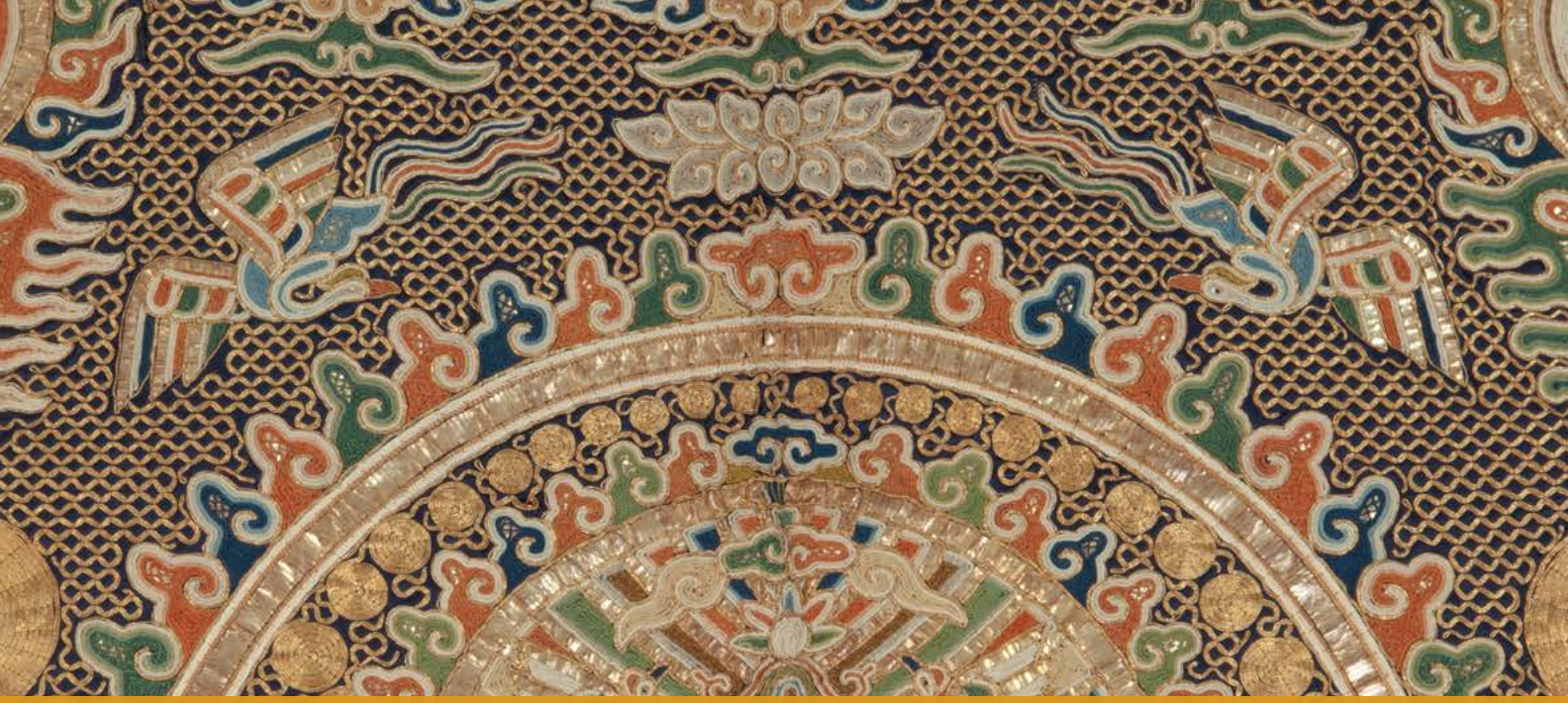
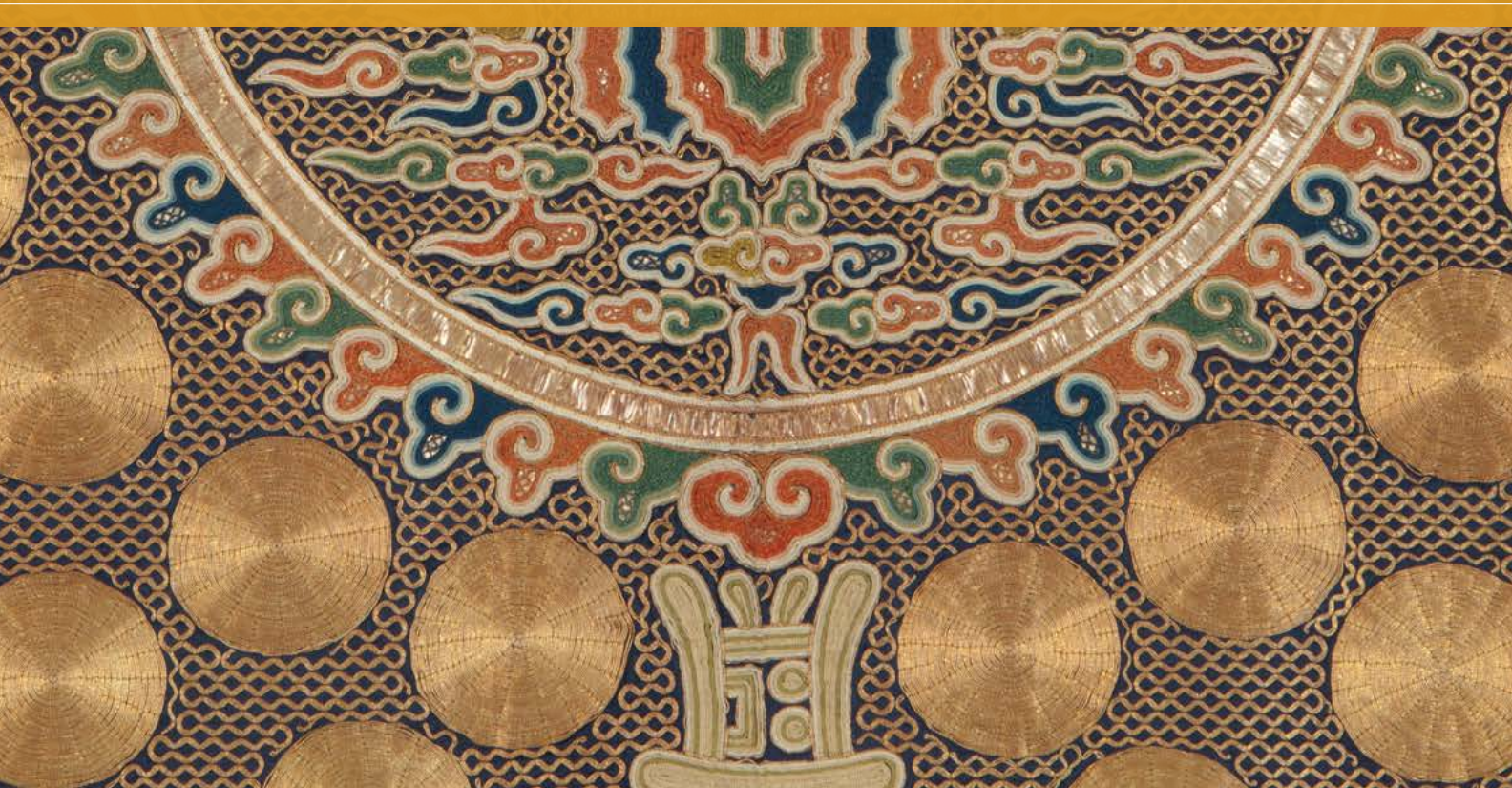


Unraveling Identity

Our Textiles, Our Stories



Unraveling Identity

Our Textiles, Our Stories

Edited by Sumru Belger Krody

With essays by
Dr. Ingrid Creppell
Dr. Mattiebelle Gittinger
Lee Talbot

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THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY MUSEUM
THE TEXTILE MUSEUM

First published on the occasion of the exhibition *Unraveling Identity: Our Textiles, Our Stories* at the George Washington University Museum and The Textile Museum, Washington, D.C., March 21, 2015—August 23, 2015

Published 2015 by The Textile Museum at the George Washington University
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The George Washington University Museum and The Textile Museum
701 21st Street, NW
Washington, DC 20052
http://museum.gwu.edu/

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Designed and produced for The Textile Museum at the George Washington University Museum by Studio A, Alexandria, VA, www.studioa.com

ISBN 978-0-87405-038-7

Cover and page 16: Detail of Daoist Priest's Robe, China, late 18th–early 19th century; silk, metal-wrapped yarns; embroidered. 73" × 54¾". The Textile Museum 51.24; Acquired by George Hewitt Myers in 1929.

