Via Email'. To contribute an article to the blog, please email [info@weavearealpeace.org](mailto:info@weavearealpeace.org)

Google - You are invited to join our Google Group. If you want to join please email Rita at [info@weavearealpeace.org](mailto:info@weavearealpeace.org) to be added.

Katie Simmons also maintains a WARP presence on [ravelry.com](http://ravelry.com), the knitting networking site; and on Weavevolution, <http://www.weavolution.com>. Please send her information at [ktd26@hotmail.com](mailto:ktd26@hotmail.com).

We are a small organization that aims to connect those who are interested in textiles and those who create them; many of our members combine both interests. The earthquake in Mexico (coming on the heels of the hurricane in Texas and the hurricanes in the Atlantic) reminding us of our deep relationships with people around the world. And today brought news of a hurricane in Central America. Many of us contacted our WARP friends in Mexico to find out if they were safe (there was, by the way, little structural damage in Oaxaca City) and to offer help. I heard from Rocio, a WARP member who we had seen recently in Oaxaca, and she told me that she and her family were safe. I've also heard from Christine Eber who tells us that the weaving community which she has worked with for years in Chiapas was not badly affected.

Just as I was ready to send this article, I realized that I'd better check on our members in northern California! They are safe and sound - living closer to the Coast rather than inland, though family members have been evacuated. (I'd better get this finished before I have to report on more disasters.)

We all know these disasters have deep consequences for communities. During our trip to Guatemala in 2007 we saw the consequences of mud slides from an earth-

quake that had occurred before our visit. WARP members have been called upon to help weavers and their families in the past. Unfortunately, with the reality of climate change upon us, we are seeing a terrifying increase in weather related disasters!

Which brings me back to our textile-connected communities. Through WARP I have made friends with people all over the US, very much taking me out of my NYC/East Coast bubble! I have been fortunate to visit WARP members and friends in Bolivia, Argentina, and Ecuador. On a trip this winter Steve and I will stop off to visit Jane Hahn in Aachen, Germany, a member who has never attended a meeting but has maintained her membership. She is generously donating some of her African basket collection for our meeting in IA.

Iowa - why do people laugh when I say our last meeting was in Oaxaca and our next will be in Iowa? For some of us, it seems as exotic as Mexico - and less frequently visited too. We will visit Vesterheim, the National Norwegian-American Museum in Decorah. Having gotten a peek at the proposed schedule, I know it will be a terrific meeting. And we'll probably get offered some delicious corn (I did have to learn the difference between seed and sweet corn, which I now explain to my fellow New Yorkers).

## Textile Artisans in Turkey

*continued from page 11*

such as "Do not mess with my outfit" and carried denim shorts on hangers as examples of the types of clothing men find unacceptable. "We will not obey, be silenced, be afraid. We will win through resistance," the crowds proclaimed.

Young women taking needlework classes may embark on careers in the textile industry. Housewives and retirees often take these classes in hopes of being able to sell their own handicrafts and thus making a little extra money while staying at home. The Turkish government has passed a law called "Every home a workshop" thus enabling housewives and the

unemployed to sell their own handicrafts without a license at fairs and to act as street vendors if they wish. Women working outside the home, for example in needlework, was a revolutionary phenomenon starting during WWI, with the demise of the Ottoman Empire.

From Ottoman times until the present, needlework, crochet, and especially embroidery has been held in high esteem by Turkish society. But the current situation in Turkey leaves many women in difficult circumstances.

