

Indiennes. Material for a thousand stories

30/8/2019 – 19/1/2020

National Museum Zurich

Photos and captions

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Indienne fabric with 'tree of life' motif, probably Neuchâtel, around 1800

The French king banned the indienne industry in France from 1686 to protect the country's own silk industry. This benefited Switzerland, where Huguenots opened important indienne factories.

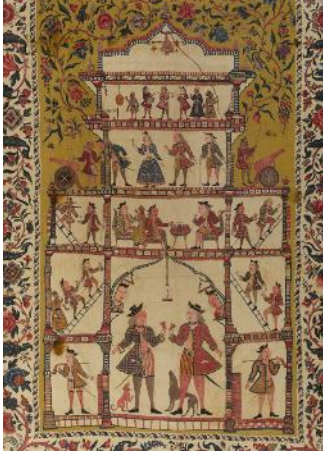
Photo: Swiss National Museum, former Petitcol Collection



'Four Parts of the World' textile, from the Oberkampf factory in Jouy, around 1785

Christophe-Philipp Oberkampf ran the most celebrated indienne factory in Jouy. The management was made up of Swiss employees.

Photo: Swiss National Museum, former Petitcol Collection



Wall hanging (palampore) from the Coromandel Coast, India, around 1700-1750

Inspired by wall hangings at the courts of Indian rulers, the Portuguese and Dutch commissioned textiles featuring their own portraits.

Photo: Swiss National Museum, former Petitcol Collection



Fabric from the Soehnée l'Ainé & Cie factory in Munster, around 1799

Alsace fabric printing started in Mulhouse in 1746. There were close links with Swiss fabric printing factories.

Photo: Swiss National Museum, former Petitcol Collection



Wall hanging (palampore) with tree of life from the Coromandel Coast, India, around 1740

In the 17th and 18th centuries, the tree of life motif was among the most common depictions on indiennes for export to Europe.

Photo: Rainer Wolfsberger, courtesy of Rietberg Museum



Cotton plant

In India, there is evidence of cotton for the period around 2600-1900 BC. It grows only in tropical and subtropical areas – particularly in Southeast Asia and the Middle East.

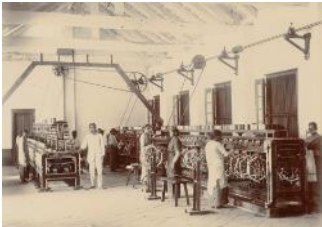
Photo: Omar Lemke, 2018, Ila 6466, Museum of Cultures, Basel, all rights reserved



Mountain of cotton in Khamgaon, Central India, approx. 1948

Cotton was stockpiled in Central India, transported to the coast, shipped and processed in Europe. The firm Volkart traded in Indian cotton, but from the 1930s it suffered heavy losses as a result of the global economic crisis and the Indian independence movement.

Photo: Ernst Würgler, former operations engineer at Volkart. Provided by Madeleine Gerber-Würgler, Winterthur



Weaving mill in Kozhikode (Calicut), Kerala, late 19th century.

The Basel Mission not only founded schools and hospitals in India, but also set up weaving mills and brickworks, employing the converted Indians.

Photo: Archive of the Basel Mission, Basel (QU-30.016.0045)



Volkart tag, approx. 1920

The trading company Gebr. Volkart, founded in 1851, grew in the late 19th century to be one of the largest merchant houses in the world. During that time, Volkart traded almost exclusively in cotton.

Photo: Municipal Archives, Winterthur Sign.-No Dept 42/1971



Household with Indian staff, approx. 1871

The wives of European officials, missionaries and traders in British India maintained the colonial lifestyle. That included running the household with the help of numerous Indian servants

Photo: Sign.-No Dept 42/1809, Municipal Archives, Winterthur

A view of the exhibition.

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