Page 10: Detail of a common *tampan*, south Sumatra, Indonesia, early 20th century. 19½" × 17". The Textile Museum 1984.23.5, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. G. Reginald van Raalte.

Page 26: Detail of Chasuble fragment with inscribed bands, Nasrid dynasty, Spain, Granada, early 15th century, silk, satin weave patterned with twill weave (*lampas*). 54½" × 29½". The Textile Museum 84.29, acquired by George Hewitt Myers in 1936.

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Acknowledgments

THE TEXTILE MUSEUM WISHES to acknowledge Jeremy and Hannelore Grantham for their generous financial support that made this publication possible.

Foreword

AN EXHIBITION AS BROADLY REACHING as "Identity" seems destined to fall short of its global and historic scope: how many objects would it take to span such a vast, mercurial, subjective theme? Yet what is a museum's purpose if not to provoke questions to expand visitors' horizons? *Unraveling Identity: Our Textiles, Our Stories* is organized around themes that guide viewers through various ways of establishing meaning: how textiles serve to define individuals or groups, mark rites of passage, announce political authority, aggrandize or diminish individual features, leverage the identities of others through appropriation, and suggest spiritualty beyond the physical realm. Such themes, combined with the examples chosen to illustrate them, provide a frame of reference for visitors to interpret art, and just as importantly, to understand more keenly the means by which each of us expresses our own identity or identities as they may be.

Beyond the gallery experience, we have supplemented this exhibition with educational programing to provoke discussion and reflection. A series of lectures, panel discussions and other cultural engagements will allow us to delve more profoundly into this vast and complex subject. The digital publication you are reading now offers yet another gesture toward this end.

Through its affiliation with the George Washington University, The Textile Museum has new opportunities for expanding partnerships across and beyond the campus, and to become a center to generate new ideas and possibilities for cross-disciplinary studies of textile arts. The Museum will leverage its curatorial and scholarly expertise across an entire academic community.

Over decades of organizing original exhibitions, The Textile Museum has established a reputation for producing exhibition catalogues of refined scholarship and exquisite visual quality. This digital publication adds a new format to the Museum's offerings and another step in making interpretive analysis of our

collections and scholarship more publicly accessible across the internet and beyond our gallery walls.

In the future, we hope to enhance such texts with digital links, richer illustrations, and even more content. In the meantime, we hope that this inaugural effort provides a viable, engaging template for digital publications to come.

Our opening essay by Professor Ingrid Creppell is a brief, but poignant, demonstration of the George Washington University's capacity to contribute intellectual substance and understanding to exhibitions of art. The essays by our curators reveal both the richness of our collections and the scholarly commitment that has driven our Museum to share its treasures with an ever-expanding public. In addition to the authors of these essays, we would like to thank members of our professional museum staff and curatorial interns for their help and support in the production of this publication, especially Monika Hirschbichler, Douglas Maas, Analissa Dimen Kiss, and curatorial intern Jenny Morningstar who, with their quiet determination, made this publication a reality.

In addition our appreciation of donations from individuals, foundations, and corporations that made the Museum's opening exhibition and events possible, we are especially grateful to Hannelore and Jeremy Grantham, whose generous contribution to an editorial fund at The Textile Museum has made possible this, our first foray into digital publication. Thank you!

Dr. John Wetenhall, Director
The George Washington University Museum and The Textile Museum

Searching for Identity

Dr. Ingrid Creppell

1

THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY IS AS OLD as the human mind. Religion, historical myths, and stories offer answers to where people came from and who they are. The extraordinary variety of experiments in identity-making through history and cultures displays a creative spirit and also a deep need to be distinct and to belong. People are this and not that, here and not there, us and not them. In every world, status, roles, and power rankings set up guideposts about locating the self. "Know thyself!" admonishes the ancient Greek oracle. In the past, that was easier to do.

For us moderns and post-moderns, identity has become a vexed question. We no longer just accept the given elements of identity-making—the cultural, physical, and social-political world in which we find ourselves. We self-consciously ask—Who are we? Who am I? The answers have become ambiguous and open to dispute. Struggles about identity for nations, groups and individuals seem to go on forever, generating anxiety and danger. Why has identity become a problem in the modern world? What in fact is this thing we call identity?

The word identity comes from the Latin *identitat-*, *identitas* meaning "quality of being the same." To need identity consists in needing an element of sameness or cohesiveness with other people in a community and within one's self as a thinking and acting person. In order to *be* in the world, to be able to locate oneself and to act, one must be able to collect the fragments of living moment by moment into a cohesive point of view, a point of sameness. This location of sameness, we might say, becomes an identity. Sometimes it is very self-conscious and in the forefront of our minds and self-awareness; at other times, it silently steers. *We* are black, American, Hindus, and so forth. Or *I* am a woman, scientist, athlete, Catholic priest, etc. The sameness that creates an identity draws from many sources—roles in society, polities and economies, experiences and

narratives about oppression, survival, and existential meaning. Always, identities are visible and made sense of in relation to other identities that are different.

The modern world began with a series of shocks to inherited identities. Discovery of new lands and aboriginal peoples in the fifteenth century astonished Europeans and called into question beliefs about human variety. Capitalist trade and markets further expanded connections among societies and disrupted traditional orders, fulfilling Karl Marx's famous observation "All that is solid melts into air." Political identities were transformed through long decades of war over religion, territory, and power. New categories were forged: nation, religious confession, race, ethnicity, and class, among others. Modernity brought heightened awareness of diverse groups and insecurity about membership by infusing continuous and accelerated interactions into the heart of social and political order. In tandem with, and firmly tied to these large forces of change, a conception of the individual emerged. People began to conceive of themselves as having particular identities separate from the community. The individual was idealized as free to make choices about who to be, guided by her own feelings, reasons, and personal experiences. The individual acquired not just a possible variety of identifications from groups and associations, but also an image of depth within his or her psyche. Finally, the instability of identity also resulted from a developing belief in equality. This belief challenges accepted ideas of natural hierarchies and moves people to reject the injustice of previous discriminations. Forces of continuous change, the idea of the individual and a belief in equality have all led to heightened awareness of the promises and perils of identity.

"Through what variety of untried being, Through what new scenes and changes must we pass!" These words of an eighteenth century playwright Joseph Addison herald the onset of the modern search and struggle. By the 1950s, the idea of identity had come to be a major focus of public and scholarly debate. Erik Erikson, the most prominent theorist of the idea, observed that identity is "something as unfathomable as it is all-pervasive." We in the early twenty-first century live in even more kaleidoscopic times. We need order and we struggle for security, and yet technologies, and economic and political events create ever-new disruptions. Experiments are met with old and reinvented ways to classify, constrict, judge, and oppress. Our world therefore presents a kind of dualism about identity—an openness and a closedness. Hope and fear. The truth about identity consists in that it can never be fixed and essential, yet will always be necessary.

If the question of identity confronts us with the mystery of the human formation of the self, as community and as individual, we should explore the

concrete, perceptible ways in which these selves have been visualized and made real in the world. Ancient peoples—nomadic hunter-gatherers and later more pastoralist nomads—represented their collective unity through concrete tactile means: totems, cave drawings, stone carvings. The advance to more complex and abstract representations of a people can be found in the distinctive uses of textiles. One of the oldest modes of depicting collective identity is through the flag or banner. Here for instance is the national flag of Scotland, St. Andrew's Cross, reputed to be from the ninth century and the oldest national flag still in use (fig. 1).

1

Fig. 1
National flag of Scotland, St. Andrew's Cross, is reputed to be from the 9th century and the oldest national flag still in use.

