



**The Institute for Advanced Study**

presents

**A Lecture by Sarah Fee**

Visiting Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study



***Born of the Indian Ocean: the Silks of Highland Madagascar***

Vibrantly coloured and intricately patterned, the brocaded silk textiles made in highland Madagascar in the nineteenth century are considered amongst the island's greatest art forms. For a century scholars have debated their origins and meanings: were they slates of religious symbols, codifiers of political rank, the dress of kings, inspired by British missionary-artisans? My research -- based on archival, museum and field studies -- suggests instead they were a short lived aristocratic fashion. Far from isolated, the island nation of Madagascar has for millennia been implicated in the trade networks that crisscross the western Indian Ocean world. In the early nineteenth century, increasing flows of imported fibers, dyes and cloth from India and southern Arabia inspired Madagascar's weavers to create new forms, at a time when highland elites were seeking new, distinctive forms of dress.

**Wednesday, May 13, 2015**

**3:00-4:30 pm**

**Mathers Museum of World Cultures Classroom**



Dr. Sarah Fee is Curator of Eastern Hemisphere Textiles & Costume at the Royal Ontario Museum, in Toronto, Canada. She is responsible for the museum's 14,000 textile items from Africa, Asia and the Islamic World. Sarah holds degrees in Anthropology and African Studies from the University of Oxford and the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, Paris. Her major research site is Madagascar where for over 25 years she has studied handweaving, dress and the social significance of cloth.

Eigenmann Hall 235  
900 E 10th Street  
Bloomington, IN 47406  
P:812-855-1513 F: 812.855.0596  
Email: [ias@indiana.edu](mailto:ias@indiana.edu)  
Website: <http://ias.indiana.edu>

