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### *Chinz, pintado and palampore: the marketing and market of imported indian textiles 1600-1800*

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## Chintz, Pintadoes and Palampores: The Market for Imported Indian Printed Textiles 1600-1800

This paper examines the impact of international trade on domestic consumption practices of printed cotton furnishing textiles between 1600-1800. Specifically it examines the taste for printed cottons or chintzes originating in India, and the subsequent social and cultural impacts these fabrics had on English (and French) taste. The use of actor-network theory to better understand the role of chintz in the period is a valuable way of negotiating the multiplicity of historical connections that arise. The **elements** of the network **define and shape one another** mainly through fashion. Lemire and Riello suggest that fashion was ‘a self-perpetuating process which informed the historical dynamic, linking itself with other components of the society and economy. The ‘systemic’ nature of fashion thus rested in its interactive relationship with historical change’. (Lemire and Riello fn. 7).

The heterogeneity of the divers actors and actants is evident in the taste for these exotic goods in the Far East, Europe and North America. **Fashion and the exotic have been closely linked by** Georg Simmel who theorized that the fashion phenomenon was only to be found in what he termed ‘higher civilizations’, where the ‘foreignness’ of objects added to their attraction, rather than detracting. (Georg Simmel, “Fashion” *International Quarterly* 10, (1904), p. 136. Cited in Lemire and Riello.p.17)

**A key element of the network was the physical materiality of the goods being considered. The economic and political power processes at work all had to play their part moment by moment as potential instability was ever present. The spanning of space and scale that covered so many varied actors, portages, Antwerp markets, southern England first half of sixteenth century and crucially how the network worked. i.e. the international nature of the trade; later protectionist polices, followed by home production France, Netherlands then England. How it held together; how it shaped its components; how it made a centre and peripheries; how the goods were consumed**

In 1559, ‘calico curtains’ were listed in the inventory of Southampton resident Margaret Pyd, whilst another resident, John Smith, had a ‘cubborde cloth of callycowe’ (Lemire, 2003, p.67).

Originally intended to facilitate the purchase of pepper and spices in Indonesia, once the first cargoes of cloth reached England demand at home grew rapidly--as early as 1620 50,000 pieces of painted and printed chintz were brought in, while as late as the 1750s Indian textiles accounted for 60 percent of the total value of the Company's sales in London. A typical eighteenth-century order, to Bengal for the season 1730-31, called for 589,000 pieces of 38 different types, sub-divided into 98 varieties. ( Farrington *Trading Places*)

**The name was originally ‘chints’, the plural of chint, itself derived from the Hindi *chint* or *chitta*, meaning ‘spotted cloth’. It has also been found as *chite*. The original chintz was not glazed, and the word referred to any Indian printed cloth. Based on **evidence from wills in Marseilles**, chintz was first introduced to Europe from India via France in the **1570s**. Chintz was soon brought into England and it became hugely fashionable for both dress and furnishings. The furnishing uses included upholstery, bed and wall hangings.**

A palampore was a single panel of mordant-painted, resist-dyed Indian cotton (chintz). It was similar to pintado, but differing in respect of pintado being a length of fabric, and the palampore being generally used as a bedcover. The name has a confused derivation

according to the *OED*. Yule (1903) says it is ‘a kind of chintz bed-cover, sometimes made of beautiful patterns, formerly made at various places in India, especially at Sadras and Masulipatam, the importation of which into Europe has become quite obsolete, but under the greater appreciation of Indian manufactures has recently shown some tendency to revive’. Introduced to England in c.1614, and often made into quilts, palampores became increasingly popular during the seventeenth century. They were also used in America during the eighteenth century. Their success is seen in the letter of 1687, where the East India Co wrote to its officers in Bombay: ‘Send no more quilts of any sort we have enough to last five or six years being put quite out of use by Palampores’ (Irwin & Brett, 1970, p.27).

In 1609, a letter from Surat to the East India Company headquarters noted that ‘Pintadoes of all sorts, especially the finest, as it seemeth to me, should yield good profit, I mean such as are for quilts and for fine hangings ... Quilts made both of white calicoes and of all sorts of painted stuffs are to be had in abundance...’ (Irwin & Brett, 1970, p.4).

A letter of 1619 to the East India Company also indicates the range of quilts: ‘all of one kind of chintz’, ‘some of different chintzes, yet such as either side may be used’, ‘some to have borders only of different colours’, ‘excellent quilts of stained cloth, or of fresh coloured taffeta lined with their pintadoes’ (Irwin, 1966, p.2).