Bearing banners and flags enables communication through prominent exposure over a distance of the presence of represented people (tribe, "nation"). This may serve to solidify the troops or assorted members; to rally and inspire communal emotion through a material symbol of one's identity; to announce, warn, proclaim to others; and to instill fear in the opponent. The intimate tie between flag and identity provides a prototype of the power of textiles to inspire identification and to communicate across space. Woodrow Wilson's words, spoken on Flag Day, June 14, 1917, following American entry into World War I, convey a universally applicable purpose for this piece of fabric: "This flag, which we honor and under which we serve, is the emblem of our unity, our power, our thought and purpose as a nation. It has no other character than that which we give it from generation to generation. The choices are ours. It floats in majestic silence above the hosts that execute those choices, whether in peace or in war. And yet, though silent, it speaks to us—speaks to us of the past, of the men and women who went before us, and of the records they wrote upon it."

If the flag is carried at a distance from the body in order to project the community as a whole, the human body offers another plane of representing identity. The body is clothed and adorned in a vast variety of ways for many purposes. Two examples here enable us to grasp the power and necessity of using textiles to stabilize an ambiguous reality for one self and for others to witness, and to integrate diverse sources of meaning into a new identity.

War offers a situation in which identities might seem to be at their most clearly defined. Mustn't one know with absolute certainty who one is in order to commit to the trial of violent conflict? Dress assists the combatants to achieve fundamental needs of identifying us and them, coordinating movements, stirring up passionate pride and camaraderie, and overall increasing one's power. The story of how the American hunting shirt was transformed into military garb offers

2

Fig. 2
Before the American Revolution, the hunting shirt was worn only by frontier marksmen in back-country territories west of the Blue Ridge Mountains, and its provenance appears to include the influence of Native-American dress. Hunting Shirt worn by Captain Abraham Duryea at the Battle of Long Island, August 1776. Linen, WH.1971.49. *Washington's Headquarters State Historic Site, Newburgh, NY. New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.*

a fascinating glimpse into the process of identity-making—creating what an historian of the shirt has called "a unique revolutionary identity."[1] Before the American Revolution, the hunting shirt was worn only by frontier marksmen in backcountry territories west of the Blue Ridge Mountains, and its provenance appears to include the influence of Native-American dress (fig. 2). When the Continental Army needed a cheap uniform, it adopted this garment in Virginia, Pennsylvania, and throughout New England. George Washington understood the power for unification and military effectiveness the distinctive shirt could bring. He ordered "a number of hunting shirts, not less then 10,000" to clothe the army, observing the garment "would have a happier Tendency to unite the Men, & abolish those Provincial Distinctions which lead to Jealousy & Dissatisfaction."[2]

As a second example of the power of textiles to transform and embolden identities, consider the short, loose garments adopted by Flappers in the 1920s (fig. 3). Emerging from WWI, women had become accustomed to new-found freedoms; running from the strictures of conventionality, many drank, smoked, wore short skirts, and tested their sexual and political liberty. In 1920, women finally won the vote in the United States. Flappers stand in for transformative experiments. Their dresses reflected a release from oppressive molds as well as a new fashion craze. "The role of dress is both to link the body more closely to and to wrest it away from nature, to give a necessarily set artifice to palpitating life" wrote Simone de Beauvoir. We feel here a profusion of life, but ambiguity as well. Beauvoir's observation of the function and impact of female dress accentuates its power to shield but also makes available the female body. Inventive modes of dressing reveal another way humans continually strain against past boundaries and other peoples.

The naked body is an animal body. Textiles provide a go-between for the allures and dangers of this naked body and the enculturated nature of human life. Humans are the only animals to spend vast resources on contriving a second layer

Note 1
Hurst ms.

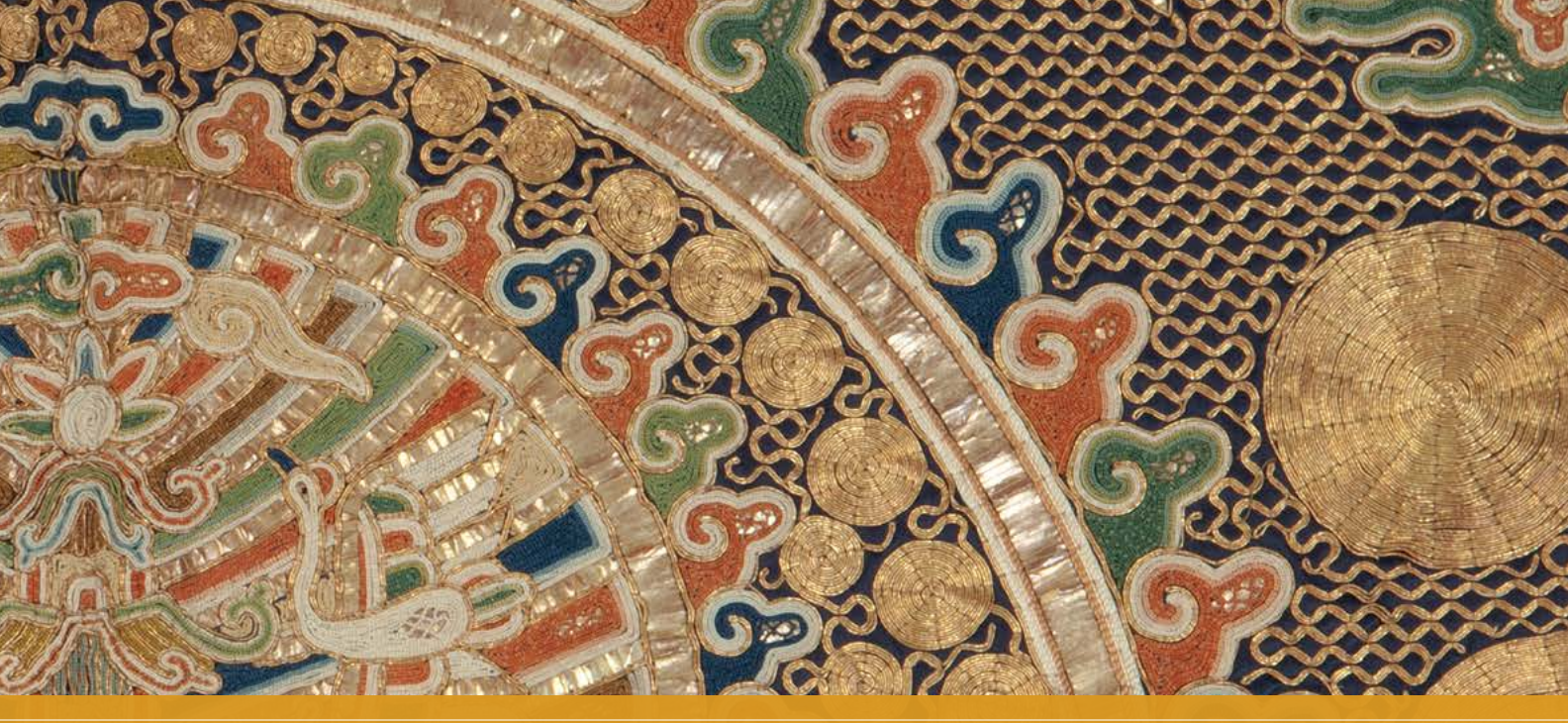
Note 2
Hurst ms, p. 24.

for themselves, to signify and communicate identities. This process serves a most fundamental need of the human mind and human order. We make ourselves into projects—we use tactile materials to symbolize, shape, stretch, shrink, embellish, inflate, adorn, and stand in judgment of ourselves. We are our own handiwork, through the projected identities we imagine, impose, embrace, and fight against. We do all this through concrete means because we must communicate with one another and make our identity real for our own and other minds. Textiles enable us to unravel, recreate, and embody the perplexing formation of the human self.

Montaigne, in his exhaustive and fascinating introspection concluded: "We too are nothing but wind. And the wind (more wise than we are) delights in its rustling and blowing, and is content with its own role without yearning for qualities which are nothing to do with it such as immovability and density." But humans yearn for density and solidity. We can hope and strive for a future when our natural drive to identify ourselves—as individuals and communities—will no longer be a source of blood and redemption, rather experienced as a source of compatibility and creative response to the ever-changing human condition. Exploring the connection between textiles and identity reveals our never-ending fascination with ourselves.