*Cathy Peppers, a student of textiles, can be reached at [peppersinfo@yahoo.de](mailto:peppersinfo@yahoo.de)*



# Celebrating WARP's 25th Anniversary

Linda Temple

A few weeks ago, I got a box in the mail from Deborah Chandler. She had told me that she was finally cleaning out



her storage unit in CO, and that she'd be sending me a few things. I was not particularly thrilled when I opened the box to find stacks and stacks of correspondence, dating mostly from pre-WARP days (1990-1992). But then I started reading those letters (yes, real handwritten letters, from all over the world). Deborah had written an article in Handwoven Magazine (January/February 1991) that inspired an avalanche of mail. At the time, she was working for Pueblo to People, an early "fair trade" non-profit that was working with small cooperatives in Central and South America. In the article, Deborah wrote, "I'm finding that Pueblo to People is a collection center for resources and information about crafts programs around the world. Should you want to become involved in a craft outreach program, please contact me." And people did contact her.

On March 6, 1992 (2:00 a.m.), Deborah wrote a letter to those many people who had contacted her, suggesting they get together for a visit. For me, the receipt of that letter was the beginning of WARP. You can read about the early history of Weave A Real Peace elsewhere (see "A Brief History of WARP" in the Summer 2002 issue of the Newsletter at [www.weavearealpeace.org](http://www.weavearealpeace.org)).

Now, twenty-five years later, we're still getting together to visit. Last week I asked current WARP members how the organization has benefited them. I'd like to encourage those of you who didn't respond to

do so. Here are a few of the comments I received.

*"WARP has allowed me to connect with extraordinary individuals that are passionate about textiles."* Heidi Thumlert

*"WARP has helped me meet creative people and see unusual places that are sort of 'off the beaten path' of world-wide travelers—Guatemala, Morocco (because I met Susan Davis through WARP), and now Oaxaca."* Jane Brownlee

*"I came to my first meeting when I was a student, and the values that WARP embodies shaped the direction of my thesis work and continue to inform my work. I see WARP as a team of mentors who have deeply impacted and influenced me."* Kelsey Wiskirchen

*"WARP has connected us with others, like us, who care about indigenous textile communities. It also has allowed us to tell our Taquile Island story to a group that really gets it!"* Sam Brown & Tara Miller

*"All would have ended in 2010 if not for WARP to the rescue. The mentoring, connections to events & info, financial support, marketing help, encouragement, and the joy of reuniting annually with kindred spirits have fueled PAZA's work in support of the grass roots efforts of the Bolivian weavers to preserve their textile heritage. Thank you for your friendship, love, and laughter!"*  
Dorinda Dutcher

One of the resources Deborah cited in her Handwoven article was Peace Corp Volunteer Mary Joan Ferrara (now Ferrara-Marsland), who was running a craft project in a rehabilitation center in Botswana, Africa at the time. Last week Mary Joan sent me this comment *"If not for WARP, I would not have found the job I love with UPAVIM more than 20 years ago!"*

These are just a few of hundreds of stories of connections that have been made thanks to the networking opportunity WARP provides. I'm proud of what we created, and what we have helped to make happen over the years. Please join us when we get together for our next visit, June 8-10, 2018 in Decorah, IA.

## Letters...

Christine Eber writes "Celia Arias Pérez and Claudia Pérez Pérez, the two young Maya women who came with me to the WARP meeting in Oaxaca and sold textiles from their community in Chiapas were both deeply moved by all the hugs and good feelings they received from WARP members. They also appreciated the economic support they received from WARP to attend the meeting. They learned a great deal visiting the homes of Zapotec weavers. From that experience came ideas of how to talk to visitors who come to their co-op's meeting house in Chenalhó, Chiapas when the house is open to the public. The young women also came up with the idea of making a museum in their meeting house! I am going to help them by returning to them the textiles that I've collected from their cooperative since the 80s."