A letter of 1619 to the East India Company from their agents discussed chintz for wall hangings:

chintes for hangings in England ... 100 piece of the strongest sorts with different workes, viz. a corge [i.e. a score] of each sort answerable in cullers which will sufficiently serve for a suite of hangings of one room. (Irwin and Brett, 1970, p.24.)

As early as 1626, specific bed hangings were occasionally imported and, in 1631, the East India Company established a large business in imported ready-made bed draperies. Samuel Pepys later recorded the fashionable use of chintz for both dress and furnishings. He wrote in his diary: ‘bought my wife a chint that is a painted East Indian Calico for her to line her new study’ (*Diary*, 5 September 1663).

Imitations of the original soon developed. In 1648, Benoit Ganteume and Jacques Bavilles set up a cotton-printing establishment in France and, by 1669, ‘Provençal prints’ were being produced in Marseilles. In the same year, patterns were sent out from England rather than using local Indian designs. In 1676, a patent (Patent no.190) was granted to William Sherwin for a ‘new way of printing and stayning calico’ with a double-necked rolling press.

It appears to have been very fashionable as, in 1682, the Masulipatam factory had an order for ‘45,000 Percallaes, the finest sorts, made into chintz 8 yards long, full yard broad, the ground to be green purple, red and some white, but the best paintings to be upon purple ground with variety of painting, curious and lively brisk colours...’. (Irwin & Schwartz, 1966, p.35)

Fashion effect:

Their success is seen in the letter of 1687, where the East India Co wrote to its officers in Bombay: 'Send no more quilts of any sort we have enough to last five or six years being put quite out of use by Palampores' (Irwin & Brett, 1970, p.27).

1687: East India Company chintz had 'become the weare of Ladys of the greatest quality which they wear on the outside of gowns and mantuoës, which they line with velvet and cloth of gold'. (Irwin Origins )

Daniel Defoe wrote c.1690 that at Windsor Castle, 'the late Queen Mary set up a rich Atlas and Chintz bed, which in those times was invaluable, the chintz being of Masulipatam on the coast of Coromandel' (*Tour*, vol.1, letter 3).

Pintado Early references occur in 1602 in the East India Company correspondence. One letter refers to 'ffardells of blewes and checkered stuffes, some fine Pinthadoes' (Birdwood, 1893, 34, 60). In 1609, a letter from Surat to the East India Company headquarters noted that 'Pintadoes of all sorts, especially the finest, as it seemeth to me, should yield good profit, I mean such as are for quilts and for fine hangings ... Quilts made both of white calicoes and of all sorts of painted stuffs are to be had in abundance...' (Irwin & Brett, 1970, p.4).

Some different use was noted in 1638, when Sir Thomas Herbert commented that 'Upon the carpets were spread fine coloured pintado Table cloaths' (*Travels*, Ed. 2, 138). The multiple uses of pintadoes were confirmed in the 1641 Tart Hall inventory, which listed a 'suite of Hangings consisting of four Peeeces of Indian Pintadoes, and Curtaynes of the same suite for the same room, and a canopye of the same suite with a valence thereunto. Also four little Pintadoe carpets for the same Room.' (Cust, 1911, 235.) In 1657, an order was made for 'chintz or Pintadoes 1000 pieces ... Pintadoes quilts that may match the works of ye chints 300' (Irwin & Brett, p.28).

Another use was recorded in 1660, when the London *Book of Rates* listed 'Pintadoes or Calleeoe cubbard clothes.' A little later, Evelyn recorded how he 'supp'd at my Lady Mordaunt's at Ashley: here was a room hung with Pintado, full of figures great and small, prettily representing sundry trades and occupation of the Indians, with their habits &c: very extraordinary' (*Diary*, 30 December 1665).

Their popularity was curtailed in 1720 when it became illegal to 'use [pintado] or wear in or about any bed, chair, cushion or other household furniture' (Irwin & Brett, 1970, p.5).

## Pintado

In the seventeenth century, pintadoes were resist-dyed mordant-painted cloths, similar to chintz. They were widely used for quilts, curtains, cupboard cloths etc. Pintadoes could be either painted or printed, and in some cases, it was both. Where the cloth was painted, it was done freehand, using dyes and painted mordants, and so was of a higher quality than those where the cloth was block-printed. In the first half of the seventeenth century, it was the expensive, painted cloths that were fashionable, being used for hangings for beds and walls. Pintadoes were sold as lengths of fabric measuring 13 yards (11.9 metres), and were cut up to fit the walls. The 'pintado quilt' was a stuffed quilt that was highly fashionable in the seventeenth century.