Fig. 3
Young women in 1920s adopted short, loose garments.

3



Celestial and Mountain Symbols in Chinese Textiles

Lee Talbot

2

IN MING- (1368–1644) AND QING- (1644–1912) dynasty China, images of the sun, moon, stars, and mountains held great cosmological significance. When depicted together on textiles, sun, moon, star, and mountain motifs implied the wearer's ability to help regulate the workings of the universe and harmonize the heavens and the earth. Worn only by the highest-ranking members of Ming and Qing society, ceremonial garments ornamented with these patterns were vivid visual expressions of political and/or spiritual power.

Celestial and mountain motifs appear in roundels on a finely woven *kesi* (slit tapestry) woman's jacket in The Textile Museum collections (figs. 1–3 and 5). The jacket's five-clawed dragons rendered in medallion form identified the wearer as the empress or a high-ranking imperial consort. The roundel on the left shoulder depicts the sun, the right shoulder shows the moon, and the roundels on the chest and back illustrate, respectively, a constellation and a mountain formation.

The motifs in these four medallions refer to the four main sacrifices that the emperor conducted each year at the altars of the sun, moon, heaven, and earth. Coinciding with the solstices and equinoxes, this annual round of imperial sacrifices was thought to synchronize the human and cosmological realms and thus ensure seasonal progression, good harvests, and the general wellbeing of the overwhelmingly agrarian populace. The performance of these rituals was considered to be the most solemn duty of the emperor, who was viewed as the divinely appointed "Son of Heaven" and an intermediary between the heavens and the earth.

On this garment, the sun is depicted as a bright red disc containing a rooster (fig. 2). Ancient Chinese legends tell of crows carrying the solar disc across the sky each day and resting at night in the mythical *fusang* tree. Images of *fusang* trees, birds, and sun discs appear on artifacts dating to as early as the Warring

Fig. 1
Empress or Empress Dowager's surcoat (long gua); China, late 19th century; silk, metal-wrapped yarns, slit tapestry woven. 46¾" × 63¾". The Textile Museum 1985.33.288, gift of The Florence Eddowes Morris Collection, Goucher College.

1

States period (475–221 BCE), and a painted silk funerary banner from the Western Han Dynasty (206 BCE–25 CE) depicts a black crow within a sun disc (fig. 4). By the time of the Qing dynasty, the avian figures on sun discs often are shown as colorful roosters, heralds of the dawn and the only bird in the Chinese zodiac.

On this garment, the moon is illustrated as a yellow disc containing a white rabbit pounding the elixir of immortality (fig. 3). The Chinese have long identified the markings on the moon as a rabbit, and the *Chu Ci* (楚辭), a Western Han anthology of Warring States-period poems, describes the moon as being inhabited by a toad and a rabbit which constantly pounds herbs to create a life-extending drug. The Western Han banner in figure 4 shows a toad resting on a crescent moon, with a white rabbit leaping above it on the left. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, Chinese cosmology associated the moon with the yin, or female principle, while the sun was associated with the yang, or male

2

3

4

Fig. 2
Detail showing roundel with sun pattern, Empress or Empress Dowager's surcoat (*long gua*). The Textile Museum 1985.33.288, gift of The Florence Eddowes Morris Collection, Goucher College.

Fig. 3
Detail showing roundel with moon pattern, Empress or Empress Dowager's surcoat (*long gua*). The Textile Museum 1985.33.288, gift of The Florence Eddowes Morris Collection, Goucher College.

Fig. 4
Funerary banner (detail), showing sun, moon, and stars. Western Han Dynasty (206 BCE–25 CE); Silk, painted; Excavated from Mawangdui Han Tomb No.1 in 1972 in Changsha, Hunan Province; Hunan Provincial Museum.

principle. Depicted together, the sun and moon symbolized the harmonious cosmic balance of yin and yang.

The roundel on the back of this garment depicts a schematic mountain formation, symbolizing the Earth, above the imperial dragon's head (fig. 5). In early Chinese texts, mountains and water signified the most characteristic aspects of the Earth, and images of mountains and water became visual shorthand for the Earth itself. Revered as links between the heavens and the world below, mountains also were venerated as gateways to the spiritual world. The peaks of tall mountains intermingled with the clouds, which were regarded as visible manifestations of *qi* (氣), cosmic energy, and mountains attracted the rain clouds on which agrarian peoples depended for their livelihood. Along with dragons, mountain and water imagery proliferated throughout the visual landscape at the Qing imperial court.

Fig. 5
Detail showing roundel with mountain pattern, Empress or Empress Dowager's surcoat (*long gua*). The Textile Museum 1985.33.288, gift of The Florence Eddowes Morris Collection, Goucher College.

5

The roundel on the front of the jacket depicts a constellation, which symbolized the heavens. In Chinese astronomy, constellations had been depicted as circles joined by straight lines since around the second century BCE. The three conjoined circles on this roundel likely represent the handle of the Big Dipper, widely viewed in Chinese cosmology as the pivot of heaven, with the power to balance the yin and yang. In the imperial palace in Beijing, the emperor typically sat or stood facing southward, so constellation patterns on the front of imperial garments aligned with the Temple of Heaven, which was south of the palace. The mountain motif on the back roundel faced the Temple of Earth, constructed to the north of the palace, the sun on the left shoulder pointed towards the Temple of the Sun in the east, and the moon on the right shoulder aligned with the Temple of the Moon in the west (fig. 1).

The sun, moon, stars, and mountains are four of the so-called "twelve symbols of imperial authority." Listed as suitable ornament for the ruler's sacrificial robes in the *Shujing* (書經), a collection of ancient writings that formed the foundation of Chinese political philosophy for more than 2,000 years, these twelve motifs seem to have appeared on imperial garments from the Han (206 BCE–220 CE) through the Ming (1368–1644) dynasties. Although the Manchu initially abandoned the "twelve symbols" when they conquered China and established the Qing dynasty in 1644, during the eighteenth century the Qianlong emperor (r. 1735–1796) revived the use of these ancient motifs on imperial garments.

According to the *Huangchao liqi tushi* (皇朝禮器圖式), an illustrated manual published in 1766 to classify and regulate court costume and accessories, only the emperor was allowed to wear clothing ornamented with the "twelve symbols." The non-sanctioned appearance of these patterns on a woman's garment may indicate the identity of the jacket's original owner. The Empress Dowager Cixi (1835–1908) wielded supreme political power in China during the reigns of her son, the Tongzhi emperor (r. 1862–74), and her nephew, the Guangxu emperor (r. 1875–1908). Photographic evidence reveals Cixi's appropriation of at least several of the twelve authority symbols, so this jacket may have been commissioned for her use (fig. 6).

The sun, moon, star, and mountain motifs appear on another silk garment from China in The Textile Museum collections (fig. 7). Called a *jiangyi* (降衣, "robe of descent"), this would have been worn by a high ranking Daoist priest when conducting certain rituals and ceremonies. As indicated by the seventeenth-century woodblock print depicting a Daoist ceremony shown in figure 8, the back of the robe would have been viewed most prominently by worshippers as the priest faced the altar to conduct rites. Accordingly, this portion of the garment typically features the most lavish ornament.

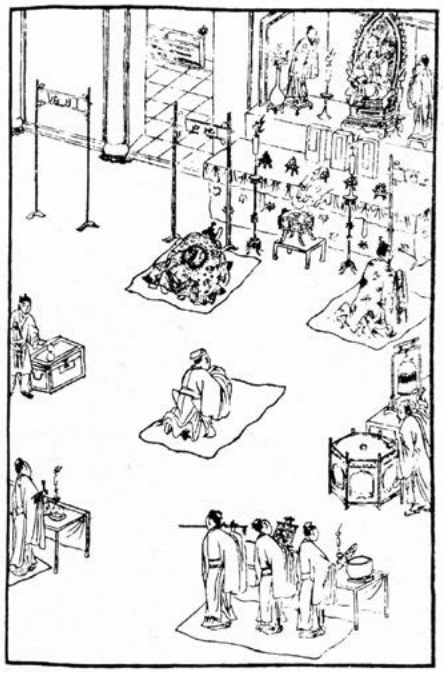
The central roundel on the back depicts the palace of the Jade Emperor (玉皇, 玉帝), the ruler of the Daoist heavens, surrounded by golden discs representing the twenty-eight "lunar

6

Fig. 6
The Empress Dowager Cixi wearing robe patterned with some of the Twelve Symbols of Imperial Authority; Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, SC-GR-262.