# Query: Is artisan work sustainable if it causes pain and disability?

## Ergonomic Projects

WARP members interested in this topic may want to read about Karen Piegorsch's Ergonomic Weaving Bench project. The development of the bench involved many years of testing, consulting, and training with the backstrap weavers of Mayan Hands and Maya Traditions and local carpenters. The project began in 2003, with the first article appearing in the Winter 2005 WARP newsletter (past issues are available on the WARP website, <http://weavearealpeace.org/warp-newsletters/>). A follow-up article appeared in the Fall 2007 issue, and another article, when production was in high gear, appeared in the Winter 2009 issue. In the Fall 2013 issue, Karen wrote "*Our nine years of work in Guatemala concluded successfully by leaving the Ergonomic Weaving Bench project in the hands of the local people. Having become independent providers of the bench and training, our Mayan collaborators are positioned to carry this project forward and determine its future outcomes for the benefit of their people.*" Karen can be reached at [info@bewellworkbetter.com](mailto:info@bewellworkbetter.com)

*Kate Colwell*

This is an invitation for anyone in WARP who would like to discuss ergonomic issues for traditional artisans.

In 2015 I went to Guatemala to investigate complaints of "hand pain" among Mayan Hands basket makers. Having had injuries myself and as a physician who has treated hundreds of people with chronic pain, I had some preconceptions about the diagnoses I would find. Mostly the diagnoses did not match my hypotheses and the concept of prevention was so foreign it was hard to figure out how to present the information. Returning this year, there were a few encouraging moments when women said that their pain had resolved when they made changes. But really, there was also only a crack in the wall of resistance to ideas about varying types of work, taking breaks, changing postures, etc.

It is worrisome that efforts to create international markets for traditional artisans will not be sustainable if the artisans are injured in the process. Moving from doing something for your family to doing it for pay involves significant stress on the body. Consciousness raising/education is important to mitigate the effects of those stresses. Realistically, anything that limits work also limits income and likely will be resisted by artisans.

Ergonomic principles are pretty simple. For detailed info I recommend *Knitting Comfortably* by Carson Demers. I would be glad to revise the class outline that I developed for Mayan Hands for anyone who would test it out and offer feedback. But the ergonomic content is the easy part. Delivery across cultures and, of course, actual behavior change is the tough part.

Who in this diverse group has talked to traditional artisans about injuries or pain? Who has had anyone talk to their artisans about preventing injuries? What have the results been? Does anyone know of literature on the delivery of cross cultural health education to artisans? Who in the Fair Trade Federation should I talk to? Has anyone done education that you thought was particularly successful? (Or words of wisdom about things you tried that didn't work?)

I have been in contact with hand experts, but am looking for more input on the process of education. While I have no illusions that this is some simple problem, could we advance these issues even a tiny bit? I would like to "talk" (e-mail, skype, etc) to anyone interested in the topic. If there is enough input I would compile it to share in whatever way seems useful. Please e-mail me at [fiberassociations@gmail.com](mailto:fiberassociations@gmail.com) if you would be willing to talk. Thanks. Kate



## Semester at Sea

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Before each port, I introduced the students to possible independent travel opportunities, including museum visits and meetings with textile artists. The students were great explorers! They returned to class with tales of their adventures. In Kyoto, students hired an Uber to find the dye workshop of master indigo dyer Ken-ichi Utsuki, where they spent an entire morning at the feet of the master. At the extensively remodeled Suzhou Silk Museum, with its fantastic entrance of hanging silk-metal threads, students viewed how a world-class museum uses contemporary

approaches to design engaging exhibitions. In Saigon, students met a woman who took them to the second floor of her silk sewing studio, where she walked them through her personal collection of *ao dai*, Vietnam's national dress.

For me, the Semester at Sea program confirmed once again why I had gone into teaching. Working with bright eager students is intellectually challenging, eye-opening, and an honor! For more information on Semester at Sea, contact Mary Littrell at [mary.littrell@colostate.edu](mailto:mary.littrell@colostate.edu), or go to [www.semesteratsea.org](http://www.semesteratsea.org).