### Eighteenth century

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Daniel Defoe commented upon chintz and noted that they had:

crept into our houses; our closets and bedchambers, curtains, cushions, chairs, and at last beds themselves were nothing but calicoes and Indian stuffs, and in short almost everything that used to be made of wool or silk, relating to the dress of the women or the furniture of our house, was supplied by the Indian trade. (*Weekly Review*, 31 January 1708.)

In this context, the paper will examine the role of the East India Company as prime suppliers, the retailers of the imported goods and the consumption patterns of the buyers of these exotic fabrics. Through this analysis a clearer picture maybe seen of the interconnections between wholesalers, retailers, the issues of taste and fashion linked to the consuming public.

Defoe's comments reflected disquiet in the wool trades. The taste for these sorts of material created unrest within weaving communities and, in 1701, following a 15 per cent duty imposition, all printed, stained or dyed calicoes were banned from use. This Act was amended in 1720 in an attempt to stop abuses, especially that of re-exporting. In 1736, the so-called Manchester Act was passed that allowed linen warp and cotton weft fustian to be printed, but it was not until 1774 that the restrictions were fully lifted. The French bans on chintz cloth types, in these cases to help the silk industry, were imposed in 1686 and were not lifted until 1759.

Nevertheless, the taste for chintz was difficult to prevent. Chintz 'carpets' were usually furniture covers for table stools and cupboards, but also referred to bedspreads. Celia Fiennes visited Mr Rooth in Epsom around 1712 and saw in Mrs Rooth's bedroom, 'a plad bed lined with Indian calico and an India carpet on the bed' (1995, p.235).

A small insight into the relationship of supplier and consumer can be seen in this passage of letters regarding an order for chintz. On 21 May 1738, Mrs Purefoy wrote to her supplier: 'I did write to you once before to know if you could get me 18 yards of chintz to make window curtains for a drawing room, or something that would suit workt chairs, workt in shades of white, but I have had no answer from you.' The upholsterer, Anthony Baxter, clearly soon wrote back, as by 4 June Purefoy wrote again:

I rec'd Mr Baxter's letter of the 23rd of the last month. I cannot but think it must be the best chintz must do for our window curtains. You say the pattern is three yards long and our window curtains must be three yards and a quarter long and for the vaillangs [valance] and curtains we shall want eighteen yards of the best sort, if you will send it down with the lowest price. (Eland, 1931, pp 168–9.)

After import restrictions were lifted, chintz remained just as popular.

Sophie von la Roche recorded seeing a bedroom at St Leonard's Hill in 1786: 'It is hung with a delicate monotone pale-blue chintz, with a border of the sweetest garlands embroidered in blue of the same shade on a white ground, similarly the curtains, quilts on both beds, and chair covers' (Fowler & Cornforth, 1974, p.139).

For example, Chippendale supplied Ninian Home with 'Extra superfine Chints callico galz'd and lined with calico' (Gilbert, 1978, p.273). By 1788, Hepplewhite was still able to recommend the use of printed cotton fabrics for bed hangings (1788, p.18).

In the early nineteenth century, chintzes designed specifically for chairs had their patterns printed so that they were centred on the seats and were supplied with a matching border. Sheraton noted that chintz 'may now be had of various patterns on purpose for chair seats, together with borders to suit them' (1793, p.374). These were often intended to match the curtains and other hangings of a room, with the designs based on the furniture print for curtains, a filler with a small overall print and the chair seat with the design (usually flowers) centred.

The taste for painted calico (chintz) bedcovers was also noted in the later eighteenth century when, in 1771, Mrs Lybbe Powys noted that Lady Blount of Mawley, Shropshire 'has more chintz counterpanes than in one house I ever saw, not one bed without very fine ones' (King, 1958, p.919).

By the early 1800s, it appears that chintz was no longer highly fashionable: George Smith deprecatingly recorded how 'printed calicos may answer extremely well for secondary apartments, or for those in houses of persons of small fortune; but they are not at all suitable for persons of rank and splendid income' (1808, xii–iii).

Beverly Lemire & Giorgio Riello *East and West: Textiles and Fashion in Eurasia in the Early Modern Period*, Working Papers of the Global Economic History Network (GEHN) No. 22/06