7

Fig. 7
Daoist Priest's Robe, China, late 18th–early 19th century; silk, metal-wrapped yarns; embroidered. 73" × 54¾". The Textile Museum 51.24; Acquired by George Hewitt Myers in 1929.



8

Fig. 8
Woodblock print illustration from Chapter 62 of the novel *Jin Ping Mei*, showing Daoist ceremony. China, Ming dynasty, Chongzhen reign (1628–1644).

mansions" (二十八宿), constellations situated along the moon's path as it rotates around the earth each month (fig. 9). The three large disks on the upper back of the robe signify the heavens of Jade Purity (玉清), Great Purity (上清), and Highest Purity (太清), the celestial homes of The Three Pure Ones (三清), deities thought to represent the three fundamental embodiments of the Dao. On either side of these three disks are an elaborately embroidered sun, containing an image of a rooster, and the moon, shown with a rabbit pounding the elixir of immortality. White cranes, symbols of long life and vehicles for Daoist immortals on their journeys through the heavens, fly among five-colored clouds, potent harbingers of an auspicious event.

Surrounding the central cosmic diagram, couched gold threads define the "true forms" (真形, *zhenxing*) of the Five Sacred Peaks of China. Clockwise from the top right, these symbols represent the Eastern Peak of Mt. Tai (泰山), in Shandong province (fig. 10); the Southern Peak of Mt. Heng (衡山) in Hunan; the Central Peak of Mt. Song (嵩山), in Henan; the Western Peak of Mt. Hua (华山), in Shaanxi; and the Northern Peak of Mt. Heng (恒山), in Shanxi. The graphic symbols associated with each of these sacred peaks originally served as talismans intended to guard Daoists on their visits to secluded mountains, and they sometimes functioned as amulets among the general populace.

During the performance of rituals, a Daoist priest wearing a robe patterned with these celestial and mountain symbols might also move his feet in patterns corresponding to constellation formations. Together these gestures and motifs communicated ideas of cosmic harmony and reinforced the priest's position as an intermediary between the heavens and the earth.

As evidenced by the sun, moon, star and mountain symbols on the garments discussed above, graphic imagery on Chinese imperial and ceremonial textiles fulfilled functions that extended far beyond the decorative and aesthetic. Chinese cosmological beliefs encouraged the idea that an image could bring about the effect of the thing pictured, so objects and built environments were carefully

9

10

Fig. 9
Detail showing upper back of Daoist Priest's Robe. The Textile Museum 51.24, acquired by George Hewitt Myers in 1929.

Fig. 10
Detail of Daoist Priest's Robe showing the "true form" (*zhenxing*) of the Eastern Peak of Mt. Tai. The Textile Museum 51.24, acquired by George Hewitt Myers in 1929.

designed to set the individual correctly and efficaciously within the cosmos. Finely made of shimmering silk and gold, this imperial jacket and Daoist robe served to clothe their original owners in suitable splendor, and their celestial and mountain iconography both articulated and reinforced the wearers' ability to positively influence the universal order and create a beneficial congruence between the earthly and cosmological realms.

The Power of Script in Islamic Art: Three Treasures from The Textile Museum Collections

Sumru Belger Kody

3

ARABIC SCRIPT WAS THE FIRST AND REMAINS the foremost form of visual expression in Islamic art. The special attitude of Islam towards the written word, combined with the Arabic script's adaptability has elevated the writing to a position of supreme importance among Islamic visual arts. The central tenet of Islam is that God (Allah) sent down his word to the Prophet Muhammad in Arabia at the beginning of the seventh century. His word was later recorded as the Qur'an, literally meaning "recitation" or "reading." In Islamic thought, writing has been the vehicle of God's message; as such, God's message has become a sacred piece of writing. Writing itself is holy, every letter or word encapsulates a small element of the divine. Thus, it is not surprising to find inscriptions decorating the majority of art forms, including textiles, made in the Islamic lands from the eighth century onwards. The inherent flexibility of Arabic script also means that it can convey specific messages while serving as an integral part of the decorative design of an object or monument (fig. 1).[1]

Written from right to left, Arabic script's twenty-eight letters are made of seventeen basic forms that consist of simple vertical and horizontal strokes. The strokes can be altered and modified to accommodate any surface or scale, yet they maintain their integrity and legibility. Letters can curve or extend to conform to the shape of the surface, be it on metal, glass, paper, textile, wood, or stone (fig. 2). This flexibility of Arabic script means that it can convey a specific message while serving as an integral part of the decorative design of an object or monument.[2]

Three Islamic textiles in the *Unraveling Identity: Our Textiles, Our Stories* exhibition represent three distinct styles of Arabic script and three of the ways inscriptions mediated

1

Fig. 1
The inscription was fitted along the rim of this deep bowl, demonstrating the inherent flexibility of the Arabic script. The inscription translates as follows: "It is said that he who is content with his own opinion runs into danger. Blessing to the owner," 10th century, Samanid period, Iran. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C: Purchase, F1957.24.

Note 1
For further discussion on Islamic inscription, see Baer 1998, Blair 1998, Blair 1997, Welch 1997, and Grabar 1992.

Note 2
Welch 1997.

Fig. 2a-b
Ince Minareli Medrese (Islamic school) in Konya has a highly ornamented stone façade which includes relief work of Arabic script that curves to frame the monumental gateway. The band of elegant *thuluth* script refers to Sura 36 (Surat Az-Zamur (the Troops) and Sura 110 (Surat An-Nasr (the Divine Support)) of the Qur'an. The Medrese was built between 1258–1279 by the Anatolian Seljuk Sultanate vizier Sahib Ata Fahreddin Ali who later founded the Anatolian Beylik (principality) of Sahib Ata in western Anatolia. Photo by Sumru Belger Krody, 2001.

Fig. 3
Fragment from a banner made of *tiraz* fabric, Iran, Shiraz or Iraq, Baghdad, ca. 1000, silk, compound weft-faced twill weave (*samit*). 51½" × 11½". The Textile Museum 3.116, acquired by George Hewitt Myers in 1927.

2a

2b

experiences (identities) in Islamic art and culture. The oldest among the group is a silk textile fragment—one of several belonging to a single large textile in the Museum's collections (fig. 3). The original textile began its remarkable life as a banner and was woven around the year 1000 for Baha al'Dawla, the Buyid ruler of Iran, who in turn presented it to his treasurer Abu Said Zadanfarrukh as *khil'a*—a gift to honor the treasurer's stellar military and public service.[3] The costly material (silk), intertwined using a complex-weave structure that is produced with a complicated drawloom technology, along with the large size of the original textile (probably six to nine feet wide, with no indications as to its length), and the personalized nature of the inscription suggest that the textile was one-of-a-kind. It may have been hung at an entryway, heralding the eminent presence of someone favored by the ruler (fig. 4). Or perhaps it was a literal herald, a banner that was displayed whenever Zadanfarrukh was performing official duties. It would then have served to legitimize the treasurer's authority as a designated officer of Baha al'Dawla. Supplying appointed officials with banners was an attested practice of investiture among the Abbasid caliphs in the ninth and tenth centuries, a practice the Buyid amirs, such as Baha al'Dawla, would have continued.[4] About two hundred years afterwards, the textile was turned into a talismanic garment

Note 3
For history of Buyid dynasty, see Cahen 2012.

Note 4
For history of Abbasid caliphate, see Lewis 2012.

3

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Fig. 4
The wedding banquet where an inscribed curtain hangs behind the feasting party, from Maqamat of al-Hariri of Basra (Muhammad al-Qasim ibn Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Uthman al-Hariri), St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies manuscript C-23 of c.1225–35. Accessed on 25 November 2014.