# Turkish Artisans Face Changing Times

WARP member Cathy Peppers recently visited the 2017 Arts and Crafts Fair in Izmir, Turkey, and came away with these impressions of the status of women weavers and other textile artisans in that country. She writes,

Turkey is pretty evenly divided between people who want to maintain a republic



*Typical scene of a rural Turkish woman in fine attire preparing Turkish pancake*

with a separation of state and religion, and upholding equal rights of men and women before the law, and people who want a return to conservative Sunni Islam law, even wanting the Sharia to replace the cur-



*The studio of up-and-coming Turkish designers in a trendy resort town where women in general (still) enjoy quite a few rights such as the right to not wear a headscarf*

rent constitution. For all women the latter would mean civil and legal rights would be lost—fathers, husbands, and imams would have control over women, the way it is in Iran. It is a very difficult situation for all. Some women artisans are doing well, financially, depending on whether their community gives them the right to work and own shops as individual business-women, or as in East Anatolia tells them

they cannot do anything or own anything unless the men in their families agree. It is so complex yet so important because women who do not go along with the men in their families are being murdered in staggering numbers.



*Demonstrating needlework skills taught at textile and fashion design institute in Izmir, Turkey*

This year has seen several women's marches in Turkey protesting the pres-



*This embroiderer is executing a very formal motif worked in silk thread on a heavy velvet material. This extravagant work found a wide range of applications during the 19th century.*

sures women throughout the country are facing to dress more conservatively. The most recent big march took place this July in Istanbul. The marchers chanted slogans

*continued on page 8*



*Many Turkish women today choose to wear a headscarf, as a sign of loyalty to family values, to their Turkish heritage, and to Sunni Islam. However, until recently they mingled freely with their more secular-minded sisters.*

## Volunteer Opportunity

UPAVIM in Guatemala is looking for a volunteer designer to live and work at UPAVIM. We would like a one year commitment if possible. It's a great opportunity for someone that wants to brush up on their Spanish, experience a new culture, explore the color, beauty, and textiles of Guatemala. Some perks provided and depending on the experience level of the person we may be able to provide more. It's a long shot for us but we desperately need someone good and can't afford them at the moment. Maybe you are looking for a change? An adventure? This may be it! Thanks!

Mary Joan Ferrara-Marsland  
UPAVIM Crafts  
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Weave a Real Peace  
c/o 6182 Pollard Avenue  
East Lansing, MI 48823

## 2018 Annual Meeting in Decorah, IA!

# Textile Educator Goes Around the World with Semester at Sea

Mary Littrell

What do 600 university students, 28 professors, a ship, and 23,550 nautical miles share in common? It's the Spring 2017 voyage of Semester at Sea, an around the world, semester-long study abroad program, run through Colorado State University. I was fortunate to be invited as a faculty member on the 105-day voyage that included 4-6 day stops in Hawaii, Japan, China, Vietnam, Myanmar, India, South Africa, Ghana, Morocco, and Germany.



*Wearing Chin-woven clothing in Myanmar*



*Mary and John Littrell*

When on the ship we had classes every day. There were no week-ends! Lectures, films, and student-organized activities filled the evenings. My classes included History of Textiles; Retailing; and Clothing, Adornment, and Human Behavior.

Students from over 30 countries and 40 universities contributed to lively class discussions. The majority of students in the History of Textiles class loved beautiful textiles, but had little background in fabric construction or embellishment. As a result we started with paper weaving and then explored other technologies, depending on the country of our next visit.

At each port, students engaged in a mixture of class-related assignments and activities, coupled with independent travel. I drew upon my contacts with artists at the International Folk Art Market | Santa Fe to arrange face-to-face meetings in Myanmar and Ghana. In Myanmar, artists from Yoyamay and Sone-Tu in Yangon introduced the students to both traditional and modern innovations in Chin weaving. As the Chin people live far away from Yangon, Sone-Tu arranged for weavers to come down from the mountains to demonstrate backstrap, floor loom, and card weaving. In Ghana, students spent a very special day with master bead maker Cedi Djaba, learning about the international bead business and trying their hand at making beads.



*Indigo dyeing in Japan*

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