Fig. 5
The jacket made of *tiraz* fabric which was a banner, Iran, Shiraz or Iraq, Baghdad, ca. 1000 (banner fabric), 11th–12th century (jacket construction), silk, compound weft-faced twill weave (*samit*). The Textile Museum 3.116, acquired by George Hewitt Myers in 1927.

infused with protective properties and eventually might have been part of the sepulchral textiles in the Bibi Shahr Banu Shrine near Rayy, Iran (fig. 5).

The Kufic lettering is consistent with other examples of the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. The date of this textile has been gleaned from the information in the two lines of inscription in kufic writing style. The first, larger line reads with only a portion presented here:

> *Glory and prosperity to the King of Kings, Baha al'Dawla, Light of the People, Strengthener of the Nation, Father of Victory, the son of Adud al'Dawl, Crown of the People, may his life be long.*[5]

Since this Buyid ruler reigned from 989 to 1012 CE, we can establish these dates as parameters for the date of production. Below, in smaller script, a second inscription reads: "For the use of Abu Said, Zadanfarrukh ibn Azadmard, the Treasurer." Since Zadanfarrukh was treasurer to Baha al'Dawla in 1001, many scholars believe this to have been the precise year in which the textile was produced.[6] The large inscription was the dominant design element on the textile; the small rosettes in the corners and a plain-color band in one end were the secondary details. The deep yellow silk used for the *kufic* inscription appears to emulate more costly gold-wrapped yarns. *Kufic* is a writing style used for Arabic script.

Note 5
I would like to thank Dr. Simon Rettig, Iran Heritage Foundation Curatorial Fellow, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution for translating the inscription.

Note 6
Snyder 2004, Golombek 1988, and Blair 1997.

5

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Fig. 6
This folio exemplifies the power and elegance of the *kufic* script. The text of this folio is Verse 15 from Sura 48 of the Qur'an, known as *al-Fatiha* (The Victory), which celebrates the oath that the Prophet Muhammad and his followers took to uphold Islam. Abbasid period, 8th–9th century, North Africa or Near East. Detached folio; ink and color on parchment, 23.7 × 33.3 cm. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C: Purchase F1930.61.

Note 7
Blair 1998, Welch 1997.

The style is characterized by the straight angular shape of lettering and is a term associated with the town of Kufa in southern Iraq, one of the main centers for the development of Arabic scripts. Even though other types of script were developed in later centuries, *kufic* remained the most common form of writing used in architecture and art objects, because of its graphic qualities (fig. 6).[7]

The second textile was once in the service of a Christian church as a chasuble (fig. 7). It dates to the early fifteenth century and was woven in southern Spain, then under the control of the Muslim Nasrid dynasty (1230–1492). Europeans became increasingly interested in wearing, collecting, and imitating the sumptuous Islamic and Asian textiles, especially during and right after the Crusades. The presence of these luxury textiles is well attested in contemporaneous European paintings. These textiles were highly prestigious, so many wealthy individuals preferred to be painted surrounded with them. In these paintings, the 'exotic' Eastern silks were used to signal the wearer's elite status. More fascinating yet are bands of Arabic script that appear on these textiles. Unfamiliar with Arabic inscriptions, Europeans often mistakenly associated the language and the textiles with their perceived place of origin—the Holy Land—and used them to express reverence for the Eastern roots of Christianity. Not only the luxury silks imported from Asia, but the fine silks produced in al-Andalus and in the Nasrid Kingdom based in Granada in southern Spain, were also coveted by Christians

Fig. 7
Chasuble fragment with inscribed bands, Nasrid dynasty, Spain, Granada, early 15th century, silk, satin weave patterned with twill weave (*lampas*). 54½" × 29½". The Textile Museum 84.29, acquired by George Hewitt Myers in 1936.

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Fig. 8.
This page in Maghribi *kufic* script, is from a Qur'an probably copied in the 13th century in Nasrid Granada. It shows the end of Sura 10 (Surat Hud IThe Prophet Jonah)) and the beginning of Sura 11 (Surat Hud (The Prophet Hud)) separated by an illuminated chapter heading in Maghribi Kufic. "Calligraphy—the Geometry of the Spirit" by David James from the website *Islamic Art & Architecture*. Accessed on 26 November 2014.

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in the north of the Iberian Peninsula and the rest of Europe. Kings and bishops acquired textiles such as this example as commercial goods, as diplomatic gifts, and as trophies and spoils of war. Surprisingly enough, a large number of silks, as well as other luxury goods from Islamic Spain have been preserved through the centuries in Spanish ecclesiastical treasuries. In addition to being used as hangings and vestments in religious ceremonies, Islamic silks were employed as wrappings for saintly relics and burial shrouds for Christian royalty.[8]

Complex-woven silk textiles with Arabic inscriptions and blocks of abstract design elements arranged in horizontal bands became popular throughout the

Note 8
Snyder 2004.

Islamic world in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (fig. 8). This was a result of increased contact through commercial trade routes between Central Asia and the Mediterranean following the Mongol invasions of the mid-thirteenth century. A record dated 1306 states that the ruling Sultan in Cairo, Muhammad an-Nasr ibn Qala'un, sent Egyptian silk textiles and other gifts to James II in Barcelona. Such a gift may well have provided the Egyptian prototype for this design in which bands containing Arabic inscriptions alternate with interlacing foliation.[9]

In The Textile Museum's Nasrid silk, the lines of inscription alternate with bands of arabesques and fine interlaced ribbons. The style of the Arabic inscription combines some of the local Maghribi style of writing—recognized by delicate winding curves— with another style of writing called *thuluth*—identifiable by teardrop-like curved upper endings of the verticals (figs. 8 and 9). *Thuluth* is an elegant cursive Arabic writing style, which made its first appearance in the eleventh century and gave rise to various writing styles with slight changes of form, such as the one seen on this textile.[10]

The foliated cursive inscription on this textile transmits ideas very different than the angular one on the Buyid banner; it is neither political nor religious, but prosaically secular. The inscription reads:

> *I am for pleasure. Welcome. For pleasure am I. And he who beholds me sees joy and delight.*

This Arabic poem is referring surprisingly to the textile itself and might have been composed for this purpose.[11]

A significant number of surviving fourteenth- and fifteenth-century textiles displaying varying renditions of horizontal bands with the Arabic inscriptions and abstract design elements, attest to the popularity of the design. Both the fine drawing and coloring on this textile suggest a first half of the fifteenth-century date. Without any specific Sultan's name attached to the inscription, it is assumed that the original textile, of which this was a part, was woven in Nasrid workshops for commercial sale; it eventually was cut to form part of a Christian ecclesiastical vestment. In between its journey from the loom to the ecclesiastical vestment, the textile might have decorated walls of the Alhambra

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Fig. 9
Maghribi style inscribed stone carved panel in Alhambra, Granada, Spain. Photo by Sumru Belger Krody, 2014.

Note 9
For further discussion on Nasrid silk textiles, see Bush 2008, Berzock 2007, Bush 2006, Jacoby 2004, Mack 2002, Dodds 1992, and Mackie 1972.

Note 10
For further discussion on *thuluth*, see Berzock 2007, Bush 2006, Dodds 1992, and Welch 1979.

Note 11
See Bush 2008 and Bush 2006 for discussion of relationship of poetry, textiles and architecture in Islamic Spain.

Fig. 10
Fragment from a curtain thought to be hung on the walls of Alhambra palace, Nasrid dynasty, Spain, Granada, late 14th century, silk, satin weave patterned with twill weave (*lampas*). 40½" × 15¼". The Textile Museum 84.11, acquired by George Hewitt Myers in 1931.

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palace in Granada. There are other Nasrid textiles that were identified as curtains and wall hangings (fig. 10).[12] The design elements of textiles produced in this period are closely associated with the decorative style of the stucco and cut-tile work seen in the Alhambra, therefore their association with the Nasrid court is very likely (fig. 11).

Since the tenth century, rulers from the widespread Islamic world considered it an honor to send contributions of money, food, and precious gifts to Mecca (the Blessed), the birthplace of Muhammad and site of the Ka'ba, as well as Medina (the Radiant) where the house, mosque, and tomb of the Prophet Muhammed are located and the city from which Islam spread. Each year, precious gifts, among which textiles had a prominent place, were carried to Hijaz—Mecca and Medina—by special caravans called *surre*. The textiles contained in these gifts were used as outside and inside covers for the Ka'ba in Mecca, for the Prophet's tomb (*Ravza-i Mutahhara*) and for the graves of the Companions of the Prophet in Medina. The Ottoman tradition of sending textile covers to the holy lands started during the reign of Süleyman I (r. 1520–1566). The most precious among these textiles was *kiswa*, a set of textiles that include the covering of the Ka'ba, the embroidered curtain for its door, and the surrounding band carrying the name of the donating sultan. These covers were adorned with Qur'anic verses and prayers arranged in stacked chevron or zigzag rows with inscriptions, sometimes supplemented with sprays of flowers.[13]

Depending on their color—often red for Mecca and green for Medina—and the content of Qur'anic verses—whether they refer to the Ka'ba or the Prophet—the intended destination of these covers could be inferred. The style of inscription on the Textile Museum's eighteenth-century Ottoman *ravza-i mutahhara* cover

Fig. 11
The design elements of textiles and the decorative style of the stucco and cut-tile work seen in the Alhambra are closely associated. Alhambra, Granada, Spain. Photo by Sumru Belger Krody, 2014.

Note 12
Thompson 2008.

Note 13
Ipek 2006.

11

Fig. 12
Fabric for *Ravza-i Mutahhara*, Ottoman period, Istanbul, Turkey, 18th century, silk, satin weave patterned with twill weave (*lampas*). 52¾" x 26¾". The Textile Museum 1.84, gift of Mrs. Hoffman Philip.

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is called *thuluth* (fig. 12). Although the script was invented by the Persian calligrapher Ibn Muqlah Shirazi in the eleventh century, Ottoman calligraphers are considered to be the greatest contributors to the development and evolution of the *thuluth* script starting from the fifteenth century onwards (fig. 13). The lines on this textile read from top to bottom:

God is my Lord, Nothing is equal to Him, Muhammed is the prophet of God.

Everything perishes except His face [God's], *His is the wisdom and you will return to Him.*

There is no divinity except God, Muhammed is the messenger of God.

He is Allah, the one, Allah, the eternally Besought of all! He begotteth not nor was begotten. And there is none comparable unto Him. (Ikhlas (The Unity) surah # 112)

O Dear God, grant peace and blessings upon the prophet and messenger [Muhammed].

Truly, God and his angels bless the prophet [Muhammed], *O you who truly believe, also bless him and wish him peace.*[14]

Once taken down and replaced by the new set, these textiles began their second lives as holy relics distributed to the pilgrims and religious institutions throughout the Islamic lands. The presence of inscriptions often emphasized the holiness of the surroundings or provided protection for the person carrying them (fig. 14). Because these objects had been part of and touched the holy pilgrimage sites in Mecca and Medina, they carry *baraka* or *barakah*. *Baraka* is the beneficent force from God which flows through the physical and spiritual spheres as prosperity, protection, and happiness, to creations—in this case textiles that were part of the holy sites. These creations endowed with *baraka* can then transmit the flow of baraka to the other creations of God through physical proximity. Many Muslims also believe that an object that is inscribed with word of God will protect the person who reads, touches, or sees it and that God's word has the power to

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Fig. 13
The painted wooden panel is inscribed 'Muhammad is the Guide' in *thuluth* script. It was produced, probably for display in a mosque, by Ottoman Sultan Ahmet III (r. 1703 to 1730). "Calligraphy—the Geometry of the Spirit" by David James from the website *Islamic Art & Architecture*. Accessed 26 November 2014.

Note 14
I would like to thank Muhammed Zakariya for translating the inscriptions.

ward off evil. Thus talismanic shirts and banners made out of inscribed fabrics that were part of holy sites, such as this example, are capable of shielding a person or group of people from malevolent forces.

What connects these three textiles is the way that writing is incorporated in the organization of their design, although all three come from different periods and different parts of the Mediterranean and west Asian world. The writing is bold and present in all three. It covers the whole surface or is the most predominant element overpowering the others while it is creating a clear identity for the textiles. Often on textiles, writing is combined with other themes and mixed with other motifs, and the human eye tends to notice writing after it notices the motifs. In these three textiles, however, this concept is reversed.

To those familiar with Qur'anic verses and able to read the Arabic script, the writings on these textiles is an open book that can be read easily and understood. Arabic inscriptions could often be read without necessarily having mastery of the language. Perhaps this is why the Islamic world considered writing as central to their visual arts. Not only a vehicle of God's message, writing helped to unite and hold the various diverse Islamic communities with different cultural backgrounds by creating a Muslim identity.

What, on the other hand, separates these three textiles are the three different experiences that the three different Arabic inscriptions mediated for Muslims: the experience of *power* in the form of a *khil'a* broadcasting the legitimacy and authority of the ruler, the experience of *beauty* in the form of a luxurious silk textile designed to be enjoyed and appreciated, and finally the experience of *spirituality*, in the form of a textile covered band after band with writing clearly proclaiming Islam's fundamental creed.

Fig. 14
Banners hanging on both sides of the *mimbar* are from recycled fabrics that once decorated the Ka'ba or Prophet's tomb. Ulu Camii, Bursa, Turkey, early 20th century. Mehmet Agaoglu archives, The Textile Museum.

Ship Cloths and Their Functions

Dr. Mattiebelle Gittinger

4

THE SOUTHERNMOST TIP OF SUMATRA WAS HOME to some of the most complex and enigmatic textiles of Indonesia. The most spectacular of these were large wall hangings used at life transition ceremonies that featured images of one or more ships (fig. 1). In addition to these there existed a type of small cloth that flowed between families in cultural exchanges that delineated alliances created by marriage and, ultimately, knit together a community (fig.2). These textiles and the manner in which they functioned have no equivalent elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Extensive ship imagery, however, may well be expected in an island nation such as Indonesia and it does occur in myths, legends and ceremonial details.[1] Yet nothing approaches the Sumatran phenomenon in their imagery and usage.

The ship cloth area of Sumatra, known as the Lampung, was home to four ethnic groups, but only the Paminggir, who live along the extreme south coast and small regions of the interior, seem to have made both types of cloths, while the smaller cloths were also made by a few groups living along the west coast. The southern area prospered in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, through the cultivation of pepper and trade via the port of Banten on Java across the narrow Sunda Strait. The wealth from the pepper trade and the conveying of honors from the court of Banten inflated any preexisting hierarchical structure which eventually became a graduated series of ranks with attendant privileges.

Among the Paminggir, four *suku* form the principal units of a geographic area known as a *marga*. *Suku* are exogamous patrilineal descent groups and a bride joins the *suku* of her husband's father when a bride price has been paid. Depending on the wealth, population, and age, *suku* are designated as weak or strong and each *suku* exists in a positional relationship with *suku* to the right and left. This positional designation governs the arrangement of cloths and positions of people in ceremony and ritual processions.

Note 1
Manguin (1986) discusses boat symbolism in the archipelago and gives an extensive bibliography.

Fig. 1
Palepai, Indonesia, Sumatra, Lampung, possibly the Kalianda Peninsula, Paminggir people, 19th century. Cotton; plain weave with supplementary-weft patterning, embroidered. 122⅝" × 28½". The Textile Museum 1962.41.1, museum purchase.

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The heads of the social units are known as *penjimbang*; thus one may speak of *penjimbang suku* and *penjimbang marga*. Only *penjimbang* and their families had the right to use the large ship hangings at rites of passage.

Known as *palepai*, these textiles have a foundation of plain-weave cotton that is patterned by cotton supplementary wefts or, rarely, small areas of silk yarns (average size 108" × 22"). A similar structure characterizes the small cloths known as *tampan* and these may also have supplementary wefts of silk floss that was locally grown and used unreeled. The average size of *tampan* ranges from 26" × 24" up to 40' × 30".

Information concerning the two types of cloths is limited and none appears to have been woven since the beginning of the twentieth century. The tsunami accompanying the eruption of Krakatau in nearby waters in 1893 devastated the entire south. The recovery period may not have included all of earlier customs. This natural disaster and avid textile collecting mean that virtually all *palepai* and certainly most of the *tampan* now exist in collections outside of Sumatra. Precise sources of individual cloths must usually be bracketed with question marks.

The evidence within the iconography of the *palepai* suggests broad outlines of interpretation. These hangings appear to be of four main types: a single large blue ship appears on one type, a red ship on another—a series of panels carrying ships on a third, and a cloth with rows of human-like figures on a fourth.[2] The blue ship image carries a structure with projecting boards shaped like a ship's prow. Similar house structures with projecting carved beams could be found in Kenali near the Lake Ranau region in the early 1970s, suggesting an interpretation of a domestic house on the blue ship. At this time, however, the red ship *palepai* could be found only in the Kalianda region to the Far East. Elsewhere I have presented evidence that these red ships are a bird or a bird-shaped ship.[3] These *palepai* usually feature an umbrella-shaped structure that may be compared to local single-pole roofed shrines dedicated to the ancestors. Offerings placed under the roof include woven mats that are accompanied by wishes for children and good fortune.

While it is not apparent how the iconography of the two remaining *palepai* styles complements the blue and red ships, the latter two cloth types could be a symbolic pairing of the profane and sacred.

The *palepai* was hung in the interior room of the house where it served as a backdrop to the bride and groom or other celebrant of a rite of passage (fig. 3). The *palepai* of other *suku* in the *marga* were hung to the right and left according to their positional relation to the *palepai* of the principal.

Fig. 2
A common *tampan*, south Sumatra, Indonesia, early 20th entury. 19½" × 17". The Textile Museum 1984.23.5, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. G. Reginald van Raalte.

Note 2
A *palepai* with two red ships, as The Textile Museum example is a development of a single type.

Note 3
Gittinger 1972.

Fig. 3
Young boys sit before a *palepai* in a circumcision ceremony in 1960. Photo by Mattiebelle Gittinger.

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Fig. 4
A hanging (*lelidung*) used in the front room of a house during ceremonies of the Paminggir people. Reports from some areas say the smaller and more numerous the triangles, the higher the rank of the owner. This example comes from Kampung Kagungan near Kota Agung. It is specific to a younger *suku* of the left. Photo by Mattiebelle Gittinger.

Complementing this schematic arrangement of a local *marga* in the house interior were one or more large textiles hung in the front room of the house where men and honored guests assembled. Today these wall-size hangings (*lelidung*) are created from cut and joined pieces of commercial cloth (fig. 4). The patterning features triangles that vary in size and arrangement, which according to some informants designated the owner's rank or social position. Such triangular patchwork has a venerable heritage on Java where it exists in the patchwork ceremonial coats of Tenggerese priests, the legendary jacket that the Sultan of Yogyakarta dons when initially ascending the throne, or the patchwork neckband worn by the woman guardian of the court treasures of Yogyakarta. The triangular-patchwork hangings of the Lampung probably confer protection just as that motif has traditionally done in Java. As it is hung, the cloth guards the entry to the house and presents a defense to the outside world.

The contemporary triangular patterned cloths of the Paminggir also raise intriguing questions concerning triangular patterned cloths once created in India for trade to Sumatra. These dyed cottons were the currency of trade for pepper and other commodities. A question concerning the imported cloths asks if they were designed for a specific market. The use and patterning of the current *lelidung* certainly suggests that they arise from very old traditions and that the Indian products were a response to a local demand.

Intersecting this elite system are customs associated with the *tampan*. Exchanges associated with these small cloths cross all segments of the society, identifying social relationships and creating new symbols in synergistic relationships with mundane objects. The patterning of the *tampan* involves a much broader range of design elements than that of the *palepai*: ships, elephants, horses, various kinds of birds, geometric designs, and in rare instances narrative scenes (figs. 5 and 6). Significant differences within the usage of the *tampan* seem to have depended on size. The larger *tampan* probably covered trays of major gifts or formed the seat of the bride sitting before the *palepai*, while the smaller cloths wrapped ritual items, including the bride wealth (fig. 7).

The obligations and responsibilities inherent to the two sides of a marriage were symbolized in the ceremonial give and take of these textiles, often accompanied by ritual foods. Marriage transactions create the patterns of exchange.

Fig. 5
Tampan from Gunung Terang near Sukamara. Photo by Mattiebelle Gittinger.

Fig. 6
Tampan from Gunung Terand near Sukamara. Photo by Mattiebelle Gittinger.

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Fig. 7
A tray prepared for a ceremonial procession to pay the bride wealth. It contains a *tampan* cover, betel chewing paraphernalia, and a *tampan* wrapping the bride wealth. The Kroe area. Photo by Mattiebelle Gittinger.

Note 4
Gittinger 1976, pp. 207–27.

After informal inquiry indicates marriage may be considered, a delegation from the boy's *suku* goes to the girl's home carrying ritual food wrapped in *tampan*. At this initial meeting only a few bundles are carried. Once the negotiations are settled, during the next meeting, in which the bride price is paid, a major gift including *tampan* goes to the bride's family and tampan wrapped foods go from *suku* ranks to parallel positions in the bride's *suku* and from brothers of the groom's father to men with corresponding positions in the girl's *suku*. Later in the day these cloths are returned containing sweets. When the first child is born, these same people will once again exchange ritual food wrapped in *tampan*, but at this time the new mother's family will give a larger number of packets. The pattern in the mountain villages involved up to 30 cloths. Elsewhere, along the coast, 80 to 100 *tampan* wrapped bundles are mentioned.[4] This is the pattern of exchanges repeated over the life of the marriage.

These customs associated with *tampan* may have been inflated in number in response to the prosperity of the pepper growing area. In more remote mountain areas along the west coast *tampan* usage appears modest and here the synergistic properties of the small cloths becomes more visible. The *tampan* is the symbol of transition.

An example of this occurs in marriages among the Sewarai, a group living in the mountains northeast of the Manna. A spear having a *tampan* and ritual flowers tied to the top is the focal object at all stages of the wedding ceremony. It is placed behind the bride and groom as spirits are called to witness the marriage.

Fig. 8
During a wedding in the mountain village of Pudding, the groom carries a spear with a *tampan* and plant material tied to the top to the area where he and the bride will ritually kill a carabao. Photo by Mattiebelle Gittinger.

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Note 5
Gittinger 1976, pp. 215–216.

Note 6
Gittinger 1972, p.218.

The groom carries the spear in procession to ritually kill a carabao, and then places it behind the bride as she sits in state (fig. 8). Later the groom's family removes the *tampan* from the spear and places the cloth in the gift of carabao meat and foods they send to the bride's family (fig. 9).

The *tampan*-spear may be interpreted as a form of cosmic tree that accompanies the ceremony and is later ritually destroyed to show the transition of the bride to her new married state.[5] This meaning is mirrored even in the extreme south where, in cases of elopement, a single tampan must be left in the home of the bride.[6] Cosmic tree symbolism is a comfortable interpretation in many areas of Indonesia.

The synergistic property of the *tampan* is also seen in house construction. A *tampan* and other items are tied to the new ridgepole as it is put in place. While

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Fig. 9
After the carabao has been killed, the *tampan* is taken from the spear and placed in the ceremonially allotted food given from the groom's family to the bride's. Photo by Mattiebelle Gittinger.

Note 7
Marsden 1966, p. 299.

most of the items are ceremonially destroyed, the *tampan* and additional ones placed in the top joint of each of the four corner posts remain. That the *tampan* are possible glosses for the sails of a ship seems apparent when the old style house with its projecting floor beams is seen as representing a ship.

Tampan usage was probably more extensive when the cloths were still woven. The early nineteenth century historian William Marsden reports "...they serve up the rice, divided into portions for each person....the tallam (tray) being covered with a handsome crimson napkin, manufactured for that use"[7]—an obvious reference to *tampan* usage in the early nineteenth century. None of the early reports, however, cite the *palepai*. This may be because foreigners such as these men never entered into the inner room where the long cloths were hung. Without earlier records, much concerning the cloths remains conjectural.

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ISBN 978-0-87405-038-7